



Violence Intervention Program

Maria's Case Example

Maria's History of Abuse and Neglect-

- Maria was 16 years old when she was referred by her immigration attorney to help process her migration story and abuse and neglect history.
- Maria is originally from Honduras, she decided to leave and make the journey to the US at 15 years old.
- Maria's mother died when she was 9 years old and after her mother's death her biological father sent her to live with a family friend who neglected and abused her.
- Maria's mother lived in a domestic violence relationship with her father. Maria witnessed the abuse most of her life. Her father was an alcoholic.
- Maria's abuse and neglect was seen as getting hardly enough to eat, doing domestic chores in the home regularly, not having clean or new clothes to wear, emotional abuse and verbal abuse "she is worthless and not worthy of love"
- After living with the family friend for 3 years, the woman decided she no longer needed her and sent her back to live with her biological father.
- In the care of her father and father's new girlfriend, the neglect and abuse continued. Maria was not given enough food to eat and she had to work making tortillas to get money to feed herself in school.

- After living with her father she decided to leave and go live with her older sister. While in the new community she started to get harassed by a local gang member
- After gang member started harassing and threatening her that he was going to make her “his woman” she had no other choice but to flee the country.
- Her only options at that point was to risk the potential of rape, being harmed or even killed by the gang or to flee and take the arduous journey to the US to be reunited with her oldest sister and brother who had fled Honduras years back

Migration-

- She left Honduras without telling the rest of her family members. There were several teens that traveled with her and a coyote.
- She was able to provide half her fee to the coyote but didn't have enough money to make it to US. She had to call her sister and brother in US and they had to send rest of money in order for her to be brought safely over the Mexico-Arizona border.
- Her journey took her a week and a half since she had to wait for her family to send coyote money. Meanwhile, she was kept in safe houses along the way.
- By the time she arrived at the Mexico-Arizona border she was severely dehydrated.

Detainment-

- She and another teen she was travelling with were picked up by border patrol and provided water
- She was placed in what she described what looked and felt like an icebox (holding container) for what seemed to her many, many hours.
- She was taken out of holding and went to detention center. The social worker at detention center tried to get in touch with her siblings in NYC.
- Before being re-united with her siblings in NYC, she was moved to another detention center in Florida. She remembers having an hour to be outside a day and she was beginning to learn English.
- Transition into her new life in US

Transition into her new life in US-

- She was fortunate to be re-united with her older sister and brother. Her older sister had already obtained a U-Visa due to her own DV history and had her own family in the US.
- She was able to obtain the same immigration law attorney her sister used to obtain her U-Visa and was connected to non-profit in NYC
- Attorney referred her to therapy to help process her trauma history
- Social worker/therapist made sure she was connected to support group in school with other unaccompanied minors and other supports such as health care
- After many months in therapy, she was able to process her trauma and talk about her story.
- Her attorney and therapist were able to advocate for client and she was able to provide her story in her immigration trial.
- She was granted protected status