



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

**Ron DeSantis**  
Governor

**Shevaun L. Harris**  
Secretary

---

## **MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** April 14, 2022  
**TO:** Members of the Miami-Dade Refugee Task Force  
**FROM:** Lourdes Leconte, Refugee Services (RS)  
**SUBJECT:** April 08, 2022, Meeting Minutes

---

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

**Date:** August 12, 2022  
**Time:** 10:00 A.M. – 12:00 Noon  
**Location:** Via Teams  
  
**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 attends 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

---

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

**MIAMI-DADE REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES  
FEBRUARY 11, 2022**

**ATTENDEES:**

Lourdes Leconte, Ileana Bustelo, Andrea Gordon , Henry Whitehead, Miesha Carr , Emily Hackerson , Emilie Goesser, Silvia Lopez, Yeen Perez, Veronica Rodriguez, Alicia Sante, Jamie Everett, Dr. Cheryl White, Lucy Tucker, Samantha Francois, Miriam Johana Garcia, Yeen Perez, Elmer Morales, Tamara Aparicio, Roketa Mansfield, Maria Avila, Connie Perez-Borroto, Diana Gomez, Marianne Lobo, Jackie Carrion, Eduardo Chavez, Sonia Arraut, Virginia Yarce, Leydi Sosa, Diana Gomez, Christine Reis, Jaime Cruz, Sylvia Acevedo, Mitsouko Puente, David Claros, Carlos Naranjo, Yvette McDonald, Jackie Carrion, Monica Farias, Elaine McArthur, Edgar Tobon, Evelyn Soto, Eduardo Moras, Maria Dominguez, Carlos Naranjo, Diego Castro, Viviane Saide, Roketa Mansfield, , Lourdes Pesante, David Brown, Sandy Ala, Miriam Rosario, Luz Perez, Paulina Velez, Valmarie Cruz, Sandrina Portillo, Abdul Rauf Khan, David Brown, Sonyetta Everett, Gisela Rhodes, Nadia Jean Joseph , Natalie Diaz, Maria Avila, Diego Castro, Jorge Fernandez, Diana Formoso, Jocelyn Meza; Arriaga, Maria; Rosy Rodriguez; Janet Perez; Sherly Sanon; Melinda Williams; Kristina Francois; Sabine Balmir-Derenoncourt; Anabel Ordaz; Inelda Canate; Miriam Perez; Evelyn Trujillo; Sabine Balmir-Derenoncourt; Amador, Marielisa; Jean Joseph, Nadia; Felicidad Jerez ; Sandy Ala ; Jania Taleno, Joe Matthews, Rhoden Valmarie

**INTRODUCTION:**

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

**PRESENTATIONS:**

- Joe Matthews, Strategic Account Executive, Language Line Solutions, provided a presentation on facilitating phone interpretation for the Afghan population and non-English speakers in general. The points he touched upon were a) How to Manage Cultural Differences b) Identify Preferred Language, c) Accessing an Over-the-Phone Linguist and d) Work Effectively with a Linguist. He reminded all that Interpreters help overcome language and cultural barriers. He also accentuated that when working with LEP (Limited English Proficiency) persons one need to keep in mind: The Cultural Sensitivity because an LEP's culture, traditions and experiences may be very different from our own. Everyone needs to understand differences do exist, therefore, be non-judgmental. He spoke about Indirect Communication. English is a direct language. In other languages and cultures, it often takes longer to get to the point—even during emergencies we need to understand this issue and be patient. The LEP persons may not be familiar with practices common to us. To improve communication and reduce confusion, offer explanations, when possible, to bring LEP customers into the mainstream. To improve understanding, use simple language and ask for clarification if needed. Be respectful and speak in a neutral tone.

When using the language line Solutions Language identification tools are available to enable limited English speakers to point to their preferred language. If a language still cannot be identified, call an interpreter for language identification assistance. Remember to brief and update the interpreter, introduce yourself and the goal of the encounter. Retain control of the call. The interpreter will assist with communication, but the caller drives the conversation.

There are not enough interpreters available who speak the languages of the Afghans people, the organization is actively hiring to fulfill the interpretation demands in these languages.

