**Minutes of the San Diego Refugee Forum Meeting**

Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2022

Location: Zoom meeting

Time: 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Attendees:

|  |
| --- |
| Abdi Abdillahi, SD County Refugee Coordinator |
| Alexis Burnstan, UCSD TASET Project |
| Anchalee Gaffney, Alliance for African Assistance |
| Anne Fosselman, El Cajon Valley HS Community Ctr |
| Anya Kuzma, Nile Sisters |
| Becky Moreno-Estrada, FBI Victim Specialist |
| Bethlehem Wolkeba, JFS Breaking Down Barriers |
| Bob Walsh, SDRF Secretary |
| Brian Tam, Refugee Services Bureau, CDSS |
| Carol Crisp, PCG |
| Carol Lewis, El Cajon Collaborative |
| Chelsea Hill, Nile Sisters |
| Cipriano Vargas, Office of Sup. Lawson-Remer |
| Cynthia To, SD County Community Health |
| Dan Wilson |
| Daria Tomsky, IRC Youth Program |
| David Schupack, Bridge Builders Network |
| Dyanne Anderson, UCSD/HHSA SD Immunization Program |
| H Valencia, Equus Workforce Solutions |
| Hanna Ingersoll, Survivors of Torture Intl |
| Hassan Abdirahman, Somali Family Service |
| Hawi Abdulkadir, Somali Family Service |
| Henri Migala, International Relief Teams |
| Ilena Gudino, JFS Employment Program Manager |
| Isabelle Darling, Upwardly Global |
| Ismael Avilez, Casa Cornelia Law Center |
| Jacqueline Garcia |
| Jamie Moody, UCSD Health, Dental Health |
| Jan Jarrell, SD College of Continuing Ed |
| Jason Bercovitch, Rep Scott Peters |
| Jean Saito, First 5 First Steps |
| Jessica Hernandez, East Region Adult Ed |
| Jessica Mier, Rep. Jacobs |
| Jessie D, Sallie Hunt Foundation |
| Jessie Du Pre, SDUSD Children & Youth in Transition |
| Jonathan Morales, SDRCC |
| Juan Estrada, Molina Healthcare, Community Engagement |
| Judy Amaro, PCG |
| Kathleen Dang, Rep. Jacobs |
| Khatira Sarferaz |
| Lauren DeVietro |
| Lenda Hanna, SD County Off. Refugee Coord., Immigrant and Refugee Affairs |
| Liz Rosas, Somali Bantu Association |
| Lora Cayanan, CHIP, Suicide Prevention |
| Lori Eaton |
| Lucy Jasso, San Diego Youth Services |
| Madisen Ferras, COSD Community Health |
| Mary Joy Cunningham, IRC MSW Intern |
| Maryam Abdul-Sattar |
| Matthew Shillingburg |
| Maureen Hartin, Volunteers in Medicine |
| Melesa Flores, Equus Workforce Solutions |
| Meredith Fuentes, Upwardly Global |
| Michele Einspar, SD Unified School District, Children Youth in Transition |
| Minda Schweizer, Home for Refugees USA |
| Moyosore Buari, United Women of East Africa, SD Refugee Communities Coalition |
| Mytili Bala, South Asian Bar Assn SD |
| Nadine Kassab, PCG |
| Navid Zamani, License to Freedom |
| Nazira Adieva, County Office of Equitable Communities CAP |
| Neil Hovland, SD Unified School District Family Engagement |
| Parker Newburn, Home for Refugees USA |
| Patty Baker, CoSD Human Services |
| Peaceful, UPAC |
| Prisci Quijada, Refugee Health Coordinator, SDCHHS |
| Raelene Pellos, UCSD/HHSA SD Immunization Program |
| Rahmo Abdi, PANA |
| Rawnaq Behnam, UCSD Global Health |
| Renee Nasori, Grossmont College |
| Roberta Krauss, SD Continuing Ed CalWORKs |
| Sara Anas, Alliance for African Assistance |
| Serena Clark, Maynooth Univ. |
| Shlyn Guarian, SD County Child Welfare Services, Community Outreach |
| Sol Godinez, IRC Emergency Resources Coordiantor |
| Tala Alrousan, UCSD School of Public Health |
| Tania Rivera, IRC Emergency Resources Coordinator |
| Tsigealem Birhane, United Women of East Africa |
| Zaynab Farah, Somali Bantu Assn SD |
| ZZZ Call-In |

