

Addressing Racial and Ethnic Disparities: Refugees and TANF in Colorado

A partnership between Colorado Works, counties and Colorado's Refugee Resettlement program



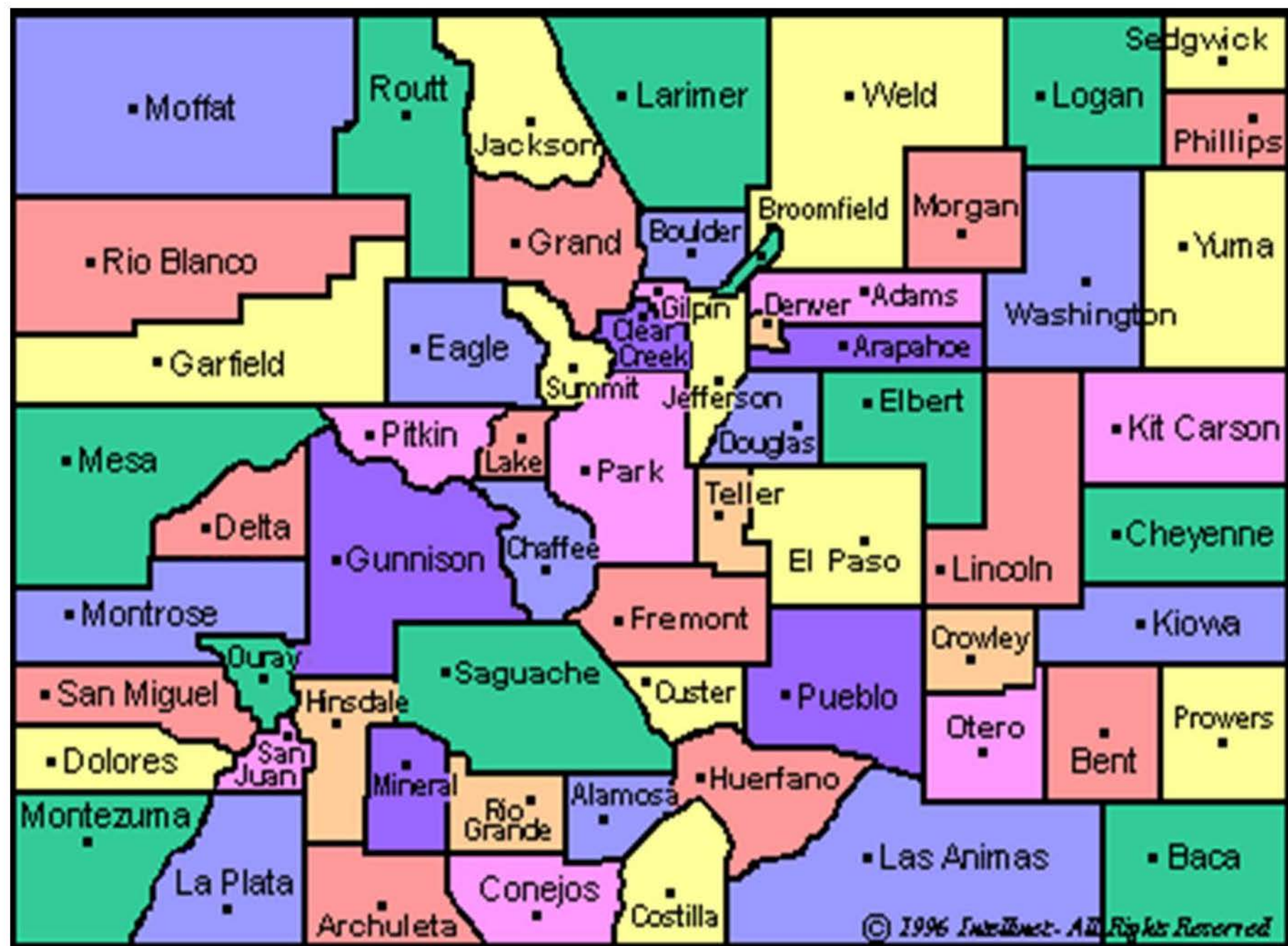
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Colorado Works

