

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Establishes Task Force on Afghan Refugee Assistance

08/27/2021

TRENTON – Governor Murphy today signed Executive Order No. 256, establishing the Task Force on Afghan Refugee Assistance to report directly to the Office of the Governor. The task force will be chaired by Adjutant General and Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMAVA) Brigadier General Dr. Lisa J. Hou and will serve to coordinate State efforts to appropriately prepare for and respond to the arrival of Afghan refugees and SIV holders in New Jersey.

“As Afghan refugees arrive at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, we must act to ensure that the State is prepared to adequately receive and assist these individuals that courageously assisted our country in the War on Terror,” **said Governor Murphy**. “Our newly established task force will oversee efforts to welcome refugees and their families to their new lives in the United States and New Jersey. I have full trust and confidence in the Adjutant General to lead this task force in coordinating our response to the ongoing arrival of refugees to our state.”

“The Task Force stands ready to support our mission partners,” **said Adjutant General and DMAVA Commissioner Brigadier General Dr. Lisa J. Hou**. “We recognize the sacrifice of our Afghan allies and American and NATO service members these past 20 years. We pledge every effort to alleviate the human tragedy unfolding in Afghanistan.”

Adjutant General and DMAVA Commissioner Hou is a veteran of the War in Afghanistan, where she served as a field surgeon and sole medical provider on an Afghanistan National Army base and was responsible for providing routine and advanced emergency medical care in the combat theater for more than 600 coalition soldiers, contractors, and foreign nationals.

In addition to Commissioner of DMAVA, the Task Force will consist of the Chief of Staff to the Governor, the Chief Counsel to the Governor, the Chief Policy Advisor to the Governor, the Executive Director of the Governor’s Disaster Recovery Office, and the Commissioners or other heads of the following Executive Branch departments and agencies, or their designees:

- The Department of Law & Public Safety;
- The New Jersey State Police;
- The Department of Health;
- The Department of Human Services;
- The Department of Children & Families;
- The Office of Homeland Security & Preparedness;
- The Department of State;
- The Department of Community Affairs;
- The Department of Transportation; and
- The Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

The task force will be responsible for:

- Developing a mechanism for identifying Afghan refugees who arrive in New Jersey and plan to remain for some period of time;

- Managing internal efforts among Executive Branch departments and agencies to welcome and provide support to Afghan refugees and SIV holders as they arrive and/or resettle in New Jersey;
- Coordinating communications with representatives of the federal government, including the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Defense, regarding the relocation of Afghan refugees;
- Overseeing the provision of vital support and emergency healthcare services for those who need it upon arrival in New Jersey, including COVID-19 testing and vaccination as needed;
- Creating an intake mechanism for organizations and individuals seeking to provide aid and support to Afghan refugees to contact the Task Force, evaluating and keeping track of such organizations and individuals, and connecting such organizations and individuals with those in need of assistance; and
- Providing any other necessary supports to ensure the safe entry and relocation to New Jersey of Afghan refugees.

Copy of Executive Order No. 256 (<https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-256.pdf>)

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