Profile in Caring: Sandra Silva - CSS Program Manager

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The Health Center has changed dramatically in the 13 years since Sandra Silva took a summer job here. Throughout all those years, as she finished first high school and then college, Sandra grew professionally assuming significantly more responsible positions culminating with her appointment as CSS Program Manager for Case Management in 2005. Sandra seems to relish each new challenge, including tackling her latest assignment to coordinate the implementation of the newly funded Women’s Health Network and Men’s Health Partnership (WHN/MHP) programs. No easy task within a tight timeframe, Sandra still exudes enthusiasm and determination as she prepares GLFHC for this latest challenge.

Q: How did you get your start at GLFHC?

A: I started working here temporarily in the summer of my junior year in high school, covering for a friend who was having surgery. I worked at the North Site throughout that first summer. When the summer was over, I stayed on part-time as a correspondence clerk. I’ve been here ever since, nearly 13 years.

Q: You’ve had a varied career path in 13 years at GLFHC. Talk about the different positions and how you’ve grown professionally.

A: While working as the correspondence clerk, I was also trained as a Patient Service Representative and covered that position part-time while attending college. When I graduated, I knew I wanted to work in the human service field. I applied for a HIV Case Manager’s position, which required visiting with clients to ensure that they follow individualized care plans. I enjoyed that aspect as well as working collaboratively with clinicians and social workers to coordinate client care. When our West Site opened on Essex Street in late 2001, I was delighted to accept the CSS Site Supervisor’s position there. It presented new challenges for me as I continued to see clients but also took on the added responsibility of supervising West’s CSS staff. Three years later, when the CSS Program Manager’s position became vacant I applied for it because I felt I would bring the skills and work experience needed.

Q: How have these experiences prepared you for your latest project?

A: To work here at the Health Center, you have to have a passion for the community and working for the underserved. I feel connected since both my parents emigrated from Portugal, and I speak Spanish and Portuguese fluently. I even had my dad, who is a diabetic, become a patient of the clinic because I know firsthand that he will receive great care. GLFHC truly is a medical home for our patients, including uninsured men and women who will benefit from services provided through the new grant.

Q: What will your role be in the WHN/MHP program?

A: Initially, I am coordinating the start-up activities, which include creating job descriptions, participating in the interview and hiring process, and helping prepare the Health Center to implement the program successfully. The timing for implementation has been incredibly short, so I have been working closely with staff from various GLFHC departments to ensure that processes are in place. Once the program is fully implemented, the WHN/MHP Director will report to me. The Director will oversee the program members including two Patient Navigators and a Case Manager.

Q: How do you manage to take on these new activities in addition to your normal workload?

A: I really am passionate about my work. Although I do have moments when I think I should hesitate before taking on anything more. Besides all of my professional obligations, I’m also working towards a Master’s degree and trying to plan my wedding for early next year.