**Meeting facilitator**: Hassan Abdirahman, Chair

**1. Greeting and introduction of attendees** Hassan Abdirahman, Chair

79 attending, including 36 new

**2. Treasurer’s report** Carol Lewis, Treasurer

We now have 12 paid members for 2022. We’re still running behind our member total for last year. It’s time to be sending in membership dues to become a paid member of the Forum for this calendar year. Members are eligible to vote in Forum elections and to run for office. Dues provide funds for Task Forces and our World Refugee Day event.

This year we are making it easier to join by once again offering the option of mailing in a check (see membership form at website). You can also pay online through Paypal on the SDRF website <http://www.sdrefugeeforum.org/members.html>

You can send checks to: Carol Lewis, Little House Family Resources, 131 Avocado Ave., El Cajon CA 92020. Fees are $35 annually for individuals/small agencies and $70 for organizations. Membership forms can be found online at http://www.sdrefugeeforum.org/



Carol can provide an invoice if you want one. Contact Carol at [carol.lewis@elcajoncollaborative.org](mailto:carol.lewis@elcajoncollaborative.org)

**3. Resettlement updates**  Abdi Abdillahi, County Refugee Coordinator

**For the month of March 2022, San Diego County resettled a total of 160.**

* Primary Refugees (not including the Afghans) = 41
* Cuban/Haitian = 77
* **Total Afghans for March 2022 = 42**
  + Afghans with refugee status = 5
  + Afghans with SIV status = 28
  + Afghans with Humanitarian Parolee (HP) status = 9
* 94 out of the total 160 (or 59%) for March 2022 are number of individuals eligible for CalWORKs including children.
* 66 out of the total 160 (or 41%) for March 2022 are number of single adults/couples with no children under 18 eligible for Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA).

**For the FFY 21/22 (October 1, 2021 through March 31, 2022), San Diego County resettled a total of 3,140.**

* Primary Refugee (not including the Afghans) = 178
* Secondary Immigration (refugees that resettled in another county and moved to San Diego) = 5
* Asylee = 5
* Iraqi with SIV status = 4
* Cuban/Haitians = 450
* **Total Afghans for FFY 2021/2022 (October 1, 2021 through March 31, 2022) = 2,498**
  + Afghans with refugee status = 335
  + Afghans with SIV status = 71
  + Afghans with Special Immigrant Parolee (SIP) status = 131
  + Afghans with Humanitarian Parolee (HP) status = 1,961
* 1,961 or 79% out of the total Afghans 2,498 that resettled in San Diego County for FFY 21/22 (October 2021 through February 2022) are Afghans with Humanitarian Parolees (HPs).
* 2,506 out of the total arrivals 3,140 (or 80%) for FFY 2021/2022 are number of individuals eligible for CalWORKs including children.
* 634 out of the total arrivals 3,140 (or 20%) are number of single adults/couples with no children under 18 years eligible for Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA).

For more details, see the County Arrivals Report for March 2022 uploaded on the SDRF website.

From Brian Tam, Refugee Programs Bureau, Calif DSS:

Arrivals

• FY 2022 arrivals: October 1, 2021 through March 31, 2022 = total of 10,805 refugees and SIVs have been resettled in the US.

• CA has resettled 1,263 refugees and SIVs: 726 refugees and 537 SIVs

Letters and Guidance

• ORR released DCL 22-22 on March 28, 2022, which announced the permanent extension of the RCA eligibility benefit period from 8 to 12 months effective October 1, 2021.

• RPB will be issuing an ACWDL to provide additional policy and operational guidance regarding this extension.

**4. Task force updates** Task Force Chairs/representatives

Asylum

Alexis Burnstan reported:

The group has been meeting. Their priority project is still to compile a resource listing of mental health providers relevant to the asylum community. Please fill out the survey at

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfTAQiXxys1ab-cQaTLNzWHzc5YmPiXDwMAOv0Ym5xgd-YDFA/viewform?usp=sf_link>

Domestic Violence

Navid Zamani, License to Freedom, reported:

Events are being organized for the summer. The police department is being invited to share their procedures around cases of domestic violence. They will get a sense of the social and legal parameters, which can be confusing for refugees. They are doing outreach to improve and increase access.

