

Refugee Advisory Board Meeting
Refugee Education & Training Center

March 25th, 2021

Board Member Attendees – Nate McDonald, Hayder Allkhenfr, Janice Kimball, Natalie El-Deiry, Rick Bouillon, Steve Pluim, Ze Min Xiao, Aden Batar, Jim McConkie, Brian Redd, Joshua Bell, Shu Cheng, Pamela Atkinson, Martin Bates, Kelli Meranda, Fatima Dirie

Members Excused –Casey Cameron (Chair), Brent Platt

Welcome and Introduction – Nate McDonald

- **Approval of Minutes**

Motion to Approve: Nate McDonald requested the motion to approve minutes from the September Advisory Board Meetings.

- Martin Bates made the motion to approve the minutes with no corrections.
- Pamela Atkinson seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Resettlement Updates

- **Catholic Community Services** – Aden Batar

- Still waiting for revised Presidential Determination to be signed.
- All refugee arrivals scheduled for month of March have been cancelled.
- This FY 2021 CCS has only resettled 2 refugee cases (6 individuals) from Afghanistan. Also helped some asylees from Venezuela.
- CCS was told to get ready for heavy arrivals- as such they have been building capacity by meeting with stakeholders in community to let them know more refugees will be incoming.
- CCS has started conversations with stakeholders in Ogden to start resettling refugees in Ogden when the time comes.
- A lot of Unaccompanied Minors are coming to the border on a daily basis. Refugee Foster Care has been getting a lot of referrals. Challenge is that many of those kids are not coming with immigration status.

- **International Rescue Committee** – Natalie El-Deiry

- While Presidential Determination for FY2021 has not been signed, there has also been a Presidential Determination set for FY2022, which would be 125,000 individuals across the country.
- Department of State has allowed resettlement agencies to increase their footprint to 100 miles from where their offices are, which allows them to resettle families farther out if needed.
- For FY2021 IRC has only resettled 5 individuals. Still anticipating an uptick for next quarter.
- Working to prepare staff and office operations for increased arrivals.
- COVID response continues to be a high priority for IRC.
- Will resume on site operations in May.
- Pamela asked why cases were cancelled in February and March. Natalie replied that they are not given a reason for cancelled cases.

- **National Update** –Asha Parekh
 - While Presidential Determination has been set for FY2021 to 62,500, it hasn't yet been signed. It has been approved by Congress but still waiting for President to sign. So we are still operating under old determination.

Refugee Related Legislative Session Update – Olivia Whiteley

- **Updates on work that was done in the 2021 legislative session:**
 - **Education**
 - **HCR 22 – Celebrating the Contributions of Multilingual and Multicultural Families to Utah Schools-** Focus on family engagement and future investment in promising practices. Passed all chambers unanimously
 - **HB 446 – Multicultural and Immigrant Student Policies-** addresses student enrollment and language access. Introduced, will be re-run in 2022.
 - **Digital Inclusion**
 - **USBF Funding Request** – creates a position and grant program in Utah State Libraries Division.
 - **HB 304 – Digital Opportunity** – did not pass
 - **Food Security**
 - **SB 141** – Creates a task force
 - **Language Access**
 - **SB 214-** allows state translations and interpretation efforts
 - **Health**
 - **Health Clinic of Salt Lake**
- Text RESCUE to 40649 to take action with IRC
- Steve asked how people can get information about agenda before legislative session. Olivia said that they would plan on getting their agenda out in early January.
- David May from Refugee Justice League reported on their work in the 2021 legislative session.
 - The Refugee Justice League this year worked on \$150,000 appropriation request for Refugee Justice League to assist with legal consultations. That didn't make it to the end but have been asked to make that request again next year.
 - Have been working on Refugee Voting Bill. Refugees don't understand that they are not eligible to vote on national level.
 - HB 160 has been punted to 2022.
 - Refugee Justice League is hosting open house on June 18th.
- Pamela thinks it would be good if legislators heard from Batar, Natalie and Asha on a regular basis. Nate said they discovered a disconnect in which they were only communicating with Legislative leadership and not all legislators. The legislators have loved having more regular communication.

