

San Diego Refugee Forum

General Meeting Minutes – October 20, 2009

I. Call to order at 10:45 am

Hamse Warfa

Present: Ralph Achenbach, Brooke Truesdale, Sheryl Ashley, Barbara Tucker, Jibriel Blejani, Brent Freeman, Laura Lopez, Rene Santiago, Juana Duenas, Morgan Congdon, Jen Cordaro, Pamela Kolbas, Maacah Marah, Sara Vaz, Paige Newman, Awichu Akiwanya, Paula Lloyd, Elizabeth Lou, Dilkhwaz Ahmed, Sharonam Moallem, Mindy Tran, Lisa Bright, Diane Petach, Diana Ross, Paulino Paida, Jill McGougan, Juan Estrada, Shukri Adam, Ahmed Sahid, Eteva Bejko, Moni Kehinde, Cara Kiggins, Mariana Vasconcelos, Karis Grounds, Ester Herrera, Cynthia Estrada, Besma Coda, Mike McKay, Samantha Hurst, Bob Montgomery, Kathryn McCarthy, Lejla Voloder, Sean Riordan.

II. Introductions & announcements

- Jen Cordaro of Alliance for African Assistance announced the availability of free cultural sensitivity workshops on the Myanmar populations in San Diego through the agency's 'Building a Healthy Myanmar Community' Program. Those interested in offering the workshop to their staff, students, clients or peers can contact Jen at (619) 286-9052, extension 252.
- Laura Lopez of International Rescue Committee San Diego announced that the agency is offering a new program providing naturalization assistance to elderly refugees (age 65 or older), incl. free computerized completion of the N-400 form, photos & mailing, citizenship classes, interview preparation and follow-up services. For more information, please call (619) 641-7510, extension 254.

III. Minutes

- Awichu Akwany moved to approve last month's minutes. Motion was seconded by Jen Cordaro. All present approved. No nays, no abstentions.

IV. Presentation: Health Literacy Curriculum of Community Health Improvement Partners and The San Diego Council on Literacy

- Shreya Sasaki, MPH, senior manager for policy and programs at CHIP, provided an overview of the organizations health literacy initiatives and opportunities for collaboration with the refugee services provider community. Slides and details on the presentation are available on the Refugee Forum website, www.SDRefugeeForum.org.

V. Financial Report

- Lejla Voloder reported the new account balance as \$9,476.00, with \$445 in expenses for translations and printing of materials for the advocacy project since last month's general meeting.

VI. Committee Updates

- Paulino Paida and Mike McKay reported on behalf of the nominations committee that four candidates have been nominated for next month's elections of officers. The candidates are Elizabeth Lou, Sara Vaz, Awichy Akwany and Ralph Achenbach.
- Ralph Achenbach reported on behalf of the advocacy committee meeting that stakeholder meetings regarding language barriers to accessing health care have continued to generate positive feedback and that all are welcome to join the advocacy committee at its planning meetings just prior to the Refugee Forum general meetings on every third Tuesday of the month, at 9 AM.

VII. County Reports

- Juana Duenas reminded all participants of the ORR Request for Proposals for Supplemental Services for Recently Arrived Refugees and urged all Forum members to consider collaborating on potential proposals.

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- Juana Duenas further stressed the current concerns regarding the H1N1 virus and the importance of effective dissemination of information to the refugee communities.

VII. Provider & State Advisory Reports

- Robert Montgomery reported that the State 2010 Refugee Summit will be held from June 23-25, 2010, in Sacramento. He will keep the Forum informed on the summit as it develops.
- Lejla Voloder reported that President Obama signed the presidential determination on time allowing for 80,000 new arrivals. The resettlement program at Catholic Charities, Diocese San Diego, is already very busy with an average of 40 arrivals per week. The majority of arrivals are Iraqi, with some Burmese and Bhutanese free cases. Affidavits of Relationships are still on hold. A brief discussion regarding the Family Reunification (P-3) component of the US Refugee Program ensued, mostly with regards to DNA testing. Robert Montgomery added that the new regulations for the P-3 Program have yet to be released by BPRM.

Adjournment at 11:50 am

IX. Next Meetings:

- *General meeting: November 17th, 10:30 am*
- *Advocacy committee meeting: November 17th, 9:00 am*
- *Special training on US healthcare system: November 3rd, 10:30 am*