

Perfecto at New Hampshire Office of Minority Health and Refugee Affairs

Health Profession Opportunity Project

Perfecto is a 31 year old Latino male who originates from Los Angeles. He grew up in the inner city in L.A. His entire family has a history of gang involvement and domestic violence. Wanting to escape that lifestyle, he made a decision to move to New Hampshire with his wife and baby. After arriving in New Hampshire, he was working mainly in low paying seasonal construction jobs. These jobs didn't offer him a path towards the future or any job security. In his interview for entry into HPOP, Perfecto expressed interest in becoming either an emergency medical technician or entering the dental field.

After doing some career planning work with his case manager he decided that dental assisting would be a good fit. They then explored the educational options and selected a program with a very hands-on learning approach. Given Perfecto's learning style and past academic experience, this seemed like a program that would foster his success. The HPOP program helped him with several supportive services: securing reliable child care so that he could consistently show up for school and work, mileage reimbursement so he could afford to travel the 55-mile roundtrip from his home to his school, car repair so he had reliable transportation and interview clothes so he could put his best foot forward. He was hired immediately upon completion of his dental assistant program coursework by the dentist with whom he had been interning during the HPOP program. At this job placement, however, he had been told that there would be a permanent position for him but that position turned out to be dependent upon other staffing configuration changes that the employer anticipated making. These changes ended up not happening but Perfecto did not lose faith. Instead he began working in another practice that is enlarging and building a surgical suite. He has been asked to staff the new surgical room and will be making \$20 per hour.

Anytime someone brings up the HPOP program, he proudly says, "That's my program!" He says that he never imagined that he'd be making the amount of money that he is making or that he would love the job he has. He is particularly struck by the fact that he went from a history of 22 times in a juvenile detention center to now wearing a suit and tie to work. Having a baby made him realize he wanted out of the gang life, HPOP has allowed him to find that better life.

Like many HPOP students, he has a close relationship with his case manager and others working in HPOP. The team has told him how proud they are of him and he has said that he never heard those words of encouragement from his own family. Growing up within the gang culture in L.A., he says he mostly just heard his mom warn him not to get shot. Even upon securing the current position that he has and sharing this good news with his family, he says his mom mainly tells him she hopes he doesn't mess up this opportunity.