



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

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Shevaun L. Harris
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 08, 2021

TO: Members of the Miami-Dade Refugee Task Force

FROM: Lourdes Leconte, Refugee Services (RS)

SUBJECT: October 08, 2021, Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: December 10, 2021
Time: 10:00 A.M. – 12:00 Noon
Location: Via Teams
[Click here to join the meeting](#)
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 2nd 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
OCTOBER 10, 2021**

ATTENDEES:

Lourdes Leconte, David Draper, Victor Atkins, 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, Dian Gomez, Elmer Morales, Tamara Aparicio, Roketa Mansfield, Maria Avila, Berta Cassidy, 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, Eduardo Chavez, Yvette McDonald, Jackie Carrion, Monica Farias, Elaine McArthur, Edgar Tobon, Evelyn Soto, Eduardo Moras, Maria Dominguez, Carlos Naranjo, Sabine Balmir-Derenoncourt, Diego Castro, Faith Hurt, Viviane Saide, Roketa Mansfield, Lisandra Lantigua, Migda Cruz, Renee Rivers, Lourdes Pesante, David Brown, Sandy Ala, Miriam Rosario, Migda Cruz, Paulina Velez, Valmarie Cruz, Sandrina Portillo, Iris Jackson, Abdul Rauf Khan, David Brown, Sonyetta Everett, Gisela Rhodes, Dr. Felicia Gil, Maria Avila, Diego Castro, Jorge Fernandez, Andrea Gordon, Cristobal Perez, Erica Perdomo, Gloria Darling, Jenifer Fonseca, Priya Amilineni, Theresa Leslie, and Rosa Chavez

INTRODUCTION:

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

PRESENTATIONS:

- Victor Atkins, Director, Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH), HUD Miami Field office and Henry Whitehead, Equal Opportunity Specialist, Equal Opportunity (FHEO): The mission of the Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO) is to eliminate housing discrimination, promote economic opportunity, and achieve diverse, inclusive communities by leading the nation in the enforcement, administration, development, and public understanding of federal fair housing policies and laws. Fair Housing is everyone's responsibility. Local Communities, Housing Advocates, Housing Managers and Organizations, Landlords Real Estate Agents, Civic Organizations etc.... The Fair Housing Act prohibits certain practices such as: Make housing unavailable or deny dwelling for certain population or set different terms, conditions or privileges for the sale or rental of a unit for certain of group of people. While refugees are not a specific protected class, the protections against housing discrimination based on national origin often may extend to refugees. FHEO does not ask about immigration status when people file complaints. Local laws may provide fewer or additional fair housing protections, but the federal Fair Housing Act continues to prohibit discrimination and is enforceable whether or not a local ordinance or state law exists. Remember it is illegal to Threaten, coerce, or interfere with anyone exercising a fair housing right or assisting someone who exercises that right! If you are the victim of discrimination, please call 800-440-8091.

- Jennie Murray, Vice President of Programs, Upwardly Global
Emily Hackerson, Director of Products and Services (Jobversity), Upwardly Global

Upwardly Global's (UpGlo) is an organization that works to lift immigrant professionals, including refugees and asylum seekers, out of underemployment into thriving wage jobs that align with their skills and education.

The organization builds an inclusive, future-ready workforce that embraces the skills of immigrant and refugee professionals. And advance equity, power the economy, and champion human potential. The program provides a unique blend of virtual soft-skills, personal coaching with industry specific advisors, re-/up-skilling and training opportunities, and professional networking- building through their 50+ Employer Partners. Jobversity by Upwardly Global is a technical assistance initiative in which we deliver our digital learning tools and expertise to empower immigrant and refugee-serving organizations. It is a subscription-based service model. They also have an online learning platform called "WeGlo". which is an open access to a curated set of self- paced job search and skill-building tools. This set of tools is designed to support job seekers to enhance professional English language communication, master phone interviews, and more. Learn more about Upwardly Global at www.upwardlyglobal.org.

REFUGEE SERVICES (RS) UPDATE:

ACCESS Program office ESS Updates:

Lisandra Lantigua from the ACCESS Program office shared the following updates: Most households will see an increase in their benefits beginning this month of October. The Maximum Benefit Amount for Food Assistance increased to 250 for a single individual household effective 10/1/21.

ANNOUNCEMENT:

None

REFUGEE SERVICES UPDATE (*Sent via E-Mail in September and October*)

Meeting adjourned at 12:01 PM

LEGAL SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES – SEPTEMBER 2021**Immigration and Legal Issues Subcommittee
Legal Subcommittee Meeting September 21, 2021****USCIS Highlights – Berta**

- Effective Oct. 1, 2021, applicants subject to the immigration medical examination must complete the COVID-19 vaccination.
- Upcoming virtual stakeholder meeting taking place on September 30, 2021

Subcommittee Highlights

- The Legal Subcommittee members will be inviting other nonprofit organizations that provide immigration legal services to join our group.