- **REFUGEE SERVICES (RS) UPDATE:**

**ACCESS Program office ESS Updates:** None

**ANNOUNCEMENT:**

None

**REFUGEE SERVICES UPDATE** (*Sent via E-Mail in February and March*)

**Meeting adjourned at 11:30 AM**

<b>LEGAL SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES – APRIL 2022</b>
--

None

<b>EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES – APRIL 2022</b>
--

**2022**

**2022 REFUGEE TASK FORCE**

**EDUCATION APRIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING (April. 8, 2022)**

- REVEST currently has more than 900 students attending this Spring Term 2022. We already have students for the Summer 2022 Term starting May 2022. So far by the beginning of this current Term, 1100 ESOL students have been enrolled program wide, and around 1000 are going to be enrolled for Summer 2022. Although we started this Spring with face-to-face classes we still consider online classes when needed to avoid students losing their courses. Approximately out of those 1000 students planning to start next Summer, 700 new students have been confirmed to test and enroll in the program throughout these months in our different Centers.
- The REVEST Program has been able to process over 74 vocational registrations so far in the current Spring term. REVEST continues with a campaign initialized in September 2019 (Fall 2197) to increase vocational registrations. We have continued to provide our students with Vocational Training Orientations during each VESOL Mimi-Term to start

informing them, since lower levels, about their training options. These ongoing presentations also focus on the requirements for each type of course/Program, including VESOL completion, TABE scores and the in-state status; and include information about employment projections, growth and salaries as per a Labor market Analysis conducted by REVEST. In addition, the Vocational Coordinator attends Faculty meetings to discuss and develop strategies with the instructors to push the students' assimilation into vocational training, and the use of the vocational flyers in communicative activities. We continue providing training and advisement to advisors to be updated about changing procedures and system issues. Already started Summer 2022 registrations  
Challenges: registration has decreased due to unemployable students (I-220a). Calling campaign is in progress.

- All faculty attended faculty meetings March 22-23, 2022. REVEST is preparing for CASAS testing which will take place this month, Instructors offered feedback on in person classes. We are maintaining vigilance on all safety protocols and procedures given by Miami Dade College. Instructors shared methods to make all classes interactive and retain students in this challenging time. REVEST/Miami Dade College continues to offer in person classes as well as on-line only courses. Students are attending scheduled classes and learning through a variety of resources including the Blackboard learning management system, My-Lab (Pearson Education) and Burlington English. We are proud of our staff for all their efforts to provide high quality learning at REVEST for all our students.
- REVEST has received extension of contract through June 30, 2022. REVEST continues negotiations to maintain continuity of important services for the summer term and in future terms to come. We appreciate all efforts to this end as we provide vital services to the refugee/asylee community.
- SAVES Current Term 2021-2 ends on April 14, 2022. As of March 8, 2022, student enrollment was 997 students. Out of those, 606 are newly enrolled students, out of the 606, 104 are students enrolled in vocational courses, and 91 are students enrolled in the Success Management Academy (SMA) GED in Spanish program. SAVES is also establishing contact with agencies processing new arrivals from Afghanistan and Ukraine to refer prospective clients to the SAVES program.
- The new Term 2021-3 starts on April 18, 2022, and will end on August 2, 2022. Early registration started on March 28th and students' registration will continue for the current term.
- The SAVES District office works closely with the Comprehensive Resource Center (CRS), DCF, and SAVES schools assuring faithful implementation of new referral

procedures. SAVES staff is working with school personnel and their administrators to provide the support and help needed to ensure that all services to students are provided.

