



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

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Shevaun Harris
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 21, 2021
TO: Members of the Palm Beach Area Refugee Task Force
FROM: Miriam Rosario (RS)
SUBJECT: July 16, 2021, Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: September 17, 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 call.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

U.S. HUD - (HUD). They stated -housing laws cover all workers, regardless of immigration status, HUD does not ask about their immigration status. HUD does education and outreach to understand and exercise their client's rights. HUD does education and outreach for employers to increased compliance. Ariel and Rob provided an overview presentation on their Essential Workers Essential Protections, HUD services to the state. They focus on the refugee community and how HUD 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. HUD outreach materials regarding refugee/asylee issues was distributed. Child Labor Law and restrictions were discussed. The concerns of recent immigrants who are not familiar their housing 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.

- 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 provided the updates from Broward RTF meeting provided by Berta Cassidy, Community Relations Officer (CRO), USCIS, Miami and Caribbean District, participated. USCIS good news and services during the COVID-19 and 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. This change helps eliminate undue paperwork and allows USCIS to track the request through a more efficient process.

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.

Department of Health-Palm Beach County (DOH): Jill Department of Health, 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. DOH clinics follow with 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. However if the timeliness passed, clients should still call to inquire for 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 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.

Palm Beach County Sherriff 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.

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

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.

RS providers:

Youth COOP Match Grant Program and RS Employment (YCOOP); Sindy De Leon, Programs Supervisor. Sindy announced leaving YCOOP after 16 years and moving to a new journey. She has asked her new boss for authorization to continue participating in the RTF meetings. Everyone congratulated Sindy and thanked her for all her dedication and contribution to helping the refugee community and RTF. Reported on the challenges of MG; new arrivals however no Employment documentation. YCOOP received 16 individuals last week. However, the Reception and Placement program have not received any refugees. The EAD delays some are up to 8 months and is impacting their MG and the RS employment program.

Church World Service, Match Grant Program (CWS/MG); Francisco Figueroa, Program Administrator, Church World Service reported about their CRS program enrolling new clients. CRS/CWS is experiencing an increase of new arrivals within the last two weeks. 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. Gladys stated of those eligible are enrolled in Comprehensive Refugee Services/CWS are assisted with CRS or referred to Community ACCESS Partners (CAPs). CRS/CWS has people waiting to apply for RS/DCF Benefits and are referred to the Palm Beach County Food Bank (FB) sites. CRS/CWS is scheduling appointments to assist the new arrivals with applying for DCF benefits (SNAP/MEDICAID/CASH) with the Palm Beach County Food Bank (FB). The Food Banks (FB) sites are full, some sites until October. CWS is a CAP for RS clients only and not for public. Isabel stated helping the new arrivals by getting an appointment with the Feeding South Fl. (CAP) for the next day. Claudia Arce, ESS/DCF provided alternative DCF sites are open for assistance and emphasized on the need to get promptly these individuals to apply for benefits. Gus explained how to be located any of the other 140 CAPs available in PBC. Miriam reminded these RS DCF benefits are time limited up to 8 months from the date of eligibility and are not retroactive. Is imperative all applicants are educated on all options so they can make informed decisions. Gus, Claudia and Miriam will email to CRS/CWS other CAPs list, link and community RTF partners for assistance.

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 and eligible entrants for their MG program. Hard times emphasis due to EAD delays. Isabel had help new arrivals by getting an appointment with the Feeding South Florida (CAP). Isabel can be reach via email at: 561-345-2021 Office Number or mmatthyse@ccdpc.org mmatthyse@ccdpc.org.

Economic Self-Sufficiency/DCF (ESS/DCF): Claudia Arce, ESS/DCF are processing these new applications reviews. The new arrivals have a variety of new immigration documents

requiring longer reviews. Is important educate clients to submit to ESS/DCF all forms for proper review. Claudia stated Social Security Administration (SSA) offices are still closed. She reminded that the Form 2275 for SSA is still mail to applicants and them all most document efforts to obtained a SSA number for benefits.

ACCESS/ESS, DCF; Gus Artau, Community ACCESS Partner, updated on the ACCESS benefits services requirements. Gus recommended to educate clients in the SNAP benefits changes during the Pandemic and now will be reduced to the original amount, effective 8/1/21. TANF activities for employment and training are now required with Career Sources.

NEXT MEETING:

Next Meeting: **September 17, 2021**

Time: 10:00 AM to 12PM

Location: TBA

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