



State of Florida  
Department of Children and Families

Ron DeSantis  
Governor

Chad Poppell  
Secretary

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**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** September 15, 2020  
**TO:** Members of the Jacksonville Area Refugee Task Force  
**FROM:** LeAndra Stafford, Refugee Services (RS)  
**SUBJECT:** September 9, 2020 Meeting Minutes

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

**Date:** November 11, 2020  
**Time:** 1:30 P.M. - 3:30 P.M.  
**Location:** Teleconference  
1-888-585-9008  
Access # 951-031-034  
**Contact:** LeAndra Stafford  
**Office:** (904) 485-9540  
**Cell:** (904) 524-1316  
**E-Mail:** Leandra.Stafford@myflfamilies.com

This task force has been active in the Jacksonville area for many years. The participants are representatives of various government agencies, private not-for-profit organizations and mutual assistance associations. An average of about twenty-five to thirty people 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!*

5920 Arlington Expressway, Jacksonville, Florida 32211

## JACKSONVILLE AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING

### **INTRODUCTION**

The meeting was held via teleconference. LeAndra Stafford, Community Liaison, represented the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Refugee Services (RS) Program and facilitated the meeting. There were 29 people in attendance on the conference call (per Open Voice Call-in Log), 20 of those people identified themselves on the call. David Draper, Community Liaison Manager, was also in attendance. The meeting was called to order and participants identified themselves by agency.

### **GUEST PRESENTATION**

- 1.) Irina Tillman, Career Development Specialist, Lutheran Social Services (LSS) of North Florida  
*American Pathways Program*
  - LSS is considered an expert in providing employment services. The current refugee employment program works very well but has a time limit on those that are able to receive services (within 5 years of arrival).
  - The purpose of the New American's Pathway program is to expand on the employment program and offer it to an expanded group (immigrants as well as refugees) without the 5-year time limit. The program will focus both on the employed and underemployed.
  - The program supports upskilling for both refugees and immigrants who would like to increase job skills and obtain better employment opportunities
  - The program offers:
    - Career Services: A career plan is developed to indicate the steps the client will need to take to achieve their goal
    - Career Coaching: The coach is a volunteer mentor who will assist the refugee in reaching their goals for better employment and strengthening their skills
  - The program can provide:
    - Degree translation
    - Fundamental training
    - Soft skills training
    - Connect trainings with clients
  - The program currently has openings in the home healthcare assistant and pharmacy tech programs.
  - Participants need to have a certain baseline English level/ability to go through the interview process and pass required exams

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**REFUGEE SERVICES CONTRACTED PROVIDERS UPDATE**

- **Lutheran Social Services (Laura Cook, Refugee Services Program Manager):**
  - **CRS Summary**
    - ❖ Lutheran Social Services (LSS) continues to operate. They are adhering to social distancing guidelines.
    - ❖ All providers are open and being creative in reaching out to their clients either by video, phone or by face to face with social distance measures
  - The Tiered Case Management Program has assisted 7 clients in past months (July & August).
  - Youth Program: LSS has served 21 clients in July and 17 in August. After-School Tutoring will begin at the end of this month.
  - Employment: LSS achieved 39 placements in the past two months (July & August)
  - Mentoring: LSS has 38 mentees. They are communicating with mentors via Zoom, WhatsApp, and text. Three UNF interns have been working virtually with these clients.
  - Reception & Placement (R&P) received a family of 5 in July
- **Catholic Charities Bureau (Anna Lindler, Associate Director):**
  - Match Grant: All MG clients have been closed with jobs. With new families arriving, they will be enrolled in the MG program.
  - Reception & Placement (R&P): They expect 13 individuals to arrive in the next two weeks (4 families).
  - ESOL: English classes are being offered online.
    - ❖ 70 students currently enrolled in the lower level. There are 22 voucher students and students are still enrolling for 9/21 class.
    - ❖ Some clients have had some challenges with computer and internet access (some students are unable to access materials due to limited phone capabilities). They are looking to increase more participation with students on a more user-friendly platform and will try this out with the GED students first
    - ❖ The lower-level students are using WhatsApp app and it seems to be working well when using the video option in the app, however, the teachers can only chat with 2-3 students at a time.
    - ❖ There has been fewer enrolled at FSCJ because when a student goes directly to FSCJ, they need a lot of assistance during the enrollment process. Clients should be sent to CCB first so that they can be tested and assisted during the enrollment process into upper level ESOL.
    - ❖ Testing is conducted on Thursdays and Fridays at CCB
    - ❖ The staff continues to try to reconnect with students to encourage them to return to class
    - ❖ Classes are provided in the morning and the afternoon. However, with technological advances, class times are flexible.

- **Jacksonville Area Legal Aid:**
  - They are still working remotely via zoom or phone
  - Starting Oct 2, 2020, USCIS fees will increase.
  - In anticipation of the fee increase, they are trying to get as many applications postmarked before October.
  - After October 2<sup>nd</sup>, public benefits will not be a determining factor in obtaining a fee waiver and bundled packages will not be allowed as in the past.
  
