

Dr. Karen Ferguson, a licensed clinical psychologist, is the new Chief Executive Officer for CORA as of April 2021. She came to Cora as an experienced non-profit social services leader, with decades of direct program experience supporting diverse vulnerable populations needing support to find to safety and security. Prior to joining CORA, since 2015 she has been the Executive Director of the Northern California offices of IRC, the International Rescue Committee, serving Oakland, Sacramento, San Jose, Modesto and Turlock, providing comprehensive services for newly arriving refugees. Programs range from securing housing and providing financial assistance to employment, legal immigration services and career development, with the goal of helping refugees achieve self-sufficiency and thrive in their new American communities. In the past five years, IRC Northern California welcomed over 10,000 refugees coming from a range of countries including Afghanistan, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Ukraine, Eritrea and Myanmar. Prior to her work with IRC, Dr. Ferguson designed and developed the full range of refugee resettlement services in Alaska including co-authoring the federal proposal that launched the programming. She then served as the State Refugee Coordinator and Resettlement Director in Alaska for over 10 years, directing assistance and resettlement services for refugees, immigrants and victims of trafficking. In this capacity she took the state from inception to a fully established resettlement program with a diverse portfolio of nationally recognized refugee services.

At CORA, Dr. Ferguson will leverage her deep background in federal state and county funded programming, her dedication to community, private foundation and corporate partnerships and her commitment to community based services, to expand and enrich the scope of services CORA provides throughout San Mateo county. Dr. Ferguson is especially committed to engaging community in services, to expanding the continuum to focus on prevention and programs that help people move from survival to thriving, and programing that addresses the issues of social justice and inequity, especially within the legal and immigration arena.