

**MEMO**

**DATE:** December 10, 2019

**TO:** Arapahoe County Commissioners Kathleen Conti, Nancy N. Sharpe, Jeff Baker, Nancy Jackson and Bill L. Holen

**FROM:** Ethiopian Community Development Council's African Community Center (ACC), Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountain Refugee and Asylee Programs (LFS) and the International Rescue Committee in Denver (IRC).

**SUBJECT:** Refugee Resettlement in Arapahoe County – Request for Consent

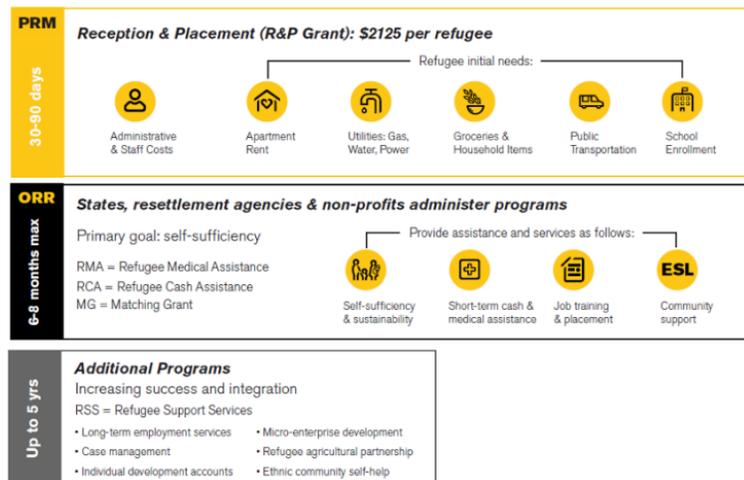
On December 17, 2019, representatives from the International Rescue Committee, on behalf of the above-mentioned resettlement agencies (RAs), request to apprise Arapahoe County's Board of County Commissioners regarding a recent Executive Order issued by President Trump wherein state and local governments are given new authority regarding initial refugee resettlement.

**Background**

- Executive Order (EO) 13888 (Attachment A), issued September 26, 2019, mandates a 90-day timeframe in which the U.S. Department of State must implement a new state and local consent process for refugee resettlement.
- RAs will be required to obtain a letter of consent from each municipality, county, and state where they intend to initially place a refugee individual or family.
  - Written consent is required as part of each RA's funding proposal to the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, and must be obtained no later than January 21, 2020.
- Prior to EO 13888, RAs were required to engage in consultation with communities where 25 or more refugees were resettled annually. However, previously there was no requirement for each jurisdiction where a refugee individual or family could potentially be placed to provide explicit consent for initial resettlement.

**U.S. Refugee Admissions Programs**

- RAs partner with the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) to provide services to refugees approved for resettlement through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program.
- Since the passage of the Refugee Act of 1980, the United States has safely resettled over 3 million refugees.
- The U.S. accepts a limited number of refugees each year. The President, in consultation with Congress, determines the authorized target for annual refugee admissions through a Presidential Determination.
- Refugees referred for resettlement in the U.S. must satisfy the following criteria:
  - Meet the definition of a "refugee" as determined by U.S. government officials.
  - Be among those refugees determined by the President to be of special humanitarian concern to the U.S.
  - Be otherwise admissible under U.S. law.
  - Not be firmly resettled in any foreign country.



**Role of a resettlement agency (RA)**

In addition to partnering with PRM, the RAs also partner with the Colorado Refugee Services Program under the Colorado Department of Human Services to provide holistic services that promote refugees' successful integration in Colorado communities. In Colorado, refugees can access RA services for up to five years after their arrival.

**RA services may include:** General case management and community orientation; health education, navigation and case management; job readiness training and job placement services; ESL enrollment; cultural orientation; psychosocial support programs; youth services; financial literacy; digital literacy; family stabilization services; immigration legal services; school enrollment; community integration support; and more.

Figure 1: Funding for resettlement agencies and service timeline

## Refugees in Colorado and Arapahoe County

- Since the Refugee Act of 1980, Colorado has welcomed more than 60,000 refugees. Currently, immigrants, refugees and other refugee-eligible populations comprise roughly 10% of Colorado's population.
- Over the last two federal fiscal years, 408 refugees were initially placed in Arapahoe County.
- According to a report by the New American Economy, there are 115,576 immigrants (14.4% of the population) living in Congressional District 1 and 117,789 (14.9% of the population) in District 6 with a combined spending power of \$5.7B.

	District 1	District 6
Immigrant residents	115,576	117,789
Immigrant spending power	\$2.6B	\$3.1B
Manufacturing (% of workforce)	22.8%	21.2%
Construction (% of workforce)	38.9%	33.5%
Immigrant entrepreneurs	3,824	4,900

Figure 2 Source: New American Economy, *Immigrants and the Economy in: Congressional districts 1 and 6*

## What does consent mean?

- Providing local consent means that the Arapahoe County will continue to allow RAs to initially place newly-arrived refugee individuals and families within their jurisdiction.
- Arapahoe County will pass a resolution and/or write a letter consenting to the initial resettlement of refugees (see Attachment B). A copy of the written will be shared with the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration and another copy will be shared with the RAs to be submitted with their proposals to the Department of State to continue resettling refugees through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program.

## Will refugees still be able to live in Arapahoe County if consent is not provided?

- Yes. The Executive Order will prevent RAs from initially placing refugees in your community and from providing them with services during their first 90 days in the U.S. However, refugees arrive in the U.S. with legal status and freedom of mobility and could decide to self-place in your county.

## Benefits of providing consent

- A significant number of refugees are initially placed throughout Arapahoe County, and numerous refugees have chosen to make cities within the county their home after initial placement—many of whom have family members they are hoping to be reunited with. If consent were provided and a family member of an Arapahoe County resident is approved to come to the U.S., RAs would be able to place the newly-arrived individual in Arapahoe County, where their family member already resides.
  - If consent were not provided, RAs would not be able to place the reuniting family member in the same city where their loved one currently resides.
- Providing consent would allow RAs to serve refugees in your community and to provide vital services that allow newly-arrived refugees to learn about their community, find employment and become self-sufficient.
  - If consent were not provided, RAs would not be able to provide services to newly-arrived refugees in your community during the first 90 days following their arrival to the U.S. This is a critical window of time in which a wide array of services and support is provided to lay the foundation for longer-term success and community integration.
- RAs regularly provide technical assistance to communities where refugees are resettled. Technical assistance ranges from providing training to police, fire and other first responders about working with refugee populations to providing support to school districts, health clinics and other providers as they seek to provide trauma-informed, culturally and linguistically appropriate services. Additionally, RAs work very closely with faith organizations, civic groups and individuals to help them learn about their new neighbors and to engage them in an array of voluntary capacities that support the resettlement process.

We respectfully request that Arapahoe County consider passing a resolution and/or writing a letter that would provide written consent for Ethiopian Community Development Council's African Community Center, Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountains' Refugee and Asylee Programs, and the International Rescue Committee in Denver to initially place refugees within Arapahoe County's jurisdiction.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We are happy to answer questions and provide background information as needed to inform the County regarding local consent for refugee resettlement.

*Please also note that, although this communication has been initiated regarding implementation of EO 13888, communication about, or participation in, the implementation of the EO is not in any way an endorsement of the legality of the EO.*