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 2: Population and Geography

Region 2 includes the major cities of Fort Collins and Greeley, along with Fort Morgan and Sterling as the largest population centers on the Eastern Plains. Fort Collins is the fourth largest city in Colorado and is on the northern end of the Front Range I-25 corridor. Greeley, central to the oil and gas industry in Colorado, is close to four main highways: I-25, I-76, Hwy 34, and Hwy 85. Ft. Collins and Greeley are home to Colorado State University (CSU) and University of Northern Colorado respectively, and as a result, both communities have a significant percentage of the population making low to no income while attending school. With I-76 and Hwy 34 running through both Ft. Morgan and Brush, and Hwy 71 through Brush is a major route in eastern Colorado. As a result, Ft. Morgan and Brush are home to multiple truck stops.

The largest employment sector in Fort Collins is education, followed by health care and social assistance, retail, and accommodation and food services. The median annual income for both Larimer and Weld Counties is nearly $65,000 and twelve percent of residents are living in poverty (American Community Survey, United States Census, 2016). The average poverty rate in Colorado is 10% and the median household income is $69,000. According to Census data, Larimer County is approximately 11% hispanic, while the neighboring Weld County,
is 30% Hispanic. Greeley, the county seat of Weld, also a college town, looks and feels significantly different when compared to Fort Collins. On average, Greeley is more diverse, has slightly lower bachelors degree attainment, and population density is spread across larger acreage in Larimer County. The largest employers in Weld are in agriculture and livestock production, health care and social assistance; followed by retail, education, manufacturing, and construction (American Community Survey, United States Census, 2016).

The median annual income of the counties in this region outside of the major population centers of Larimer and Weld varies from about $45,000-$50,000. The population of Ft. Morgan has a relatively high proportion of limited English speakers, including a large refugee and immigrant population. The area is 56-70% male, about 60% of the county is white while about 35% are Hispanic and 3% black. Manufacturing is the largest sector of job market, mainly beef and dairy processing, and most of Morgan County is agricultural. In Logan County (Sterling), besides the government sector, health services and retail provide the majority of jobs. About 15% of Logan is Hispanic. Yuma’s population is 75% white and about 23% Hispanic. About 12% of the population has achieved less than a 9th grade education, which is more than twice the national average of 5.4%. Besides government, the agricultural sector provides the majority of jobs.

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 resulting from a person’s LGBTQIA identity. We asked communities to describe root causes they believe contribute to human trafficking.

Participants described root causes of trafficking in Larimer County, as poverty, family environment, and drug use by youth. The recent population growth and the resulting tight housing supply leads to homelessness/lack of stability.

In Larimer, we see a lot of survival sex, so kids who are on the run for a period of time and are exchanging sex for a place to stay or drugs or food and that’s even more common with our boys than typical sex trafficking is with our male population.

Local residents described scenarios where traffickers have approached girls in local high schools and at CSU and handed out fliers for them to audition to be porn stars. Trafficking in the Fort Collins area sometimes involves technology or social media. Youth are connecting through Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook and various apps with adults or people they think are their peers, and then getting lured into trafficking situations. Men answer ads on Craigslist for young girls seeking drugs, which can turn into commercial sexual exploitation.

Participants described root causes of trafficking in the Greeley area, as including poverty, lack of education, and a high number of jobs in the construction and agricultural sectors, as well as in the oil and gas fields. Seasonal and temporary work situations in the farming, construction, meat processing, and oil and gas fields can create conditions where trafficking can thrive. “I think the oil and gas boom, particularly the mineral development, we’ve got huge groups of workers in the motels and all over town.” Participants worried those types of workers might be particularly vulnerable to exploitation.

Participants described the root causes of trafficking in the Ft. Morgan/Brush area as including poverty, lack of education, lack of citizenship status, and addiction. The number of non-English speaking households here is one of the highest in the state. It is a “minority majority community,” with twenty-three languages spoken in the school district. Participants stated the fact that there are so many immigrants with different languages, religions, cultures, and ethics, can lead to challenges related to communication among ethnic groups and with law enforcement. There is fear among immigrant communities regarding Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and what will happen to them if they are the subject of an ICE raid. “The immigrants are scared of both the drug cartel and the police, so victims hide from both.” Participants also mentioned the physical location on the I-76 corridor as a factor in local trafficking.

There’s a lot of criminals, there’s a lot of deviance that goes on I-76. And we’re a community- I mean, we’re right off of I-76. A new truck stop just opened up in Brush and truck stops are notorious for this kind of activity. Then we have a large cultural component here that’s directly tied to drug cartels in Mexico.

Participants described a substance abuse problem in the 13th Judicial District, with people traveling from within Colorado and neighboring states who become victims of trafficking.
Unfortunately, a lot of young women that we’ve dealt with over the years are users. I’ve actually heard one girl say, ‘I’ve never paid for my dope.’ I find that kind of hard to believe, because you’re paying for it one way or the other. And the girls, and probably to some degree some men and guys, are pimped out to pay their debts, and they can either pay their debts by sexual favors for people or by getting involved in the trafficking of drugs.

NORTHERN COLORADO CHALLENGES

Housing

Affordable housing is a significant issue in Northern Colorado, which creates vulnerabilities among children and adults alike. There is talk of establishing different models for shelters and other resources for at-risk youth.

I’m a huge fan of the drop-in center idea because I’m convinced we have a lot of unaccompanied youth that are ending up in survival sex situations or other situations like that that lead to a more serious trafficking situation because they just don’t have anywhere to go if they’re out of their home.

There are a limited number of beds for individuals experiencing homelessness in northern Colorado, and those that do exist have high barriers to access. Rules for substance use, curfews, or inflexibility regarding same-gender couples leave large numbers of this population vulnerable to trading sex to fill survival needs that are not being met with existing resources.

Some youth, identified as victims of commercial sexual exploitation in Larimer County, have been in foster care. They received support and services through the child welfare system, and when they turn eighteen that support often ends, creating what is known as the ‘cliff effect’ where youth abruptly lose access to services. In addition, there are not enough housing options while they are in the system.

I would love to see a dedicated foster care program for kids so that they don’t have to stay in residential treatment. Youth that are trafficked are going to need really individualized attention and to be able to attach to a caregiver, but it would take an extensive media campaign and a lot of dedicated funding....

There is also a distinct lack of services for adults. There are shelters that want to help, but they have not received the training or the resources to support the distinct needs of a trafficking survivor.

Need for Awareness and Services

Community members working in anti-trafficking efforts recognize that there needs to be more public awareness about both sex and labor trafficking. It is important to empower individuals, especially victims and survivors.

They can no longer just take it home and say ‘well, I won’t deal with that, somebody else is gonna have to deal with that.’ No, you have to deal with it. You have to own it if it’s something you witness, and know you have a responsibility as a citizen to deal with it.

Broadly, there is a challenge around educating the community as to what human trafficking looks like in Northern Colorado.
I think there is definitely a large chunk of the community at large that is still like ‘human trafficking doesn’t happen here’. We’re in a rural area, so we have a lot of the good ol’ boy beliefs, and very male-dominated beliefs up here, so very so often we run into some interesting conversations.

An identified challenge in the 13th Judicial District is the lack of trained trauma-focused therapists, as well as multilingual therapists. This challenge is compounded by the lack of resources in this rural community. Rural communities in northern Colorado are not the only ones facing the challenges of increased need for trauma-responsive resources. However, this region is making strides to develop systems and teams who are able to provide resources to end human trafficking.

Regional Resources for Trafficking Survivors

Northern Colorado boasts two existing anti-trafficking partnerships in the region, along with a third partnership poised to bring trafficking into its purview in 2019. The Larimer County Response Team works to build a unified community response to human trafficking in Larimer County through collaboration, transparency, and education. They have trained many organizations and agencies doing work in parallel movements related to sex trafficking in Larimer County. The other active partnership in the region is the Northeastern Colorado Coalition Against Trafficking (NECCAT). This group is a collaborative effort of law enforcement, community groups and concerned citizens who are also raising awareness and supporting survivors. Of note is the non-profit, Free Our Girls, a survivor-led organization that facilitates trainings across northeastern Colorado and provides services to at-risk and exploited women and girls in the region.