Employment

Carol Crisp reported:

The Refugee Career Fair is set for Tuesday, May 10, 11-2pm. It will be an in-person event, possible to sign up for a virtual link. It will be held at Grossmont College, outdoors. So far 10 employers are signed up, including, Amazon, Sycuan, Cohn Restaurant Group. They are expecting to have around 20. They will provide translation services in Arabic, Pashto, Dari, and Spanish. Participants will be connected to the Grossmont College Career Center. They need more job seekers to sign up at link. They are partnering with IRC and others. See the flyer attached to these minutes. If you have any employers that would like to participate in the Welcoming Refugee Job Fair, or any questions, please reach out to Carol Crisp ccrisp@pcgus.com

Health

Cynthia To reported:

After a long hiatus, we will have our meeting on Thursday, April 28th from 10:30 to 12. Meeting invite and agenda will come soon. We will discuss nominations for our second Co-Chair, talk about our Medical Maps, and brainstorm events and projects for this year. If you are interested in joining, please contact Cynthia To at cynthia.to@sdcounty.ca.gov.

Mental Health

Bethlehem Wolkeba reported:

The Mental Health Task Force will be transitioning its leadership. Its main project continues, to create a map of mental health service providers who are culturally qualified, including for newly arrived asylees. Please help the task force identify qualified people.

Culturally Qualified Mental Health Providers Survey: https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=UvK1-s5zPU-vwLTWlV5JSZ2\_onwb\_1tKg0dDvHKvMpFURFdTV09FRlpPNjlXSjZFTVExRjlMN1FZUy4u

World Refugee Day Committee

Additional volunteers interested in working on this event, please contact SDRF Chair Hassan Abdirahman, [Hassan@sfssd.org](mailto:Hassan@sfssd.org).

**5. Presentation: Welfare to Work, Refugee Employment Services** San Diego County Self Sufficiency Services (SSS) and Refugee Service Providers Panel

Patty Baker, Human Services Program Manager, Self Sufficiency Services, County of San Diego Health & Human Services Agency

Nadine Kassab, PCG

Abdi Abdillahi, RES Program Manager and San Diego County Refugee Coordinator

Patty Baker began by describing CalWORKS (known nationally as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families - TANF). It is a program that gives cash aid and services to eligible needy families. It serves all 58 counties in the state and is operated locally by county departments. There are approximately 40, 853 CalWORKS recipients in San Diego County.

The CalWORKS Program offers cash aid and Employment Services (formerly known as Welfare to Work), which is the employment and training component of CalWORKS. ES was created to assist CalWORKS recipients to become employed and self-sufficient, and include Refugee Employment Services (RES). All CalWORKS recipients are required to participate in ES unless exempt. Employment-ready refugees are referred to participate in RES.

People will be referred to ES when CalWORKS is granted. They are referred to the appropriate ES Region based on their home address. They are assessed first for child care needs.

ES participants have the opportunity to:

* Acquire or enhance skills to obtain/retain employment
* Attend school (including ESL), receive training, obtain work experience
* Receive supportive services (including transportation, ancillary items, and child care) to ensure participation and employment
* Receive barrier removal services to ensure family well-being and stability

Transportation assistance includes public transportation, mileage reimbursement, parking permits.

Child care is provided for initial CalWORKS recipients, then transitions as families move off aid.

Refugee Employment Services (RES)

RES provides employment focused services to assist refugee families achieve self-sufficiency within the first 60 months after arrival to the United States.

Who is eligible?

* Refugees
* Asylees
* Cuban/Haitian Entrants
* Human Trafficking Victims
* Certain Amerasians

Priority of Services:

1. All newly arriving refugees during their first year in the U.S. who apply for services.
2. Refugees who are receiving cash assistance.
3. Unemployed refugees who are not receiving cash assistance.
4. Employed refugees in need of services to retain employment or to attain economic independence.

Refugees must participate in employment services to continue to receive cash assistance.

County refugee statistics looks at incoming refugees in terms of two categories regarding their eligibility for services: individuals eligible for Refugee Cash Assistance (single adults, or couple with no children), and those eligible for, or potentially eligible for, CalWORKS.

