



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

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Shevaun L. Harris
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: Feb 28th, 2022
TO: Members of the Orlando Area Refugee Task Force
FROM: David Draper, Refugee Services (RS)
SUBJECT: Feb 9, 2022, Task Force Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: Wednesday, Apr 13th, 2022
Time: 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 Noon
Location: Microsoft Teams or TBA

Contact: David Draper
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This task force has been active in the Orlando 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 thirty to forty 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 at the local, state, and national level; request for proposals, training, workshops, conferences, discuss refugee service needs and explore solutions to those needs. Meeting participants 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!

400 W. Robinson Street, S1111C, Orlando, Florida 32801

ORLANDO AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING

INTRODUCTION

This meeting was held through Microsoft Teams. Approximately 47 people were in attendance. David Draper, Community Liaison Manager, represented the Florida Department of Children and Families, Refugee Services (RS) Program; Rosa Chaves, Community Liaison for the Central Region, was also present. Everyone introduced themselves and the agencies that they represented through the chat in Microsoft Teams.

Special presentation

- **Christine Commerce – Catholic Charities Coordinator, Diocese of Orlando, Human Trafficking Task Force** provided an overview of human trafficking from a global and local perspective. Christine also shared important phone numbers: Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-962-2873, National Human Trafficking Resource Center 1-888-373-7888, United Abolitionist Hotline 407-504-1319, text line for emergencies 233733, and a Web chat option (humantraffickinghotline.org/chat)
- **Moriah Cunning – Development and Community Engagement Specialist - Adult Literacy League, Inc.** provided an overview of their English language learning program which serves adults in the community (including immigrants). They are operating in Orange, Osceola, and Seminole Counties.

GENERAL UPDATES/ ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Sandra Algarin – Community Health Centers - Outreach & Marketing Lead** reminded the task force about their care center at Bithlo. They have an Open House on February 26 at 10:00 AM.
- **Alphonse Lindor - Pine Hills Neighborhood Center for Families - Haitian Services Specialist** invited task force members to their upcoming event “The Other Side of Grief”. This will take place today (February 9) at 3:00 PM. No registration is required.
- **Anne Packham - Primary Care Access Network (PCAN) -Marketplace Project Director** announced that even though open enrollment through the Healthcare Marketplace is currently closed, they have “special enrollment” available (for example, clients that just received employment authorization). There is also allowable enrollment for individuals under 150% of the poverty line. PCAN currently employs healthcare navigators that speak English, Spanish, Creole, Portuguese, and Russian.

- **Donald Jarrell – USCIS Community Relations Officer** commented that the period of EAD validity may be extended for individuals (including refugees and asylees) that fall under certain categories. More information can be found on the USCIS webpage.
- **Kevin Baker – Seminole County DOH Program Manager** stated that they are still trying to hire a nurse for their refugee health program. The number of new clients has been manageable.
- **Dana Franchetti – Bethany Christian Services of Florida - Refugee Resettlement Case Manager** announced that they will begin settling refugees in about a month (in March) Housing is one of the biggest challenges they will be facing. They discussed the possibility of utilizing temporary housing (like AirB&B) until permanent housing is obtained. Bethany has been building relationships with property managers and landlords. During this federal fiscal year, Bethany plans on resettling up to 75 refugees. They may receive Syrians and Congolese as well as refugees from other countries.
- **Jacia Dionnaire - Bethany Christian Services of Florida – UC Quality Assurance/ PSA Compliance Manager /Human Trafficking Social Worker. Trafficking Victims Assistance Program TVAP Case Manager Director** Bethany has two programs to assist human trafficking survivors (both foreign-born and domestic). They are able to provide financial assistance to these individuals. They are partnering with Harbor for Hope and have open slots available now.
- **Jeffrey Boone – Congressional candidate** introduced himself and stated his support of the refugee population..
- **David Ell – Central Florida Catholic Charities Chief Operating Officer** let the task force know that CRs Director Vanessa McCarthy is leaving Catholic Charities. Until a new individual is hired, Shaimaa and Monica will be the points of contact.
- **Monica Araujo – Catholic Charities – Program Manager CRS**, informed task force members that they have hired a new employment coordinator (Edelna SaintPhorin) and are still looking for a new case manager that speaks Creole. Many of the new arrivals have been Haitian over the last 2 months. Many new clients are seeking legal services (generally Cubans and Haitians wanting to apply for asylum). Monica stated that they have not had recent issues with social security registration. They are assisting one survivor of human trafficking. They have not served any recent Afghans. They continue to provide adult education and child care services.

- **Edelna SaithPhorin – Catholic Charities - Employment Specialist Coordinator** stated that the employment program has been assisting asylum applicant clients, asylees, and Haitian clients with TPS. They are helping several clients that are awaiting their EADs..
- **Shaimaa Elawdan – Catholic Charities – ESL Program Manager Adult Education**, informed the task force that many clients are starting new classes each month. They currently have five in-person classes (Pine Hills and near the Florida Mall) and 5 online classes. Classes take place on weekdays, weekend, and morning, afternoon, and night. They are looking to hire a new ESL teacher.
- **Maria Diez – Catholic Charities - Youth Mentor Coach** shared with the task force that the youth and mentoring programs are supporting youth through two pathways (Educational Pathway and Career Pathway). The youth program is serving youth ages 16-19. The mentoring is serving youth and young adults ages 15 to 24. The mentoring program focuses on career development and planning activities, skills builders, financial information, health care and community service activities, educational and cultural activities, social engagement with peers, and social/personal/emotional support. They bring speakers on Wednesdays from different professions. They are a volunteer-based program and always in need of new volunteers. They are trying to find a new AmeriCorps VISTA member to assist their program. They currently have 25 clients.
- **David Draper, Department of Children and Families Refugee Services Community Liaison Manager** announced to the task force that they are trying to recruit a new AmeriCorps VISTA member for Catholic Charities. He also mentioned that Bethany Christian Services and Lutheran Services Florida are starting refugee resettlement programs very soon. Florida continues to see a steady flow of Cuban and Haitian arrivals. Most of the state (not Orlando) has seen a significant number of Afghans resettling. Most newly-arrived Afghans are eligible for refugee services and benefits.
- **Lodia Rojas – DCF ESS Supervisor** let the task force know that there is a delay in processing applications .
- **Liliana Zuluaga – DOH Orange County Refugee Health Case Manager** introduced herself as a new manager at DOH.
- **Nicola Roberts – Career Source Central Florida** informed the task force that the Summer Youth applications will be opened on March 1st, 2022, for youth 16-19 years-old. It There will be 5-week internships available.

NEXT MEETING

Date: Wednesday April 13th, 2022

Time: 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM.

Location: Virtual Microsoft Teams

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