

San Diego Refugee Forum

General Meeting Minutes – April 20, 2008

I. Call to order at 10:40 am

Hamse Warfa

Present: Ralph Achenbach, Sid Voorakkara, Kathi Anderson, Beatriz Ledezma, Suzette St. Pierre, Sara C. Reinig, Ahmed Said, Melissa Dennison, Debbie Rull, Besma Coda, Paula Lloyd, Samantha Hurst, Jennifer Tracy, Michael McKay, Janice Stucke, Bob Montgomery, Brent Freeman, Ellee Igoe, Dung Le, Bounghong Khommarath, Dena Lewerke, Etleva Bejko, Dilkhwaz Ahmed, Juana Duenas, Florence Clark, Lejla Voloder, Hamse Warfa.

II. Introductions

- Lejla Voloder introduced Chaldean and Middle Eastern Social Services, Muslim Community Services of San Diego, Dr. B.S.L. Hurst and Nola Butler Burt & Associates as new members.

III. Minutes and Announcements

- Ralph Achenbach noted that the Refugee Forum aims to go paperless and that in the future, all minutes and agendas will be available through the Forum website: www.SDRefugeeForum.org
- Motion to approve minutes: Dr Hurst, Second: Hamse Warfa
- All in favor, no nays, no abstentions
- Mike McKay announced that Catholic Charities has submitted the continuation application for the Wilson Fish collaborative with Jewish Family Services and IRC for year four of the five-year grant.
- Melissa Dennison of Jewish Family Services noted that \$6,000 are available through the 'Fix It' service to fix refugee homes, particularly those of senior citizens, through the end of July and made available an information packet.

IV. Convening

- Mike McKay reported on behalf of the Outreach Committee their recommendation to make certain changes and additions to the content available on the website, incl. the Forum membership application form, copy of the bylaws, members' rights & responsibilities statement, dates of future meetings, and links to outside resources and service providers. He reiterated the committee's recommendation to acknowledge new members at the beginning of each meeting and the encouragement to continuously invite new potential members.
- Dena Lewerke reported on behalf of the Advocacy Committee that Kushbindar Lally of California Endowment presented to the committee at the most recent meeting on available resources and that the committee welcomed new member Ellee Igoe of the IRC. The committee has created a survey/score sheet tool for health clinics with a focus on language accessibility.

V. Focus: County Medical Programs: Suzette St. Pierre, County of San Diego Medical Program Manager

- Ms. St Pierre noted that there are approx. 100 different MediCal programs, resulting in all information shared necessarily only skimming the surface.
- In response to the questions submitted by Forum members prior to the May meeting, Ms. St. Pierre further noted that:
- Applications for MediCal can be processed in person at family resource center, via mail or via phone (866-262-9881). Additionally, 13 schools in San Diego currently offer express lane applications/enrollments through the national school lunch program.

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- A new rule requires proof of citizenship/alien status & identity at the time of application. A social security number is required for the full scope of services.
- Several avenues of qualifying for MediCal include the CalWorks program, SSI, Foster Care & Adoption Assistance, Refugee Medical assistance and Refugee Cash assistance.
- Applications are processed within 45 days of receipt of all required documentation but will be kept open without time limit pending this receipt. It takes an additional few days to receive the benefits card. Applications based on disability are processed by the state within 90 days but typically take 6 months or longer.
- For immediate needs, expedited applications within 10 days are possible.
- The CIN has been replaced by the BIC (benefits identity card) number, a 14-digit code on the benefits card which may be available to the applicant prior to receiving the card.
- There are special 'accelerated enrollment programs' for children.
- Changing a plan within MediCal is entirely possible and solely up to the client. However, a change of plan may require a change of physician, since not all health care practitioners take all plans.
- The MediCal fraud hotline can be called on 800-822-6222 to report overbilling by doctors and other suspected abuses.
- If bills for services covered by MediCal remained unpaid, they can be retroactively paid within one year. If more than one year has elapsed since the time of service or if the service was not covered by MediCal to begin with, the client can call legal aid on 877-534-2524 or check the Consumer Health Alliance website for resources and assistance at www.healthconsumer.org.
- Translation services are best obtained by first approaching the eligibility worker, through a family member/friend capable of interpreting if necessary. MediCal pays for translators for as many languages as possible via three contractors: Alliance for African Assistance, Interpreters Unlimited, and Asian Languages.
- If attempts to obtain translation services are unsuccessful, the client can contact the Civil Rights Coordinator Jennifer Cooke on 619-685-2298, Jennifer.cooke@sdcounty.ca.gov.
- Ms. Cooke may be available to present to the Forum on a separate occasion.

VI. Financial Report

Lejla Voloder reported the ending account balance as \$1,550.09 and noted that membership renewal forms will be sent out via email shortly and need to be returned to her by the June meeting and no later than the end of June.

VII. County Reports

- Juana Duenas noted that Barbara Jimenez was unable to attend the Forum meeting but hopes to be in attendance in June.

VIII. Provider and State Advisory Reports

- Bob Montgomery reported that the next state advisory meeting is scheduled for May 21.

IX. Adjournment at 12:00 noon

X. Next Meeting: June 17th, 10:30 am