



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

**Ron DeSantis**  
Governor

**Shevaun Harris**  
Secretary

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## **MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** April 5, 2021  
**TO:** Members of the Palm Beach Refugee Task Force  
**FROM:** Miriam Rosario (RS)  
**SUBJECT:** March 19, 2021, Meeting Minutes

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

**Date:** May 21, 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 Palm Beach 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

## PALM BEACH COUNTY REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING

### **INTRODUCTION**

The meeting was held via a 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. The meeting was called to order and participants introduced themselves, services and the agency they represented. Approximately 40 people joined the meeting.

### **SPECIAL PRESENTATION**

Liza Zamd, Senior Trial Attorney, **U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Immigrant and Employee Rights Section**, provided an overview presentation on their Immigrant and Employee Rights (IER) services to the nation. She focuses on the refugee community and how DOJ services and their relationship with other US department can collaborate for the best of all. Some of the topics; specifically cover how employers can hire workers who have not yet received their SSNs, she discuss less traditional employment documents like Transportation Boarding Letters and asylee foils, and ways in which IER can help refugees/asylees beyond the work DOJ do. For example, if a DMV incorrectly rejects an I-94 as proof of status, IER can call the DMV to try to remedy the situation. Similarly, if a bank does not give a refugee/asylee a loan because the person does not have an EAD, IER can call the bank to explain refugee/asylee permanent work authorization. Please see examples of IER outreach materials regarding refugee/asylee issues:

- For employers: <https://www.justice.gov/crt/page/file/1132626/download>
- For workers: <https://www.justice.gov/crt/page/file/1119566/download> (available in Spanish, Arabic, Eastern Punjabi, Haitian Creole, Hindi, Korean, Russian, Simplified Chinese, Tagalog, Traditional Chinese, Urdu, Vietnamese, Western Punjabi)
- For workers: <https://www.justice.gov/crt/case-document/file/1132566/download>

The members stated, this was extremely important topic for our population (and our refugee task force members) and a learning opportunity provided was be very helpful. Also, in addition to the flyers inked – we shared the PowerPoint presentation to the providers/task force members.

Liza answered several question from the members and shared her contact information; 202-353-5195 or best at [liza.zamd@usdoj.gov](mailto:liza.zamd@usdoj.gov) .

**Rapid Response Eviction Assistance Program (RREAP) Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County, Inc:** Denita Jones, ESQ., Staff Attorney- (561-655-8944 ext. 160, [djones@legalaidpbpc.org](mailto:djones@legalaidpbpc.org) ), provided presentation on the **RREAP**. Legal Aid is providing legal and financial assistance for tenants, impacted by COVID-19, that are facing an eviction in Palm Beach County. Legal Aid Palm Beach County, their program will provide legal representation and rental assistance to undocumented tenant households. Legal Aid of Palm Beach County just opened its Rapid Response Eviction Assistance III Program (RREAP III). This program will provide legal representation and rental assistance to undocumented tenant households that have experienced loss of income, reduction in hours, or unemployment as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The RREAP III program will:

- Negotiate temporary rent reductions, rental payment plans, deferred payments
- Mediate landlord/tenant rent payment agreements
- Draft settlement agreements

This program is specifically for undocumented individuals located within Palm Beach County. PBCLA will be hosting an information/training session for organizations working with noncitizen populations. Please join us for this insightful session via zoom (link provided below) on Tuesday, March 30, 2021 at 11:00 am.

Please RSVP [cdawson@legalaidthpb.org](mailto:cdawson@legalaidthpb.org) with Connie Dawson, On behalf of Tequisha Y. Myles, Esq. Fair Housing and Elder Law Projects, Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County, Inc. Office: (561) 655-8944 ext. 296, Fax: (561) 655-5269 Email: [tmyles@legalaidthpb.org](mailto:tmyles@legalaidthpb.org)

**Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) Program, Community Services Department, Palm Beach County (PCSD-PBC):** Taruna Malhotra, Assistant Director of the PBC Community Services Department presented on the **ERA Program**. The ERA is for PBC resident renting in a residential dwelling, Household income is at or below 80% AMI (emphasis on 30% and below), Qualified for unemployment, Experienced a reduction in income directly or indirectly from COVID-19, or can demonstrate a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability. Taruna indicated registration close within days due to high demands. Taruna provided an overview on the documentation needed to prove a household is at risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability. It will reopen soon. She suggested going into their website regularly, start educating and helping those in need and collect the documentation needed. PCSD-PBC will do another webinar for organizations helping to apply, to offer information how to apply and how the program works. She recommended helping client getting all documents ready. Webinar information: <https://www.pbcbgov.com/oscarss>

**Coalition for Independent Living Options, Inc. (CILO):** Laura Cusack, MSW, Senior Victim Advocate, with the CILO (Services for people with Disabilities- [www.cilo.org](http://www.cilo.org)) and **Human Trafficking Coalition of the Palm Beaches** (Community education on Human Trafficking [www.htcpb.org](http://www.htcpb.org)), [lcusack@ciilo.org](mailto:lcusack@ciilo.org), provided an excellent presentation on their services and victim services resources. CILO is an is a private non-profit, client-directed civil rights organization for children and adults with all types of disabilities. Incorporated in 1990, CILO primarily serves Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie and Okeechobee counties. CILO helps any individual with a disability, any age, any disability type. She explained the Federal Disability Definition, Types of Disabilities, their Five Core Services and Auxiliary Programming. Among their services; Alert Youth Program and Social Security Disability/SSI Benefit Services. Among adults with disabilities, 83% of females and 32% of males are victims of sexual assault, National studies estimate almost 80% of people with disabilities are sexually assaulted on more than one occasion 50% of those experience more than 10 victimizations, Rape/sexual assault make up almost 70% of all violent crime experienced by people with disabilities. CILO's Victim Services Program, it can help those Victim of Violent Crime or Victim of Property Crime. Services include but are not limited to: Court Accompaniment, Crime-Related Advocacy, Victim's Compensation Applications, Counseling, Support Groups, Information and Referral Services, Assistance with Emergency Shelter/Safe Housing, Relocation Referrals for Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Victims and Emergency Victim Fund Applications. Laura offered to provide Training and Technical Assistance to other service providers. If you are an agency wanting to refer a consumer to CILO, complete a referral form or call our office 561-966-4288. Laura invited all

to the become a member of the Human Trafficking Coalition of the Palm Beaches (HTCOPBC). The HTCOPBC meet monthly via zoom. The meetings are the first Wednesday, every month. For referrals to CILO:

referrals@cilo.org  
561-966-4288  
Toll-Free: 1-877-581-6887  
www.cilo.org

Laura Cusack, MSW  
Senior Victim Advocate  
561-544-7337  
lcusack@cilo.org

Treasure Coast Contact:  
Libby Snider  
Senior Victim Advocate  
772-878-1131  
LSnider@cilo.org

## **NEW ISSUES/ACTION TAKEN**

**KidCare and Market Place:** Rebecca Miele, Florida KidCare (KC), Outreach Program Manager, Florida Department of Health, Broward provided the updates. Discuss the Florida KidCare Program, information to educate partners on matters of importance to families, discussed issues and barriers with enrollment and assist partners with resolution of client issues; areas of concerns such as especially the announcement for the breach and how to direct the families. Broward county/ Statewide Enrollment numbers – KC is going down since 1/2020 Medicaid is increasing. Medikids Full Pay Program has increased. The full pay program was \$157 per child, which has now increased to \$187.96 per child. Rebecca provided the information for the KC Early Tax Season Documents and HealthyKids Website and System Information Breach and the resources available for parents. Rebecca indicated Hispanic Unity is providing VITA Taxes Services. The number to call for Rebecca is Office: 954-847-8082 and Cell: 954-895-5563, Email; [Rebecca.Miele@flhealth.gov](mailto:Rebecca.Miele@flhealth.gov). Florida KidCare Broward - 954-467-8737; <https://www.healthykids.org/>

