



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

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Shevaun Harris
Secretary

DATE: October 8, 2021

TO: Members of the Tampa Bay Refugee Task Force

FROM: Janet Blair, Refugee Services (RS)

SUBJECT: **August 31, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: December 7, 2021
Time: 1:30 P.M. – 3:30 P.M.
Location: Microsoft Teams

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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 70 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 **104** individuals were present and the meeting was called to order at 1:35pm.

- The Mental Health Minute was given by Florence Ackey, MSW and founder/co-chair of the Mental Health Committee, Stacy Kratz PhD, was recognized for her years of voluntary service to the task force.

Presentations

- Faye Steinhauser, director of Project Prosper, gave an overview of the Advance Child Tax Credit and what refugee clients can expect from this program. Project Prosper is a financial literacy and loans program in Tampa Bay that is considering expanding to SWFL in the future. More information and financial resources can be found at <https://www.projectprosper.org/>
- Don Jarrell, Community Relations Officer, gave USCIS updates and information. Legal Permanent Resident applicants (green cards) will now need to provide proof of covid vaccination as of October 1, 2021. Other information and updates can be found at <https://www.uscis.gov/>
- Christine McKee, Community Partner Liaison Coordinator in the Policy and Strategic Partnerships program gave an overview of the new DCF Care Navigation program. This program is now fully active within the SunCoast region and will soon be open for referrals. More details on this evolving program can be found at <https://www.myflfamilies.com/APathwaytoProsperity/>
- Henry Whitehead, Equal Opportunity Specialist from the Miami Field Office gave an overview of HUD's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity Program and the Fair Housing Act. Housing discrimination cases can be submitted by phone at the FHEO Hotline: 800-440-8091 or electronically at www.hud.gov

Provider & Community Partner Updates:

- The Welcoming Basket Donation Drive is underway at Largo and Barbara S. Ponce Libraries in Pinellas County. Items for kitchen, bathroom, children's, and baby baskets will be collected throughout the entire month of September and given to refugee families in early October.
- Lutheran Services, Florida (LSF) announced that they have applied to assist 75 Afghans through the special program set up for those given humanitarian parole and Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services (GCJFCS) has already had a few Afghan arrivals. LSF also reported that of the Cuban/Haitian border crossers they are serving, an increasing number are unemployable.
- USF continues to provide free, in-home covid vaccines to refugees ages 12+ and over 80 individuals have been fully vaccinated through this program.
- The CARIBE adult education program is launching new vocational training programs that are at no cost to clients and will train them to be nursing assistants and pharmacy techs.
- **The final task force meeting of this year will be held on December 7 at 1:30pm on Microsoft Teams.**