



**State of Florida  
Department of Children and Families**

**Ron DeSantis**  
Governor

**Chad Poppell**  
Secretary

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## **MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** August 29, 2019  
**TO:** Members of the Miami-Dade Refugee Task Force  
**FROM:** Lourdes Leconte, Refugee Services (RS)  
**SUBJECT:** August 09, 2019 Meeting Minutes

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### **THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:**

**Date:** October 11, 2019  
**Time:** 10:00 A.M. – 12:00 Noon  
**Location:** Miami-Dade College  
Building 8, Room, Room 8525  
300 NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Miami, Florida 33132  
**Contact:** Lourdes Leconte  
**Office:** (786) 257-5173  
**Cell:** (305) 401-3374  
**E-Mail:** Lourdes.Leconte@myflfamilies.com

This taskforce has been active in the Miami area for many years. The participants are representatives of various government agencies, private not-for-profit organizations and mutual assistance associations. An average of about twenty-five to thirty people attend these meetings on a regular basis. The purpose of these meetings is to increase awareness of the refugee populations, share best practices, build collaborations between agencies, spot trends in refugee populations, characteristics or movements, help create good communication among service providers; get informed about upcoming community events, request for proposals, training, workshops, conferences, etc., at the local, state and national level; discuss refugee program service needs and possible solutions to meeting those needs. Meeting participants also receive updates, information and clarification on new federal and state regulations and policy changes pertaining to refugees.

If there are any issues that you would like to include in the agenda, please contact me at the above address.

***I look forward to seeing you at the meeting!***

401 NW 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Suite N-812 Miami, Florida 33128

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**MIAMI-DADE REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES  
AUGUST 09, 2019****ATTENDEES:**

Kerry Allen; Bajic Bojan; Diego Castro; Eduardo Chavez; Monica Farias; Martha Ferrer; Marja Gonzalez; Maria Hernandez; Sylvia Lopez; Kristina Montes; Elmer Morales; Sergio Mora; Eduardo Morras; Ulises Pacheco; Maureen Porras; Maria Penha; Cristobal Perez; Yeen Perez; Christine Reis; Maria Rodriguez; Jose Sanchez; Lilliam Sorzano; Edgar Tobon; Carmen Torres; Andy Trojillo; Roketa Mansfield; Amanda St Jean; Carmen Torres; Dorothy Martin; Ibis Valdes;; Freda Voltaire; Patricia Vazquez; Lucia Canizares; Sandra Sierra; Arno Lemus; Maria Paula Sobrero; Lourdes Pesante; Sol Fauvel; Sandra Sierra;

**INTRODUCTION:**

Lourdes Leconte, DCF Refugee Services Community Liaison for the Southern Region welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.

**PRESENTATION:**

A representative from the Idea Center passed on information about this program within the Miami Dade College and invited participants to learn about it online. It is a program geared at unlocking entrepreneurial and innovation skills in students from diverse backgrounds to meet America's most pressing economic and social challenges. The Program enables its students to succeed in a disruptive, knowledge-based economy by teaching them world-class innovation, technology and entrepreneurship skills. The Representative provided samples of programs available that one could register for such as computer program, design etc.

**Amanda St Jean**, Regional Public Information Officer from the Executive Office for Immigration Review, provided an overview of the organization.

The Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) is an office of the United States Department of Justice whose primary mission is to adjudicate immigration cases by fairly, expeditiously, and uniformly interpreting and administering the Nation's immigration laws. Under delegated authority from the Attorney General, EOIR conducts immigration court proceedings, appellate reviews, and administrative hearings. Besides being a separate agency within the Department of Justice, the Immigration Courts are also independent of USCIS and from the Office of Special Counsel for Immigration-Related Unfair Employment Practices in the DOJ Civil Rights Division and the Office of Immigration Litigation in the DOJ Civil Division. The chief function of EOIR is to conduct removal proceedings, which are administrative proceedings to determine the removability and admissibility of individuals in the United States. Removal proceedings are conducted in immigration courts. As of September 28, 2016, there are fifty-eight immigration courts throughout the United States.

**ANNOUNCEMENT:**

- Welcoming Week 2019

**REFUGEE SERVICES UPDATE** (*Sent via E-Mail in June and July*)

**NEXT MEETING DATE:** October 11, 2019

**Meeting adjourned at 12:15 PM**

**SOUTH FLORIDA REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT AGENCIES MINUTES – AUGUST 2019**

**South Florida VOLAG Consortium**

**None**

**LEGAL SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES – JULY 2019**

**Immigration and Legal Issues Subcommittee**

**Minutes for July 3, 2019**

**Held at Church World Service**

Submitted by Brad Ginter

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**Attendees: Berta Cassidy, Roketa Mansfield, Maria Penha, Amelia Ramirez, Miriam Garcia, Lourdes Leconte, Dorothy Martin, Maria Catalina, Lucio Perez, Viviane Saide, Brad Ginter**

**USCIS** - Berta Cassidy

Personnel changes: acting Miami Field Office director--Rodolfo Nunez

acting USCIS director--Kenneth Cuccinellia

A revised N-648, Medical Exceptions, is out and must be used, as of August 12, 2019.