- State supervised, county administered
- 64 counties, rural and urban
- Counties have flexibility in their structure but are responsible for eligibility and workforce development activities
- Colorado is one of eight states with a Hispanic population of over 1,000,000



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Colorado Refugee Services Program (CRSP)

- Coordinates refugee resettlement in the State
- Largest populations are refugees from Burma, Bhutan, Somalia, Iraq, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, and Afghanistan
- The vast majority of refugees are resettled into three areas: Denver/Aurora, Colorado Springs and Greeley. This encompasses 6 major counties.
- Refugees come with very different backgrounds, religions, ethnicities, education, and transferrable work skills
- All services for refugees are contracted to nonprofits that have the language and cultural ability to serve refugees, including resettlement agencies which provide initial reception services
- Resettlement agencies in the three areas are funded by CRSP (Office of Refugee Resettlement) to assist refugees in accessing benefits and securing employment



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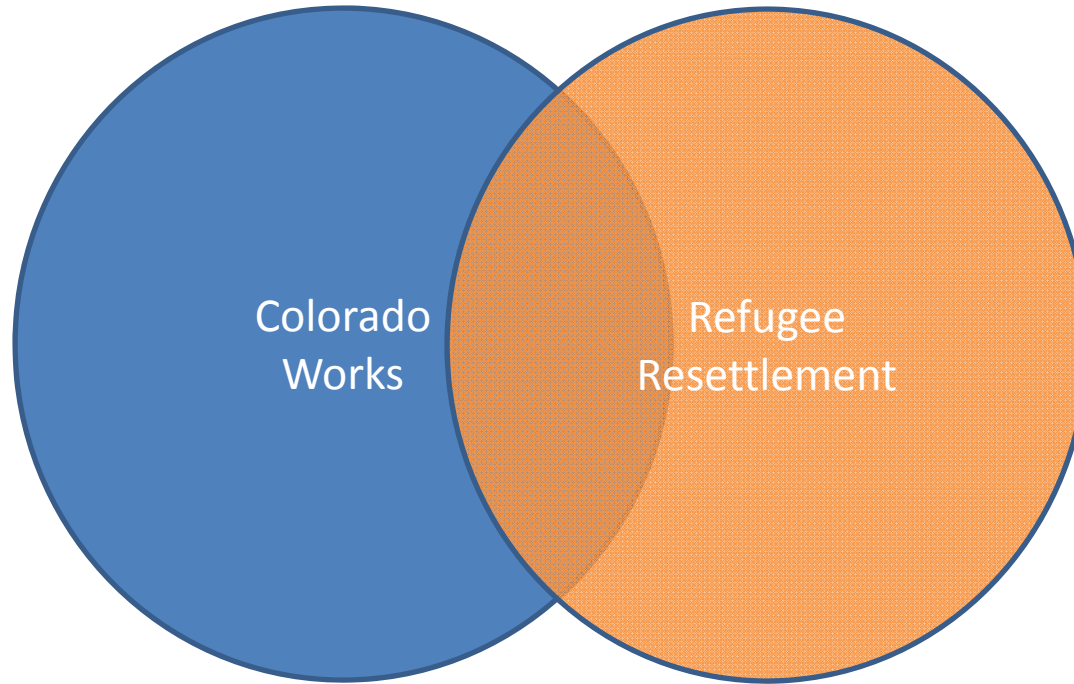
Challenges Faced by Counties

- Refugee population represents <1% of state's population yet there are over 30 languages and cultural backgrounds
- Interpretation was expensive and finding interpreter availability for languages such as Rohingya can be time-consuming and burdensome
- Finding employment activities for refugees was difficult
- Employment outcomes for refugees were far lower than for the general population
- Front line staff were expected to be culturally fluent in all refugee populations; workers felt unsuccessful in being able to help their refugee clients
- ***Disparities in service, activities and outcomes for refugees, despite the best intentions of counties***



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A partnership that serves all



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Model

Core Principle 1: Refugees are best assisted through a network of providers dedicated to assisting refugees achieve self-sufficiency and integration, regardless of the funding source or program

- The four largest Colorado counties (out of sixty-four), with about 90% of all resettled refugees made the rare agreement to cede authority to the state to administer refugee services
- Funding from TANF came to CRSP straight from the state block grant
- Through existing contracts, refugee resettlement agencies expanded their employment services to include the workforce development for Colorado Works
- The resettlement agencies work closely in partnership with counties to ensure that their needs (data, compliance, review, etc.) are met
- Counties have point persons for resettlement agency staff that foster collaborative approaches to serve the clients



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Model

Core Principle 2: The most efficient use of resources and effective achievement of outcomes will be achieved through frequent reassessment of progress towards negotiated goals with clients and agencies, and adaptation of case plans to support their success.