- SAVES Students are enrolled in all the different programs such as ESOL, ABE, and SMA GED in Spanish programs. A wide variety of vocational courses are offered to meet the demands of the job market. M-DCPS periodically researches the job market situation to inform of the availability of new jobs and salary scales to SAVES students. Also, new vocational courses are created and offered to keep up to date with the current job market.
- Degree translation and validation services continue to be offered to all eligible students. These services are provided to students with high school diplomas, associate degrees, and four-year degrees and higher, including licensing. The process of reporting directly to the translation service provider remains unchanged.
- SAVES continues to serve clients at 14 schools and three technical colleges, George T. Baker Aviation, Miami Lakes, and D. A. Dorsey, Technical College, where eligible students receive services through vouchers. To better serve our clients, the voucher program has been extended to all adult education centers and technical colleges in M-DCPS.
- SAVES is implementing a digital marketing/advertising campaign to reach refugees and asylees who are still within the five-year eligibility period and new arrivals that are not being served. This campaign includes the SAVES website in Spanish, Haitian Creole digital media and multiple platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. This campaign is yielding good results in enrollment, especially in the Haitian Community.
- New initiatives are being implemented for better monitoring of the program. Enrollment of new, returned students and the non-re-enroll, as well as activities such as absences, withdrawals, and attendance hours, are recorded.
- Youth Co-Op and Workforce of South Florida continue to be very supportive of the SAVES Program. Supplementary services are offered to the SAVES population 16 to 24 years old. Services including bus passes, mentoring, tutoring, community relationship enhancement, conflict management, financial leadership, assistance with work permits, summer job assistance, internship, and employment assistance are being provided.
- SAVES and the REVEST program continue to collaborate on new developments and policies that affect both programs and agreed to keep this practice for the benefit of both programs.
- The SAVES District office is providing additional support to the schools including deadlines reminders, visitations, and calls from the SAVES District office to school staff every week to provide assistance to facilitate compliance of new contract requirements, policies, and referral procedures.
- The Department of Children and Families (DCF) conducted its Annual Provider Site visit at South Dade Technical College on March 17, 2022. During the visit, the principal Dr.

Susana Mauri gave an overview of the school, highlighting the SAVES program. DCF staff visited classrooms, interviewed SAVES staff and students and reviewed student folders. The DCF staff was very pleased with the visit and highly complementary of the school, the staff, administration, and programs specially the SAVES program.

- The SAVES website was updated with the list of new documents required in all student's folders. The new referral procedures were also uploaded to facilitate implementation of the Amended SAVES Contract. New SAVES student success stories are also uploaded to the SAVES website, and congratulation letters are sent to the schools to be forwarded to the students. Visit our SAVES website at [saves@dadeschools.com](mailto:saves@dadeschools.com).
- The third SAVES District meeting is scheduled for May 18, 2022. At this meeting, we will review student eligibility, registration procedure and any new changes to the contract. If you would like additional information about the SAVES program or are interested in being on our agenda, please email Dr. Felicia Gil at the SAVES District office [gilfelicia@dadeschools.net](mailto:gilfelicia@dadeschools.net).

## USCIS UPDATE – MARCH - APRIL, 2021

### USCIS Miami & Caribbean District March April 2022 Update

#### Secretary Mayorkas Designates Ukraine for Temporary Protected Status for 18 Months

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced the designation of Ukraine for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for 18 months.

USCIS, the federal agency tasked with the adjudication of U visa petitions, announces today the publication of an updated [U Visa Law Enforcement Resource Guide](#). This guide provides certifying officials, including law enforcement, with best practices for the U visa certification process, emphasizes that completing the Supplement B is consistent with a victim-centered approach, and clarifies the roles and responsibilities of certifying agencies in the U visa program.

Highlights of the guide include:

- The U visa law enforcement certification process;
- Best practices for certifying agencies;
- U Visa Quick Reference Guide;
- Outline of the U visa adjudication process;
- Responses to frequently asked questions; and
- Additional resources for certifying agencies and officials, including information for other DHS personnel on U visas.

Like the [T Visa Law Enforcement Resource Guide](#), the U visa guide is consistent with the Department of Homeland Security's commitment to use a trauma-informed, victim-centered approach to combat crime.

By completing the Supplement B, certifying agencies confirm that the victim has been, is being, or is likely to be helpful to law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, or other government officials in the detection, investigation, prosecution, or sentencing of the qualifying criminal activity of which they were a victim. By signing the Supplement B, certifying agencies strengthen their ability to detect, investigate, and prosecute serious crimes.

U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services Miami and Caribbean District Weekly Virtual Naturalization Information Sessions in English Tuesdays in April 2022, 5-6 pm April 12th, 19th and 26th

Presentations will be held via Webex:

<https://uscis.webex.com/uscis/j.php?MTID=m1db6e30ea4469a151037f9edb06b242e> Meeting number (access code): 2762 269 4720; Meeting password: tX2cgEX8vZ?2

Learn about the requirements and process for naturalization How to find resources on the USCIS website

Get your questions answered

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Will host an information session to learn the Naturalization process Saturday, April 30 10:30 am—12:00 pm Miramar Library & Education Center

2050 Civic Center Place Miramar, FL 33025

Library: (954) 357-8180 [www.broward.org/library](http://www.broward.org/library)