On May 23, 2019, a Presidential Memorandum on Enforcing the Legal Responsibilities of Sponsors of Aliens was issued, directing federal agencies to update their procedures so that immigrants don't receive federal means-tested benefits, if they aren't eligible. USCIS officers are now required to remind applicants and their sponsors that the I-864 Affidavit of Support is a legally enforceable document. Berta reminded everyone that the sponsor remains responsible until the LPR naturalizes, has 40 quarters, dies or is otherwise no longer an LPR.

The processing times for I-485's and N-400's can vary considerably between Field Offices within a district. In order to even out adjudicating processing times, CIS will send cases from Field Offices with longer processing times to ones with shorter times. Subcommittee members affirmed that some applications are adjudicated in as little as 3 months, while others are well over a year.

FOIA requests can now be submitted online, via FIRST (FOIA Records SysTem). You must have a USCIS online account to submit the request. USCIS will hold a Webinar on this on July 9, 2019, from 2:00 to 3:00.

Berta will be out from August 1 to 25. Roketa will be providing updates at our next meeting.

### **Issues, Information raised by members**

Parolees are having their parole cards taken from them by ICE when they report to Miramar and are given ROR papers instead. They say that ICE tells them that that is better. Parolees should always make a copy of their parole card. It was suggested that they only take a copy to Miramar, not the actual card.

The 2A preference category is *current!* This may very well be a temporary situation, so people may want to submit their applications at once. If, as expected, the date retrogresses, the application will be held in abeyance until one's date is reached.

Some errors on an application or receipt can be quickly corrected by going to USCIS' case status website, putting in the receipt number, and then going down the page to "Submit a case inquiry." There is then an option to correct typographic errors.

## **EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES – AUGUST 2019**

### **2019 REFUGEE TASK FORCE EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING Aug. 9, 2019**

- REVEST is already enrolling students for the upcoming first Mini Term of Fall 2019 from September to October 2019. So far around 1200 VESOL students have been enrolled program wide in this current Terms of Summer A & B, and around 800 are going to be enrolled for the first Mini Term 81.1 for Fall Term 2019. Approximately 200 students have been projected to test in our next Orientation Sessions throughout these months.

- The REVEST Program has been able to process 1177 vocational registrations for the contract year ending in August 2019. We have begun CCC and CTEC registrations for the Fall 2197. So far, there are almost 80 new registrations. We continue providing training and advisement to advisors to be updated about changing procedures and system issues.
- Faculty meetings were conducted with all REVEST instructors Aug.8, 2019. All CASAS testing procedures were reviewed with instructors to ensure a successful testing session. CASAS testing is taking place Aug. 9->16, 2019. We expect completion rates to remain steady. All REVEST students were trained to employ basic test-taking skills. Our Wolfson and Hialeah Centers are now using the ECASAS computer-based test. We are very proud of the hard work of our determined faculty and especially our students.
- REVEST is offering ESOL classes through scholarships at Community Education (Miami Dade College) Kendall and West Campus. This is allowing clients to be served by REVEST in a broader range of sites. Our current sites in Hialeah and Wolfson are also offering classes and we are ready to serve clients. REVEST is monitoring progress of our eight-week courses and our mini-term system. We are also monitoring students receiving scholarships in the Kendall and West Miami Dade College sites.
- World Refugee Day was celebrated on Wednesday, June 19, at Miami Dade College's Wolfson Campus. Festivities included presentations, awards, success stories and a talent showcase that highlighted the contributions of refugees to this nation. Refugee services organizations were present to assist and provide information. We would like to thank all involved that made this special event possible.
- Negotiations for the 2019-2020 SAVES contract have been successfully completed. We would like to thank Ms. Andrea Gordon and everyone else in DCF and Refugee Services for their assistance and support.
- The new trimester (2019-1) will on start on August 19, 2019 and will end on December 20, 2019. For the trimester (2018-3) that ended on July 31, 2019, the total enrollment in the SAVES program was 1,200. This number includes 427 new clients and 57 Success Management Academy (SMA) GED clients, 16 – 18 yrs. old.
- We are asking every provider to refer clients to the SAVES program. We offer English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), General Basic Education, SMA GED in Spanish, and a wide range of vocational/technical programs.
- The SAVES program continues to serve clients at 14 schools where SAVES representatives are housed. Four other schools, George T. Baker Aviation and Technical College, Miami Lakes Educational Center and Technical College, D. A. Dorsey technical College, and Miami Palmetto Adult Education Center accept SAVES vouchers for referred SAVES clients. Eligible SAVES clients can take advantage and the opportunity to attend classes to learn English and complete a vocational program that can lead to a successful career.