**COVID-19 Vaccine Update, Florida Department of Health, Palm Beach County (DOH)** Merlene Ramnon PhD, MPH, MSN, RN, Community Health Program Director. Dr. Merlene. covered for all the vaccination educational information. Dr. Merlene was able to offer a PowerPoint presentation and open it for discussions. In efforts to educate and share accurate information with refugees, the information was distributed to all members. The information help understand the risks and benefits of all COVID-19 Vaccines, which may it be receive because there is currently a pandemic of COVID-19. The information regarding COVID-19 general preventive measures was also disused. COVID -19 Vaccines are effective at protecting us from getting sick. Early data show that the vaccines may help people from spreading the disease. We are still learning how vaccines will affect the spread of COVID-19. After been fully vaccinated continue taking precautions in public places: wear a mask, stay 6 feet apart from others avoid crowds and poorly ventilated spaces. Palm Beach County Health Department (Epidemiology)

will call to discuss potential exposure to COVID-19 with a contact tracer. A contact tracer will NEVER: ask for your Social Security number, ask for private financial information, ask for credit card information, send you a link without proper authentication procedures. The information of free COVID-19 vaccine and testing sites was distributed. Dr. Merlene also indicated of available free Medicaid transportation for the COVID-19 Vaccination sites. If not enrolled in a plan, call the Medicaid Helpline at 1-877-254-1055 to find out the name and phone number for a transportation service. Complete list of phone numbers available on the COVID-19 Vaccines in Florida webpage or visiting MyVaccine.FL.gov.

### **GENERAL UPDATES/ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

**U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)**, Don Jarrell, Community Relations Officer (CRO), USCIS, Tampa District, S23, (Cell:561.213.4889, email: [donald.jarrell@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:donald.jarrell@uscis.dhs.gov)) participated. Don emailed & posted on the chat about, USCIS updates and services during the Covid-19. USCIS updates: G-884, Request for the Return of Original Documents. Use this form to request the return of original documents submitted to establish eligibility for an immigration benefit. <https://www.uscis.gov/g-884>.

Designation of Venezuela for TPS and Implementation of DED Venezuela:

The Department of Homeland Security today published a Federal Register notice (FRN) announcing the designation of Venezuela for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for 18 months, effective March 9, 2021, through Sept. 9, 2022. <https://www.uscis.gov/green-card/green-card-processes-and-procedures/public-charge>

The FRN details the eligibility criteria Venezuelan nationals (and individuals without nationality who last habitually resided in Venezuela) must meet and describes procedures necessary to submit an initial TPS application and apply for an Employment Authorization Document (EAD).

Additionally, the FRN provides information about Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) for covered Venezuelan nationals (and individuals without nationality who last habitually resided in Venezuela) and how to apply for DED-related EADs.

More Information:

USCI are planning outreach opportunities regarding the new designation of Venezuela for TPS to provide information and answer questions from the public.

For the most current information related to USCIS humanitarian issues, please visit [uscis.gov/humanitarian](https://uscis.gov/humanitarian).

For more information on USCIS and our programs, please visit [uscis.gov](https://uscis.gov) or follow us on Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

The Public Charge Final Rule:

On March 9, 2021, the Seventh Circuit lifted its stay and the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois' order vacating the Public Charge Final Rule went into effect. When the vacatur went into effect, USCIS immediately stopped applying the Public Charge Final Rule to all pending applications and petitions that would have been subject to the rule. USCIS continues to apply the public charge inadmissibility statute, including consideration of the statutory

minimum factors in the totality of the circumstances, in accordance with the 1999 Interim Field Guidance that was in place before the Public Charge Final Rule was implemented. In addition, USCIS will no longer apply the separate, but related, “public benefits condition” to applications or petitions for extension of nonimmigrant stay and change of nonimmigrant status.

For more information, see our main public charge webpage, our public charge litigation page, and DHS’s news release.

#### Important Updates Regarding the 2020 Version of the Civics Test:

On Dec. 1, 2020, USCIS implemented a revised version of the civics test for naturalization (2020 civics test). Due to recent policy changes, some applicants required to take the 2020 civics test may now have a choice to take the 2020 test or the 2008 civics test. Please note that beginning on April 19, 2021, USCIS will only offer the 2008 civics test at the initial interview appointment regardless of filing date.

