



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

**Ron DeSantis
Shevaun Harris**
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 15, 2021
TO: Members of the Tallahassee Refugee Task Force
FROM: Theresa Leslie, Refugee Services (RS)
SUBJECT: Task Force Meeting Minutes for June 8, 2021

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR:

Date: September 14, 2021
Time: 10:00 AM to 11:30 PM
Location: Department of Children and Families
Conference Call via TEAMS unless advised otherwise
Tallahassee, Florida 32399
Contact: Theresa Leslie
Office: (850) 778-4065
Cell: (850) 445-4040
E-Mail: Theresa.Leslie@myflfamilies.com

This task force has been active in the Tallahassee area in the past few years. The participants are representatives of various government agencies, private not-for-profit organizations and volunteer groups. An average of about twenty to twenty-five attend 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, 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.

TALLAHASSEE AREA REFUGEE TASK FORCE MEETING

INTRODUCTION

The meeting was held via conference call with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) Refugee Services (RS). Theresa Leslie called the meeting to order.

David Draper, DCF Refugee Services, provided “Opening Remarks” and reminded the group of the purpose and intent for the local RS Task Force meetings and again thanked them for their on-going participation and commitment to the refugees who reside in this area.

PRESENTATIONS

1. The first guest presenter was introduced. Susan Eccher, American Red Cross, Regional Manager Military and International Services, North Florida Region reminded participants of previous presentations related to Family Tracing, Family Reunification, more familiarly known as Restoring Family Links.

This is especially important to those refugees in Leon County that still have family in their home country. In case of a natural disaster such as a hurricane or earthquake local refugees can contact the Red Cross for their help in contacting their family members back home.

2. **Robert Vaden, U.S. Department of Labor, Community Outreach and Resource Planning Specialist** gave a presentation on the rights of refugee workers. That presentation will be shared via email with task force members.
3. **International Rescue Committee, Una Bilic, Site Manager presented program updates and current successes and challenges:**

IRC reported that for the past year staff, interns, and volunteers have been working remotely at home while assisting refugee clients through Zoom and What’s App applications. However, since January 2021 the office has been staffed with one person from 9 AM to 5 PM, Monday through Friday. This allows for appointments, completion of paperwork, and other case management activities.

Clients are healthy and are still enrolled in English classes at Adult and Community Education Center.

IRC reported that an AmeriCorps Vista employee and university interns are making calls to find other jobs for the other clients. Clients are also getting the maximum amount allowable of their SNAP benefits. IRC used their other funding streams to pay rent for many of the refugees during the past year.

IRC explained that many local refugees have approached the time when they can apply for citizenship. This will be a busy year for the clients with the assistance of FSU Center for the Advancement of Human Rights.

The AmeriCorps Vista person, Tristan Jahn gave an update of the volunteer mentors who are working with students through Zoom, in school visits, or some are making home visits.

This Mentoring program focuses on civic and social engagement while also supporting each client's individual educational and vocational advancement. The program is designed to give these individuals extra guidance and experiences that will contribute to their future.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 AM

Next Meeting:

Tuesday, September 14, 2021
10:00 to 11:30 AM

Department of Children and Families
Tallahassee, FL 32399
TEAMS CALL unless otherwise advised

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