



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

Rick Scott
Governor

Esther Jacobo
Interim Secretary

DATE: February 27, 2014
TO: Members of the Tampa Bay Refugee Task Force
FROM: Janet Blair, Refugee Services (RS)
SUBJECT: January 28, 2014 Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: March 4, 2014
Time: 1:30 P.M. – 3:30 P.M.
Location: PTECH, Clearwater Campus

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 Ana G. Mendez University, 3655 West Waters Ave. Tampa, FL 33614. Janet Blair, Community Liaison of Refugee Services, represented the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Janet called the meeting to order at 1:40pm and 36 people were present.

Special Presentations:

- **The Affordable Health Care Act:** Joel Velasco with Florida Covering Kids and Families was available to answer any questions about refugee issues concerning the Affordable Health Care Act. One question asked was about completing the application at the Marketplace; a yellow box would pop up at the end of the application, asking you to sign and finish later if you had included a document number and alien number. Joel advised not to add that information. By not adding this, the application can be completed at that time. There is a new Florida Kid Care App which could assist parents with marketplace information and in December a new Medicaid App. He also discussed income levels. Joel will send a PDF document with instruction for the Affordable Health Care Act. He also said he would be available to check the best options for a Provider's client and provide information about the Hillsborough County Health insurance. The Florida Kid care Act App cutoff date for open enrollment is March 15, 2014 for coverage to start April 1st. There will be an extra 15 day window for a life changing event.
- **Unaccompanied Minors: Adriana Dinis, Staff Attorney, Gulf Coast Legal Services (GCLS)** Ms. Dinis spoke about the arrivals of unaccompanied children. Anyone under the ages of 2 and 18 residing in the following counties, Pasco, Pinellas, Hillsborough, Manatee and Sarasota, can receive free legal services through Gulf Coast, even undocumented minors. She will attend immigration court with the child which is located in Orlando and advocate on their behalf. The Office of Refugee Resettlement is working to place these unaccompanied minors with families in the US. GCLS will also represent minors placed in foster care, labor trafficking victims, sexually assaulted women and women escaping sexual abuse who are coming with children. All services provided are free of charge.

General Updates

Resettlement: Lutheran Services Florida: Oct-Dec 37 cases, matching grant 114 individuals. Arrivals are mostly Cubans, Somalis, Iraqis, Iranians, and Congolese. Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services: Oct-Dec 35 individuals. Arrivals are mostly Cubans, Iraqis, Congolese, Somalis, Iranians, and Sudanese. Coptic Orthodox Charities: Oct-Dec had 55 individuals who were either Cuban or Iraqis. Catholic Charities: 184 individual arrivals and 125 matching grant for 2014, mostly Cuban and one Colombian case.

Caribe: ESOL classes (am and pm) begin Jan 27th at Lois, Macdill and First Baptist Church of Temple Terrace (FBCTT). Erwin classes will begin January 28th. Lois is full and FBCTT is limited in space. Refugee Services is looking at the possibility of launching classes for Burmese refugees at a new location in the near future.

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United States Citizenship and Immigration Services: There will be an Open House, Friday, March 14 from 4-6pm at the Tampa Field Office 5629 Hoover Blvd, Tampa 33634. There will be informational booths and a presentation on Naturalization. The event is open to everyone.

Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office: Deputy Marilyn Alvarez asked that refugees be made aware of two fraudulent phone scams targeting Spanish speakers from Spanish speakers asking for money. One involves immigration and the other claims a product was ordered and money is trying to be collected.

World Refugee Day Planning: Greg Musselman and Nicole Herman updated the Task Force on planning for World Refugee Day. This event will be held June 19th at Jefferson High School if the mall is available. The alternate date would be June 18th. The theme is Welcome to America and will include a cultural festival. Each refugee group will have a table with information about their culture and native foods for all to sample. There will also be a fashion show and music. The event will be held from 5-7:30pm. Media, local politicians, and entertainment will be part of the celebration.

Discussion Topics:

DCF Customer Authentication System and Refugee Clients- Jason Merriss, ACCESS Refugees are subject to the customer authentication process if they apply for benefits, such as food stamps. The exemption only applies to the Refugee Assistance Program (RAP). Random questions are asked when registering clients. The system is not to cause problems but to protect our clients. At this point there seem to be no concerns about the implementation of this system locally.

Mental Health- A subcommittee is being formed to look at resources and gaps in the community. Rosemarie Conner and Stacy Kratz have volunteered to be on the committee.

Spotlight Presentations:

Community Tampa Bay's Anytown Program: Kipp Holloway provided information on the upcoming leadership and diversity camps for youth between the ages of 14-18 or entering grades 9-12 at Eckerd College. The camp is residential and it's being offered either June 29-July 3 or July 20-24th. Anytown program fees are included in the application package and waivers are available.

Tampa Bay Burmese Council: A representative from the council spoke to the Task Force about the Council's goals and services. The goal is to empower the refugees with knowledge and to help clients achieve lifelong success. They also help with health care issues. There is a monthly workshop on health care. The Council will also make home visits as needed and will assist any group of refugees, not just the Burmese.

Chin Christian Community Center, Ms. Christina Mawi and Pastor Reuben Hrang gave an overview of the Chin Christian Community Center. Their goal is to provide spiritual encouragement and free community services. Examples of community services would be job training, free transportation to medical appointments, applying for refugee benefits and English classes. The group meets in the Town and Country area of Tampa and the approximate number of Chin in the Tampa Bay area is 50-160.

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Announcements/Upcoming Events:

- Pinellas Provider Meeting, Feb 19th, Coptic Orthodox Charities, Clearwater
- Hillsborough Provider Meeting Feb 25th, DCF, Tampa
- World Refugee Day Meeting Committee Meeting, Feb 24th at 10 at Dickenson Elementary

Upcoming Task Force Meetings:

- March 4th- PTECH, Clearwater Campus
- May 6th- Location TBA, Special Resettlement Consultation Meeting
- July 22nd-Pinellas-PTECH, Clearwater Campus
- Oct 7th-Tampa, Location TBA
- Dec 9th-Pinellas-Location TBA

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