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 6: Population and Geography

Region 6 holds the 5th, 14th, and 9th Judicial Districts in the central mountains and northwest part of the state. It has no major urban cities but the major tourist hubs and high-country towns of Vail, Breckenridge, Steamboat Springs, Glenwood Springs, as well as the rural towns of Rifle, Craig, and Meeker. The population of Region 6 is less than 250,000 people with the majority of the population in the popular tourist counties of Summit, Eagle, and Garfield (about 140,000). What this area has in common are ski resorts and tourism, distance from major urban centers, and industries such as oil and gas, agriculture, shepherding and mining.

Population Demographics and Industries

Eagle, Pitkin, Garfield, Grand, and Summit Counties have jobs primarily in construction, service/hospitality, recreation, healthcare, and real estate. These five counties in this region have world class ski resorts visited year-round by tens of thousands of tourists each season. Much of the economies in these counties revolve around catering to these tourists, including constructing temporary housing, selling to vacation home owners, and
recreation and hospitality services. The cost of living in these communities is growing rapidly. In many resort areas workers are being forced to move further and further away from where they work, in order to be able to afford to live. Affordable housing is scarce and competitive as second home owners and property investors are increasingly renting their homes to short-term renters (vacationers) instead of to local residents.

Alternatively, the other counties in this region are mostly rural and frontier communities with limited access to resources. In addition to the regional tourist hubs of Vail, Glenwood Springs, and Steamboat Springs, this part of Region 6 is closest to the city of Grand Junction as a transit and resource hub. Routt County is the largest employer outside of the ski resort towns with about 20,000 jobs. Moffat County’s primary industries include agriculture, mining, and manufacturing. Routt County is primarily oil and gas, construction and other special trades, agriculture and ranching, health services, and the service/hospitality industries.

The mountain communities in Eagle, Summit, Lake, Pitkin and Garfield Counties each have higher than average number of foreign-born residents with large sections of the counties ranging from 11-26% foreign-born residents. Eagle County has an even higher average with 27-55% of its population being foreign-born. Still, all of these counties are about 70-80% white and 20-30% Hispanic. Moffat, Rio Blanco, Routt, and Clear Creek Counties are overwhelmingly white (around 90%) with only 0-10% of their populations foreign-born.

**Cost of Living**

The current median household income in the mountain communities are between $70,000-$85,000 and about 10% of the population lives in poverty. Lake County is an outlier with a $45,000 median household income and about a 13% poverty rate. Moffat and Rio Blanco counties have median household incomes of around $55,000 while Routt County is higher at $67,000; all have around a 10% poverty rate.

As a comparison, until 2015, the average sheepherder made $750-$1000/per month (or $9,000-$12,000/year) for 24/7 work. This is only about $100 more than they were making in 1965. Due to lobbying by human rights organizations, the Department of Labor released a new rule increasing that pay to $1200/month and up to $1500 in 2018 (or $18,000/year). The salary of sheepherders is an extreme example, but it illustrates the contrast between salaries of this area’s more marginalized residents and business owners. Many immigrants work in low wage, seasonal employment in all counties in this region. This burden for workers in Region 6 is highlighted by the following quote:

And, I think some of the factors that help us see it here we touched on earlier and some of that is the remoteness of the Yampa Valley and the cost of living especially Steamboat Springs itself, it’s very very difficult if you’re not affluent to live especially within the city limits, you’re forced to some of the outside but the services are expected. So I think some of that remoteness but being the resort encourages businesses or companies within the resort to bring some of these people in, but once they’re here, they can’t afford to live here on their own, they can’t afford to feed themselves very well, and we’re three hours from anywhere decent sized, that might be able to give you stronger ways to get out or communicate or even do a whole lot so I think just our unique remoteness with the affluence of the area that once people are here it’s difficult for them to be able to get out without help.

**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 6 participants:

And our county, it’s a thousand square miles and we’re a resort community so we have a lot of service industry jobs and construction jobs. And therefore, we’ve ran into quite a bit of labor trafficking, perhaps more than sex. We also have a very large commercial airport that has potential that we’ve had human trafficking issues there particularly around the holidays.

