

Colorado Funders for Inclusiveness & Equity
Meeting Notes
January 7, 2016

Summary

January's topic was the Refugee Experience. The session was facilitated by Joe Wismann-Horther from the Colorado Refugee Services Program at CDHS Department of Economic Security and Meg Allen from the Colorado Providers for Integration Network. Meg and Joe led the group through a comprehensive overview of the refugee experience from WWII to today.

There was a PowerPoint presentation and two additional handouts:

- MPI Fact Sheet – Ten Facts about U.S. Refugee Resettlement
- Taking it to a Deeper Level – Ways to Volunteer and Get Involved

Defining the Term Refugee

Part of the difficulty in understanding the history and experience of refugees in our country and in the world is the lack of understanding among the general public and media about the official definition of refugee. The terms immigrant, migrant, and refugee are often mistakenly used interchangeably. The Refugee Act of 1980s primary goal was to bring U.S. law into compliance with international law.

The act contains a definition of the term "refugee" derived from the 1951 convention. The definition includes, in brief, any person unable or unwilling to return to his or her country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

History of Refugees & Resettlement

Joe and Meg walked the group examples from Gallup Polls that indicated that historically, public will hasn't been in support of welcoming the "other," and yet, there are several examples where the legislation has allowed specific groups into a country.

They shared what they called three durable solutions to refugee resettlement:

- 1) Ability to repatriate or go back one's home country, i.e. South Sudan.
- 2) Local integration
- 3) Resettlement

Colorado Refugee Resettlement Facts

Colorado settles 1.5 – 3% of refugees coming into the U.S. Historically targeted cities/areas included Denver Metro and Colorado Springs. In 2006, Greeley and Ft. Morgan became target areas as well due to job opportunities in the meat packing industry. The PowerPoint presentation posted to the COFIE website provides more detail and compelling photographs.

A COFIE member suggested the book "The Late Homecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir."