



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

Rick Scott
Governor

Esther Jacobo
Secretary

DATE: September 9, 2013
TO: Members of the Tampa Bay Refugee Task Force
FROM: Janet Blair, Refugee Services (RS)
SUBJECT: July 23, 2013 Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: September 17, 2013
Time: 1:30 P.M. – 3:30 P.M.
Location: St. Mary's Ethiopian Orthodox Church, 2424 86th Street South,
Tampa 33619.

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 and mutual assistance associations. An average of 40 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, 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 next meeting!

Refugee Services Program
9393 North Florida Ave, Tampa FL 33612

Mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency

TAMPA BAY AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MINUTES

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

This meeting was held at Pinellas Technical Education Center; 6100 154th Ave. N, in Clearwater FL. Janet Blair, Community Liaison of Refugee Services represented the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Janet called the meeting to order at 1:35pm and 47 people were present.

General Updates:

- **Arrivals in the Region-** From October 1st- June 30th, 488 arrivals have accessed DCF services (Hillsborough- 412, Pinellas- 68, Pasco- 8).
- **World Refugee Day Recap-** This year's event had more refugees in attendance than past years, and over 400 participants overall. The daytime event benefited from helpful participation and support from the Hillsborough County Schools Superintendent and from youth participation at each table. There will be a follow-up event in November with school administrators. The evening portion of the event was also successful and included resource tables, a cultural fashion show, live music and dance performances.

Provider/Community Agency Updates

Resettlement: Lutheran Services Florida (LSF) reports 41 arrivals in July from Cuba, Iraq, Somalia, and Burma. Coptic Orthodox Charities reports 5 new arrivals, totaling 11 individuals for July and 121 year to date. Gulf Coast Jewish Family and Community Services had 3 new arrivals, totaling 10 individuals, all from Cuba and Iraq. Catholic Charities has had a total of 136 refugee arrivals and 37 Cuban Entrants. All Match Grant programs are full at this time.

Melody's Closet: Offers Plus sized clothing for women needing business casual items. On 8/31 from 9am-2pm they will be holding their first event by appointment only, at which women will receive 4 complete outfits each. Referral information was given to all present.

Habitat for Humanity: The Pinellas branch plans to build 26 houses this year. This program offers interest and down payment free homes to those who qualify. Refugee families are encouraged to apply. The acceptance process involves attending an orientation, submitting an application, and a decision by committee.

Hillsborough County Public Schools Literacy and Acculturation Center: A presentation on the collaborative work of the Task Force with the school system will be highlighted as a "best practice" at the National Superintendents Conference in October. In addition, four literacy nights will be held each quarter and attendees will each receive a free book.

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Florida Center for Survivors of Torture: The new program director, Sylvia Acevedo was introduced and will be based out of the Pinellas office at Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services, but will also oversee the Miami office and travel there regularly. The torture treatment program is currently accepting client referrals.

Adult Education: PREP/PTEC: Over the next two weeks, PREP classes will relocate to the St. Pete campus during construction.

Tampa Bay Burmese Council: The Council has completed its strategic plan and is now looking for board members to help the organization grow. They received a small grant for health initiatives this year and have relocated to 56th Street in Temple Terrace. Business cards with the new contact information were disseminated. Those interested in joining the board should contact Rose Marie Connor or Christy Sui.

Tampa Bay Gardens: The Garden has applied for two large grants, one from a local foundation and the other from the Office of Refugee Resettlement. An event for National Welcoming Week in September will be held at the Garden in collaboration with the University of South Florida and Task Force members.

Pasco County Schools: A five day seminar will be held in the summer of 2014 at the University of South Florida to educate teachers and staff on cultural diversity and human rights issues. Task Force members are involved in assisting with this event.

DCF ACCESS Program: Staff changes were announced as Jason Morris is replacing Lisa Torres as the new supervisor. Task Force members were encouraged to continue to send emails about Matching Grant clients to sr_cash_issues@state.fl.us in order to assist with tracking these clients.

Refugee Health Clinic: The Tampa clinic location will be moving at the end of September, rather than in July.

Occupational Safety & Health Administration: Susan Hardwood Grant offered resources for employment programs serving hard to reach populations.

Spotlight Presentations:

Social Security Administration (SSA)- Pinellas County Administrator, Shirely Heitner, provided a brief presentation on local offices and procedures and addressed issues providers raised on working with refugee clients in need of SSA services. She advised that Tuesday, Friday, and the end of the month are the best times to come in to the SS offices and that appointments can currently be made 1.5-2 months out. She also advised that for issues with applications for terminally ill clients, the best thing to do is call the 800 number and inform SSA of the client's diagnosis so that a call back will be arranged within 48 hours with an appointment time.

LSF Employment Related Immigration Services- Virginia Ramirez provided an overview of LSF's Legal Services. She shared that the program serves to remove barriers to legal residency and employment. All services are free for recently arriving refugees and the program currently serves about 250 clients each month. A newly developed referral form will be sent electronically to all Task Force members.

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GCJFCS VOICES Program- Marija Hannen provided information about local interpreting services. There is currently funding available for DCF funded programs to receive free interpreting services for refugee clients. Programs not funded by DCF can enter into a contract with VOICES to be billed for interpreting hours. To request a trained interpreter, email interpreter@gcjfcs.org. VOICES has a variety of languages available, and providers can request new languages as needed.

Announcements/Upcoming Events:

- Doug Haskitt was presented with a letter in recognition of his work in helping put together the film about refugees produced by PTEC students.
- National Welcoming Week, September 20th there will be an event at the Tampa Bay Gardens which will be a service project for refugees and community members.
- There is a call for a program resource guide listing all programs and information geared towards community members, Florence and Lesleigh have offered to compose and Niki has offered to review.
- SPIFFS will be on November 1st and 2nd and the Task Force plans to have a booth again.
- The Non-Profit Leadership Center of Tampa Bay will be hosting a daylong not-for-profit workshop at the Straz Center on 8/29.
- Pinellas Provider Meeting scheduled for 8/21 at the Clearwater Highpoint YMCA
- Hillsborough Provider Meeting scheduled for 8/27 at DCF in Tampa

Upcoming Task Force Meetings:

- November 17th at 1:30pm —at the Tampa Bay Gardens located at St. Mary's Ethiopian Orthodox Church, 2424 86th Street South, Tampa 33619.
- December 3rd at the Pinellas Technical Education Center located at 6100 154th Ave. N, Clearwater FL

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