

FILE NOTE

SUBJECT: PRRPC Meeting

DATE: November 13th, 2009

ATTENDEES: Esta Yifrach and Gail Zukermann, JEVS, Sarah Peterson and Hansi Wang, HIAS, Nicole Boehner, HIAS AOP, Beverly Mallard, NSC, Janet Panning and Chinemelu Oguekwe, LCFS, Reina Kimso, EDSI, Christa Loffelman and Thoai Ngyuen, SEAMAAC, Ludy Soderman and Stephanie Stover, Philadelphia School District, Jillian McGilvery, Upper Darby School District, Shazia Waters, State of PA, Dept. of Education, Evan Shuey, State of PA, Refugee Resettlement Program.

DISCUSSION:

1. Gail Zukerman opened the meeting, giving the floor to Evan Shuey. He began by giving out the Bureau of Employment and Training (BETP)'s new address, which is:

Bureau of Employment and Training
2nd Floor West
7th and Forster Streets
Harrisburg, PA 17105

Evan Shuey informed providers that all state funded programs are required to attend the PRRPC. Mr. Shuey then asked agencies to report on specific arrival numbers.

HIAS began, anticipating 15-20 arrivals during the first quarter, most of which would be Buremse (Karen, Ch'in).

LCFS is projecting 100, with 32 in the October 1st-November 30th time period. Many of these individuals will be Bhutanese, Iraqi, and Burmese.

NSC stated that they have just under 400 and will likely have 425, with 50-60 people arriving in a month. The population is heavily Iraqi, with some Burundi, Bhutanese, and Eritrean peoples. NSC is also resettling many Burmese populations, including Karen, Chin, and Burman Muslim clients.

NSC, HIAS, and LCFS each expressed concern over the lack of match grant slots. Many are shrinking or have run out. Match Grants are

declining as years go by, presenting a greater challenge to resettlement for each agency.

2. Nicole Boehner and Hansi Wang of HIAS (along with the group) discussed the following facts: Currently, there are not enough Matching Grant spots for all of Pennsylvania's eligible refugees and asylees. The same is projected for the years to come. Refugee resettlement agencies prioritize the available spots for the arriving refugees meaning that asylees, who are supposed to receive the same services as refugees, no longer can be enrolled. The impact of this is primarily felt in the area of housing because other existing housing assistance resources do not equal the housing assistance provided by the Matching Grant Program.

Short of advocating for increased funding for the Matching Grant Program, suggestions at the PRRPC meeting focused on accessing newly created city funding to prevent homelessness. Much of the funding is not specifically for immigrants, but they should still be able to access it. Additionally, PICC has a very active working group on health issues, therefore they might be interested in creating another working group for housing.

Stimulus funds, housing networks, and a Refugee Housing Coalition were also discussed. Thoai Ngyuen of SEAMAAC discussed an article on the subject of predatory lending. Other discussions regarding the necessity of a renter's license to get stimulus money and housing agencies were also mentioned.

3. The subject of World Refugee Day was brought up. Mr. Shuey explained that no state funding would exist for this current year, and thus, he recommended that other sources be considered, such as private donors. Some concerns were aired, along with a discussion of how WRD should be implemented. Ludy Solderman expressed a desire to recognize the day in order to teach the public about what it means to be a refugee and illustrate the struggles of all who have come to America and started a new life. A suggestion regarding the Mayor's Office was brought up. Mayor Nutter was thought to be a possible source of help, and several individuals (Thoai Ngyuen, Sarah Peterson, and Ludy Solderman) agreed to discuss the matter further.
4. Shazia Waters spoke about 2 main issues related to K-12 refugee education: enrollment and communication. The enrollment issue focused on schools not having access to the I-94 from refugee families because it reveals a child's immigration status, whether or not it was intended to do so. The federal Civil Rights Act and Pennsylvania School Code support this. Resettlement agencies helping refugee parents complete forms for school enrollment can use the I-94 to establish a child's date of birth (DOB), but these forms should not be given to the school, even upon the

request of the school. If refugee parents want to provide this information to the school, the resettlement agency, being an advocate for the refugee family, should advise against this. If a child's DOB is in question, then a written affidavit from the parent will suffice by PA School Code.

5. There was also a discussion about home-school communication, which Shazia provided and Jillian McGilvery and Stephanie Stover elaborated on.
 - Communication with parents must be in the parent's preferred language and mode of communication. Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VI.
 - It is the Local Education Agency's (LEA) responsibility to provide for translation (written) and/or interpretation (oral) services. In order to do this, LEAs must determine the preferred mode of communication of the parent and develop a plan for translation and interpreter services.
 - Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) provides translated documents necessary for communication with parents and students regarding general education and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements via TRANSACT at www.transact.com.
 - Other translated PA forms for special education can be found at the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) website at www.pattan.net.
 - Individualized LEA documents must be provided by the LEA and must be part of the regular budget planning of the LEA for core language instructional programs. Here is the Link to the Basic Education Circular: <http://www.pde.state.pa.us/k12/cwp/view.asp?A=11&Q=45272&eslNav=|4974|&eslNav=|4974|>
6. Further presentations by the Philadelphia School District highlighted special activities such as the Translation and Interpretation Center (TAIC) and the various Language Hotlines available to parents. The translation of every school document was listed as a valid goal for the program.
7. Unfortunately, the PRRPC was running short on time, requiring an early termination. Thoai Nyguen volunteered to host a meeting.
8. The next PRRPC meeting was scheduled for February the 12th at 10:00 am at SEAMAAC. The address is:

1711 S. Broad Street
Philadelphia, PA 19148