

Multi-Agency Partnership (MAP)

Thursday, January 25, 2018

Location: **ISS of BC Welcome Centre**

Attendees: Saleem Spindari (MOSAIC); Andrew Kuipers (Kinbrace); Fran Gallo (Kinbrace); Loren Balisky (Kinbrace); Raul Gatica (Kinbrace); James Grunau (JHC); Laura Brook Mansfield (JHC); Angelica Alejandro (VAST); Mariana M. Vieyra (VAST); Laura Moran Bonilla (FHA); Tassillie Dent (City University Seattle); Farah Kotadia (AMSSA); Sabrina Dumitra (AMSSA); Peter Prediger (Inasmuch); Dawn-Lynn Prediger (Inasmuch); Tammy Johnson (Inasmuch); Lindsay Chu (Vancity); Louise Ghoussoub (BC211); Nathan Wright (bc211); Sharalyn Jordan (Rainbow Refugee/SFU); Rainer Nicdao (MSDPR); Salima Jamal (MSDPR); Khim Tan (Options); Dennis Juarez (Options); Rochelle Appleby (LSS); Chris Friesen (ISS of BC); Patricia Woroch (ISS of BC); Kathy Sherrell (ISS of BC); Mona Hassania (SOS-ISS); Megad Alharbi (SOS-ISS); Dominic Fung (Ministry of Jobs, Trade, and Technology); Ahmad Nakhaei (Volunteer VAST/SOS/Kinbrace); Mario Ayala (WCMC); Cecilia Tagle (VSB-SWIS); Yola Vargas (FBC); Leanne Hodaly (IRCC); Jessica Sardi (IRCC) Patricia Mahecha (Inland Refugee Society); Ilona Belks (Inland Refugee Society); Sanja Slavlojevic (MPFC); Arely Rodriguez (Little Mountain NH); Cordelia Revells (JFSSeattle); Margaret Hinson (JFS Seattle); Salah Ansary (LCSNW); David Duea (LCSNW); Beth Farmer (LCSNW); Nichole Lundin (LCSNW Refugee); Jaimie Schilling (LCSNW); Jaimie Fournier (LCSNW)
Conference Call: Carling Helander (MJTT); Megan Lessard (MJTT); Jenny Moss (MAP)

Apologies:

Darcy Bromley (IRCC), Azadeh Tamjeedi (UNHCR), IRB/RPD

9:30 am

Welcome

Co-chair: Saleem Spindari, MOSAIC

Introductions

Outline of Agenda

Review of November Minutes

9:45 am

Planning on Refugee Claimants: Ministry of Jobs, Trade & Technology

Presentation by: Carling Helander

- Provincial and National governments working on contingency plans for a large influx of refugee claimants to BC, in order to be prepared
- Learned a lot from the experience in Quebec
- Outside the scope of Emergency Management at provincial level so MJTT & EM are charged with devising a plan to be able to respond in the same way as any Emergency.
- Needs to be a scalable plan – ramp up in terms of unknown numbers of claimants.
- Identifying the ‘triggers’ that will set off a govt. response in aid.
- Working in partnership with other ministries e.g. Social Services, to respond to needs.
- Exact scope of provincial vs national govt. responsibilities unknown.
- Will work with Red Cross and Settlement Services where appropriate.

Q & A

Q: Raul (Kinbrace): Anything more specific about **housing**?

A: Nothing more specific – emergency shelters are under strain. May need to create new solutions for example new funding for reception centers.
(Quebec had to create 10 new centers: they housed 4000 people for on average 45 days each.)
When they know more about the needs of arrivals, and can talk to all agencies involved they will devise a scalable plan to respond appropriately.

Q Loren (Kinbrace) is there a timeline for the planning process? Are there dates for the plan to be in place?

A: We don't have a date – we also don't have a sense of anyone arriving yet so we have time. We are moving step-by-step and realistically need a few months to respond to a very complex issue needing a plan ASAP. The plan also needs to be revisable.

Q Peter (In As Much): When do you anticipate a 'trigger', what sort of triggers?

A: There will be trigger levels for each level of govt. and for agencies. The Federal govt. is working on their own set of trigger levels, afterwards the Provincial govt. will work on theirs. They might be completely different according to the need – for example housing.

Q James (JHC) When do you expect to draw in refugee serving agencies?

A: In February. First ministry has to sort out their own parameters and then engage with agencies in a few weeks' time.

10:00 am MAP Updates

Andrew regretfully informed the meeting that he is moving to Alberta and therefore resigning his co-chair position at MAP. Andrew will be present for the February and March meetings but hopes to have a new co-chair in place for April. Nominations for the position (from partner agencies) should be sent via email to MAP - more information at the February meeting.

Saleem thanked Andrew for his contribution as co-chair and also his work on the Mayor's Task Force on Immigration.

