



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

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Shevaun Harris
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 25, 2021
TO: Members of the Broward Refugee Task Force
FROM: **Miriam Rosario (RS)**
SUBJECT: May 20, 2021 Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: July 15, 2021
Time: 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM
Location: TBA
Contact: Miriam Rosario
Office: (561) 227-6722
Cell: (561) 459-6098
E-Mail: Miriam.rosario@myflfamilies.com

This task force has been active in the Broward 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 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!

Southeast Region - Circuit 15
111 South Sapodilla Avenue, West Palm Beach, FL 33401

BROWARD COUNTY REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING**INTRODUCTION**

The meeting was held via a tele conference call and Miriam Rosario, Southeast Region (SER) Community Liaison (CL), Refugee Services (RS) Program, Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) facilitated the Refugee Task Force (RTF) meeting. Miriam thanked and welcomed all participants for calling in and joining the meeting during. The meeting was called to order and participants introduced themselves, services and the agency they represented. Approximately 40 people called and joined the call.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Ariel Rivera Maldonado, Community & Outreach and Resource Planning Specialist & Robert Vaden, Community & Outreach and Resource Planning Specialist, with the U.S. DOL -Wage & Hour Division (WHD). They stated -Labor laws cover all workers, regardless of immigration status, WHD does not ask workers about their immigration status. WHD does education and outreach for workers to understand and exercise their rights. WHD does education and outreach for employers to increased compliance. Ariel and Rob provided an overview presentation on their Essential Workers Essential Protections, DOL services to the state. They focus on the refugee community and how DOL services and their relationship with the labor market can collaborate for the best of all refugees. Some of the topics specifically cover; how to protect the workplace rights of the essential workers who are keeping the country moving during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, refugees' clients working in the grocery stores, health care, delivery services, retail, agriculture, construction, and landscaping. DOL outreach materials regarding refugee/asylee issues was distributed. Child Labor Law and restrictions were discussed. The Wage and Hour Division is committed to ensure all workers are protected including the Fair Labor Standard Act and the Family & Medical Leave Act. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) was discussed and distributed the "quick tip poster, to help determine if clients qualify to the FFCRA. The information about the EMPLEO program that was just started in South Florida, was disseminate, this important information to many vulnerable workers as we serve. EMPLEO addresses the concerns of recent immigrants who are not familiar their workplace rights and responsibilities in the U.S. These are extremely important topics for the working population (and our refugee task force members). Training to agencies' staff was offered. Also, in addition to the flyers and the Power Point Presentation was share to the task force members. Ariel and Robert answered several questions from the members and shared there contact information; 850-942-8712 (Rob) and Office: 305-270-5574, Cell: 786-427-9521 (Ariel) or best at Vaden.robert@dol.gov and /or riveramaldonado.ariel@dol.gov.

ISSUES/ACTION TAKEN

Michael Gordon, Esq., Senior Program Analyst, Office of Field Policy & Management, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) updated the members on the April 1, 2021, HUD submitted a Federal Register notice withdrawing the unfinalized Mixed Status Rule. HUD welcomes immigrant communities. Under the current administration, HUD will ensure and encourage immigrant communities to access to all available housing assistance under the law.

- Eligibility for HUD Covered Programs will remain the same. As a result of HUD's action, nothing will change as to the treatment of mixed-status families under HUD Covered Programs.
- HUD's action prevents harm to families. The Mixed Status Rule would have resulted in the

eviction or removal of roughly 22,000 families from housing assistance, including over 92,000 individuals and at least 46,000 children—many of whom are clearly eligible for HUD assistance. By preventing evictions and providing certainty on the eligibility criteria, this action will prevent homelessness and unstable housing among an already vulnerable population.

- HUD's action keeps families together. With today's action, HUD asserts its strong commitment to immigrant rights and preventing family separation.
- HUD's action bolsters fair housing efforts. Today's action reduces the possibility of using eligible immigration status as a pretext for discrimination against individuals based on their race and national origin. The MIXED STATUS RULE WITHDRAWAL – FACT SHEET was distributed to all members. Michael Gordon contact information: Michael.J.Gordon@hud.gov or (Phone) 305-520-5002.

GENERAL UPDATES/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), Roketa Mansfield, Community Relations Officer (CRO), USCIS, Miami and Caribbean District, participated. Roketa emailed and spoke about USCIS good news and services during the COVID-19. USCIS updates:

Rescheduling Biometric Services Appointments by Phone:

We announced on May 11, 2021 that applicants, petitioners, requestors and beneficiaries may now call the USCIS Contact Center (800-375-5283) to reschedule their biometric services appointments scheduled at a USCIS Application Support Center. Previously, applicants had to submit requests in writing to reschedule their biometrics appointments. This change helps eliminate undue paperwork and allows USCIS to track the request through a more efficient process.

