In 2000, the United States, along with the majority of countries around the world, declared “human trafficking” a transnational crime. Prior to 2000, practices that are now understood as human trafficking included forced prostitution, forced migration, or were categorized as other crimes. Drawing from the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act (2000), states passed legislation to bolster prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnership efforts (4Ps). Colorado’s anti-trafficking movement emerged in 2005, with non-profit organizations, law enforcement, and coalitions documenting hundreds of cases.

What would it take to end human trafficking in Colorado?

Since 2005, the Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking (LCHT) has endeavored to answer that question more effectively while advancing anti-trafficking efforts across the state. With an array of partners - survivors, advocates, law enforcement, and practitioners – we developed methods to measure Colorado’s progress in addressing human trafficking. The Colorado Project to Comprehensively Combat Human Trafficking 2.0 (CP2.0) is a summary of anti-trafficking efforts across the state of Colorado as of 2018. CP2.0 builds from the original research conducted from 2010-2013 (our baseline assessment). For more information on CP2.0, please see LCHT’s Report and Action plan at combathumantrafficking.org/coloradoproject

Colorado communities differ in their characteristics, strengths, gaps, and opportunities; these regional differences led researchers to create demographic profiles as tools for communities seeking more specific recommendations based on data collected during CP2.0. The aim of these regional profiles is to provide specialized feedback on combating human trafficking in seven regions across the state. These regions, defined by LCHT, are geographic areas grouped by judicial district and county, with a review of industries, population demographics, and the physical landscape that influence the root causes and vulnerabilities to trafficking. Direct quotes from study participants are included below that pertain to this region.

Region 5: Population and Geography

Region 5 includes the 6th, 11th, 12th, and 22nd Judicial Districts. Grouping these judicial districts into a single region allowed researchers to consider the mountainous geography of the counties, the similarly sized towns and cities, generally similar economies, and the broadly comparable median incomes of households in the cities or towns. This region also included two sovereign nations, the Southern Utes and the Ute Mountain Utes. The data collected does not include tribal participants although it is important to understand how cultures vary; therefore, we do not assume that the vulnerabilities are similar in the sovereign communities, but we expect that some of the risks to trafficking for individuals might be the same. The communities included for comparison are Pagosa Springs, Salida, Durango, Canon City, Buena Vista, and Alamosa.

This region of Colorado, the southwestern corner and highway 285 corridor, often feels isolated from the larger metropolitan communities of Denver, Colorado Springs, Pueblo, and Grand Junction. To some, the communities of Durango, Alamosa, Canyon City, Buena Vista, Pagosa Springs, Cortez, and Fairplay represent the ‘ruralness’ that comprises the western sensibilities of Colorado. Median household incomes can range from $60,500 in Durango to $30,000 in neighboring Pagosa Springs; on average, all these communities have median household incomes
below or significantly below the statewide median of $65,600. Many of these communities have significantly larger proportions of the population living in poverty than the Colorado average coupled with lower high school degree attainment than the state average. Tourism drives the economy in several of these towns, but agriculture, public employment (government), construction, services/retail, and hospitality also comprise the economic drivers and industries across southwest Colorado.

For some of these communities, they feel more deeply connected to New Mexico as a result of the proximity to that state’s border. For example, one participant noted, “Parts of the state don’t have – I know, like, we don’t have Denver channels for example. When we watch the weather, it’s Albuquerque channels.” This sense of a broader disconnection from the urban parts of the state, led another participant to mention:

“It's kind of interesting where I feel like we're more vulnerable in terms of, like, where we’re situated, kind of between Denver and Albuquerque. So, just geographically I think we are very vulnerable of people kind of coming in, coming out, right? Just the rural nature- there’s something about being rural when there’s not a lot of eyes or witnesses for things to happen, right? I feel like that makes people very vulnerable.

This sense of disconnection is further illuminated by the physical geography surrounding these communities. Many of the cities and towns in this region are within mountainous areas, at higher altitudes, or require travel across significant mountain passes.

Human Trafficking in Colorado

A central theme emerges from the CP2.0 research: trafficking is happening across the state and the problem is worthy of time and attention. Overall, participants note that there is little agreement on the root causes of trafficking. Communities do not share the same definitions or understanding of trafficking, and participants worry that average citizens may not have the tools to identify the signs of trafficking. Colorado’s legislation, updated in 2014 with House Bill 14-1273, highlighted force, fraud or coercion as the definition of trafficking. Overwhelmingly, Coloradans believe human trafficking to be sex trafficking; however, our current research shows that we are beginning to characterize nuances to include labor trafficking descriptions.