Vaccine Clinic – Atem Aleu

- Shared a clip from lieutenant governor speaking about having the opportunity to visit vaccination clinic at Utah Refugee Center.
- Able to vaccinate 373 individuals over 3 clinics, with help from resettlement agencies and a partnership with SLCO department of health.
- 1st clinic was for people aged 70+. That clinic helped 93 individuals.

- 2nd clinic was for people aged 50+ and there were 200 people that came for that.
- 3rd clinic Utah Muslim Civic League held and 80 more people came to that clinic.
- Making sure we are helping people who cannot reach out and schedule their own appointment by themselves. Language and digital literacy are barriers for some of our refugees. There have been negative feelings about vaccine in the communities, but doing it at Refugee Center makes people feel more comfortable.
- Preparing to have another clinic on April 5th, will have 200+ people coming to the center. Open to people ages 18+.
- Asha wanted to add that clinics that community groups are hosting, are the places where higher numbers of refugees are getting vaccinated. They are not going to mainstream locations. When lieutenant governor visited she asked some really good questions about access. There has been great concern from the leadership that we are equitably rolling out vaccines.
- Batar added that community clinics make a huge difference because of language barriers.
- Shu added that SLCO has been really wonderful working with communities. There are a lot of senior citizens with digital barriers and they are really appreciative of community engagement to help them register.
- Hayder wanted to re-emphasize what everyone is saying. Has been great collaboration with all partners. Planning a lot of different clinics coming in the next few weeks with different partners. Barriers can be deep seated religious beliefs all the way to not having digital literacy. Refugee Clinics are still the top place where refugees received their vaccines. As of today only 22% of the refugee population of refugees aged 70+ who arrived in 2016 or beyond have been vaccinated.
- Atem mentioned that it takes a good deal of convincing to get refugees to take vaccine. Natalie said that her experience has been similar and takes quite a bit of effort to get refugees to turn out to take vaccines as there are a lot of myths about vaccines.
- Steve Plum asked that he be given information about upcoming vaccination clinics. Asha says Hayder is putting that together and will send that out to the wider group.

RSO Strategic Plan – Asha Parekh

- Asha went through 4 objective areas of the Strategic plan for 2021:
 - Building Strong Refugee Communities- create buy-in for new Refugee Center with refugee communities and individuals
 - Increase and Improve Refugee Integration- refine case management measures to determine refugee integration success
 - Improve Refugees' Employment Opportunities
 - Build Valuable Local Community Support

Employment

- **Intermountain Healthcare Pathways** – Asha Parekh
 - Shared a video of Asha's presentation at IHC's Grand Rounds.
 - The Grand Rounds talked more about other ways IHC is shifting their policies and practices to have more equity. They are now working with us to develop training.
 - They really are looking at how their systems are set up and where there are barriers to getting people into the system that are not the same as those who have training in the US and speak English at a high level.

- Pamela said that she has started the process with the Governor and his team to raise minimum wage to a more living wage. The legislature is not keen to raise it.
- Natalie added that Utah is not a very family friendly place for working mothers. Nate said Casey attended meeting with lieutenant governor where this was a topic.

World Refugee Day – Becky Wickstrom

- Building on success of last year with virtual event, and given challenges of large gatherings, RSO is still planning on having a mostly virtual WRD event for 2021. Will have some food trucks and a movie on a Friday before WRD. Looking at doing a cooking show, demonstrations, art projects, and telling some specific stories about the refugee experience.
- Will be reaching out to Advisory Board to get a video clip to recognize and celebrate WRD.
- Pamela asked about where naturalization ceremony will be held- Becky says it will be held in advance and filmed so it can be filmed during WRD.

Refugee Services Fund – Spencer Bernard

- Spencer Bernard walked through the financial income statement for the second quarter of State Fiscal Year 2021.
- Pamela asked where funds come from. Spencer says some funds are specifically given from different organizations. Asha says they are primarily private donations.

Refugee Center Update / RSO Quarterly Data Report- Michael Pekarske

- Program participants went down as we switched to virtual environment. Saw a big increase in direct services.
- Josh Bell would like to take a closer look at this data for the next Advisory Board meeting.

Closing Remarks – Nate McDonald

Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn: Nate McDonald requested the motion to adjourn.

- Martin Bates made the motion to adjourn.

Next Meeting: June 24th, 2021