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

Date: Tuesday, September 20, 2022

Location: Zoom meeting

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

Attendees:

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| Abdi Abdillahi, CA Refugee Programs Bureau |
| Afrah Abdulkader, IRC Survivor Advocate |
| Aliaa Al-Tabatabaee, Somali Family Service |
| Allie Clerget, Home for Refugees |
| Amanda Urena, SD Unified School District |
| Anchalee Gaffney, IRC Community Sponsorship |
| Anne Fosselman, El Cajon Valley HS Community Ctr |
| Annie Dunlap, SD Co Off. Immigrant and Refugee Affairs |
| Bella DeSantis, SD County CSA |
| Bob Walsh, SDRF Secretary |
| Brett Hall, CHIP Community Health Improvement Program, SD County Suicide Prevention Council |
| Brian Tam, Refugee Services Bureau, CDSS |
| Bridget Shidler, SD Co Public Health Nurse |
| Brittney Ochira, National Conflict Resolution Center |
| Carol Lewis, El Cajon Collaborative |
| Claire Enemark, SD Refugee Communities Coalition Behavioral Health |
| Clint Carney, Survivors of Torture Intl |
| Daria Tomsky, IRC Youth Program |
| Diana Jones |
| Edith Quintero, SDCCE CalWORKS Director |
| Eli Nash, Dr., Family Health Centers SD |
| Elissa Hill, Somali Family Service |
| Hasan Radhi, OIRA Equitable Communities |
| Hassan Abdirahman, Somali Family Service |
| Hawi Abdulkadir, Somali Family Service |
| Heidi DeGuzman, SD Immunization Partnership UCSD |
| Irene Elizabeth Garcia, SD Co Child Lead Prevention |
| Ismael Avilez, Casa Cornelia Law Center |
| Jane Hoey, Women's Empowerment Intl |
| Jaren Mullen, IRC volunteer |
| Javier Ayala, Dr. Dean Career Ed, Grossmont College |
| Jeff Yim, Home for Refugees USA |
| Jovanna Aguilera |
| Juan Estrada, Molina Healthcare, Community Engmt |
| Judy Amaro, PCG |
| Kathryn LaPointe, Church of the Brethren |
| Lauren DeVietro |
| Lauren Truss, USCIS Immigration Services Officer |
| Lenda Hanna, SD Co OIRA, Dept of Equitable Communities |
| LP |
| Mary Joy Cunningham, Survivors of Torture Intl |
| Maryam Abdul-Sattar |
| Minda Schweizer, Home for Refugees USA |
| Moyosore Buari, United Women of East Africa, SD Refugee Communities Coalition |
| Naz Ali, CDSS Refugee Programs Bureau |
| Nazira Adieva, SD Co Off Eq Comm |
| Neil Hovland, SD Unified School District Family Engagement |
| Paw Say, Karen Organization SD |
| Paw Wah, Karen Organization SD |
| Plahset Moo, Karen Organization SD |
| Prisci Quijada, Refugee Health Coordinator, SDCHHS |
| Randa Baramki, SD Co OIRA, Dept of Equitable Communities |
| Renee Nasori, Grossmont College |
| Rita Shamoon, CALWORKS job developer |
| Ryana Contreras, IRC |
| Sandra Candler Wafer, FACE Dept., Cajon Valley Schools |
| Sarah Conklin, ORR DRA R9 |
| Sediqa Fahimi, Welcome US |
| Shirley Barajas, IRC Seattle, Resettlement |
| Sol Godinez, IRC Emergency Resources Coordinator |
| Stephania Ortega, IRC Services for Asylees |
| Tania Rivera, IRC Economic Empowerment Sup. |
| Tiffani Hamilton, SD Co Off Eq Comm |

**Meeting facilitator**: Hassan Abdirahman, Chair

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

63 attending, including 20 new

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

The Forum has $8,216 in its bank account. The main use for this money is to provide funds to support task force events and projects. Each task force can receive an expense budget of $500 per year.

Membership currently stands at 25. Only paid members have voting rights in Forum elections, which will be held in November. Members are listed on the SDRF website with a link to their organization.

You can pay online through Paypal on the SDRF website <http://www.sdrefugeeforum.org/members.html> or pay by check. 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. SDRF Elections**

The annual Forum elections will be coming up soon. The process will begin at this meeting with a call for three volunteers for the Election Committee and will end at the November 15 meeting with the announcement of the results. An email explaining the process and exact schedule for this year will be sent out to the Forum soon.

The Forum has four officer positions: Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. The term of office is two years. All four positions were up for election last November. Chair, Secretary and Treasurer were elected, and the Vice Chair position was left vacant. At the end of this year, Secretary Bob Walsh will resign his post and give a new person a chance to serve. This will put the officers on an election cycle of two positions opening each year.

Responding to the call for volunteers are: Anchalee Gaffney, Kathryn LaPointe, and Clint Carney. Thank you for helping out, and the officers will be in touch with you soon.

**4. Resettlement updates**

The report on the county’s August arrivals is being prepared and will be distributed soon.

