

## Haitian orphans added to Baptist plans

By Barbara Denman  
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JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (FBC)—Florida Baptists have opened a second ministry initiative – to Haitian orphans and refugees – following the catastrophic earthquake of Jan. 12.

Contingency plans were being developed Jan. 20 to house 100 Haiti orphans at the Florida convention's Lake Yale Conference Center campus in Leesburg under the care of the Florida Baptist Children's Homes. The Haitian children are expected to remain at the center for five months.

"The influx of refugees will present a unique ministry opportunity for Florida Baptists in south Florida," said John Sullivan, the convention's executive director-treasurer.

The convention's church and community ministries personnel, headed by Marcus Johnson, also are developing action plans to assist in the receiving, processing and re-settlement of other Haitian refugees.

According to the Miami Herald, federal agencies are gearing up under an existing crisis plan called "Operation Vigilant Sentry," drawn up in 2003 to help prepare for any mass migration from the Caribbean. Miami-Dade officials are looking at housing the refugees in the currently closed Krome Detention Center in West Miami-Dade and the old Baptist hospital facility in Kendall.

Florida Baptists will partner with Alabama Baptists to provide water, disposable diapers and lightweight blankets for the incoming Haitian children. More details will be coming from Florida Baptist Children's Homes.

Sullivan acknowledged that while Florida Baptists are "experienced in refugee resettlement," housing children at Lake Yale "is virgin territory." He said the state's Baptists nevertheless "are up to the task."