



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

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Shevaun L. Harris
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 15th, 2021
TO: Members of the Orlando Area Refugee Task Force
FROM: David Draper, Refugee Services (RS)
SUBJECT: Oct 13th, 2021, Task Force Meeting Minutes

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: Wednesday, Dec 8th, 2021
Time: 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 Noon
Location: Microsoft Teams or TBA

Contact: David Draper
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This task force has been active in the Orlando 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 thirty to forty 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 at the local, state, and national level; request for proposals, training, workshops, conferences, discuss refugee service needs and explore solutions to those needs. Meeting participants 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!

400 W. Robinson Street, S1111C, Orlando, Florida 32801

ORLANDO AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING

INTRODUCTION

This meeting was held through Microsoft Teams. Approximately 53 people were in attendance. David Draper, Community Liaison Manager, represented the Florida Department of Children and Families, Refugee Services (RS) Program; Rosa Chaves, Community Liaison for the Central Region, was also present. Everyone introduced themselves and the agencies that they represented through the chat in Microsoft Teams.

Special presentation

- **Emily Hackerson – Director of Jobversity at Upwardly Global** provided an overview of their organization and how it helps to lift immigrant professionals, (including refugees and asylum seekers) out of underemployment and into thriving jobs that align with their skills and education.
- **Xeix Colon – Department of Children and Families – CNR Program Administrator Hope Florida – A Pathway to Prosperity** Provided information about working with their customers to create a future of Self Sufficiency.

GENERAL UPDATES/ ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Kathy Walker – Program Manager Florida Department of Health Orange County** announced that they have not yet hired a Refugee Health Case Manager Nurse (still trying to hire). The lack of these nurses is impacting their operations, but they are being assisted by TB nurses. Because of the large flow of clients, they are seeing clients at a slower rate. .
- **Kevin Baker – Refugee Health Program Manager DOH Seminole County** announced they are also hiring nurses for their TB and Refugee Program. In June, they saw 16 refugees and in July 30 refugees.
- **Anne Packham, Marketplace Project Coordinator** informed the task force that refugees can apply for insurance through the Marketplace. Their organization hired 13 new navigators, including Creole, Portuguese, and Russian speakers. Open enrollment was extended until January 15.

- **Alexandra Garnier Mercier – Alzheimer and Dementia Resource Center/Brain Back program** let us know that they can provide support and counseling to the elderly, or any patient suffering from dementia. Also, they can provide resources for legal services and workshops for caregivers and family members. They have information in Creole, French, English, and Spanish.
- **Mayra Nunez – Manager of the Welfare Transition Program and SNAP** is looking to recruit community partners. They are also looking to hire staff in Leesburg, Orlando, and Kissimmee.
- **Wellington Ovalle – Department of Labor DOL** reminded the task force of labor laws and new minimum wage increases.
- **Benito Renelus – Regional TB Program Coordinator Department of Health Polk County** informed the task force that they are receiving 5-6 refugees weekly.
- **Karin Zikra – President of UCF’s the Refugee and Immigrant Education Initiative RIEI** (student organization), informed the task force that their organization supports refugees and has a free one-on-one virtual mentorship for immigrant and refugee high schoolers to help them apply for vocational studies, college, or university.
- **Fatima Ait Rami – Islamic Center of Orlando ICOrlando** let us know they have donated furniture and clothing for refugee families.
- **Shaimaa Elawdan – Catholic Charities – ESL Program Manager Adult Education**, informed the task force that new arrivals have been having issues with EAD and LPR delays. They are also conducting job fairs weekly (on site) for refugee clients in the employment program. They continue receiving a high volume of Haitians and Cubans. English classes continue in-person and online. They have hired 2 new ESOL teachers.
- **Monica Araujo – Catholic Charities – CRS Case Management Supervisor**, informed the task force that they are hiring a Creole speaking case manager. They have seen 80 to 90 new arrivals daily in September. Most of these clients are Cuban and Haitian. They are seeing single clients but also families with children.

David Draper, Department of Children and Families Refugee Services Community Liaison Manager CRS announced that Youth Co-Op was awarded the Comprehensive Refugee Services contract in Miami and began serving clients on October 1. Statewide, we continue to see an increase of Cuban and Haitian clients. Also, Afghans with humanitarian parole are now eligible for refugee services and benefits.

NEXT MEETING

Date: Wednesday Dec 9th, 2021

Time: 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM.

Location: Virtual Microsoft Teams

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