Applicants must establish good cause for rescheduling and must call before the date and time of their original appointment to reschedule. If an applicant fails to call before the scheduled appointment or fails to establish good cause, USCIS may consider the application, petition, or request abandoned and, as a result, it may be denied.

For more information, please see the Preparing for Your Biometric Services Appointment webpage

USCIS Announces Open Application Period for Citizenship and Integration Grant Program

We are accepting applications for two funding opportunities under the Citizenship and Integration Grant Program. The grant opportunities will provide up to \$10 million in grants for citizenship preparation programs in communities across the country.

These competitive grant opportunities are open to organizations that prepare lawful permanent residents for naturalization and promote civic integration through increased knowledge of English, U.S. history, and civics. USCIS received support from Congress through appropriations to make these funding opportunities available to communities.

- **Citizenship Instruction and Naturalization Application Services:** This opportunity will fund public or nonprofit organizations that offer both citizenship instruction and naturalization application services to lawful permanent residents. USCIS expects to award 33 organizations up to \$250,000 each for two years through this opportunity. Applications are due by July 16, 2021.
- **Refugee and Asylee Integration Services Program:** This grant opportunity will provide extended integration services with a focus on individualized programming to former refugees and asylees to attain the skills and knowledge required for successful citizenship. It will also provide other services that foster a sense of belonging and attachment to the United States. The program has expanded eligibility to include lawful permanent residents who were admitted or

entered the United States as Cuban or Haitian entrants or individuals admitted on a Special Immigrant Visa. USCIS expects to award six public or nonprofit organizations with experience in serving refugees up to \$300,000 each for a period of two years through this opportunity. Applicants must design an integration support program that provides a suite of services to program beneficiaries to promote long-term civic integration and citizenship. Applications are due by July 16, 2021. USCIS expect to announce award recipients in September 2021.

Roketa Mansfield, shared her contact information Office: 305.762.8211, Cell: 786.351.9497 and email; roketa.f.mansfield@uscis.dhs.gov

Department of Health-Broward County (DOH): Migdalia Diaz Nieves, MAS, Office Operations Supervisor II, TB/Hepatitis, Refugee Coordinator, Florida Department of Health-Broward County RS Health Clinic reported they have seen an increase in new arrivals. Most of Broward's new arrivals were Cuban and Haitian entrants and parolees. All walking's are accepted but appointments are strongly encouraged by calling 954-467-4700 Ext. 4550. Migdalia stated that so far in March they had 39 refugees and about 15 in April. The Refugee Health Program is a voluntary program that provides free health screening to eligible persons as designated by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. These screenings usually occur 30-90 days after the refugee arrives in the United States. For information regarding eligibility and services please see the Florida Department of Health Refugee Health Program web-site. Migdalia Diaz Nieves, MAS, Office Operations Supervisor II, TB/Hepatitis, Refugee Coordinator, DOH, is located at 2421 S.W. 6th Avenue, 1st Floor, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33315. Office: (954) 412-7166 and email: Migdalia.Diaz-Nieves@flhealth.gov. The information regarding COVID vaccine is available at the DOH Broward website at <http://broward.floridahealth.gov>.

International Rescue Committee (IRC), David Oliver, Deputy Director of Florida, International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Tallahassee and Miami, spoke about their plans to resettle refugees in Broward County. David provided a brief overview of their international organization resources. IRC indicate that Broward County may be the best place for them to initially concentrate all efforts for reopening a resettlement site. He briefly shared plans of resettling mostly USA Tide families and from Latin America. Their requested number of 200-250 refugee for next FFY 2022, mostly the first will resettled one quart of the arrivals towards the last quarters of the FFY. The plan might be to have a physical location in Broward. David Thank all and stated of wonderful to hear all the fantastic resources in Broward County. Thank you all for allowing him to join the meeting and deeply appreciate all that this group does. David can be contact at 786-459-8330.

American Red Cross (ARC), Jaime Cruz, Service to the Armed Forces & International Services Specialist American Red Cross shared his positive experience as ARC working to help reunite a family and IRC in NYC. Jaime can be reach at (M) : 786-714-6796 or jaime.cruz@redcross.org.

Jewish Community Services, Sandra Ala, spoke about their plans for resettlement in Miami, extending to Broward County. Sandy confirmed 50 arrivals. Sandy also confirmed they are applying for Preferred Communities. Sandy thank everyone for allowing her to share her information. She can be reach at sala@jcsf.org and website jcsf.org.

