



Naomi | OIDO case manager (contractor)

A Breath of Fresh Air



For Naomi, family is the connecting thread of her life. Coming from Hispanic, Spanish, and Native Apache roots, she grew up with a rich heritage to enjoy and pass down, but she also saw the struggle of immigrants. Her family's suffering through domestic violence, sorrow, and death helped inform her compassionate disposition. As a child—after watching hospice workers attend to her grandmother with such skill and caring—she told her mother she wanted to be a social worker, even before she knew what one was.

Now living in El Paso, Texas, Naomi enjoys life with her blended family and two dogs. Free time is spent with family and enjoying a true guilty pleasure: reality TV. She's even achieved a dream of appearing on a TV show herself.

HELPING THE HOMELESS

After graduating from college with her social work degree, Naomi followed through on her childhood plan, working as a hospice social worker and then running a women's homeless shelter a block from the U.S.-Mexico border. There, she encountered migrants, both citizens and noncitizens. Getting to hear their stories of how they crossed, were caught, and the conditions they lived in while being detained made her want to see it for herself and be a part of positive change.

Her favorite success story from the shelter is when she helped an older woman with substance use disorder and long prison stints realize her final wish of entering recovery and enjoying the love of her children and grandchildren. During the woman's time at the shelter, Naomi helped her reacclimate to society. Although the woman passed away three months later from natural causes, those three months were the realization of her greatest desire—to have a relationship with her family. The shelter meant so much to Naomi that she held her wedding there, wanting to share this milestone of her life with the women.

LITTLE THINGS CAN MEAN A LOT

Joining OIDO as a case manager helped Naomi continue doing important work helping others. One of her first cases involved getting a broken soda machine fixed. At first it didn't seem like much, but it was as simple as contacting the person in charge of the machines, who had it replaced within the week. "It wasn't until my next visit that I saw the detainee who brought up this concern. She was so excited to see me and literally had a soda in her hand and gave me a thumbs up," Naomi says. "It was such a heartwarming feeling and made me excited for the next time I could help someone, no matter how small or big it may be."

GETTING SERIOUS

But not every issue is so easy to solve. A detainee who had experienced nosebleeds and started vomiting blood was frightened that something was terribly wrong. He told Naomi he was seen by a medical professional at the facility but had not received treatment for the nosebleeds. His statement left her with questions, so she spoke to the medical supervisor and found that the man had spoken to the medical team about several issues, but not about his nosebleeds. She instructed the detainee to make a sick call and this time to just address the bleeding—and not to bring up any other issues. A successful result: he was immediately scheduled for an appointment with a pulmonologist.

In another instance, 33 women were arriving to a facility that had never housed women. The guards, not having worked with female detainees before, tried to make the experience as positive as possible for them by offering little touches like painted flowers on the walls. The female detainees seemed apprehensive and bewildered at their new surroundings. Some were hopeful about their prospects in America, thinking of opportunities that awaited them, while others were reeling from being separated from their families as they fled conflict or other challenges. Many knew the journey was going to be difficult, as they continued to work toward building a life in the U.S. to eventually bring their families here. "I spent all of Monday there just listening," Naomi says. "It wasn't all sad stories; it was nice to hear their hopes and dreams, too."

“If you do good and be good, good things will happen.”

Favorite dish

Chicken Jerusalem

Hobby

Roller skating

Favorite movie or show

Anything with Will Ferrell or Steve Carell and lots of reality TV shows.

Biggest accomplishment outside of work

Being blessed with three children, after getting told she would never have any.

In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, she was a guest on "Watch What Happens Live," with Andy Cohen on the Bravo network.

Favorite quote

"If you do good and be good, good things will happen." –Unknown

Favorite book

"Gone With the Wind," by Margaret Mitchell