#### Links:

<https://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/find-study-materials-and-resources/study-for-the-test>

USCIS updates:

<https://www.uscis.gov/news/alerts/dhs-withdraws-affidavit-of-support-proposed-rule>

<https://www.uscis.gov/news/news-releases/registration-period-opens-for-temporary-protected-status-tps-for-syria>

<https://www.uscis.gov/news/news-releases/dhs-secretary-statement-on-the-2019-public-charge-rule>

<https://www.uscis.gov/news/news-releases/secretary-mayorkas-designates-venezuela-for-temporary-protected-status-for-18-months>

DHS Withdraws ‘Affidavit of Support’ Proposed Rule The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) today announced the withdrawal of the affidavit of support proposed rule, consistent with DHS’s commitment to reduce barriers within the legal immigration

<https://www.uscis.gov/outreach/upcoming-local-engagements>

[www.uscis.gov](https://www.uscis.gov)

**U.S. Department of Labor:** Teresita Camacho, Wage and Hour Investigator. Her email is [camacho.teresita@dol.gov](mailto:camacho.teresita@dol.gov) with the US Dept of Labor/ Wage and hour Division. The U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division is responsible for administering and enforcing several federal labor laws, including the Fair Labor Standards. DOL enforce minimum wage, overtime, record keeping, child labor, Family Medical Leave Act and many other labor laws. Ariel G Rivera Maldonado, Community Outreach and Resource Planning Specialist, U.S. Department of Labor / Wage and Hour Division, will be available for a presentation next May.

**U.S. Dept of Justice (DOJ), Immigrant & Employee Rights Section (IER):** Elaine McArthur, IER, DOJ, enforces the anti-discrimination provision of the Immigration and Nationality Act



(INA). This federal law prohibits: 1) citizenship status discrimination in hiring, firing, or recruitment or referral for a fee, 2) national origin discrimination in hiring, firing, or recruitment or referral for a fee, 3) unfair documentary practices during the employment eligibility verification, Form I-9 and E-Verify, and 4) retaliation or intimidation. [www.justice.gov](http://www.justice.gov)  
If you feel you have suffered one of these forms of discrimination, click here to file a charge or call our Worker Hotline: 1-800-255-7688. If you are an employer with questions about the anti-discrimination provision of the INA, call our Employer Hotline: 1-800-255-8155. Filing A Charge at [www.justice.gov](http://www.justice.gov)

**Office of Economic Self-Sufficiency, Southeast Region (ESS/DCF):** Claudia Arce, ESS/DCF, Program Office's representative, reminded all applicants to upload their documentation with the DCF benefits application to help with the eligibility process. Claudia update the latest regarding ACCESS and benefits; such as DCF stores front are offering a box to drop any documents listed for benefits and these boxes will be pick up daily and documents can also be scan and fax to DCF. Additional information can be located at DCF website; [myflorida.com](http://myflorida.com).

Updates on the Microsoft (MST) chat:

**Palm Beach County Medical Society, Promise Fund:** Olga L Sierra, Outreach Coordinator, a team of Care Coordinators help individuals in need of medical services, referrals to county, state and/or federal programs, as well as access to medical care and overcoming social barriers to care. We help individuals under the 200% Federal Poverty Guideline.

**Palm Beach County Behavioral Health Coalition (PBCBHC):** PBCBC is doing a community wide survey on non-opioid options for pain. Their goal is to inform people how to have conversations with their healthcare providers and their local lawmakers on these alternatives. Alexa Lee, M. S., Director of Programs, Office: 561-374-7627, Cell: 561-301-9975 provided the link to the Community Knowledge Survey: <https://research.zarca.com/r/mFToIL>