Naz Ali of the State Refugee Programs Bureau reported:

* Afghan resettlement totals from Oct. 1 to Aug. 31, 2022:

27,736 refugees and SIVs have entered the US, more than 3,500 have arrived in California.

* The Afghan Placement Assistance (APA) program dating from Sep 2021 is closing.
* There have been 95,000 arrivals in the US since July, to Aug. 31. In California, there have been 12,669 Afghan refugees, SIV, and Humanitarian Parolees. 77% HP, 22% refugees. Sacramento had the largest number.
* The Afghan Support and Investment Program (ASIP) providing assistance with housing will stop accepting applications after Sep. 30. Allocations will be based on available funding. Up to one year rental subsidies are still going on.
* The Afghan arrival job readiness program is working with the Upwardly Global organization.
* Ukrainians: 61,000 have arrived in the US. Applications in CA: 28% LA, 27% Sacramento, 22% Bay Area, 8% San Diego.

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

Asylum

Mary Joy Cunningham (now on the staff of Survivors of Torture Intl) reported:

The task force has been gathering information on resources for asylum-seekers covering a range of subjects (health, legal, shelter, etc.) and has a list ready to share with the community. If anyone would like to be added to the list before it goes public, email: mjcunningham@notorture.org. The task force will be working with Forum officers to make the list available.

Domestic Violence

Afrah Abdulkader reported:

The task force has been working with the Asylum Task Force, collaborating with the DA’s office, IRC, and other agencies to work on workshops related to new arrivals, specifically Afghans, on topics such as how to report DV situations. Also working with newcomers networks. They will organize a monthly cultural festival starting Nov. 5. Also working with the Sheriff’s Dept. on a committee for knowing your rights. They will share a flyer on this in the future.

Other information supplied by Chair Navid Zamani:

1. October is DV awareness month, with numerous events happening around the county.

2. Every 3rd Saturday of the month One Safe Place has a different celebration and theme.

3. Month of August has 500 cases of domestic violence reported - these are general arrests, not just for refugees. We do not have that data at this time.

4. A tragic murder occurred in the community earlier this month, with a father killing mother. Community agencies, including License to Freedom, coordinated to provide ongoing support to family. Unclear if it is DV at this time, as justice protocols proceed.

5. Task force is working on a campaign to address DV in an ongoing and sustained manner.

6. We are aiming to involve Child Welfare Services more prominently, as there continues to be significant issues with cultural competency and accountability for the agency.

We meet on the first Thursday of the month from 1-2 pm. Feel free to reach out to Navid Zamani for more info on the SD Refugee Forum DV Task Force – Navid@licensetofreedom.org

Education

Amanda Urena reported:

Classes resumed at San Diego Unified on August 29 to start the new school year. A new policy provides free breakfast for all students. Masking policies are determined by schools.

Employment

Renee Nasori reported:

The Employment Task Force will join forces with Grossmont College in sponsoring a job fair at Grossmont College on Wednesday, October 26 -- the 44th Annual Career Expo. It is a major community-wide event, with more than 100 employers lined up so far. Interpreters will be available. A good opportunity to network. Also working with educators to arrange workshops on soft skills, employment preparation. Flyers will go out as the even nears. renee.nasori@gcccd.edu

There will be a Manufacturing Expo Tuesday, October 4, 3-6 pm at the Ronald Reagan Community Center in El Cajon, with displays, exhibits, information and opportunities for job seekers and others. There will be more than 20 employers hiring for manufacturing in San Diego, as well as over 20 resources in education, training and professional development including resumes and application submittal processes. The event is a project of the East County Economic Development Council. Sponsors include PCG and Grossmont College, along with SDGE.

Rayan Kaskos of IRC reported:

IRC is working with Welcome US in holding a job fair September 9-10. It will be at the Marriott Hotel in El Cajon. Welcome.US and REACT DC are hosting the Newcomer Hiring Fair on September 30th and October 1st for Afghan and Ukrainian newcomers to San Diego and others, with the support and partnership of the State Refugee Coordinator of California, Workbay, San Diego Refugee Forum, Grossmont College, Somali Bantu Association of America, IRC, MAKE Projects, Somali Family Service of San Diego, Afghan Refugee Relief, and the San Diego Afghan Refugees Aid Group. There will be employers from many different industries. Transportation and interpreters will be available. Shuttle pickup locations will be announced.

Health

Prisci Quijada, County Refugee Health Coordinator, reported:

The task force has been working on a project to assemble hygiene kits, hand sanitizer and children’s coloring books for refugees and asylum seekers coming into health clinics.

