



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

Ron DeSantis

Chad Poppell
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 10, 2020

TO: Members of the Tallahassee Refugee Task Force

FROM: Theresa Leslie, Refugee Services (RS)

SUBJECT: Task Force Meeting Minutes for March 10, 2020

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: June 9, 2020
Time: 10:00 AM to 11:30 PM
Location: Department of Children and Families
1317 Winewood Blvd., Bldg. 3, Rm201
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Contact: Theresa Leslie
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This task force has been active in the Tallahassee area in the past few years. The participants are representatives of various government agencies, private not-for-profit organizations and volunteer groups. An average of about twenty to twenty-five attend 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, 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.

TALLAHASSEE AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING

INTRODUCTION

The meeting was held at the Department of Children and Families Conference Room #201, Building 3. Theresa Leslie, Community Liaison, represented the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Refugee Services (RS) Program and led the meeting. The meeting was called to order.

PRESENTATION

International Rescue Committee (IRC), Una Bilic, Site Manager presented program updates and next steps.

IRC reported that they have a new Swahili-speaking volunteer that is helping with the translation of training materials and announcements. This new volunteer is also assisting as an interpreter for certain Congolese clients.

IRC reported that 15 new refugee clients are ready to arrive shortly. Over the past two weeks, 18 other refugee clients arrived. It was initially projected that IRC would resettle 144 refugees this fiscal year. However, IRC now states that this estimate is not probable considering the current rate of arrivals.

IRC reported that due to campus closures and online classes, many Florida State University (FSU) students are returning home. Because of this, IRC will lose the assistance of several interns. However, some of those interns will still be able to assist IRC remotely/virtually. IRC reports that FSU campus closing also means that some refugees may lose their jobs working in dining halls and in maintenance on campus.

IRC also explained that many refugee clients are approaching the time when they will be able to apply for citizenship. However, those clients will need to first obtain signed medical forms from a designated civil surgeon. Obtaining these medical forms can be expensive. IRC and the community liaison are exploring more economical options to obtain these forms. IRC states that 36 citizenship applications are on hold because of this challenge.

IRC stated that they are currently recruiting an AmeriCorps VISTA member to assist them with their mentoring program (the previous AmeriCorps VISTA already finished his year of service). This VISTA member will help recruit and match mentors with refugee mentees ages 15 to 24. The program will focus on civic and social engagement while also supporting each client's individual educational and vocational advancement.

Community Input from Karen Strange, City of Tallahassee's Adult Literacy Volunteer Program). The Adult Literacy Program explained that participation in daytime and private tutoring sessions have been increasing. The Adult Literacy Program has been operating for over 30 years and serves over 350 clients each year. On-site classes are also offered at the Perry Library (2817 South Adams St.). Clients can work on improving reading and math skills and receive assistance with GED prep, computer instruction, and resume-writing assistance. Tutoring and classes are offered Tuesday through Friday. The Adult Literacy Program encourages task force members to promote their program to refugees and other community members that might benefit from these services. Task Force members can call 850-606-2960 or email LearningCenter@LeonCountyFl.gov for additional information.

The Leon County Health Department announced that RoseAnn Sheck, MSW will now be representing the Health Department at Tallahassee Task Force meetings. Krissy Hamilton, the previous representative, is now in a new position.

Theresa Leslie, DCF Refugee Services Community Liaison led a brainstorming session with the task force members exploring creative input for possible employment opportunities for refugees. Many ideas were shared. IRC stated that this information will be shared with their Employment Case Manager.

Lisa Urban, Leon County ESOL Schools Coordinator, announced several new ESOL resources including the installation of a new translation line and the delivery of new training/teaching materials. These materials will be utilized in teaching and supporting ESOL students.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 AM

Next Meeting:

Tuesday, June 9, 2020

10:00 to 11:30 AM

Department of Children and Families

1317 Winewood Blvd, Bldg. 3, Rm 201

Tallahassee, FL 32399

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