Employment Services Providers

The following organizations are contracted to provide ES:

* + Public Consulting Group (PCG) -- South, East and Central Regions
  + Equus -- North Regions
  + Cal-Learn -- Home Start, Palomar Health, Say San Diego, South Bay Community Services

See contact information on the attached flyer.

The CalWORKS Program also provides:

Housing Support Program (HSP)

* Temporary Housing Assistance
* Homeless Prevention Services and Utility Assistance
* Homelessness Prevention Services

Family Stabilization (FS)

* Homelessness Prevention Services and Utility Assistance
* Transportation Emergency Assistance
* Behavioral Health

The program has housing navigators to help participants find permanent housing, and helps them achieve housing stability. They can provide 6 months of rental subsidies after securing permanent housing. During that time, they also give support for employment so participants can continue paying their rent.

See also: <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhsa/programs/sd/community_action_partnership/RES.html>

**6. Community announcements**

Serena Clark, researcher at Maynooth University

Serena is working on a project to document stories of refugees in the US. We want to learn from refugees and speak to those willing to share their stories and experiences living in the US and tell these stories through the consequence of the US government's policies. With this, we hope to work alongside refugees and use these experiences to help inform policy, placing them as experts because they have first-hand experiences of migration. Please let me know of any organizations or people in the Forum that would be willing to help us connect with people willing to share their experiences. [Serena.clark@mu.ie](mailto:Serena.clark@mu.ie)

Minda Schweitzer, Home for Refugees

We are a co-sponsorship organization looking to raise, equip, and guide community groups across the nation to help refugees throughout their first year of resettlement. We partner with RA’s like IRIS, IILA, IRC, and more. We have supported over 100 Community Sponsorship Teams since our inception 4 years ago. Our group is active with the Los Angeles Refugee Forum. We're looking to partner with SD refugee agencies. You can read more about our work here: [www.homeforrefugeesusa.org](http://www.homeforrefugeesusa.org) Our emails are Minda Schweizer m.schweizer@hfrusa.org and Parker Newburn p.newburn@hfrusa.org.

Mytili Bala, South Asian Bar Association

I am the current president of the South Asian Bar Association of San Diego, and we've launched an Afghan Outreach Project to support resettled Afghan judges and lawyers find employment within our legal community. We are connecting with law firms that are interested in hiring them. Please contacdt me at [mytili@gmail.com](mailto:mytili@gmail.com)

Chelsea Hill, Nile Sisters Development Initiative

We are currently seeking volunteers who speak Swahili to assist with tutoring youth in the San Diego Unified School District. If you or anyone you know would like to volunteer, or if you can connect me to any relevant resource, such as tutoring programs that have Swahili speakers, please email me at chill@nilesisters.org

Renee Nasori, Grossmont College

An in-person refugee job fair will be held Tuesday, May 10 from 11-2pm at Grossmont College. Please invite clients, customers, family, friends to the event. Training workshops are also being held. See flyer attached. See Task Force notes above.

Hannah Ingersoll, Survivors of Torture, International

Survivors of Torture, International is currently recruiting contracted therapists. Must be licensed or license-eligible and working with a supervisor. Contact: survivors@notorture.org

Tsigealem Birhane, United Women of East Africa

We have a program called Baking Connection where we highlight the importance of seeking help, creating a support system, and friendship. Breaking down barriers and stigmas that get in the way of seeking support. Catered to East African Women. The aim of this program is to create a healthy open dialogue about mental health and create a safe space to talk about stressors in individuals' daily life, all while baking and cooking healthy foods. Get in touch at: tsigedesbele@gmail.com phone number 6194087212

Anya Kuzma, Nile Sisters Development Initiative

If any of the partners and attendees on this meeting are interested in receiving a presentation about the dangers of vaping, smoking and other tobacco related health risks, please reach out to me. I work for the FULSToP program. akuzma@nilesisters.org

**7. Approval of the minutes of the March 2022 meeting** Bob Walsh, Secretary

The minutes were approved.

**Adjournment**: Hassan Abdirahman, Chair, 11:45 a.m.

**Next Meeting**: May 17, 2022

Minutes recorded by Bob Walsh, Secretary