

El Encuentro

EDITION 8



SPRING 2023



LEVERAGING COMMUNITY RESOURCES

A letter from our Certified Community Health Worker

Norma Casas, CHW



No one should have to choose between providing for their family or paying for housing, medical care or education. Yet, this is one of the many challenges immigrant families face every day. Even before the pandemic aggravated unmet needs for vulnerable communities, immigrant families have been discriminated against and excluded from government support due to immigration status, language barriers, and limited access to information.

When I arrived in the USA in 2004, my family and I faced these challenges. I became a Community Health

Worker (CHW) to help immigrant families like mine access community resources and navigate systems while learning English as a new language. Between the economic pressures to generate enough income to pay for food, basic necessities, and housing, to un/under employment and the lack of health benefits, our low wage working families have an increased risk of homelessness, food insecurity and poor health outcomes. Worse yet, these stressors exacerbate mental health issues including anxiety and depression within our community.

Encuentro knows that for students to succeed and focus on their education, they also need support across these same challenges in their lives. That's why in 2012, we started a collaboration with the UNM Health Sciences Department through the Pathways Program, which is now a fundamental component of Encuentro's mission.

As one of two CHWs at Encuentro, I work one-on-one with students and allies to address unmet family needs and help navigate systems including public benefits, healthcare, financial assistance, childcare and legal support to mitigate barriers and ensure that all families have the best chances for success.

In this edition, learn about Encuentro's CHWs and the support Encuentro offers in partnership with our allies.

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.

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

Armando & Lidia



Lidia with her family

ARMANDO immigrated from Mexico 21 years ago. He worked in the landscaping industry until a cancer diagnosis left him unable to work to generate an income for his family and in need of specialized medical care. With no medical insurance, access to care seemed impossible for Armando's family until a friend referred him to Encuentro. With support from Encuentro's CHW, Armando enrolled in the UNM Care Program to make affordable payments towards his cancer treatment and register for biweekly food boxes.

"The support I received from Encuentro, and assistance connecting to community resources made a huge difference in the way I'm facing my diagnosis. Without Norma's caring support and knowledge, I wouldn't know where I would be standing right now."

—Armando, Pathways Client

LIDIA was one of the many Encuentro students who lost their job due to Covid-19 making it impossible to pay her bills. With no where else to turn, Lidia reached out to Encuentro's CHW, Crimilda for support. Working together, she caught up with payments, registered for biweekly food boxes, and accessed important legal services.

"Pathways took me by the hand during difficult times giving my family the hope and help we needed."

—Lidia, Pathways Client



STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Crimilda Andrade is not only a CHW, she is also the first person to greet visitors when they enter Encuentro's front door, making her the bridge that connects families to the services we offer. Crimi is a prime example of the constituent leadership and advancement that shapes the power dynamic and culture of shared power at Encuentro. She is a Mexican immigrant who has been involved since Encuentro's beginning as student, volunteer and now plays a vital role as staff member. 🌟

"Now more than ever, it has been a challenge to support our clients. Politics and the pandemic have combined to create more barriers for our community and increasingly limit access to resources. As a CHW, our duty is to break down those barriers and find a way to support and connect our families with what they need."

—CRIMILDA ANDRADE, CHW, Office Administrator

Impactful Community Partnerships *Making a Difference*



Community Navigators Norma Casas and Crimilda Andrade provide information to families.



Norma Casa and colleagues at one of the many health fairs held in the community.



UNM students, Community Health Workers and refugee and immigrant families engaging in mutual learning.



Bernalillo County's Pathways Program

A multi-year grantee of the Pathways Program, Encuentro works with a network of 24 nonprofit organizations with Navigators who collaborate to connect low-income clients with community resources. As a result, our most vulnerable families access critical services and are supported to create direct relationships with a local safety net of community organizations, increasing social capital for members of our immigrant community. 🌟

Vacunate Con Confianza

In partnership with UNM Research Department, a network of front-line CHWs educated families about Covid-19, the vaccine, and helped to organize transportation to vaccination sites in rural areas. Over 546 people were vaccinated through this strong community collaboration. 🌟

Refugee and Immigrant Well-Being Project

UNM's Center for Social Policy, and other partner organizations like Encuentro, work collaboratively to improve refugee and immigrant mental health and well-being by pairing UNM students with families over the course of nine months to engage in mutual learning, advocacy and resource mobilization. 🌟

Frontline Worker Collaborative

Encuentro's Home Health Aide training program launched a project with five local nonprofit organizations with CHWs on staff to promote peer-to-peer learning among CHWs and identify and identify the challenges and barriers facing low-income seniors and their families in Albuquerque. Partners include: Centro Savila (mental health counseling); Enlace Comunitario (intimate partner violence prevention); East Central Ministries, Hope Clinic (primary health care); NMILC (immigrant legal services); ACCESS (youth and family engagement). 🌟

"The collaborative organizers at Encuentro are engaging experts from federal, state and local community partner organizations who are working in housing, access to benefits, legal resources and more to provide important information to participants as a means to expand their professional network and create a social safety net of resources for seniors and their families. The collaborative seeks to present and support key advocacy recommendations to improve the lives of seniors and their families in Albuquerque."

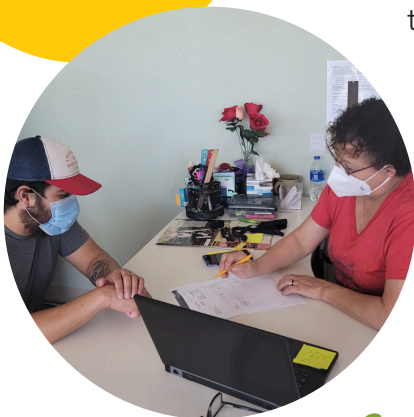
—SAMANTHA MORALES, Home Health & Career Development Director



NEW MEXICO FOUNDATION

Through a partnership with the **New Mexico Foundation**, Rapid Response Funding is available for immigrant families who face one-time crisis situations such as the loss of a job, death of a family member, sudden health diagnosis or being the victim of a crime. Navigators can help families apply for direct financial assistance to avoid losing their home, assist with emergency medical or dental expenses, repair or modify a home, or pay funeral expenses. Since August 2021, Encuentro Community Health Workers have helped 11 families receive \$36,000 in financial assistance.

Did you know?



› **Since 2017**, our Community Health Workers have connected over 1,500 immigrant families to Spanish-language community information and resources, and helped them to navigate complex systems.

› **During Covid**, Encuentro disbursed over \$250,000 in direct financial assistance to over 350 immigrant families in crisis.

Community partnerships make this work possible!

Visit encuentronm.org to see the complete list.
To refer a family in need, call Encuentro at (505) 247-2920.

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