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

Oct 19, 2021 10 am

Nov 16, 2021 10 am

Dec 21, 2021 10 am

Jan 18, 2022 10 am

Feb 15, 2022 10 am

EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES – OCTOBER 10, 2021**2021 REFUGEE TASK FORCE
EDUCATION APRIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING
(Oct. 8, 2021)**

- REVEST currently has more than 740 students attending this Fall Term 2021. We already have students for the Spring 2022 Term starting January 2022. So far by the beginning of this current Term, 844 VESOL students have been enrolled program wide, and around 250 are going to be enrolled for Spring 2022. Although we started this Fall with face-to-face classes still COVID 19 keeps impacting our students, even though the strict security measures taken at the college confirm their safety on Campus. Approximately out of those 250 students planning to start next Spring, 120 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 150 vocational registrations so far in the current Fall term ending in December 2021. 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.
- 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 the all their efforts to provide high quality learning at REVEST for all our students.
- All faculty attended a virtual faculty meeting Sept. 16, 2021. Instructors offered feedback on in person classes. We are maintaining vigilance on all safety protocols and procedures given by Miami Dade College.
- REVEST is requesting training in fulfilling form regarding the Family Self-Sufficiency Plan Requirements to Promote Self-Sufficiency and Integration. Thank you for your support.
- The SAVES Trimester 2021-1 started on August 23, 2021 and will end on December 17, 2021. The total enrollment as of September 9, 2021 was 500. This total includes 280 newly enrolled and 17 SMA GED in Spanish students. The SAVES District office is working with the SAVES school contact persons and their administrators to provide the support and help needed to ensure that all services to students are provided.
- Students are enrolled in ESOL, ABE, SMA GED in Spanish, and in 73 different vocational/technical courses. Some of the courses in greater demand are Welding Technology and Advanced Automotive Services Technology for LAND ROVER and HONDA. Also, in great demand are courses on Electrical and Instrumentation Technology, Aviation Airframe Mechanics, Aviation Power Plant and Avionics Systems Technician and Network System Administration (Microsoft Technology).
- Translation and degree validation services continue to be offered to eligible students. These services are provided to students with high school diplomas, associate degrees, and four-year degrees and higher, including licensing. Students will continue to report

directly to the new service provider until we are able to resume meeting in person with the students, SAVES and the new service provider.

- 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 engaged in a massive marketing/advertising campaign to reach refugees and asylees who are still within the five-year eligibility period and are not being served. This campaign includes the SAVES website, Spanish and Haitian radio, and digital media in multiple platforms, including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. This campaign is yielding good results for recruitment, enrollment, and retention.
- SAVES District personnel and school contacts follow up with students to ensure that they are aware of the instructional modes available to them according to their situations. Namely, 1. In person classes, 2, On-line classes and 3. Dual Modality to ensure continuation of the instructional process. SAVES District personnel explains the alternatives and assist students in accessing the instructional delivery method that best fits their needs. Information is gathered on students who are enrolled as well as those students who did not re-enroll. Students enrolled are being monitored on absences, withdrawals, and attendance hours. Those who did not re-enroll are contacted and offered help to motivate them to continue their education.
- The SAVES website is updated on an ongoing basis. The website is being revised to include more prospective students' user-friendly information about eligibility, services, and benefits available through to the SAVES program. New SAVES Student Success stories are uploaded, and congratulation letters are sent to the schools to be forwarded to the students. Visit our SAVES website at saves@dadeschools.com
- SAVES District staff conducts orientation and training for new school contacts to apprise them of procedures, new eligibility guidelines and initiatives to increase enrollment.
- SAVES first District meeting for School year 2021-2022 will be held on October 8, 2021. If you would like additional information about the SAVES program or are interested in being in our agenda, please email Dr. Felicia Gil at the SAVES District office gilfelicia@dadeschools.net

| |
|--|
| USCIS UPDATE – OCTOBER 10, 2021 |
|--|

**USCIS Miami & Caribbean District
September- October, 2021 Update**

- WASHINGTON— U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services will celebrate Constitution Day and Citizenship Day this year by welcoming 21,000 new citizens in 335 naturalization ceremonies across the country between Sept. 17 and 23. Burma till 11/25/22
- COVID-19 Vaccine Series Required for Immigration Medical Examinations
Effective Oct. 1, 2021, applicants subject to the immigration medical examination must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 before the civil surgeon can complete an immigration medical examination and sign Form I-693, Report of Medical Examination and Vaccination Record. This guidance applies prospectively to Form I-693 signed by civil surgeons on or after Oct. 1, 2021.
- Afghan Special Immigrant Parolee and Lawful Permanent Resident Status
On July 30, 2021, the President announced that the first flight of Operation Allies Refuge had arrived in the United States, carrying Afghans who are eligible for Special Immigrant Visas (SIV), including family members. These individuals and future arrivals that are part of this operation will have a special immigrant Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR) status or special immigrant parole that meets the special immigrant requirement for certain government benefits.