



Serving Diverse Communities in a Virtual World



Challenges Faced by Social Service Organizations

- A lack of a **clear outreach message** can create a disconnect between the organization and their clients, partners, and community members
- Clients may feel **insecure in their communities**, especially due to socioeconomic or immigration status, hindering their ability to feel a **sense of belonging** or to enjoy public spaces
- **Decreased funding** due to changing government policies and conditions attached to available funding can **hinder organizations**, keeping them from being able to provide programs that meet the needs of their clients



Challenges due to COVID-19

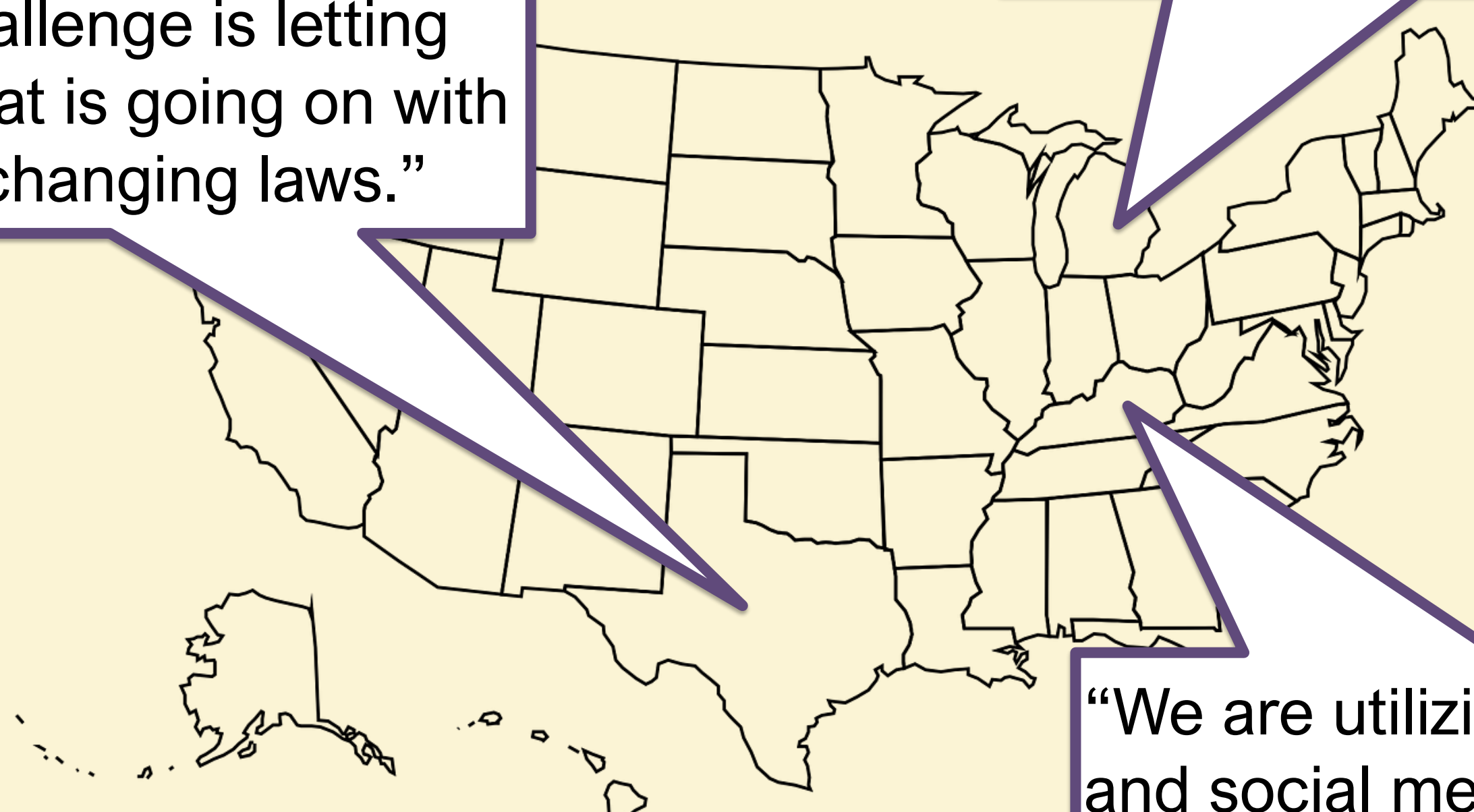
- **Funding limitations** for providing clients with technology needed to conduct vital services via the internet
- Varied levels of **technology literacy** in vulnerable populations
- Limited **internet availability** can lead to lower ESL class participation
- As the economy lags, **funding** from private donors decreases while major fundraising events are now canceled
- Difficulty in **maintaining partnerships** between organizations
- **Decreased staffing** as organization employees and volunteers care for personal and family health

Conversations with Peer Organizations

“We reached out to donors who mailed tablets to the office, which were then distributed by case workers to families. This has led to successful virtual client services. Our greatest challenge is letting clients know what is going on with COVID-19 and changing laws.”

“We have been meeting with clients one-on-one to teach them how to use Zoom, but due to barriers, we dropped off books to some clients and are holding ESL instruction over the phone. Facebook has been very effective in communicating with families.”

“We are utilizing WhatsApp groups and social media posts to get COVID-19 information translated and out to community members in their native languages. We have transitioned volunteer and internship opportunities to be done remotely whenever possible.”



Social Media in Community Engagement

- Can be effective for networking and communicating with other like-minded organizations to encourage **information sharing and collaboration**
- Can disseminate an organization's message to a **broader audience**
- Organizations are using **dialogue** in social media, but the primary focus tends to be **informational communication**
- More dialogue through social media should be encouraged as this supports **greater community-building**

Ethnic and Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table. "Guidelines for Outreach to Immigrant Populations." American Library Association, Chicago IL, December 2015.
Main, Kelly. 2012. "Outreach in Diverse Communities: A Conversation with James Rojas." Focus: Vol. 39, Iss. 1, Article 11.
Mukhtar, Maria, Jennifer Dean, Kathi Wilson, Effat Ghossemi, and Dana Helene Wilson. 2015. "But Many of These Problems are about Funds...": The Challenges Immigrant Settlement Agencies (ISAs) Encounter in a Suburban Setting in Ontario, Canada." Journal of International Migration and Integration 17 (2): 389-408.
Richmond, Ted and John Shields. 2005. "NGO-Government Relations and Immigrant Services: Contradictions and Challenges." International Migration & Integration 6, 513-526.
Tang, Melissa, Kristin Gaertner, and Tanya Shah. "Essential Social Services Are Struggling to Survive the COVID-19 Crisis." The Commonwealth Fund, June 1, 2020.
Deli, Markus and Grik Allo. April 2020. "Is online learning good in the midst of Covid-19 Pandemic? The case of EFL learners." Journal Sinestesia, Vol. 10, No. 1.
Stagner, Matthew. "COVID-19 Revealed Longstanding Problems in Our Social Safety Net: It's Time to Address Them." Mathematica, April 22, 2020.
Knight, Ken and Kathryn Hunter. January 2013. "Using technology in service delivery to families, children and young people." Australian Institute of Family Studies.
Lovejoy, Kristen and Gregory D. Saxton. April 2012. "Information, Community, and Action: How Nonprofit Organizations Use Social Media." Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, Volume 17, Issue 3.