

## CONTRA COSTA COUNTY WORKFORCE SERVICES BUREAU'S SAFETY NET PRESENTATION

JULY 14, 2021

In February, 2019, an extremely frightened and traumatized mother of 4 walked into an office in Bay Point, California with my two younger children to meet with Maria Munoz with 4 Our Families. Immediately, I felt a sense of comfort and understanding, from someone who knew what I had been going through; that I was in desperation for help and guidance and needed any support I could receive to help my children and I through this terrible time in our life. It was at that point, when I met Maria Munoz, a Navigator for 4 Our Families, I knew I was in good hands, and my children and I were going to be ok.

Going back a 2-3 weeks earlier, on January 20, 2019, after being in an abusive and violent marriage for 12-years, my life was given back to me. My perpetrator, my husband, was arrested for strangling me. Although, this was the beginning of a new beginning of my freedom to live my life, I was left with taking care of 4 children ranging in ages of 12 – 3 years old. As a once stay at home mom/wife, I had no means of making a living for my family and the anxiety I carried with not submitting us to live on the streets, and fighting hard to continue living in the comforts of our home was weighing on me heavily.

I had mentioned to Maria, that I had received her information from the organization called STAND. I mentioned that STAND had been helping me with getting me involved with a support group with other women going through the same situation. Without hesitation, Maria said she understood where I was coming from, and she was here to help. She immediately found resources such as employment support through Opportunity Junction (who happened to be in the same office), Department of Human Services to help me with Cal Fresh and MediCal and even helped me fill out the application to get started and set up the appointment with a Case Manager, SHELTER, Inc. to get help with my rent, Coco Kids to help with childcare while I looked for work, Family Justice Center to help seek free legal help in my situation, provided me with gift cards for food and gas to get me by in the meantime, and lastly gave all my children activity/care packages.

I was literally speechless and overwhelmed with gratitude as I had never thought walking into my meeting with Maria, that there was so much help and support for someone like myself, with my situation.

With all the resources Maria provided that day, I obtained a Bank Teller position with the help from Opportunity Junction, had medical and food expense privileges through Contra Costa County, help paying rent and past due car payments from SHELTER, INC., subsidized childcare through CoCo Kids, and legal representation from Bay Area Legal Aid.

These past two in a half years, my life has turned a 360 degrees in a positive direction. Although, I still struggle at times, I am able to stand on my two feet and hold my head up high that I deserved a better life for my children and myself and was able to accomplish just that. A BETTER LIFE. I am truly indebted Maria Munoz and the many professional she has connected me with to get me where I am today.

My story is a success story, I am proudly willing to share with all who want to know someone who beat the odds as a survivor of abusive, controlling, and social-isolation. My children are thriving and I am thriving as a better Mother for them. Life is good! It's not perfect, but IT IS GOOD! With sincere gratitude, I am thank you Maria and all your colleagues for all you have done for me.

Warm Fondness,

Jessica Reid-Ozalp