

Refugee Advisory Board Meeting
Refugee Education & Training Center

June 24th, 2021

Board Member Attendees – Casey Cameron (Chair), Hayder Allkhenfr, Natalie El-Deiry, Rick Bouillon, Steve Pluim, Aden Batar, Jim McConkie, Shu Cheng, Fatima Dirie, Kelli Meranda

Members Excused – Brent Platt, Brian Redd, Joshua Bell, Janice Kimball, Pamela Atkinson, Rick Foster

Welcome and Introduction – Casey Cameron

- **Approval of Minutes-**

Motion to Approve: Casey Cameron requested the motion to approve minutes from the March Advisory Board Meetings.

- Steve Pluim made the motion to approve the minutes with no corrections.
- Aden Batar seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

World Refugee Day Review – Becky Wickstrom

- In addition to successful naturalization ceremony at Capitol, created 13 videos that were premiered on the Utah Refugee Services Facebook page. Those videos are still available on Facebook to watch.
- Had a virtual Global Market. Created an online marketing training course that some participated in.
- Had a successful in person event.
- Next step is determining the metrics. Measuring reach of videos, numbers of views, etc. Will share those when they are available.
- Shared WRD highlight video.

Arrivals Update

- **Catholic Community Services** – Aden Batar

- Haven't been getting many refugee arrivals. Have only resettled 6 cases/18 individuals total this FFY. Have assisted 13 asylee cases/33 individuals- mainly from Venezuela.
- Have been getting information about Family Reunification cases that have filed over the years. These cases are being called for interviews.
- Central American Minor program is being reopened and people are being interviewed.
- Last quarter of Federal Fiscal year more arrivals are expected.
- Refugee Foster Care is getting more cases. Program is going to be reaching capacity before the end of the FFY.

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

- Presidential Determination was set at 62,500 this year. Current projection is 20,000 nationally.
- Next year the ceiling has been set for 125,000, likelihood of reaching this amount is not high.
- For IRC, have resettled 50 individuals to date in this FFY, 33 from June. Last year at this time had resettled 104. Hoping to see 30 arrivals each month through the end of the fiscal year. Largely from DRC and Afghanistan.
- Housing is becoming very difficult challenge. Need to reconvene Housing Subcommittee to look at what housing looks like for refugees. Need to converse about affordable housing. Asha says

she is happy to reconvene group to identify partners who could help. Casey suggested adding Christina Oliver to subcommittee.

- Matt commented that RESH program is a great program for larger families.
- Shu talked about rental assistance program. Casey says state got \$213 million for rental assistance. There is a local community partner that can help with rental assistance in each community in Utah. This is a state program.
- Bear River Association of Governments (BRAG)
Cache, Rich, Box Elder Counties

(435) 752-7242

braghousingcrisis@gmail.com

Facebook

facebook.com/BRAGHS

- Utah Rent Relief : <https://rentrelief.utah.gov/contacts/>

Refugees in Logan – Danny Beus, Cache Refugee and Immigrant Connection

- In Cache County at (CRIC) have been around for 7 years.
- Provide services for refugees and immigrants that come to Logan.
- Fill in gaps when people lose case management services coming to Logan. Most popular program is after hours walk-in hours.
- Have a community garden.
- Started a Neighbor Program that has local families sponsoring a refugee family to help them integrate into the community.
- Work with Bear River Association of Governments to help people with housing issues. Is becoming harder and harder to get housing in Cache County as well.
- Have financial literacy course which they are adding to. Working with local bank.
- Partnering with Asian Association to start providing mental health services for refugees in Cache County. This is a program that is up and coming. Shu says one issue is that mental health is a very stigmatized. Hoping to make mental health services more available in Logan area using telehealth.
- Really focused now on helping people get vaccinated for COVID.
- Seeing an uptick in people coming from Salt Lake City and Twin Falls. Have a meat packing plant that recruits so it's a draw for people. Mostly seeing Somalian refugees and Eritreans. Also from Myanmar.
- Logan is a very welcoming community for refugees. County Council signed a letter of support and welcoming for refugees. County Executive is very involved in helping CRIC. Met with Dan Johnson yesterday and he's working on a couple of bills that benefit refugees specifically. In the broader community they love the Refugee and New American community. During COVID there was a large outbreak at JBS and CRIC was able to have mobile food banks with the help of volunteers. Because of a lot of donations, were able to help 100 families keep their housing. Have a lot of support. Volunteers donate 1000's of hours each year.
- Fatima asked what CRIC's relationship is with the Utah State Extension program. Danny says they have a very good connection with Utah State. The Garden is funded through extension. Have a very good relationship with Sorenson Center for Mental Health at Utah State. Also have a good relationship with

SEED program at Huntsman School. Help teach financial literacy classes and want to help with entrepreneurship program.

