Leslie Olson

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*Combining creativity and passion for effective communication to help individuals from diverse backgrounds become confident, safe, self-sufficient, engaged members of the community.*

**Employment**

**US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants/Project Iowa 2018-present**

Intern, Refugee Wellness Program

* Provide culturally-appropriate medical case management for newly arrived refugees
* Train staff on microskills for successful social work with target audiences
* Developed, delivered and researched the efficacy of a group-based model for addressing emotional distress among refugees reluctant to engage in mainstream mental healthcare systems

**Oakridge Neighborhood 2013-present**

Director of Special Projects

Incorporate trauma-informed practices and cultural competence to coordinate housing orientation, adult education and other resident engagement programs with 1000+ residents from around the world.

**Lutheran Services in Iowa, Refugee Connection Center \2012-2013**

Volunteer Specialist/Special Projects

* Launched WorkWise, a new employment readiness class for low-literacy refugee students
* Recruited, trained and managed 40+ volunteers in compliance with Council on Accreditation standards
* Worked with leaders from various ethnic communities to increase their organizations’ capacity

**Human Write Communications/ViewPoints 2009-present**

Intercultural Communications Consultant and Freelance Writer

* Write and edit materials—including emergency plans and marketing materials—that clearly communicate key messages to diverse populations
* Help organizations and individuals effectively communicate in intercultural settings, specializing in health education, risk-reduction, disaster/emergency preparedness
* Guest lectures, speaking engagements and workshops include subject matter expert, lead developer and contract instructor for the National Fire Academy’s 6-day course *Cultural Competence in Risk Reduction*
  + Keynote speaker for Snohomish County, WA Emergency Preparedness Conference (2012)

**KOR Consulting/ Mercy Housing, Refugee Housing Technical Assistance Program**

Refugee Housing Technical Assistance Consultant

* Provided services and training to help refugees, other immigrants and low-literacy adults live safely and responsibly in secure, stable housing
* Led the development of and contributed writing to two key resources, *At Home with Refugee Housing,* a book of promising practices and *New Roots in Common Ground,* a multilingual housing orientation DVD
* Provided on-site, remote, and conference-based technical assistance on refugee housing issues including training on topics of housing orientation, finding housing and building community

**University of Denver, International Human Rights Advocacy Center**

Asylum Project Administrator

* Coordinated a *pro bono* legal program for people seeking political asylum in the U.S., researched and prepared country condition reports, located and engaged expert witnesses, prepared clients for hearings and attended asylum proceedings with applicants and their attorneys

**Ecumenical Refugee Services**

Employment Specialist

Helped recently-arrived refugees resettle in the U.S. including aiding employable adults secure and retain employment

**Arapahoe Community Residential Center**

Adult Basic Education Instructor

Developed lesson plans for and taught weekly basic adult education and GED preparation classes for women transitioning from incarceration

**Professional Training**

* Mental Health First Aid
* Motivational Interviewing
* Mitchell Communications Group, Professional Communicator Series
* Institute for Consensus Action, Group Facilitator Training
* CASAS testing certification
* Mandatory Reporter, Mandt, Universal Precautions and HIPPA certifications
* Trauma Informed Care training
* Volunteer ESL Instructor training, Benton County Literacy Center
* Colorado Division of Housing *Developers Toolkit*

**Education**

**University of Iowa School of Social Work**

Masters in Social Work, anticipated graduation May 2019

**University of Denver**

School of International Studies, Denver, Colorado, B.A. in International Studies, minor in Anthropology

Participated in service learning and on-site study opportunities including those involving travel to Bosnia, Kenya and the U.S./Mexico borderlands

**University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado**

Political philosophy and journalism

**Volunteering and Other Activities**

* City of Des Moines Refugee and Immigrant Advisory Subcommittee Member
* Lead organizer, Des Moines World Refugee Day
* First place winner of national Creative Writing in Social Work prize (2017)
* Grantee, Iowa Arts Council individual artist/writer
* Ethnic Community-Based Organization Mentor (South Sudan, Somali and Congolese Communities)
* Adult ESL instructor for Polk County Refugee Education and Acculturation Program
* Art on the Prairie planning committee and presenter
* Lifelong Learning Expo, organizing committee member
* Benton County Community Literacy Program of Gravette, ESL Instructor
* Somali Community in Kenya, urban asylum seekers’ community development and human rights advocate
* United Nations Refugee Conference, Geneva, Switzerland, presenter