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

- SAVA (Sexual Assault Victim Advocate Center)
- Saint John’s Lutheran
- The Murphy Center
- Catholic Charities
- Estes Valley Crisis Advocates
- Bringing Home Justice Project
- Crossroads Safehouse
- Fort Collins Rescue Mission
- Sunrise Loveland Community Health Clinic
- Voices Carry Child Advocacy Center
- Summit Stone Health Partners
- The Matthew’s House
- SAFY of Colorado
- Health District of Northern Larimer County Dental Clinic

The eastern part of Region 2 (Sterling, Yuma) is less densely populated with fewer available resources for survivors. However, with the leadership of SARA (Sexual Assault Response Advocates) and an existing partnership that gathers to discuss multidisciplinary cases in Fort Morgan, that landscape is shifting. That partnership has received Federal funding to support the integration of human trafficking into their purview. Training for members will begin in 2019. In addition to SARA, the following organizations may be able to offer support to victims of exploitation or human trafficking (not an exhaustive list):
- Morgan county: S.H.A.R.E, Inc., Rising Up Morgan County, Morgan Family Center, One Morgan county
- Logan county: Help for Abused Partners and Logan County Department of Human Services
- Washington county: New Directions Rural Communities Resource Center and the Washington County Sheriff’s Office
- Yuma: Rural Communities Resource Center

Last year in 2018, the CoNEHT 24/7 Human Trafficking Hotline received 37 calls from Region 2. This region has the second highest number of calls to the hotline after the greater Denver area.

Human Trafficking Response in Region 2

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

Human trafficking introductory training of child welfare workers, community providers, and medical professionals is a prevention strength in Larimer County, and many have expressed interest in receiving intermediate-level training. Trainings in the school system have also seen victories with red-flag education for school personnel and the national, evidence-based MyLife MyChoice educational program for youth.

I work with prevention and I think success is when somebody in a position of power can properly recognize and identify signs of trafficking and intervene before it’s too late. When I hear of a teacher or of a school counselor or school resource officer say ‘Because I was trained, I saw A B and C in this student and as we intervened, realized that they had indeed begun the process of a sales crew or interacting with some older person …’, that to me is success because we’ve just prevented another number and another statistic.

Participants speculate that high school students could benefit from more human trafficking education in different formats, such as plays, music and other arts, so that it seems more like entertainment than education.

Furthermore, service providers cite ongoing mentoring, coaching, and campus connection programs as having a big impact on changing the lives of teens who have experienced challenging circumstances, as well as communication between agencies. The county has also begun to assemble a list of trauma-informed service providers.

I think not only that collaboration with community service providers when we are identifying those higher risk kids or even providing more prevention education before they’re even at that risk level, it’s also that communication between agency partners so … information sharing can occur, because often times we’re interacting with some of the same kids or families. I can think of situations where we have a family with three or four girls in their family and so we’re just going down the line as they get older and so it’s just being very on top of it in terms of that sharing of information... I think it’s sometimes difficult if agencies become silo-ed and knowing that we’re all working towards the same purpose is really important and that’s where success is too.
Another sector that has benefited from education on human trafficking is the hospitality arena, where hotel and motel workers can recognize trafficking activities. One area that participants cited for improvement in prevention education is of the general public, specifically more education on how to spot potential trafficking, who to report it to, and how to report it in a way that keeps the reporter and the potential victim safe. Since members of the public also serve as jurors, it would be beneficial to educate the public on the trauma impacts of trafficking as they listen to testimony and consider verdicts.

PROTECTION

Education of health care professionals in Larimer County has resulted in medical teams identifying the symptoms of human trafficking at a local hospital. A county-wide response protocol has also been established, which educates the community, training everyone to use the same language around commercial sexual exploitation, and then providing services to survivors that didn’t exist previously. Those services include dialectical behavior therapy, equine therapy, and other therapeutic treatment for youth who have experienced trafficking and may have subsequent PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), as well as substance abuse treatment.

Larimer County has adopted a demand reduction model. Law enforcement and social services recognize that those that are involved in the commercial sex industry are more often than not part of a vulnerable population subjected to exploitation, and that penalizing vulnerable people does not eliminate their vulnerabilities.