- Asha asked about working conditions at JBS. Danny says conditions are a bit better now. It is very labor intensive work. Because of COVID things have improved a bit when it comes to working conditions. CRIC works with union to guide them in helping with working conditions. JBS has paid for office space for CRIC for 2 years.
- Shu says they worked with JBS for many years. Have placed 100's of refugees into good paying jobs. 25% of workforce are refugees and immigrants. Are looking forward to expanded refugee resettlement.
- Hayder asked if they see more of older refugees and people on disability. Where do they go for medical needs? Right now Danny says he is not sure how many older refugees they have but they are working with county to find out.
- Danny's email is Danny@CacheRefugees.org

Legal Challenges – Jim McConkie, Refugee Justice League

- Refugee Justice League is a group of attorneys. Over 800 on the rolls. Do legal work pro bono.
- Mission is quite narrow: take cases pro bono for refugees who have been discriminated against on the basis of the religion, ethnicity, or national origin.
- Gave examples of cases that the Justice League is handling. Seen an uptick in hate mail and in refugees who are working for large stores being yelled out by people saying they don't want them in this country. Police are very uninterested in those cases.
- Spoke about no-fly list. Metrics and application of program is random.
- Still see random stops by police with no probable cause.
- Been involved in voting violation cases.
- Have consultations at Utah Refugee Center.
- 15,000 hits on Hello Landlord app that fills out a letter appropriate to send to landlord.
- If anyone sees constitutional violations, please let Refugee Justice League know. Call or text Jim McConkie at 801-916-1830.
- Asha said we were always struggling with legal issues before, and this organization has come in and provided great muscle in dealing with these issues.
- Fatima asked if James has any opportunities for young refugees who are going into law school. James says there are opportunities for internships and can also recommend other places where people can intern.

Career Pathways Grant – Asha Parekh

- RSO partnered to apply for Career Pathways Grant available through office of refugee resettlement.
- Partnered with Salt Lake Community College, Utah Neighborhood Partners, U of U Health Professional Planning Alliance, U of U, Utah State Board of Education, Division of Professional Licensing.
- Utah State Board of Education has agreed to pay for ESL portion of Diesel Mechanic Training.
- Providing support for people who have medical training in their home countries, helping them to get into careers at MA level.
- Skills Based testing for Engineering. Will work with an organization called WES to build out that piece. WES selected RSO to be a part of consortium for 2021.

- Anticipated start date is September 30, 2021 if approved for the Grant.
- Casey asked if most of the customers qualify for tuition assistance. Rick Bouillon says SLCC won't let money be an object, especially with diesel technicians.

RSO Update – Michael Pekarske & Brady Misustin

- **Refugee Center Update**
 - Went over ongoing programs. Some classes went to smaller cohort, others could take more due to virtual format. Serving 139 students currently. There were 15 students when Homework Help was in person. Going virtual were able to help 44 students.
 - New vocational trainings are up and coming. If good candidates are known, please refer them.
 - Finishing up adult and youth public speaking. This was a class that was requested through Leaders Dialogue.
 - IT program is on cloud computing. Up to 25 participants in this class. With lessons online it's been easier to take more students.
- **RSO Quarterly Data Report**
 - Number of refugees served is coming back to the numbers pre-COVID. One of the biggest places is in Community Development program.
 - 5,782 services provided this quarter. Average months in US is 85.8.
 - Employment and training served 333 customers with a 63.2% retention rate for jobs.
 - 1,565 services offered in Service Navigation and Crisis Intervention.
 - 199 Case Management assessments
 - 12 RSO-Led Programs and events- 743 total participants.
 - Refugee Community Programs and Events Supported by RSO- 25 total programs and events with 639 total participants.

Refugee Services Fund – Spencer Bernard

- Spencer Bernard walked through the financial income statement for the third quarter of State Fiscal Year 2021.

Closing Remarks – Casey Cameron

Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn: Casey Cameron requested the motion to adjourn.

- Aden Batar made the motion to adjourn.
- Steve Plum seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Next Meeting: September 23, 2021