**Palm Beach County Library System (PBC Library):** Maribel de Jesus, Multicultural Outreach Services Librarian, ([dejesusm@pbclibrary.org](mailto:dejesusm@pbclibrary.org)) and Jayme Bosio, Government Research Services Librarian, (1-(561)233-2777, [bosioj@pbclibrary.org](mailto:bosioj@pbclibrary.org)) at Palm Beach County Library System, provided information regarding all free services, including: SNAP benefits at 7 locations <http://www.pbclibrary.org/food-service-program>, free access to computers, printers, scanners. Many online activities for kids and adults <http://events.pbclibrary.org/events/digital-activities>, HomeboundVaccine@em.myflorida.com. The PBC Library is also offering a series in personal finance offered in Spanish and English by representatives from Consolidated Credit. You can register in the library's digital activities page. Register | PBCLS Events ([pbclibrary.org](http://pbclibrary.org)) Which Is the Best Debt Solution For YOU? This is to register for the homebound service for the COVID Vaccine/library for updated information. Starting on next week the library will have someone to help with Emergency Rental Assistance applications at several of locations. They can access our catalog on our website at <http://www.pbclibrary.org/>.

**Early Learning Coalition of Palm Beach County, Inc. (ELCPBC):** Rachel Mondesir, MPA, Community Engagement Manager, ELCPBC, (561) 600-9423, cell (561) 381-1094, [rachel.mondesir@elcpalmbeach.org](mailto:rachel.mondesir@elcpalmbeach.org), ELCPBC is continuing to serve children in the childcare programs. Providers have implemented enhanced safety protocols in their Family Child Care homes and Centers. If you know of families who need help with paying for childcare, ELC have

open enrollment and would love to help them with their application. Please call 561-514-3300! VPK Applications are open- please encourage families to participate in Summer VPK to prepare their children for Kindergarten in August 2021. Email Rachel at [rachel.mondesir@elcpalmbeach.org](mailto:rachel.mondesir@elcpalmbeach.org) for more information.

**211 HelpLine:** Patrice Schroeder with 211 participated, 211 is Celebrating 50 Years! (Email: [patrice.schroeder@211pbt.org](mailto:patrice.schroeder@211pbt.org), 561-383-1149.) 211's advocacy programs are still up and running & available: Help Me Grow, Special Needs Helpline, Elder Crisis Outreach, Sunshine daily calls, & 211's MYFLVET program. 211 is available by dialing 2-1-1 or texting zip code to 898211, 24/7. Online chat also available at [211palmbeach.org](http://211palmbeach.org) from 10am to 8pm.

You can access our Online Resource Directory that includes local, state and national information at [www.211palmbeach.org](http://www.211palmbeach.org) click on "Get Help Now" or reach out by dialing 2-1-1 or texting their zip code to 898211 24/7.

211 Helpline Palm Beach and Treasure Coast 211 helpline provides immediate service for those in need within Palm Beach, Martin, St Lucie, Okeechobee and Indian River Counties. Just Call (866) 882-2991 [www.211palmbeach.org](http://www.211palmbeach.org)

**Palm Beach County Sheriff Office:** Marcia Bahia, PBC Sheriff's Office Gang Prevention Coordinator. Marcia facilitate workshops on Anti-Bullying, Gang Prevention, and Parents Against Gangs. These are good workshops for our immigrants to learn how criminal activities may impact their children's future. Also, she would like to remind everyone, that April is Reentry Awareness Month and we will host a table at the Green Market WPB on April 10. Come visit us! [bahiam@pbso.org](mailto:bahiam@pbso.org)

**RS/DCF –** Miriam informed the task force that DCF now has a new Secretary. Ms. Shevaun Harris has worked in multiple roles at the Agency for Health Care Administration, most recently serving as the Acting Secretary. Also, the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) has a new Director, Ms. Cindy Huang.

### **RS Contracted providers:**

**Comprehensive Refugee Services (CRS);** Church World Service (CWS) provide comprehensive refugee services and coordinate all RS in Palm Beach and Broward counties. The CWS/PBC telephone number is 561-266-0624 and the contact staff are: Francisco Figueroa (Administrator) and Gladys Sanchez (Coordinator).

### **NEXT MEETING:**

**Next Meeting:** **Thursday, May 21, 2021**

Time: 10:00 AM to 12PM

Location: TBA

**Contact:** [Miriam.Rosario@myflfamilies.com](mailto:Miriam.Rosario@myflfamilies.com) Phone: (561) 227-6722

[David.Draper@myflfamilies.com](mailto:David.Draper@myflfamilies.com) Phone: (407) 317-7335