Saleem announced that Jenny Moss has accepted the position of coordinator at MAP. Though still in Costa Rica she will return at the beginning of April and in the meantime will work remotely. Please feel free to email Jenny at the normal MAP email address any agency news, questions or suggestions. Jenny will also be involved in organizing World Refugee Day 2018.

10:05 am Break

10:30am Refugees Northwest, Seattle–Tacoma, WA

Presented by: Beth Farmer, David Duea and team

- **David:** appreciate the opportunity to link with partners north of the border during this especially difficult time.
- Lutheran Community Services North West have settled over 45,000 refugees and provide many services in Washington, Oregon and Idaho.
- Focussing on asylum seekers our staff provide the following:

- **Beth:** Introduced Margaret and Cordelia – Family Services (Settlement Services)
Nicole and Beth – provide complex health services to asylum seekers: including mental health and complex care not included in regular settlement services.
- 190,000 refugees were resettled globally in 2017, in Washington 4,000 were permanently settled.
- ISV program for Afghanistan & Iraq – this program speeds up process: green card in 3 months and citizenship acquired much faster.
- But it's expected that resettlement will be reduced by 50% this year.
- Processing of resettlement has slowed to only 20,000 in 2018, although USA approved to take 45,000
- There's expected to be a 30% reduction in resettlement in Washington/Oregon.
- But predictions and arrivals are very different: asylum seeker numbers are increasing – in 2015 there were 40% more than the previous year.
- 101,000 claims made in USA
- Refugee claim process distinguished as:
Affirmative claims – i.e. claim voluntarily made by the individual to a government department
Defensive claims – made by an individual during his/her deportation process
- Huge increase in defensive claims has resulted in lack of resources to process the claims.
- Claims are dealt with by 3 bodies: USCIS, Homeland Security and Ministry of Justice
- Children seeking asylum: 236% increase since 2013 of children – directly connected to situations in Central America.
- Because of the increase there are now 6,200m cases in a backlog who have a 6 year wait.
- **Nicole** – runs asylum program for those before and after the decision process.
- **Before decision** – refugees, including children, have no rights to legal aid.
- Many of those are people who have claimed protection at the Mexican/US border and have to defend themselves against deportation.
- They may be able to get a 'bond' from the judge to be released but most often are denied and must wait another 6 months for another chance to request a bond. And if they get a bond they must report to Immigration. The bond is usually \$10,000 - \$15,000
- LCSNW helps with legal representation and guides the claimants through the legal process.
- Receive over 1,000 applications for assistance a week. Those who can pay are referred to legitimate lawyers at a low cost.
- However, usually they are detained and enter the defensive process which takes 6 years to complete.
- Work permits usually take 18 months to acquire
- Refugee claimants are permitted food stamps under a state program once their application for refugee protection is received. This program doesn't exist in all states – explains why many come to the NW where services are available.
- But no medical services are available until asylum is approved. So LCSNW has developed a relationship with Dept. of Health, Harborview and Children's Hospital to provide access to medical services.
- North West Detention Center – in reality it's a jail. There is space for 1,500 but currently are 1,800 – so space and resources are overwhelmed and not all are claimants.
- On average it takes 10 months to get a hearing.
- Families split – children are not allowed in detention centers so they join the Unaccompanied Minors program and are usually placed in foster care.

- K.I.N.D. – agency to assist children
- There are proposals to keep kids with their parents though up to now the state has preferred to split families up in order to deter people from crossing the border. So usually:
 - Dad goes into the Detention Center
 - Mom is on community release with a tracking device and has the children
 Their claims processes are different: Dad is defensive and Mom is affirmative so obviously problems can arise about family reunification.
- It takes 3-5 years to be granted asylum
- When granted asylum Medicaid is provided for up to 8 months free, after depends on income.
- At that point successful claimants can apply for family reunification.

LCSNW PROGRAMS:

- **Foster care**, and Group Homes for children aged 16/17 years.
- Work with youth up to age 23
- 80 – 100% of their kids graduate high school: arriving at 15 with no English but do graduate.
- **Mental health** - provides support for PTSD, depression, cross-cultural counselling
 - Support groups for positive socializing activities
 - Counselling – group and individual
- **Complex Medical Care** – organized by a coordinator from simple diabetes up to cancer.
- **Citizenship** – free assistance for changing status
- **Family reunification** – provides help to those trying to reunify with their families by completing legal requirements so that the claimant can focus on finding work ready to accept his family.
- **Survivors of Torture** program – helped 12,000 survivors since 2012
- **Community services** – ESL, employment assistance, food programs
- **Language services** – 43 different languages supported. Some indigenous dialects hard to interpret (e.g. Guatemala)

GAPS:

- Lots of threats: reduced medicare – has affected mental health especially.
 - fewer referrals because of new laws this past year
- Staffing & Funds: in 2015 LCSNW started their asylum program with 60 cases/year; now this is up to 350/year. Should they start a waitlist? Nowhere else to refer their clients.
- Not enough foster parents – LCSNW cannot receive refugee children from overseas without a foster parent in place, and the child must be under 18. They often ‘age out’ before a foster parent can be found and have to be sent on to group homes.
- Housing is a huge issue. Cost of affordable housing is up and there’s a 5 year waitlist for low income housing currently.