The cycle of poverty in the Greeley area is influential in the perpetuation of human trafficking. The “pull” for traffickers is a means of income, and those traffickers recruit victims with the promise of escaping poverty. The local agencies work with each other and nonprofits to assist one person at a time. Faith communities and civic groups are rallying around the issue and contributing financially. One local non-profit is able to provide financial assistance within 24 hours to any survivor identified by law enforcement.

I believe that not only helps the survivor, but it helps our officers so that the officers or advocates can be human beings helping another human being... when a person needs a ride the officers may call and say they need a ride, the officers may just not have time or sometimes can’t do the things for a survivor that need to be done like buying them lunch or taking them to court.

This also establishes relationships so that the survivor can receive ongoing assistance with court appearances, housing, and other basic needs.

PROSECUTION

As indicated by the table below, all of the cases in this region pursued under the 2014 Human Trafficking legislation were sex trafficking-focused (12 filings for adults and three for minors). While there have been no labor trafficking cases tried under this law, victim service providers and civil legal services have pursued and won labor trafficking cases in civil court. In fact, one of the landmark cases in Colorado was successfully tried in civil court. In 2008, in Weld County migrant farmworkers from Mexico were forced to live and work in squalid conditions, under threats of violence by their traffickers. Under a federal lawsuit, they were awarded $7.8 million in what was the largest judgement of its kind at that time in the US.
Greeley had a significant court victory in 2016, in which a man was sentenced to 248 years in prison on sex trafficking charges. Such cases help to raise awareness about the issue in the local community, which subsequently leads to the public supporting providers and survivors through financial donations and cooperation with law enforcement and other agencies.

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

<table>
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<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>
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<td>0</td>
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<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>
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</table>

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

**PARTNERSHIP**

Larimer County has established a number of local, regional, and statewide partnerships. Larimer County Department of Human Services (DHS) is working with the statewide Colorado Human Trafficking Council and NECCAT; with the District Attorney on establishing the multidisciplinary team; with the delinquency court, probation, and the Public Defender; and with the Jefferson County high-risk juvenile tracking database. One-on-one relationships in these agencies and departments build trust and allow for quick responses to requests for assistance and outreach.

These partnerships are:

- Definitely a promising practice for youth in general, but it also lends itself very well to kids who are experiencing or are at risk for trafficking because it’s a huge collaborative effort. Everybody’s talking so we don’t have kids ever that come in that are charged with prostitution, ever. And there’s the tremendous amount of recognition around kids who have committed a crime as a result of other stuff, trafficking being one of them... we don’t refer our kids who have experienced or who are at risk for trafficking to anybody who hasn’t been vetted as a trauma informed provider... DHS has paid for practitioners to go and have a two-week training for trauma-focused CBT [cognitive behavioral therapy].

- The juvenile diversion program refers youth to CSU’s campus connections program, which is a semester-long weekly commitment where the youth are paired with a Bachelor’s-level mentor and Master’s-level therapists are
available. The youth have dinner with their mentor, do fun activities, and receive homework assistance. The local organization, A Face to Reframe, has partnered with the diversion program and campus connections to do one-hour prevention education curriculum for those children and their mentors every semester.

Brush law enforcement has seen a substantial increase in sexual assault reports over the past eight years. This is attributed not to the fact that there are more sexual assaults, but to a greater willingness of victims to make those reports due to community policing, education and victim outreach. The police department and multidisciplinary team have partnered to hold a Take Back the Night event to raise awareness about domestic and sexual violence.

Law enforcement in Morgan County have held Community Listening Sessions and other trainings and educational programs. They have also partnered with Colorado-based Truckers Against Trafficking to raise awareness about human trafficking in the local community, and have developed a good relationship with truck stop and hotel management so that they are more likely to spot and report suspicious activities.

**Recommendations for Region 2 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 should the rural and more urban communities across this region work together?** Can assets across both types of communities address the varied root causes of trafficking?

3. **How can systems across the region meet the needs of adults?** Are there organizations that can extend services or partner in new ways to support adult survivors of human trafficking?

4. **How can this region add more education and trainings around labor trafficking?** What new partners would need to be added to help develop protocols as well as services for survivors of labor trafficking?
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.