In Colorado, adults and children, foreign-nationals and US citizens, men and women, have all been identified as victims. Colorado sits at a geographic crossroads and is accessible via an international airport and by two major interstates. Denver and Colorado Springs have a disproportionately large number of youth experiencing homelessness compared to other urban centers. Much of the state is used for agriculture, ranching, and tourism, necessitating seasonal/migrant workers. Such circumstances may result in the exploitation of many particularly vulnerable populations including immigrants on temporary visas, refugees, people experiencing homelessness, and victims of domestic abuse or sexual violence.

Ending human trafficking requires collective action and collaborative efforts among all stakeholders. Focusing collaborative community efforts on root causes will support efforts to decrease trafficking. As the anti-trafficking movement reflects upon 19 years since the passage of the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act (2000), the crime expanded and the response has become more sophisticated. The following sections highlight regional characteristics, the vulnerabilities to trafficking, and successes occurring across the 4Ps of Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, and Partnership.

Trafficking Vulnerabilities/Root Causes

Participants believe that human trafficking decreases in Colorado communities when agencies that provide resources understand the unique circumstances facing their local communities. Participants’ responses emphasize
that point, “I think that to truly be more effective, you have to be very locally grounded and understand what’s happening in the different communities.” Additionally, another participant noted, “Every community is very different, and so, how each community handles an incident of human trafficking is going to be unique to that community.”

The realities of human trafficking are challenging for all communities to recognize and address throughout the nation. Rural communities in Colorado have particular challenges regarding human trafficking. These challenges come as a result of factors such as geographical isolation, interstate transportation routes, industries that hire seasonal workers (like tourism, agriculture, energy, and ranching), lack of economic/employment security, lack of victim resources and support, and a lack of training for front line professionals or law enforcement. Geographical isolation can contribute to a delay in intervention and lack of opportunities to identify human trafficking.

Root causes are preexisting social, cultural, and family conditions that create vulnerability for people to be trafficked such as trauma in the home setting, poverty, homelessness, addiction, violence in the home or local community, lack of education, lack of citizenship status, and marginalization from one’s LGBTQIA identity. We asked communities to describe root causes they believe contribute to human trafficking, and these were responses from Region 5 participants.

Across southern parts of Colorado, participants suggested that most recognizable root causes or vulnerabilities were likely a lack of access to resources or services. For example:

I would also say that there is probably not a healthy appetite for communities to engage specifically around combating human trafficking. And I think that stems from not a lack of desire but a lack of resources and the reality that many of us are wearing multiple hats. And this is a fairly small population of individuals as far as our area that have been recognized or prosecuted or there’s been investigation around it.

The vulnerability to trafficking is still present, but specific types of vulnerabilities may be connected to an individual’s identity. Individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, intersex, transgender, or gender fluid may experience challenges disclosing or getting services. As noted by one participant, “Historically in the Four Corners region, there has never been any organization tasked specifically to serve and work with the LGBT youth community and basically no resources for LGBT youth.” The identity of immigrant, or perception that a citizen or resident in a community is “not from here,” may similarly increase the chances of being trafficked. One participant from the region notes:

That’s the biggest form in Colorado, actually [labor trafficking]. I feel like kind of- well, things differ, don’t they? I feel like there’s a huge refugee and immigrant community. I used to work for Child Protective Services and I would get the sense, but I could never prove anything, you know? It was terrible though. I just really felt like people were being taken advantage of because they were so vulnerable. They maybe didn’t speak the language quite well.

Because culturally-specific resources may not be readily available, people might be at increased risk for manipulation or exploitation.

The resources that may be unavailable across these communities are not only services for specific populations - instead, services for persistent social issues are limited. As one participant argues:

I know like our domestic violence nonprofit human services are geared to address a situation or do an investigation or assessment and provide, you know, services. But we don’t have things like, you know, there isn’t a homeless shelter, period, in [our] county. You know, and that’s also speaking for other counties surrounding us. And with that said, there’s definitely not a special bed or a person who is
necessarily trained to address you know the housing needs for a human trafficking victim or additional training that's been received because we don't even have a shelter for just your average homeless person.

Rising costs related to housing are likely driving many insecurities for communities in this region. In Alamosa, nearly 35% of residents are below the federally defined poverty line, Pagosa Springs has 22% living in poverty and other communities in the region hover between 10 - 16%. These financial and structural challenges create persistent vulnerabilities for individuals in more rural and agrarian communities in the southern part of the state. One participant effectively sums up the challenge of resource scarcity, “I think the issue is that we don't have additional resources to apply [to human trafficking].”