- Resettlement agency employment plans, required by refugee resettlement funding, serve functions for refugee resettlement and for Colorado Works
- Refugee resettlement agencies have ongoing relationships with clients that assist them in ensuring activity towards integration
- Funding from both TANF and CRSP/Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) are leveraged to support outcomes. This particularly works since both programs have employment and cessation of benefits as a major goal

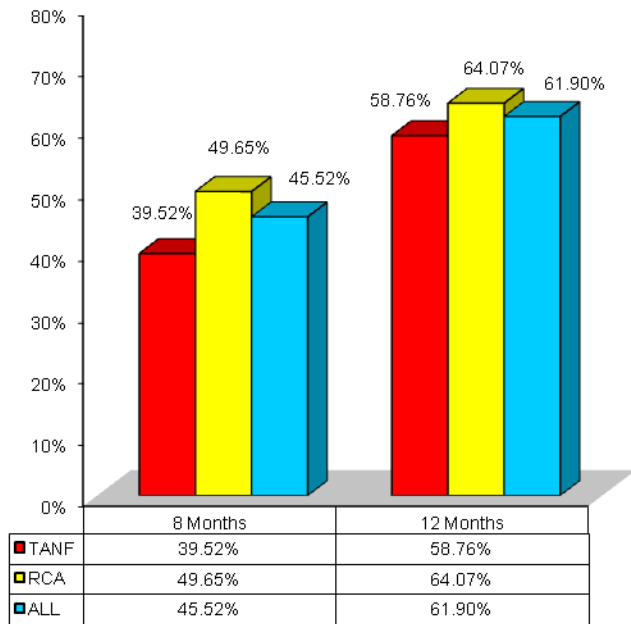


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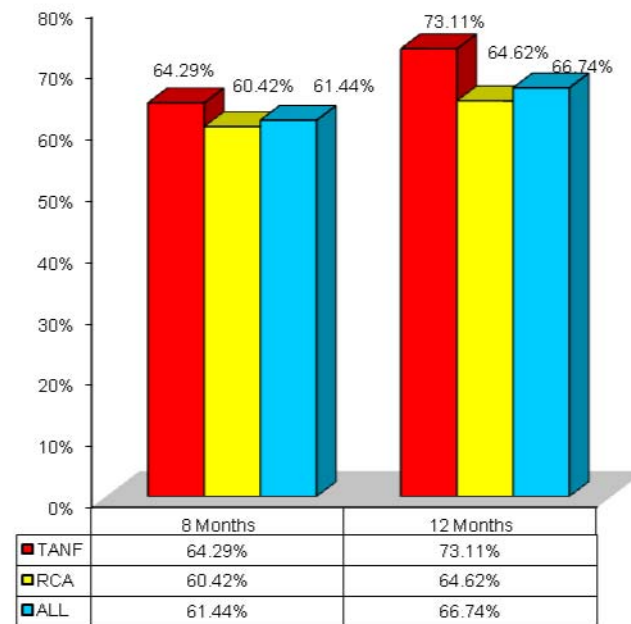
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Refugee Cases Becoming Self-sufficient Eight And Twelve Months From Arrival



FFY 2011



FFY 2015

Key Take Aways

- Utilize strengths within the community: refugee resettlement agencies have existing tools to assist with eliminating disparities for refugees
- There may be partners in your state or community working towards the same goal(s) as you, but may be in a better position to serve diverse communities
- Collaborate in a way that recognizes the strengths of each partner
- Cultural fluency and language-appropriate staff goes a long way to reduce disparities
- When the client is successful, everybody wins!



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