



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

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Shevaun L. Harris
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 17, 2021
TO: Members of the Orlando Area Refugee Task Force
FROM: David Draper, Refugee Services (RS)
SUBJECT: December 8, 2021, Task Force Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: Wednesday, Feb 9th, 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 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 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 46 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

- Renée Rivers – Community Engagement Manager of Aunt Bertha provided an overview and demonstration of the Aunt Bertha program platform.
- Kerri Stephen – Community Liaison Healthy Start Coalition of Orange County, Inc. provided an overview of their program serving pregnant women and kids under three years old.

GENERAL UPDATES/ ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Felipe Sousa-Matos - City of Orlando, Multicultural Affairs**, announced they and other organizations have been focused on assisting with TPS (Temporary Protected Status applications) for the Venezuelans and Haitians. They have assisted nearly seventy people.
- **Denis Karenkin from PCAN (Primary Care Access Network)** let the task force know that the enrollment period is open until December 15. PCAN has hired additional Market Place navigators (they now have 15). It is a multilingual team with English, Spanish, Brazilian Portuguese, Creole, and Russian speakers.
- **Tyler Bradshaw from Bethany Christian Services** informed the task force that at the end of January or beginning of February they are expecting to begin resettling refugees in Orlando. They are hiring a Case Manager.
- **Mayra Nunez from Career Source - Manager of Welfare Transition Program and SNAP program** informed the task force that they are receiving more Spanish and Creole speaking clients. Also, as a part of TANF and SNAP requirements, they are looking for non-profit organizations to provide community service opportunities to clients.

- **Josefina Medina – Senior Director for multilingual Services** in Orange County Schools offers classes for ESOL parents. New sessions start in January. They also have workshops in English Spanish, Haitian Creole, and Portuguese.
- **Anne Piervil, an Attorney from Florida Legal Services** announced a project to create a Medical Legal Partnership to serve Haitian Farm Workers and the Haitian Community in Central Florida. Clients can see an attorney and a physician. They are located at the Orange Blossom Family Health Center Mondays and Wednesdays from 9:00am-12:00pm.
- **Kathy Walker – Program Manager Florida Department of Health Orange County** announced that they are dealing with a backlog of health assessments. They are currently serving clients that entered in June. They are trying to hire new staff.
- **Alexandra Garnier Mercier – Alzheimer and Dementia Resource Center/Brain Back program** informed the task force that Florida Hospital can serve certain patients that do not have insurance.
- **Monica Araujo – Catholic Charities – CRS Case Management Supervisor**, informed the task force that they are dealing with a backlog of clients. They saw 287 arrivals in September, 546 in October, and 406 in November (mostly single clients). To help with the influx, Catholic Charities hired a new Creole-speaking case manager.
- **Vanessa McArthur – Catholic Charities CRS Director** – stated that they are processing TPS for many Haitian clients (in partnership with the City of Orlando). Through the CRS program, they have recently served 300 clients with TPS and EAD requests. They plan to conduct an “asylum workshop clinic” with clients soon.

Shaimaa Elawdan – Catholic Charities – ESL Program Manager, Adult Education, informed the task force that they will have a new location for English classes in January near the Florida Mall. They currently have three in-person classes in the following zip codes: 32807, 32835, and 32809. Also, they continue with online English classes. The Youth and Mentoring programs continue to serve new clients. In November, they had a Thanksgiving event with the youth. They are recruiting a teacher for ESOL.

David Draper, Department of Children and Families Refugee Services Community Liaison Manager communicated that Florida has seen significant Afghan arrivals in Tallahassee, Jacksonville, Tampa, South Florida, Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami. These are primarily coming through APA programs (Afghan Assistance and Placement programs). Central Florida has not been impacted by Afghan arrivals. However, Orlando (and the rest of the state) continue to see a steady flow of Cuban and Haitian arrivals.

NEXT MEETING

Date: Wednesday Feb 8th, 2022

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

Location: Virtual Microsoft Teams

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