SOUTHWEST COLORADO CHALLENGES

Need for Human Trafficking Awareness

Across some of the more isolated or rural parts of the state, participants suggested that the broader community may not fully understand the root causes of trafficking or how trafficking occurs. For example, “Well the first controversy is going to a community and saying that they don’t have that [human trafficking] in their community and it’s just people from other countries. That’s number one.” The notion that human trafficking does occur in the region appeared incongruous with people’s perceptions of their communities. Another participant noted that trafficking may be misunderstood through the lens of opportunistic promises. They stated:

I mean I think it’s almost a glorified lifestyle almost like back in the day of the gang involvements of giving these young people a sense of purpose and belonging and finding somebody who says they’re going to take care of them and tell them they’re going to give them everything they want and need, but could end up in a very dangerous life threatening situation.

It is no surprise that residents of this region would not recognize or identify trafficking if they simply do not believe it can happen locally.

Across the judicial districts that comprise Region 5, only 1 case has been filed under the 2014 updated Colorado statutes related to involuntary servitude. One community leader raised concerns that the community is unwilling to recognize and report crime because it could potentially damage the economy or perception of the community:

Because it needs to- economically, it needs to be a tourist town, right? And so, you know, they advertise as a tourist town. It’s very much advertised as this safe, clean, you know, no crime happens here, yet we have one of the highest criminal rates in Colorado. And that’s because everything is shoved under the rug here. And there’s violent crimes that happen all the time ... that we hear about through the grapevine, but you never see it in the paper, it’s never talked about, so honestly, I think that’s the number one vulnerability of [the community] in terms of any violent crimes, including human trafficking because it’s not talked about. Nobody’s going to talk about it.

The pressure to silence or ignore crime in order to maintain perceptions of safety is an important opportunity to note for this region - while the indictment is harsh, there is an opening to begin and continue the dialogue about safety and addressing root causes.

There are local community partnerships and organizations who have the capacity to lead those much-needed conversations and action plans. For example:
I know there’s lots of councils and tasks groups and nonprofits in the more densely populated areas. Again, I just think the further out that you get, is adding to a place that’s already full and not very practical for a lot of providers to specialize in providing services to traffic victims. I think that there could also be more attention or more awareness around the labor trafficking component.

These coalitions may not need to focus solely on human trafficking. Instead, including labor trafficking, and highlighting the root causes and vulnerabilities to trafficking across long-established and effective partners is a place to take action.

Regional Resources for Trafficking Survivors

Buena Vista HOPE (BV HOPE) is the only human trafficking partnership in Region 5 and although they are mainly focused on prevention work with youth in Chaffee County, they have connections and partnerships across the state. For organizations or agencies who would like to receive anti human trafficking training or who would like to learn more about how to get more involved in the movement, BV HOPE is one place to start to plug in. However, Buena Vista is a significant distance from Durango and Pagosa Springs; this region is vast and as previously mentioned is separated by mountain passes.

In the Durango and Cortez area there are partnerships that have previously not taken human trafficking into their purview that are starting to do so in 2019. In Durango there is the Collaborative Management Program (CMP) that meets to discuss cases that overlap between service providers as well as the Integrated Services and Support Team (ISST). Both of these collaborations will be receiving human trafficking training in 2019 and will determine how and if that fits within their scope.

Local resources that may be able to offer support to victims of exploitation or human trafficking (not an exhaustive list):

- **Durango Area**: the Four Corners Rainbow Youth Center (which serves LGBT youth in the four corners region), Volunteers of America Southwest Safehouse, Alternative Horizons, La Plata Youth Services, Southern Colorado Community Action Agency, Durango Adult Education Center, Manna Soup Kitchen, Companeros - The Four Corners Immigrant Resource Center, San Luis Valley Immigrant Resource Center, San Juan Basin Public Health, Southern Ute Victim Services Program. There is also a Collaborative Management Program and Integrated Service and Support Team (ISST group) in Durango.
- **Montezuma County**: RENEW (offering crisis intervention services). RENEW also leads the Outreach and Education collaboration (ORE), a group of service providers, district attorneys, judges and county agencies that meet to discuss victim service provision in the county.
- **Chaffee County**: Alliance Against Domestic Abuse.
- **Alamosa County**: Tu Casa, BLV, Immigrant Resource Center, and Valley Wide Health Systems.
- **Archuleta County**: Rise Above Violence.
- **Fremont County**: Southern Peaks Regional Treatment Center, Life Compass Counseling, Canon City Pregnancy Center, and Valley Wide Health Systems.

