



Glenda at Montefiore Medical Center

Health Professions Opportunity Grant Project

Hard work and motivation translate in any language.



After overcoming cultural barriers, economic barriers, and family tragedy, Glenda Lee Mejia's engagement with HPOG allowed her to turn hardship into triumph.

At the age of sixteen, Glenda relocated to New York City from Puerto Rico. Before long, she was a teenage mother living with a much older abusive partner battling drug addiction. After that relationship ended, leaving Glenda as the sole provider for three daughters, she could have succumbed to the darkness and desperation that seemed to be encircling her life; but Glenda's daughters were all the inspiration she needed to keep working towards a better tomorrow.

In the midst of finding ways to make ends meet while raising her daughters, Glenda met the love of her life, the man who remains her husband to this day. With his support and encouragement, Glenda earned her GED and had three more daughters. With a loving husband and a busy life as a homemaker, things seemed to come into focus for Glenda; but no sooner had she found stability, than tragedy ambushed her unsuspecting family. Glenda's husband suffered a horrible injury that left him unable to work and turned his family's fortunes on end. With her husband's disability, he was unable to cover household expenses, and Glenda and her family were soon in deep debt. Glenda realized she needed to become her family's primary breadwinner. She knew that with a lack of English-speaking skills, a lack of job skills, and a lack of resources, that was no small task.

Inspiration about what to do next came from Glenda's eldest daughter who was a Registered Nurse. She realized that her daughter's passion, assisting others, was also her passion. With the encouragement of all her daughters, Glenda began researching careers in the health care industry and attended an

information session put on by a home care and staffing agency called Best Choice. At that information session, Glenda and both of her two younger daughters were first introduced to Montefiore Health System's [Health Profession Opportunity Grants program](#), funded by the Office of Family Assistance. Glenda and her daughters were all interested in the services HPOG, in partnership with Best Choice, offered and particularly the support of the HPOG Vocational Counselor, as they all aspired to advance in the health care field.

In August 2016, Glenda and her daughters were all accepted to enroll in [Best Choice's Home Health Aide \(HHA\) training](#) program. In addition, all three women were chosen to be part of Montefiore's HPOG program. HPOG staff built a strong connection with Glenda and her family. They helped Glenda overcome her language challenges and provided her and her daughters help with transportation as well as the proper uniforms and shoes for training. Glenda's HPOG Vocational Counselor also regularly visited Glenda to provide support when she doubted her ability to complete her training.

Glenda and her two daughters all successfully completed Best Choice Home Health training. In fact, Glenda was able to graduate at the top of her class. With her HHA certificate, Glenda now has a full-time position, earning the money she needs to support her family. HPOG continues to assist Glenda with English proficiency classes, and Glenda is considering attending college to advance her medical career and write the next chapter of her New York City success story.

January 2017