- SAVES continues to work closely with the M-DCPS Office of Public Relations, the Marketing Department, and SAVES schools to reach out to the community and disseminate information about the SAVES program. SAVES is currently advertising via mail-out, newspaper, radio, career fairs, and opening of school meetings.
- SAVES schools administrators and SAVES school contacts will continue to engage in an aggressive machine marketing campaign to recruit students by participating in open-houses and distributing flyers to the public at supermarkets, churches, and community agencies. They will continue to present at students' orientation and go on the public announcement system to promote their schools and the SAVES program.
- The SAVES Success Management Academy (SMA) program for students 16-18 years old continues to be implemented in seven SAVES locations. Schools are recruiting eligible high school students not graduating to attend the SMA program.
- SAVES continues to collaborate with other agencies in the community to provide additional services to the clients. On our meeting that was held on May 29, 2019, the program director of the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Miami, Ms. Monica Farias, presented. SAVES is also collaborating with Career Source, Administrative Office, on a new referral program. Ms. Ibis Valdes, Administrative Officer attended and presented at the last meeting.
- SAVES Students' success stories are shared at the SAVES District meetings and published on the SAVES website [www.savesdadeschools.com](http://www.savesdadeschools.com). We invite everyone to read them.
- The next SAVES District meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 25, 2019, from 3:00 to 5:00 PM at Hialeah-Miami Lakes Adult Education Center. Please let us know if you would like to attend and share any information with SAVES school personnel.
- If you have any questions about our program, you can call us at (305) 823-5020 or visit the SAVES website at [www.savesdadeschools.com](http://www.savesdadeschools.com).

<b>EMPLOYMENT SERVICES REPORT – AUGUST 2019</b>
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None

**USCIS UPDATE – AUGUST 2019****USCIS Miami and Caribbean District  
August 2019 Update**

- ❖ **Naturalization Test Redesign** – U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is revising the current naturalization test with improvements to ensure it continues to serve as an accurate measure of a naturalization applicant’s civics knowledge and that it reflects best practices in adult education assessments. The goal is to create a meaningful, uniform, and efficient test that will assess applicants’ knowledge and understanding of U.S. history, government and values.

“Granting U. S. citizenship is the highest honor our nation bestows,” said USCIS Acting Director Ken Cuccinelli. “Updating, maintaining, and improving a test that is current and relevant is our responsibility as an agency in order to help potential new citizens fully understand the meaning of U.S. citizenship and the values that unite all Americans.”

To read more, please visit - <https://www.uscis.gov/news/news-releases/uscis-announces-plan-improve-naturalization-test>

- ❖ **Grant Program** – USCIS will begin accepting applications for two funding opportunities under the Citizenship and Assimilation Grant Program. The two programs will provide up to \$10 million in grants for organizations to support citizenship preparation and civic assimilation efforts. Applications are due by Aug. 13, 2019.

Please see the attached invitation to a teleconference taking place on Tuesday, August 6<sup>th</sup> from 1-2 pm to discuss Notices of Funding Opportunity for the fiscal year 2019 [Citizenship and Assimilation Grant Program](#). USCIS posted two grant funding opportunity [announcements](#). During this teleconference, USCIS officials will provide an overview of the Citizenship and Assimilation Grant Program and answer your questions about the application requirements and process.

To read more, please visit – <https://www.uscis.gov/news/news-releases/uscis-announces-citizenship-and-assimilation-grant-opportunities-0>

- ❖ **Updated DOJ Listing** - Please see the attached updated local listing of DOJ recognized organizations. Below you will find links to Recognition and Accreditation (R&A) Roster reports:

[Recognized Organizations List](#) (PDF)

[Accredited Representatives List](#) (PDF)

[Organizations and Representatives, Listed by State](#)

For more information about the R&A Program, click [here](#).

- ❖ **Outreach Sessions**

Below is a listing of our upcoming outreach sessions and events. These events are free and open to the public. If you need additional information, please contact – [Berta.M.Cassidy@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:Berta.M.Cassidy@uscis.dhs.gov) or [Roketa.F.Mansfield@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:Roketa.F.Mansfield@uscis.dhs.gov) .

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Type of Event</b>	<b>Location</b>
August 5 <sup>th</sup> , 2019	12:00-3:00 pm	USCIS Information Desk	Lemon City Branch Library, 430 NE 61 St., Miami, FL 33137
August 20 <sup>st</sup> , 2019	10am – 12:30 pm	USCIS Information Desk	Stephen P. Clark Government Center Lobby, 111 NW 1st St. Miami, FL 33128
August 21 <sup>st</sup> , 2019	1:00 – 4:00 pm	USCIS Information Desk	Miami Central Driver's License Office 3721 NW 7 St. Miami, FL 33126
August 26 <sup>th</sup> , 2019	12:00 – 3:00 pm	Naturalization Information Session	Lemon City Branch Library, 430 NE 61 St., Miami, FL 33137
August 27 <sup>th</sup> , 2019	12:30-3:30 pm	USCIS Information Desk	Mall of the Americas Driver's License Center 7795 W. Flagler St. Suite #82C Miami, FL 33126

❖ **Upcoming Naturalization Ceremonies**

Below are scheduled dates for upcoming administrative N-400 naturalization ceremonies and the corresponding field offices where the ceremonies will take place (unless otherwise listed).

Please note that although these dates are current on the date of issuance of this update, the dates are subject to change without notice.

- **Miami Field Office** – August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>
- **Hialeah Field Office** - August 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>
- **Oakland Park Field Office** - August 16<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>
- **Kendall Field Office** - August 10<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, 31<sup>st</sup>