Although this may seem like a large number of resources, it is also important to note that this is a vast area of land separated by major mountain ranges and not quickly accessible. Additionally, it is important to point out that from the participants quoted in this profile we can see that many individuals representing service providing organizations in the area are unaware of the resources available, for example the LGBT serving organization in Durango was not known by the participant in the Vulnerabilities/Root Causes section of this profile. It is vital not
only that organizations exist to support victims, but that communication and collaboration is fostered between organizations and agencies so that those resources can be used to their greatest potential.

Last year in 2018, the CoNEHT 24/7 Human Trafficking Hotline received 12 calls from Region 5.

**Human Trafficking Response in Region 5**

Community responses are driven in part by the ways in which the cause of the crime is framed, availability of local resources, how resources interact with each other, and how communities talk about the innovative work that is successful in their local community. We asked professionals and community members across the state to explain what is working in their communities, as well as to share their ideas for the future.

**PREVENTION**

One regional participant highlights that the statewide efforts are significant and worthy of national attention. They state:

I just think that Colorado’s doing a fine job and I know that a lot of other states are looking at Colorado to see how they’re doing it and I know lots of other states are replicating things that Colorado is doing, so. I wish that, and this is a broader statement this is not just for victims that have been trafficked but across the whole behavioral health realm that we had better systems and better funding so that we could work on the prevention piece so that we can alleviate some of this pain and suffering.

Systematically, these communities are working on implementing trainings and awareness-raising programs. Slowly the trainings from the metropolitan areas are reaching providers and trainers, however, the prevention area still appears to be an area of growth for this region.

**PROTECTION**

While services might be limited in the region, participants noted that the services they do have tend to be high quality:

I’m really proud of the women’s shelter here. The women’s shelter here has always, until this year, been a cisgendered safe shelter for women and this year they opened it to trans women and genderqueer women and I’m so happy because there were, like, no safe spaces for a lot of trans women to go, you know?

Overall, participants suggested that the state is ahead of the nation in working to end human trafficking. For example:

I’ve had conversations with people from other states about this, because we’re one of the few places in the country that work with trafficked kids the way we work with them and so they talk about how do you do this, how can we do this the way that you’re doing it…. I think one of the reasons we’ve got a chance at being successful is because we’ve got the different program tracks. We have the education piece, we have the substance abuse piece, we have the trauma informed piece all under one roof.

Having quality services is key in protecting individuals who’ve experienced trafficking.
PROSECUTION

Efforts to engage the law enforcement communities in this region are needed. As noted previously in this report, the region has only filed a single case since 2014. Increasing trust between law enforcement and prosecution agencies appears to be an area of growth for the region. One participant, for example, describes in response to a question about reporting human trafficking:

In prosecuting... that’s a good question. I haven’t really given that much thought. I think I would report it to see because I don’t know how much has gotten reported, but I don’t know how much trust I would have in our judicial system down here.

The statewide report found a similar need for ongoing training for district attorneys, judges, and law enforcement.

STATE JUDICIAL CASES AND FILINGS OF

THE 2014 HUMAN TRAFFICKING STATUTES BY REGION, CY 2014-2018

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<th>REGION 4 (4)</th>
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<th>REGION 6 (5, 9, 14)</th>
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<td>181(130)</td>
<td>29(21)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
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*ERRORNEOUS FILING OF LABOR TRAFFICKING: ANCILLARY CHARGES RELATED TO SEX TRAFFICKING
**ERRORNEOUS FILING OF LABOR TRAFFICKING; CRIMINAL CONDUCT MOST CLOSELY MATCHED SEXUAL ASSAULT WITH NO EVIDENCE OF FORCED LABOR

PARTNERSHIP

Most of southwestern Colorado may not have partnerships specifically dedicated only to trafficking, but the communities excel in their ability to collaboratively meet the needs they can locally identify. For example:

Yeah, they [regional public health organization] really- because of the smallness and the ruralness of the community, which you know- they take on gaps. So, you know, their whole focus for the San Juan region is, if there’s something missing, they’ll fill it in until the community has it.
Another participant states:

We have strong collaborations on many different levels in our community. At the systems level, at executive leadership, at the ground level talking about kids dually involved in child welfare and juvenile justice, we have our multidisciplinary team that talks about any kid that’s involved with multiple systems which could be mental health, school, child welfare, juvenile justice. So yes, we get together often and talk about specific cases on a weekly basis.

