



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

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Shevaun Harris
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 26, 2021
TO: Members of the Palm Beach Area Refugee Task Force
FROM: **Miriam Rosario (RS)**
SUBJECT: May 21, 2021, Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: July 16, 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 Microsoft Teams 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

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

Luis Rolle, Director, 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. Luis Rolle and Michael Gordon contact information: Michael.J.Gordon@hud.gov or (Phone) 305-520-5002.

EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE (ERA) UPDATES:

Miriam updated regarding the PBC COMMUNITY SERVICES EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE LUNCH-N-LEARN. The ERA program was presented during last RTF meeting thanks to Taruna Malhotra, Assistant Director, Palm Beach County Community Services Department, tmalhotr@pbcgov.org;

Every Tuesday from noon to 1 p.m., the Palm Beach County Community Services Department (CSD) is hosting an Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) Lunch-n-Learn for Palm Beach County residents. During the sessions, staff will cover what the ERA application process entails, how to complete an application, and what the eligibility and documentation requirements are. Staff will also answer frequently asked questions. Residents may join via WebEx at <http://bit.ly/ERALunch-n-learn> with meeting ID 157 444 3885 and passcode 1234 using any electronic device. The meeting works best when accessed using Google Chrome. The option to join via phone is available by calling 1 (904) 900-2303 or 1 (844) 621-3956 with the access code 157 444 3885.

GENERAL UPDATES/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), not present, however Miriam will forward the updates from Broward RTF meeting provided by 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-Palm Beach County (DOH): Merlene Ramon, PhD, MPH, MSN, RN Community Health Promotion and Education Director, Designated Institution Official: Public Health Residency Program, RS Health Clinic reported they have seen an increase in new arrivals. Most of Palm Beach new arrivals were Cuban and Haitian entrants and parolees. All walking's are accepted but appointments are strongly encouraged by calling the RS DOH Clinic. Vaccine open Saturdays a clinic and orientation on public health is available. Merlene also indicated the DOH clinics follow with the DOL and a designated safe space for staff and for the patient for breast feeding is provided. The Refugee Health Program offers 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. Refugees need to get a health assessment within 90 days of arrival in the U.S. To receive this FREE health service, please visit the Palm Beach County Health Department located at: Northeast Health Center, 851 Avenue P, Riviera Beach, Florida 33404. To schedule an appointment call: 561-625-5180 or 1-855-438-2778 For information regarding eligibility and services please see the Florida Department of Health, Refugee Health Program web-site. or email: jill.rubin@flhealth.gov or merlene.ramnon@flhealth.gov. The information regarding COVID vaccine is available at the DOH PBC website at <http://pbc.floridahealth.gov>.

Palm Beach County Library System: PB County Library provided information regarding all free services. Including the USCIS presentation U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services Information Session, for access to all resources and library branches and hours of operations. Visit www.pbcls.org/library for updated information. Flyer was distributed.

Area Health Care Agency (AHCA): Jerome Hill – Program Operations Administrator – SES, AHCA Doral - BUREAU OF MEDICAID RPA, - reported office are open for staff however clients are not yet in their offices. All service continues to be provided by phone calls or online. For additional information please contact Jerome at JeromeK.Hill@ahca.myflorida.com or 305-593-3079 (Office).

Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office (PBSO): Marcia Bahia, M.S., Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, Gang Prevention Coordinator. Marcia reported this month is Mental Health (MH) Awareness month. Marcia stated the importance to reduce the stigma on MH needs During the pandemic there is an increase need for mental health resources. Marcia continue to offer Gang prevention workshop to clients and staff as needed. Workshop are offered virtually and in person. Marcia can be reach via phone 561 688-4002, cell: 561 319-6889, or email, bahiam@pbso.org.

Career Sources of Palm Beach (CSPBC): Marta Roque, Sr. Career Consultant, Career Center, 3400 Belvedere Road West Palm Beach, FL 33406. Marta stated helping 45 Cuban and 32 Haitian families. All where referred to CRS; CWS, ESOL, Legal and YCOOP. Marta reported on a high increase of new families reaching out for TANF services at her office in YCOOP. This office is located at Central Career Center/ Youth Coop Location, 2112 S. Congress Ave Ste. 102, Palm Springs, FL 33406. Office: 561.340.1061 ext.2356 | Fax: 1-888-897-5269 |web: www.careersourcepb.com. Marta can be reach at 561-340-1060 x 2356 or via Email: mroque@careersourcepb.com

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. 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

Community ACCESS, Office of Economic Self-Sufficiency, Southeast Region (ESS/DCF):- Gus Artau, Community Partner Liaison C-15. Gus reported on the changes due to the pandemic: DCF Benefits, the maximum amount is approved until May until further notices, employment requirements and EBT Pandemic card for children free school lunch. Gus can be reach at: Gus.Artau@MyFLFamilies.com

Refugee Services Program (RS/DCF) – David Draper, Community Liaison Manager, RS/DCF, David announced that the The U.S. 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 seen increases in Cuban and Haitian arrivals.

Early Learning Coalition of Palm Beach County, Inc. (ELC): Rachel Mondesir, MPA, Community Engagement Manager, Palm Springs Office, 1630 S Congress Avenue, Suite 300, Palm Springs, FL 33461, * (561) 600-9423 * cell (561) 381-1094 * rachel.mondesir@elcpalmbeach.org . Rachel informed all the resources available thru the ELC. ELC has referrals available for Child Care resources. Encourage all to partner with other agencies to use a wonderful resource and strategies like those offered through the 3T's to improve language and brain development for all children in Palm Beach County.

211 PBC & Treasure Coast: Patrice Schroeder, MA, Community Relations Specialist, informed on the Bilingual counselling resources. 211 has data reports available on the 211 data for those organizations needed of the reports on resources and needs in the community.

RS 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.

Youth COOP Match Grant Program (YCOOP/MG); Sindy De Leon, Programs Supervisor reported on the challenges of MG. Increases most parolee, however no Employment documentation. YCOOP received 16 individuals last week. However the two families migrated to North Carolina with the help of CWS. Their Reception and Placement program have not received any refugees.

Catholic Charities Dioceses of PBC Match Grant Program (CCDPB/MG); Isabel Matthyse Case Manager, Bakhita Empowerment/Refugee Program, Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Palm Beach. Isabel stated of hard times as they wait for increases of asylees for their MG program. Hard times emphasis due to EAD delays. Isabel had very few paroles with 3 clients. Isabel can be reach via email at: 561-345-2021 Office Number or mmatthyse@ccdpb.org

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/PBC telephone number is 561-. Gladys Sanchez, CRS Coordinator shared the continue increases in new arrivals seeking ACCESS application. Gladys CRS/CWS is very happy with the increases of newly arrivals. CWS is open to help these families and is thankful to the collaboration with YCOOP and Career Source. The higher numbers of new arrivals only speak Creole and have not computer skills. CRS/CWS will continue working with Career Sources and YCOOP for work registration requirements.

NEXT MEETING:

Next Meeting: **Thursday, July 16, 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