

Mi Casa Resource Center Offers Tangible Benefits



Part of the CHRA Workforce Readiness Initiative is to encourage members to develop relationships with partner organizations such as Mi Casa Resource Center. In doing so, we hope that the effort will benefit the member's organization and their community.

Since 1976, Mi Casa has empowered disadvantaged workers to overcome barriers to employment and launch careers that offer advancement opportunities and a family-sustaining wage. The career training and job development services offered by Mi Casa offer tangible benefits; families are able to break the cycle of poverty through career advancement and employers can connect to a trained, screened, career-ready – and largely bilingual – workforce enabling them to reach the growing market of Hispanic consumers in Colorado.

Workforce development for disadvantaged populations

Mi Casa offers career development programs, including career coaching and job placement assistance, within a comprehensive case-management model to ensure workers have access to the supportive services they need (i.e. transportation passes, child care referrals) to be successful in training and on the job. The focus of Mi Casa's career development programs is on life skills, professionalism, and career readiness. All participants in Mi Casa's career programs complete an intensive two-week core curriculum designed to cultivate soft skills for success on the job:

- Workplace culture/expectations
- First impressions/attitude projection
- Positive conflict resolution and stress management
- Teamwork, collaboration and following directions
- Effective workplace communication
- Giving/receiving constructive criticism
- Financial literacy
- CareerReady Colorado certificate

Following this core curriculum, Mi Casa offers four career pathway programs:

- **Bilingual Bank Teller:** prepares individuals fluent in English and Spanish for careers in the financial services industry.
- **Healthcare Professions:** prepares individuals for careers in healthcare support, including jobs as Certified Nursing Assistants and Personal Care Workers.
- **Green Construction and Energy:** prepares workers for careers in the efficiency, renewable energy, and sustainable construction industries.
- **Customer Service (begins in early 2012):** prepares individuals – most of them bilingual – for careers in customer service and sales in settings including call centers, retail, and hospitality.

Mi Casa's Career Coaches provide training and individual assistance to all career students on topics such as resume and cover letter writing, interview techniques and networking skills, and setting realistic employment goals. Meanwhile, Mi Casa's Job Developer works closely with employers to identify employment openings, match participants with appropriate opportunities, and support employer partners to ensure effective placements.

Case Study: Bilingual Bank Teller Training and Simona H.

Mi Casa's Bilingual Bank Teller (BBT) program is transforming the lives of low-income Latino families in our community and providing banks with a valuable tool to increase their share of the booming Hispanic market. In 2010, 71% of the individuals who completed Mi Casa's BBT program (most of them previously employed in minimum-wage occupations) entered employment and increased their earnings by an average of 50% initially. Mi Casa's BBT graduates employed in front-line banking positions are bilingual, bicultural and uniquely capable of helping the Hispanic population utilize banks more effectively. The BBT program allows banks to effectively reach the underbanked and unbanked Hispanic population, as well as lift low-income

Latino families out of poverty through careers in financial services.

Many participants in Mi Casa's Bilingual Bank Teller program have a story similar to that of Simona, who worked since the age of 15 to make ends meet and provide for her family. For six years Simona worked in a fast food restaurant, and though money was tight, she thought her job was secure. When she was laid off in 2009, Simona realized that if she was going to keep her home, she needed help to get her career back on track.

"I was embarrassed because I have always been proud of the fact that I could provide for my family," she said.

As a fast food manager, Simona supervised more than 20 people and was responsible for the hiring of new employees. But the prospect of being on the other side of the interviewing table after so many years was terrifying. Simona enrolled in Mi Casa's BBT program and after working with her career coach and learning new skills in class, Simona began to see that despite her fears and with some help, she was able to launch a new career with higher wages and unlimited potential for growth.

Mi Casa helped Simona secure a full-time job with benefits at a local credit union, where she has worked for over a year as a bilingual teller. To once again feel the pride of financial independence, Simona has a renewed hope for the future.

"More important than falling down is always getting back up. And at a difficult time in my life, Mi Casa helped me prove to myself and to others that I have the ability to learn new skills, start a new career and be successful."

For more information on volunteering, donations or working with the Job Developers to identify potential candidates for your organization, please contact Kate Ridings @ 303-573-1302 or kridings@MiCasaResourceCenter.org



**Colorado
HUMAN
RESOURCE
ASSOCIATION**

ADVISOR



October 2011