Yeah, there’s a lot of migrant farm workers in our area, primarily in the sheep and cattle industry, and we see a lot of human trafficking in, not a lot, but that’s where we see our cases.
One of the same things that I think we see up here, probably more is we see they’re isolated, where the victims are isolated. And they withhold documents, a lot with the ones that we see, and so that there’s that power and control situation again. And then they may be way out in the boonies somewhere, and not have access to anybody to provide assistance.

Vulnerabilities and root causes as outlined by participants in the above quotes here are mostly focused on industries like service/tourism, shepherding and farming, and construction. As Region 6 has diversity in population demographics, industries, and cost of living; those vulnerabilities are discussed in further detail below.

CENTRAL COLORADO CHALLENGES

Need for Awareness and Services

Participants confirmed that Region 6 is no different from other parts of Colorado in that more public awareness is needed for communities to recognize human trafficking happening in their midst. The following quotes highlight that need.

I think that’s true. I think the overall community perception is that Routt County, Yampa Valley, doesn’t have the human trafficking problem, and I think that’s probably fairly true across the state wherever you are that unless they see some big, and then it’s usually police involved, bring up the arrest of so many people and saved this many victims who were being sexually trafficked, because I think that’s the primary perception of human trafficking, that people are like, “Yeah we don’t have it.” And I don’t think that they think about the labor trafficking and things like that.

I think the people that need to know about the human trafficking piece are well versed in it. Law enforcement, probation, the court system, the people that deal with this stuff all the time are well educated and have a pretty good perception. I think the next tier down, in the service organizations that reach out are fairly well educated on what to look for and, and the red flags which to report, they don’t always do that, but they’re educated in it, and then the general public is a whole, very minimal understanding or concept of human trafficking. They see it as something that happens in Las Vegas and 16th Street Mall in Denver, they don’t believe that it happens in our own backyard.

Increase Attention on Labor Trafficking

Respondents noted the need to specifically address labor trafficking wage exploitation in this region. Specifically,

We see it’s not only the sexual human trafficking, you also see it in labor trafficking, heavily in this area because of the resorts and, the migrant farm working stuff, and they do get exploited because of those issues. And then they have no recourse.

Another respondent stated,

Restaurants. And it’s not coming across our country’s borders, but it’s bringing immigrant folks, or permanent residents or maybe visa holders from other states in to this remote location and so we had a specific situation with a restaurant a few years back bringing in Mandarin speakers, and Mongolians
and such who were residents of the United States but were from their own community in Texas, and they were bringing them here and isolating them where they didn’t have any language, capacity to speak with community members and things of that nature and then putting them all in one house, and working them seven days a week, and kind of that indentured servitude piece, and including food in their lack of pay, I guess you would call it? So that’s one example that we see it with restaurants, other workers coming in, we’ve seen it some with the sheepherders, and some abuse there.

There is seemingly limited access points for individuals experiencing labor trafficking to report, seek support, or access resources.

**Regional Resources for Trafficking Survivors**

There are no formal anti-trafficking task forces in Region 6. However, there is one group of service providers, law enforcement and concerned community members who meet informally to discuss trafficking and related issues in Glenwood Springs. There is also a group of concerned community members in Steamboat Springs who agreed to meet with researchers to discuss human trafficking and related issues in that community.

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

- Clear Creek County Advocates
- Summit Advocates for Victims of Assault
- Summit Community Care Clinic
- Family and Intercultural Resource Center, Summit County
- Bright Future Foundation, Eagle County
- Food Rescue Express, Eagle County
- Advocate Safehouse Project, Garfield County
- Response, Pitkin County
- Advocates of Lake County
- Advocates for a Violence Free Community, Grand County
- Valley Wide Health Systems-Moffat Family Health Clinic
- Advocates Crisis Support Services, Moffat County
- Advocates Building Peaceful Communities, Routt County
- Rangely Victim Services, Rio Blanco County
- Valley Wide Health Systems, Rio Blanco County

In ten counties there are a total of 15 resources available. This is over an area of 19,000 square miles. It is easy to see how victims could “fall through the cracks” in this vast region with some of the tallest mountains in the state, remote rural communities and expansive ranches with open space. One participant suggested,

So, we don’t have a process or a system for it, but because we are a small community, everybody knows each other, in fact we have cell phone numbers and can text people personally and things like that when we need to figure something out. I guess that’s our system.