Mental Health

Claire Enemark reported:

The task force will be meeting on the second Monday of the month on Zoom. They will work on setting goals for the task force for the coming year. They are looking to add more members; if interested, contact Bethlehem Wolkeba, [bethlehemw@jfssd.org](mailto:bethlehemw@jfssd.org). For any other questions about the mental health task force, feel free to e-mail: Claire@uweast.org

Resources

Several of the pages on the Forum website’s Resources tab were recently updated. See <http://www.sdrefugeeforum.org/>

This is a great place for task forces to post information they would like to share with the community. It really lends itself to this function and is or will be used by the Health, Asylum, and Mental Health task forces and others for this purpose. If you would like to post something or have suggestions on what you would like to see up there, contact Bob Walsh at [bwalsh48@cox.net](mailto:bwalsh48@cox.net)

**6. Presentation: Grossmont College Employment Training for Newcomers**

Dr. Javier Ayala, Dean of Career Technical Education and Workforce Development javier.ayala@gcccd.edu  
Renee Nasori, Career Services Director

renee.nasori@gcccd.edu

Dr. Ayala

Grossmont College has been operating for 50 years. It is a two-year community college that offers more than 150 academic programs that lead to associate degrees, professional certificates and successful transfer to four-year universities for completion of a bachelor's degree. It offers numerous training programs that prepare student for employment. For example, computer science studies can lead into a BA program. There are also short-term programs; and in some cases, after taking one class, a student can get into the workforce. There are accelerated training programs, some of which have a 100% job placement rate. GC training programs can lead to jobs in the IT field. There are thousands of jobs in office careers in our current employment scene.

Classes are back in session as the fall semester started Aug. 22. 55% of classes are online, the rest are on campus in person. Students can still sign up, as a new set of classes are opening in October.

The school has 20,000 students. Most are aged 18-24, but in career education areas the average is between 34 and 40.

The Division of Career and Technical Education/Workforce Development offers a variety of associate degree and certificate programs and courses. These programs offer career and technical skills training for entry level, upgrading existing skills, or preparing for advanced training.

CTE programs, and the types of jobs they can lead into, include:

Administration of Justice (security officers)

Business Administration

Business Office Technology (office assistants and administrators)

Child Development, Education, Family Studies (preschool and child care teachers and teacher assistants)

Computer Science and Information Systems (IT specialists, tech support)

Culinary Arts (cooks, shift leaders)

Drone Technology (videographers, camera operators) – 220 students graduated from this program

Office Technology Training

Management, Marketing, and International Business

Supply Chain Logistics (delivery drivers, quality inspectors, production supervisors)

90% of students don’t pay for their first and second year.

Find more information at <https://www.grossmont.edu/why-choose-grossmont/career-education-programs.php>

Renee Nasori

The school offers a variety of short-term programs and degree programs that support refugee education. There are one-semester programs, 3-4 months, and longer-term options with the opportunity to transfer to university. They have a staff of career counselors to meet with applicants to create their individual instructional plans. Applicants will first be referred to the Career Services Center, where they will identify goals and explore majors and do a career assessment. The focus is generally on employment.

They offer special assistance to “adult re-entry” students. Some students come in with skills, and the school will work to support them. The school will also connect with resettlement agencies for students who are receiving social services.

The school offers free, one-hour training workshops. A certificate can be earned. Attend remote or in-person. Topics include Time and Stress Management, Effective Communication, Customer Service, Financial Literacy, Resume Writing, Preparing for Interviews, and others.

**7. Community announcements**

Sediqa Fahimi, Welcome US

A Newcomer Hiring Fair will be held on September 30th and October 1st for Afghan and Ukrainian newcomers to San Diego. See detail above in Task Force Updates.

Renee Nasori, Grossmont College

A Manufacturing Expo will be held in El Cajon on October 4, presenting information, workshops, and job opportunities. See detail above in Task Force Updates.

Clint Carney, Survivors of Torture, International

Clint announced that Kathi Anderson, who founded the organization in 1997 is retiring. The new Executive Director is Etleva Bejko, formerly Director of Refugee and Immigration Services at Jewish Family Service San Diego.

Brett Hall, CHIP Community Health Improvement Program, SD County Suicide Prevention Council

San Diego County Suicide Prevention Council Monthly Meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 27th from 10:00 am-11:30 am via Zoom. Link: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86245631916?pwd=Z0h2TEtndFY0Mno5M1QzdGp4eWU3dz09 Meeting ID: 862 4563 1916, Passcode: spc2022

CHIP Question Persuade Refer Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training will be held on Friday, September 23rd from 10:30am-12:00 pm via Zoom. Link: https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0oc-msqDoqG9ZR0LEiPgJVeEq6Yzy2WC28

For more information or to get involved, please email Brett Hall at bhall@sdchip.org.

Neil Hovland, SD Unified Family Engagement Department

San Diego Unified Family Engagement Department hosts lots of family workshops through Zoom. Please check our events calendar for more information. Currently we are focusing on college admission and then next month, financial aid. <https://sdusdfamilies.org/events/>

Bella DeSantis, CSA San Diego County

There will be a multicultural festival organized by the Welcome Newcomer Network on November 5th from 9am -1pm in El Cajon. They will be providing food as well as resource packets to those that attend. It is a drive thru/walk thru style. For questions, please contact 619-444-5700.

**8. Approval of minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the August 16 meeting were approved.

**Adjournment**: Hassan Abdirahman, Chair, 12:02 a.m.

**Next Meeting**: October 18, 2022

Minutes recorded by Bob Walsh, Secretary