

# El Encuentrolero

EDITION 5 \* SPRING 2022 \* LEADING THE WAY TO DIGNIFIED ELDER CARE



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Letter from our  
Executive Director  
Andrea Plaza

## Our Mission

Encuentro's mission is to transform New Mexico into a thriving community for all of its residents by engaging with Latino immigrant families in education and career development opportunities that build skills for economic and social justice.

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To support Encuentro's mission, fuel educational and career opportunities for immigrant adults, or the purchase of a new home, GIVE TODAY.

Make your donation at [encuentronm.org](http://encuentronm.org)

## Saludos Encuentroler@s!

Did you know that in less than 10 years, New Mexico will rank third in the nation for per capita persons over the age of 65?

Some call it the "silver tsunami," and Encuentro is positioning itself to have a major impact on how we think about and approach providing dignified care for our treasured seniors, and the skilled and committed workers who care for them.

In this latest newsletter, we're excited to share the voices of staff and caregivers who have worked together over the last six years to create innovative and impactful solutions to the growing challenges of the home health industry.

Encuentro's Home Health Aide (HHA) program was created in response to the concerns of Encuentro students who wished to enter the field but felt underprepared and at risk for their profession as Home Health workers due to the lack of training available in Spanish. We heard our students' concerns as a call to action. With demographic shifts making home health the fastest growing labor force in the state, Encuentro saw an opportunity to challenge the for-profit corporate model and advance instead a community-based, immigrant-centered approach that could improve quality of care, working conditions, and access to family sustaining wages.

Founded on the pillars of Education, Economic Opportunities and Leadership Development, the HHA program has become a nationally recognized leader in the field, with plans to continue expanding through the vision and leadership of our graduates. Learn more about our HHA program in this issue, and be sure to stay tuned for future news on our plans to build a Home Health Training Center on the south lot of our new property.

**Encuentro's program offers a community-based nonprofit lens and avenues for immigrant leaders to shape the future direction of the field including access to more equitable employment and educational opportunities.**

# Encuentro's Home Health Aide (HHA) Program



Susana Espino with Chuck O'Herron Alex

“Encuentro helped me realize the value and impact of my work and that’s what I want other HHA graduates to discover. When I first started in this industry, I cared for two clients at a time, worked on Sundays, and earned \$10/ hour. I love caring for people and even though I work long hours, I still struggle to provide for my family. Now, as a member of our worker-owner cooperative, ABQ Assisted Care en Comunidad, we are working together to start our own business, advocate for better wages, and build better lives for ourselves.”

—Susana Espino

Encuentro's HHA program is a quality elder-care training program that is responding to the emergent needs of New Mexico's aging seniors while elevating immigrants to their rightful position as key contributors in this rapidly growing industry. Leadership development is woven throughout the program and provides Home Health Aides opportunities to strengthen skills and advocate for themselves and others in intentional ways. Our nationally recognized program is transforming home health care in New Mexico.

## Democratizing Care

Six Encuentro Home Health Aide Program graduates are developing a worker-owner cooperative to create more equitable home health employment opportunities.

Susana Espino, a founding member of ABQ Assisted Care en Comunidad cooperative, is a graduate of the entry-level HHA training program and Senior Nutrition course. She is pictured with Chuck O'Herron Alex, the principal contributor of the Home Garden Project, an initiative coordinated by an HHA graduate that installs donated self-contained gardens in the homes of low-income HHAs and offers specialized training on cultivating home-grown produce.



HHA graduation,  
Class of 2019



During the entry-level training's simulation lab, students learn essential skills such as how to safely turn a bed-bound client.



EnCasa Care Connections (ECCC) is an online matching registry that connects elders seeking care with caregivers seeking self-employment.

Go to [encasacare.com](https://encasacare.com) for details.



### Building a Qualified Workforce

Each year 40 aspiring care providers enroll in the entry-level course, earning three industry-recognized certificates (Personal Care Assistant, Home Health Aide, and CPR/First Aid). Since 2016, 226 have graduated and the program boasts an outstanding 98% graduation rate.

### Addressing Senior Nutrition

Encuentro's HHAs have co-developed training to understand and address the unique dietary needs of their clients. Since 2019, 75 HHAs have completed specialized training.

### Making Care Accessible

Since 2019, 45 HHAs have provided over \$70,000 dollars in subsidized care to low income seniors who are not eligible for Medicaid through a three month paid internship program.

### Increasing Wages

Home health aides working with clients through EnCasa Care Connections earn on average 18 dollars per hour, which is 40% above current agency wages.

## PILLARS of the HHA PROGRAM

### EDUCATION

- Spanish Language Entry Level Course
- Spanish Language Senior Nutrition Course
- Small Business Development Training

### ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

- EnCasa Care Connections matching registry
- H2H Internships (skills practicum)
- Community Health Educator Trainings
- Worker-owner Home Health Cooperative

### LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- Skill Building Training
- Quarterly Meetings
- Advisory Committees & Leadership Teams:
  - Encasa Care Connections
  - Entry-level HHA Training
  - National Domestic Workers Alliance



# Student Spotlight



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In 2015, Olga Santana, a mother of four and Master’s prepared educator in Mexico, fled violence and immigrated to New Mexico to seek safety with her family. Soon after, she enrolled in classes at Encuentro to learn English and train as a home health care provider. The HHA program helped her provide better services to her clients and motivated her to pursue the dream of becoming a nursing assistant.



*“The HHA Leadership program has helped me discover my leadership skills and given me confidence and encouragement to raise my voice whenever necessary for the good of the community.”*



Olga is an active member of Encuentro’s Leadership Committee and selected as a finalist to serve on the National Domestic Workers Alliance’s Home Care Worker Council.

Encuentro’s Home Health delegation at the NDWA National Domestic Workers Bill of Rights mobilization in Washington DC, July 2019.

Left to right: Olga Santana, Gloria Bringas Nuñez (HHA graduates), and Mayte Lopez, HHA Program Coordinator.



## Did you know?

### NATIONWIDE

- ★ Home health aides:  
30% are immigrants  
53% are women of color  
47% live in or near poverty



- ★ On average in 2020, corporate-run agencies charged elders \$23/ hour for in-home care and paid their care providers \$11.50/hour.



- ★ Independent caregivers can save a family 20% - 30% and earn, on average, \$6/hr more than those working for an agency.

### ★ THE BOTTOM LINE

Encuentro’s HHA graduates save clients money while earning a living wage.



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