This this type of system, common in small, rural communities, can create barriers to access in and of itself. In small communities it may be more difficult to accuse someone of wrongdoing if that person is an established business owner in the community possibly with powerful friends. If the accuser is an immigrant on a temporary
work visa for example, the unequal power dynamic of small-town relationships can make it even more difficult for someone to disclose and potentially that much more difficult for them to be believed and supported.

**Human Trafficking Response in Region 6**

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**

Some organizations are facilitating know-your-rights trainings in and around Moffat and Routt Counties targeted at sheepherders and other foreign nationals on temporary work visas. Colorado Legal Services has a Migrant Farmworker Division that leads these types of events. Additionally, the Colorado Department of Human Services in partnership with LCHT and the Colorado Human Trafficking Council recently held a full day training event in Rifle (Garfield County) to train child welfare professionals and the local victim service providers who they partner with. There was also a public awareness event (the Western Slope Human Trafficking Summit) held also in Rifle, in early 2019. Small steps are being made towards some prevention efforts, but Rifle is one small community inside the 19,000 square-miles that encompass Region 6, and there is more work still to be done in the prevention realm.

**PROTECTION**

As evidenced by the lack of resources noted above in this region, protection measures in Region 6 are limited. The resources that do exist are mostly victim advocate organizations. It is important that other service providers like medical professionals, child welfare workers and law enforcement in this region be trained to understand the laws supporting trafficking survivors as well as the nuances of identifying someone experiencing this form of exploitation. Rocky Mountain Innocence Lost Task Force recently facilitated a training for law enforcement in Garfield County, which could be duplicated throughout Region 6 so that law enforcement understands how to treat a victim of trafficking and what community resources are available to support survivors. Here is what one service provider from Region 6 told researchers about the lack of resources and support:

I agree with them that there’s no, specific format, or... catch net so to speak, I think what happens with us is, once we- once it’s identified that somebody has been trafficked in our area, then we, start, first thing and foremost, that all of us do, is listen to their story. Learn their needs, learn their concerns, and we try to match resources to their needs, and that’s very unique to each and every one of them. We do reach out, to States and Federal sources to provide services to them, because we don’t have the kind of money earmarked for that, so a lot of times we will seek funding for a specific project or an individual. But the big thing is, is that we need to be able to educate the communities, and we don’t have the resources. We try to do that, but again, it’s almost like ‘human trafficking’, and all of a sudden everybody’s ears are turned the other way and they don’t want to talk about it. Even though it’s a, I believe it’s more prominent in northwest Colorado than it is known. And I think that we could do a better job here if we were able
to reach out and educate. We have a very close knit ethnic groups, that those barriers are very difficult to cross into, especially in Craig, it’s hard to get them to participate and be, be present, and they stay very much close to themselves, unless you have somebody in your organization that is a part of that community. And and I understand that, I understand the, you know, those kinds of issues, but it makes reaching out to those groups a lot more difficult, and finding resources and finding tools to break down those walls would be very helpful.

PROSECUTION

This table sums up filings and cases in each of the seven regions since the 2014 Colorado Human Trafficking Legislation (HB 14-1273):