Broward County Library: Vonda Ward Bryant, Learning Services Coordinator, Broward County Library provided information regarding all free services. Including the USCIS presentation is hosted by Broward County Library. U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services

Information Session, Temporary Protected Status (TPS)/Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) for Venezuela, Thursday, June 10th, 2021, 12:00—1:00 p.m. This Program in English. Registration required at: <http://broward.libnet.info/event/5126440>. Please send general questions by June 7th to learningservices@broward.org for this event. Also Wednesday, June 16, 2021:12:00—1:00 p.m. Program is in Spanish. This USCIS presentation required registration at: <http://broward.libnet.info/event/5126450>. Please send general questions by June 11th learningservices@broward.org for this event.

Go to Broward.org/Library for access to all of the above and library branches and hours of operations. Visit www.broward.org/library for updated information.

Family Success Administration Division (FSAD), Wilma Jacobs, announced of the Financial Capability Program. This program is only offered to Broward County residents only to those over 18 years old. The FSAD offers a Financial Capability Program at the one stop centers throughout Broward County. The Financial Capability Program integrates financial capability into their division services by placing one Financial Coach at each Family Success Center. The Financial Coaches work one-on-one monthly with residents to help develop individualized financial goals and foster good financial management practices to assist with understanding to help achieve the following: Develop a sustainable budget, Establish or improve credit, Understand secure banking options, Design a financial plan to build assets, Foster good financial management practices and Build financial confidence. The Financial Capability Program offers monthly workshops at each FSAD location to educate residents on a variety of financial topics. Financial Coach are available to assist with setting personal financial goals, Additional information to this program can be obtain at: <https://www.broward.org/FamilySuccess/Pages/FinancialCapabilityProgram.aspx>

Office of Economic Self-Sufficiency, Southeast Region (ESS/DCF):- Claudia Arce, ESS/DCF, Program Office's representative reported an increase in new arrivals with a variety of immigration documents not as previously seen. These documentations require various processes for eligibility verification. All applications are handled on a case by case basics. She reminded all applicants to upload their documentation with the DCF benefits application to help with the eligibility process. Claudia reported the latest regarding DCF stores front are open, however due to pandemic visiting an ACCESS Community Partner or filing online or calling the call center is encouraged. The Commercial/DCF lobby office will be closed for clients, all clients. The store front is in Oakland is bigger. ESS eligibility worker still needs the Social Security Administration (SSA) verification application and SSA 2275 Form to document client's attempts to apply for none-working SS number. Additional information can be located at DCF website; myflflorida.com. Claudia can be reach at claudia.arce@myflfamilies.com

Refugee Services Program (RS/DCF) – David Draper, Community Liaison Manager, RS/DCF, stated that the number of refugee admissions authorized by the presidential determination refugee admissions cap has been set at 62,500 for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2021. Florida has experienced an increase of new arrivals in other immigration categories mostly from Cuba and Haiti.

Updates from the MST chat:

Refugee Assistance Alliance (RAA), Jamie Everett- “RAA, works with refugees’ families who don't speak Spanish or Haitian Creole (or English). So, our clients are from Asia, Africa & the Middle East who feel more isolated here in South Florida.”

RS Contracted providers:

Church World Service, Match Grant Program (CWS/MG); Carlos I. Naranjo, Resettlement Program Coordinator, Church World Service spoke about their Match Grant (MG) Program. The MG has been slow in enrolling new clients mostly due to delays in Employment Authorization documents (EAD). The EAD delays some are up to 8 months and is impacting their MG employment program.

Project RENEW/Broward College (PR/BC): Jocelyn Martinez, PR/BC Director Project RENEW & Project RECAP reported on their enrollments for this and fall semester. PR/BC offers orientation including access to computer usages and application. The students will need further contact refresher in computer skill and workshop is available. To help the students the classrooms are virtual or open in campuses with smaller groups following DC guidelines. PR/BC is still offering laptops, to borough and as an incentive to reregistering to the next semester. Classes are online and classroom.

Comprehensive Refugee Services (CRS); Church World Service (CWS) provided overview information on the CRS. The CRS is assisting larger group of recent arrivals from Haiti and increases numbers of Cuban. Most of the new arrivals need help with the DCF application for benefits. Thanks to Claudia Arce, ESS/DCF in helping with these new applications reviews. Many new families are facing housing challenges and are temporary staying with friends. The CWS/Broward telephone number is 954-689-6466 and the contact staff are: Edele Firm, CRS Coordinator. Edele shared the continue increases in new arrivals seeking ACCESS application. She is glad DCF is reopening the store front as is becoming overwhelming for the CRS staff. The higher numbers of new arrivals only speak Creole and have not computer skills. CRS/CWS will work with Career Sources for work registration requirements. CRS/CWS will signed the DCF letter for those clients that require registration.

NEXT MEETING:

Next Meeting: **Thursday, July 15, 2021**
Time: 10:00 AM to 12PM
Location: TBA

Contact: Miriam.Rosario@myflfamilies.com Phone: (561) 227-6722
 David.Draper@myflfamilies.com Phone: (407) 317-7335