



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

**Ron DeSantis**  
Governor

**Chad Poppell**  
Secretary

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**DATE:** February 1, 2021

**TO:** Members of the Tampa Bay Refugee Task Force

**FROM:** Janet Blair, Refugee Services (RS)

**SUBJECT:** **January 26th, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

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

**Date:** April 27, 2021  
**Time:** 1:30 P.M. – 3:30 P.M.  
**Location:** Microsoft Teams

**Contact:** Janet Blair  
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This task force has been active in the Tampa area for many years. The participants are representatives of various government agencies, private not-for-profit organizations, academic institutions and faith community representatives. An average of 50 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 and needs, facilitate strong communication among refugee services and community providers, get informed about upcoming community events, 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 next meeting!*

## TAMPA BAY AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MINUTES

***Mission Statement: Helping Refugees to settle, integrate and thrive through support, education and community.***

The meeting was held on Microsoft Teams and Janet Blair and David Draper represented the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Refugee Service Program. A total of **94** individuals were present and the meeting was called to order at 1:34pm.

- Janet Blair opened the meeting with a welcome and overview of the meeting's agenda. David Draper gave an opening regarding the purpose of the meeting.
- The Mental Health Minute was given by Stacy Kratz, Ph.D. The topic for this meeting addressed stress related to getting the Covid-19 vaccination.

### **Presentations**

- A panel presentation entitled *Providing Covid-19 Vaccination Information to Refugee Families* focused on dispelling myths around the vaccinations, shared research regarding local refugee population attitudes toward the vaccination and the plan for the vaccination on a local level. The panel featured the following speakers:  
Dr. Dillon Mahoney, Dept of Anthropology, USF  
Dr. Angela Hill, Associate Dean of the Pharmacy College, USF  
Jylmarie Lewis, MPH, FL Dept of Health-Hillsborough
- The second presentation was given by Myra Mgaly from Coptic Orthodox Charities and was an overview of the refugee programs/services offered by the organization.

### **Provider & Community Partner Updates:**

- An update on the Comprehensive Refugee Services Program (CRS) was given by Lutheran Services, Florida (LSF), Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services (GCJFCS) and the Hillsborough County Public Schools Caribe Adult Education program. All programs are fully operational on both sides of the bay with a hybrid of in-person and remote services being offered. The youth/mentoring program is up and running but in need of more mentors. Flyers targeting volunteer involvement will be sent to the task force. A new adult ed semester is underway and information on class locations/offerings will be sent to the task force.
- A USCIS update was given by Don Jarrell. The Tampa office is getting caught up on their backlog of cases due to the pandemic. With a new administration at the federal level, there are ongoing changes happening. All are encouraged to go to <https://www.uscis.gov/> for updates.
- Upcoming Task Force meetings are April 27, August 31 and December 7 at 1:30pm. All meetings will be on Microsoft Teams unless otherwise announced. Contact Janet Blair at [Janet.Blair@myflfamilies.com](mailto:Janet.Blair@myflfamilies.com) with any questions regarding the task force.