And further:

The collaborative management program. Yes, yes. They have started a committee that is solely focused on the youth homelessness problem here. They don’t have a lot of quote-on-quote ‘answers’ yet, but it’s at least a project that’s started here through the CMP [collaborative management program].

The fabric of these communities seems to support partnership in ways that may not seem as familiar in the larger, urbanized parts of the state.

Recommendations for Region 5 to Comprehensively End Human Trafficking

These regional profiles should spark conversation, discussion, and ultimately, action. We encourage each community to gather in partnership and create goals related to these location-specific questions:

1. How are you measuring the effectiveness of your efforts to end human trafficking? What data would you need to collect to understand your impact? How would you like to share and protect this data? How will you know your efforts are directly impacting the root causes of trafficking in your community?

2. How are your efforts to end trafficking addressing the root causes of trafficking?

3. How are efforts in schools prioritized to raise awareness about trafficking? How are teens and young adults sensitized to the symptoms and red flags of trafficking?

4. Are health care interventions to recognize and report trafficking available? Which agencies or organizations can provide human trafficking trainings for the health and mental wellness communities?

5. How can law enforcement agencies be supported to investigate and prosecute labor trafficking? Are community members and local service providers comfortable reporting to law enforcement and the criminal justice system? How can we enhance trust across the community for reporting?
THE COLORADO PROJECT

THE 4PS: WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- ADVANCE COMMUNITY-LED SOLUTIONS
- EVALUATE
- REFINE PROMISING PRACTICES
- END HUMAN TRAFFICKING

STRENGTHS: WHAT EXISTS

GAPS: WHAT'S MISSING

RECOMMENDATIONS: ACTION PLAN

THE COLORADO PROJECT TIMELINE

2010-2013
Colorado Project 1.0
National Survey (2011)
Statewide Survey, Focus Groups (2012)
Report Publication (2013)

2018-2019
Colorado Project 2.0
Statewide Survey, Interviews, Focus Groups (2018)
Report Publication (2019)

2010
Colorado Action Plan 1.0
State Advisory Board
14 Recommendations
48 Activities
State Policy Recommendations

2013
Colorado Anti-Trafficking Movement
Updated Human Trafficking Laws
Governor’s Council Established (2014)
Colorado Anti-Trafficking Exchange (2017)

2019
Colorado Action Plan 2.0
Survivor-Informed Committee
State Advisory Committee
10 Recommendations
The 4P Framework

The Colorado Project Regional Community Profiles frame their recommendations through the “4P” (Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, and Partnership) definitions, which were shaped by five global and federal protocols and legislation. The 4P framework recognizes that there are multiple sectors engaged in efforts to combat trafficking, as well as necessarily diverse strategies. Using the 4Ps helps us better understand both strengths and gaps in Colorado, and to develop a more comprehensive response.

Prevention measures increase awareness, advocacy, and education towards addressing a community’s systemic vulnerability to a continuum of exploitation, including human trafficking. Prevention plans recognize that exploitation and human trafficking are symptoms of root causes like poverty, gender inequality, and other forms of oppression which create vulnerable populations in the first place.

Protection measures ensure that survivors of human trafficking are provided access to (at a minimum) health care, legal aid, social services, and education in ways that are not prejudicial against victims’ rights, dignity, or psychological well-being. Protection also means creating an environment (social, political, and legal) that fosters the protection of victims of trafficking.

Prosecution measures ensure the creation and implementation of laws that address the continuum of labor exploitation and the pursuit of criminal punishments for such cases, treating human trafficking as exploitation of victims rather than recruitment/transportation of workers or people in prostitution. This includes not just criminal prosecution, but law enforcement officers and the creation of legislation.

Partnership measures acknowledge that combating human trafficking requires a comprehensive response through the cooperation of multiple sectors. Partnerships bring together diverse experiences, amplify messages, and leverage resources. An anti-human trafficking partnership refers to a cooperative relationship between two or more organizations established for the purpose of jointly combating human trafficking in some way (LCHT, 2013, p.8).
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The Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking (LCHT) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization based in Denver, Colorado and an established leader in the national anti-trafficking movement. Since 2005, LCHT has trained over 30,000 professionals and community members; conducted research to drive action and inform policy change; operated Colorado’s 24/7 human trafficking hotline; and developed over 150 future human rights leaders.