RESEARCH & NEW DIRECTIONS:

- Family-based (cf. individual) therapy is a goal
- How to adapt therapy to help claimant’s coping mechanisms
- Post-traumatic SD. – PTSD never stops as claimants worry about those back home.
- Stress of resettlement – remaking refugee identities.
- Bi-directional sharing of skills and knowledge – encouraging refugees to share their skills with the community. 75% of staff come from refugee and asylum communities.

CONCLUSION:

Resiliency of the refugees is a major motivation. But the numbers are staggering and the Administration wants to expedite deportations – so due process will suffer. Raids are up to remove people – even in 7/11 stores.

Question:

Will more people try to cross over into Canada because of the backlog in USA?

People may choose to go north because of a real fear of deportation. Canada's refugee programs are known as better.

Specifically the El Salvador community in King County – those with TPS status – will probably make a refugee claim but uncertain whether many will want to uproot their families and move to Canada.

Detention Centers – they are privately owned and the number of detentions have skyrocketed because of 'for profit' motive. Previous administration had tried to move away from this model, but actions have been rescinded. Canada is appealing to avoid detention.

Family Reunification – is a deep worry for many refugees and so some may try to claim in Canada as a quicker way of being reunified. Waiting time for a pro-bono lawyer is very long.

Some have family in Canada – so it's a temptation to move north.

Backlash to the backlash! LCSNW has received donations and support from many churches, mosques and synagogues as well as politicians on both sides. Amidst the hardship there is a lot of good.

Q & A

Saleem commented that we should both reach out beyond the border to help fellow organizations.

James (JHC) – Is there a shift of resources from regular resettlement to asylum seekers?

A: Resources are very few, but yes, where possible, LCSNW is trying to service refugees more. But everything depends on what's available and the Administration's decisions.

11:45am Agency Updates**Saleem (MOSAIC)**

Partnering with Options and UNHCR: Refugee Claimants Resource Fair – March 10 at Surrey Central Library.

Presentation by Fadi (Embarkation Law Firm) re: appeals in Canada. Tables for organizations. Flyer and more details will be shared with MAP members.

Dominic (MJTT)

Extension of public funds from April to June to align with new contracts.

Andrew (MAP)

If you are able to host a MAP meeting this year please contact MAP.

Mariana (VAST)

Added two new staff – Farsi and Arabic speaking counsellors.

Laura (Fraser Health)

Primary Care multi-disciplinary team want to collaborate with agencies serving refugees

Sabrina (AMSSA)

- announces a new Service Information Coordinator
- Online and in person training available (see MAP notice)

Dennis (Options)

- some work permit applications are being refused – especially for those from DCO's – have to wait 180 days after eligibility.
- UNHCR: Human Library Project at VPL Central Branch Jan 27/28 and Feb 3 / 4.

Lindsay (Vancity)

Office in Welcome House:

- cash checks and open accounts for refugee claimants
- PR fee loans completed through referral from SOS
- free financial literacy classes on tax preparation, starting a business etc.

Peter (Inasmuch)

Question: update from IRB re: backlog?

Answer: Clients for December 2017 have been moved provisionally to June 2018; generally 13 - 15 month wait time for a hearing.

Rochelle (Legal Aid)

Funding for 2018 has been approved federally. Funding for 2019 not yet known. Legal Aid looking for lawyers interested in comprehensive training in refugee work. Contact Rochelle

Mona (S.O.S.)

- New bulletin ready to share outlining statistics.
- Hired a new Arabic speaking settlement worker.
- 'Health and Settlement Orientation' workshops in February on Saturdays, 10 – 4.
- Creating 6 orientation videos re: refugee process voiced over in different languages. Available in April.

Ilona (Inland Refugee Society)

- Mario's resigned January 1st and Julia on sick leave.
- Effective Monday IRS has closed its doors for 2 weeks in order to plan their future.
- A handout will be prepared for refugees who stop by referring to other agencies and services, so please update your services and contact information with IRS.
- Food & Clothing Bank will remain open on Tuesdays
- Update in 2 weeks

Arely (Little Mountain NH)

- Citizenship class: Thursday February 8
- Nobody Perfect Parenting in English: Saturday February 3

Rainer (MSDPR)

- On-site liaison services at MOSAIC and ISSofBC
- Poverty reduction consultation in Richmond. Vancouver/Burnaby sessions soon
- Dates are on their website

Fran (READY tour)

- READY tour this Friday
- Next tour: February 9
- RAD tour in the next couple of weeks

12:00 pm Evaluation and Adjournment

Next Meeting: Thursday, February 22, 2018 at MOSAIC