**STATE JUDICIAL CASES AND FILINGS OF THE 2014 HUMAN TRAFFICKING STATUTES BY REGION, CY 2014-2018**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGION (JUDICIAL DISTRICT)</th>
<th>REGION 1 (12, 16, 10, 3)</th>
<th>REGION 2 (8, 13, 19)</th>
<th>REGION 3 (1, 2, 17, 18, 20)</th>
<th>REGION 4 (4)</th>
<th>REGION 5 (6, 11, 12, 22)</th>
<th>REGION 6 (5, 9, 14)</th>
<th>REGION 7 (7, 21)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INVOLUNTARY SERVITUDE § 18-3-503</td>
<td>1**</td>
<td>1’</td>
<td>6’</td>
<td>2’</td>
<td>1’</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEXUAL SERVITUDE OF AN ADULT § 18-3-504</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEXUAL SERVITUDE OF A MINOR § 18-3-504</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL FILINGS (CASES)</td>
<td>1(1)**</td>
<td>15(10)</td>
<td>181(130)</td>
<td>29(21)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>9(1)</td>
<td>5(3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*ERRORONEOUS FILING OF LABOR TRAFFICKING: ANCILLARY CHARGES RELATED TO SEX TRAFFICKING
**ERRORONEOUS FILING OF LABOR TRAFFICKING; CRIMINAL CONDUCT MOST CLOSELY MATCHED SEXUAL ASSAULT WITH NO EVIDENCE OF FORCED LABOR

While there were 9 filings in Region 6, it was all the same case. However, legal partners in Colorado, like Colorado Legal Services, described that though it is difficult invoking the involuntary servitude charge for labor trafficking, and is more productive to go after labor trafficking cases via civil litigation. There have been several trafficking cases in the 9th and 14th Judicial Districts. One of them is outlined here as a “typical” case, but there are several more in this region.

Camayo v. Peroulis and Sons Sheep, Inc.

Peroulis and Sons operated two ranches in northwest Colorado and recruited foreign national labor through the H-2A visa program. The two victims in this case were Peruvian nationals. They were charged over $2000 in fees before they even arrived to work. Upon arrival Peroulis confiscated their passports and visas and they were not provided copies of their employment contracts. They worked difficult physical work “approximately 17 hours per day.” They were provided “with the barest of provisions, causing them to have to ration food or go hungry; on at least one occasion.” Their supervisors were verbally and physically abusive. Both victims suffered on-the-job injuries and were not allowed to seek medical attention, because it was “too expensive.” Peroulis was aware of
the difficulties the victims would face if they went back to Peru without completing their contract, on one occasion he “threatened to send him back to Peru after he found the plaintiff talking to a coworker.” On another he told one victim that “he had called immigration and the police.”

This type of exploitation is what marginalized populations, like foreign nationals on temporary work visas, face in more remote parts of the state where landowners are a powerful part of small communities and foreign nationals hold no power. The societal, community and interpersonal dynamics of these types of relationships can and sometimes do lead to exploitative conditions. Prosecution efforts need to be trained to understand how to pursue these cases through the criminal justice system so that victims can feel supported in the communities in which they live and work. Increasing prosecution efforts to address labor trafficking in Region 6 would also bring more attention to the problem and raise awareness for the local communities.

**PARTNERSHIP**

There are no formal anti-trafficking partnerships in Region 6, though Garfield County does meet to discuss the local response to trafficking efforts informally. The Western Slope Anti-Trafficking Alliance based in Grand Junction has supported and advocated for the rights of workers in the 9th and 14th Judicial Districts for several years, however they are located in a different region and not included in this report. Please consult the Region 7 report for more information on Mesa County and the work being done in Grand Junction if that might be helpful in this region. It would be a great benefit to potential and confirmed victims of human trafficking to have a formal partnership in Region 6, and likely more than one due to the nature of the sheer size of this region.

**Recommendations for Region 6 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 can partnership efforts of other communities be modified to suit the needs of anti-trafficking efforts in Region 6?** How can nearby partnerships support the development of new partnerships in the region?

3. **How can current prevention efforts be scaled up to reach the community at large?**
   How can public awareness of the issue of human trafficking (including labor trafficking) be increased? What would it take to convince local communities that trafficking does exist, and it exists in Region 6?
THE COLORADO PROJECT

THE 4PS:
WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- STRENGTHS:
WHAT EXISTS

- GAPS:
WHAT’S MISSING

- RECOMMENDATIONS:
ACTION PLAN

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

THE COLORADO PROJECT TIMELINE

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

2013
Colorado Action Plan 1.0
State Advisory Board
14 Recommendations
48 Activities
State Policy Recommendations

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

2019
Colorado Action Plan 2.0
Survivor-Informed Committee
State Advisory Committee
10 Recommendations

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