



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

Rick Scott
Governor

David E. Wilkins
Secretary

DATE: March 15, 2013
TO: Members of the Tampa Bay Refugee Task Force
FROM: Janet Blair, Refugee Services (RS)
SUBJECT: January 29, 2013 Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: March 19, 2013
Time: 1:30 P.M. – 3:30 P.M.
Location: Pinellas Technical Education Center
6100 154th Ave. N
Clearwater FL 3376

Contact: Janet Blair
Phone: (813) 545-1716
Fax: (813) 558-5598
E-Mail: Janet_Blair@dcf.state.fl.us
Taddese_Fessehaye@dcf.state.fl.us

This task force has been active in the Tampa area for many years. The participants are representatives of various government agencies, private not-for-profit organizations and mutual assistance associations. An average of 40 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 next meeting!

Refugee Services Program
9393 North Florida Ave, Tampa FL 33612

Mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency

TAMPA BAY AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MINUTES

Mission Statement: Helping Refugees to settle, integrate and thrive through support, education and community.

This meeting was held at the USCIS Tampa Office, 5629 Hoover Blvd, Tampa, FL. Janet Blair, Community Liaison, and Hiram Ruiz, Director of Refugee Services represented the Department of Children and Families (DCF) Refugee Services program. Janet called the meeting to order at 1:25pm following the conclusion of the Naturalization Oath Ceremony. Brief introductions were given by all participants. 45 people were present.

Refugee Services Updates:

- **Recent Local Media Coverage-** Terri Durdaller, DCF Communications Director, provided an update on two recent stories done on the Tampa Garden and funds received through the Santa Cause program. She encouraged everyone to share potential newsworthy stories with her to help increase our positive visibility. She also offered her assistance should individuals need help with press releases and getting press coverage. Terri can be reached at 813-337-5854 (O) or 813-917-7570 (C) or by email Teresa.Durdaller@dcf.state.fl.us.
- **Statewide Consultation May 8th-10 2013-** The consultation will be held at the Loews Portifino Hotel in Orlando. All providers are encouraged to send representatives from all levels of the organization. There will be a special one day "companion ticket" available for personnel who work on contracts to attend the contracts workshops. There will be a resettlement meeting the morning of the 8th before the start of the consultation. Refugees from the ECBOs are being invited to attend as well for special session. There will be many diverse workshops including one from the ORR technical assistance provider on working with LGBTQ refugees. To this Hiram Ruiz shared that Church World Service (CWS) in Miami has added an LGBTQ outreach specialist as a part of the technical assistance program. It was suggested that they speak with Nadine Smith of Equality Florida for ideas and resources.
- **National Welcoming Project-** Welcoming America has received a grant from ORR to help address issues highlighted in the GAO report as well as growing anti-refugee sentiment in other communities. Our community continues to be fairly welcoming, but we need to keep key stakeholders involved in order to continue to have a welcoming community.
- **World Refugee Day 2013-** Planning is well underway for this year's world refugee day. As a result of participation in the "Community Conversations" put together by LIRS we will be holding a daylong event on June 20th. The first portion of the day will be an educational "conversation" with school administrators from Hillsborough County Schools to help them gain a greater understanding of their refugee students and the challenges facing refugee families.
- **RTF Focus-** Janet reviewed the themes that came out of the small group discussions at the November task force meeting. They include looking at the structure of the task force meetings, creating welcome baskets for new arrivals, using "volunteer families" to create a welcoming committee for new arrivals, highlight more of our success stories, and provide diversity training for refugee providers.

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General Updates

Resettlement:

LSF December and January have been extraordinarily slow with only 6 cases arriving primarily Cuban, Congolese, Iraqi and Eritrean.

Coptic Orthodox Charities Report 36 in R&P and 44 in Matching Grant, Iraqi, Cuban and Eritrean all in Pinellas.

GJCFCS Very quiet since early December. 20 individuals so far this year, but arrivals are scheduled for February. All Cuban and Iraqi.

Catholic Charities No report.

Service Providers & Community Partners:

Project Pro\$per Provided quick overview of their services and announced that they are now accepting applications from Hillsborough County as well.

United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS): Kristen Smith announced that they have been working to increase language access to their stakeholder conference call and will be holding their first ever call in Vietnamese in February.

Refugee Health: Florence reported there has been an increase in the number of adults with diabetes and it is important for individuals to be educated about the disease. They are offering free classes for those diagnosed with diabetes.

CARIBE: Estella reported that CARIBE has enrolled more than 600 students so far this year.

EEOC: A representative from the EEOC was in attendance and offered assistance to anyone with employment discrimination issues or questions.

USFSP Community Engagement- Greg Musselman with LSF reported on an upcoming community engagement event at USF St. Petersburg that will include a panel of young refugees to share about their experience in the US.

Robbie Bear, USF- Robbie Bear is a professor of anthropology who has worked with various refugee services providers in the past around student research projects and wanted everyone to know that they continue to have students interested in helping with the work we do.

Spotlight Presentation:

A Brief Introduction to the Democratic Republic of Congo- Stacy Kratz and Linda Stryker provided an overview of the Democratic Republic of Congo to help providers become more familiar with what could be the next large population of refugees to arrive in the US.

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Announcements/Upcoming Events:

- World Refugee Day Planning Meeting, Feb 1st 9:30 at LAC. We are in need of greater participation from more members of the task force. All interested are encouraged to attend.
- Pinellas Provider Meeting, Feb 6th 10:00am, PTECH 901 34th St. S. St. Petersburg
- Tampa Bay Burmese Council Event, April 6th, 12-4pm. Partnership with the Bridge. Still working on location. Details to follow
- Ann Marie Winter reported that Rep. Cathy Castor will be holding a local round table meeting on January 30th to discuss immigration related issues.
- LSF immigration attorney's reported ongoing difficulties with getting fee waivers approved with certain USCIS applications. Kristen Smith reported it was a nationwide issue that USCIS was working to improve.

Upcoming Task Force Meetings:

- March 19th at 1:30pm —PTECH Campus in Clearwater- We will be following our new structure with the first hour focusing on RTF business and the second hour to include community stakeholders. We will be viewing the 20 minute piece of the full length film "Welcome to Shelbyville".

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