- **Early Learning Coalition (ELC):**
  - ELC continues to work remotely; They are not seeing clients face-to-face and completing redeterminations in the system remotely/virtually.
  
- **Department of Health (DOH)**
  - The Refugee clinic is still open and seeing refugees for vaccinations.
  - They are completing medical assessments for parolees
  - They are assisting clients that need medication delivered to their homes.
  - They served a new refugee client recently.
  - RHs-15 screening tool (mental assessment) has been completed to include the Creole language. Now the form is available in 15 different languages

## **GENERAL UPDATES**

### **United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)**

- No Updates

### **ACHA**

- Individuals should call the helpline with any concerns regarding the Healthcare Marketplace or Medicaid (#1-877-254-1055)
- The staff is teleworking but still available to assist customers Monday – Thursday Hours: 8 am – 5 pm

### **FSCJ ESOL**

- Class sessions: August 21<sup>st</sup> – November 24<sup>th</sup> and September 21<sup>st</sup> - December 15<sup>th</sup>. Class hour options: 9:30 am – 12 pm or 6 pm – 8:30 pm
- They will be using the Burlington English Test to get placement rather than CASAS (they don't offer on-line test)
- Important for students to know the registration process is not simple and they will need assistance. When students realize they need assistance, they are not following through the process or returning. Students who are referred by providers are encouraged to have them go through CCB for registration.

**YMCA**

- They continue to provide support services. Clients are being seen on-site with social distance practices/ precautions in place
- They are assisting clients with benefit applications and school enrollments
- They are providing food pantry services three days per week, with a concentration to assist residents in the Dupont area. However, all are welcome to receive food
- Started offering English and Citizenship classes. The classes will be smaller due to pandemic.
- The gardening area is being upgraded with a new irrigation system

**Red Cross**

- Continue to work remotely
- Nationally they are stretched thin
- Hurricane pamphlets are available in different languages and they can be disbursed when requested
- The Family links (international reunification) program is still in operation and accepting referrals

**Center for Language & Culture (CLC)**

- The CLC is open four days per week by appointment only and limit the number of people allowed in the building at one time. Hours 7:30 am – 5:30 pm. They are available by phone or email. Phone numbers: Hind: 904-755-5753, Mary: 904-419-8835, Office: 904-739-4891
- There are three testers available Tuesday and Thursday by appointment only.
- They are working closely with families and parents to assist them with preparing for the new school year, tech support, and opening school accounts
- They have been working with JSO and truancy officers to get hotspots out to students and create accounts

**UNF**

- The students are working with YMCA, San Jose Elementary School, & CCB with soccer and English classes

**Project for Healing**

- Project for Healing is currently offering confidential therapy through an online portal and/or via phone. If a client must be seen face to face, they follow strict protocols for social distancing.
- They have provided 63 sessions to teach clients how to handle stress related to COVID-19.
- They continue to receive referrals from community providers.
- They continue to partner with Jacksonville Area Legal Aid (JALA) to provide psychological evaluations for asylum seekers.

**Beyond 90**

- Service Center hours are Mondays 10 to 3 and Thursdays 1 to 6. They continue to help with basically anything the refugees needs with no limitations on an individual's time in the country (i.e., benefit applications, school enrollments, referrals, UF Health enrollment, etc.)
- Classes are open and following social distancing and COVID protocols.
  1. Driver Readiness classes on Saturdays as needed
  2. Computer Typing and Literacy classes - Saturday mornings
  3. Women's Sewing - Wednesday mornings
  4. New Class - ESL, Civics and Citizenship on Saturday Mornings. Target is Low Level English Learners at 4 to 5 years in US. We are following the model of the former ECBO at World Relief that utilized refugees as instructors. Starting with 2 classes - Eritrean and Congolese with plans to expand to other nationalities.
- Additional Support Services - Free Monthly Diaper and Period Supply Distribution. Designed to help families stretch their income during these difficult times. Purpose is to help alleviate some financial burden but not become dependent on for their entire monthly supply. Estimated start is sometime in October

**Florida Immigrant Coalition**

- Created a resource guide
- WeaveTales Resource Guide for Northeast Florida is an online resource guide created by WeaveTales to help immigrants, refugees, and low-income families in Northeast Florida better navigate reliable and trustworthy resources available in their areas. It features the locations and information on providers of core services such as food, housing, and legal aid. It is available on their website and can be accessed in English, Spanish, or Arabic at [www.weavetales.org/nefl](http://www.weavetales.org/nefl).
- For those service providers interested, monthly meetings will start in October

**NEW ISSUES/ ACTIONS TAKEN**

David Draper, Community Liaison Supervisor

- 1.) Information on DCF's response to COVID-19 can be found on the DCF website.
- 2.) The moratorium on evictions have been extended by Governor DeSantis
- 3.) We are seeing a statewide increase in arrivals
- 4.) Beginning in October, Task Force meetings will be virtual, information will be forthcoming