

Yesenia Pleitez: From C.O.R.E. Client to C.O.R.E. Lead Outreach Worker

Yesenia Pleitez came to America from El Salvador when she was 12 years old. A childhood filled with abuse and trauma paved the way down a steep slope of drugs, domestic violence, and incarceration. Her children were taken from her numerous times. “This was my life cycle,” said Yesenia. “I was broken into pieces. My kids were better off without me.”

Yesenia became homeless and was angry for failing her children. For failing herself. She attempted suicide.

At her lowest point, she went to a shelter in Richmond and called 211. She found out about [Coordinated Outreach Referral, Engagement \(C.O.R.E.\)](#), a program that serves as the entry point into Contra Costa’s coordinated entry system for unsheltered persons.

“C.O.R.E. coming into my life was the best thing,” Yesenia said. “They picked me up and never gave up on me.”

Through assistance from C.O.R.E. and her own determination, Yesenia is now five years clean and back with her children. She has a home and a loving partner. What’s more, she is using her lived experiences and bilingual skills to help others as a full-time C.O.R.E. Lead Outreach Worker in Richmond and San Pablo. In this role, she identifies individuals living on the streets, assesses their housing and service needs, and facilitates connection to shelter and services.

“She has an amazing story and is a true testament that people experiencing homelessness can recover and give back to others what was given to them,” said co-worker Hillary Bowers.

“I know what my clients are going through because I’ve been there,” said Yesenia, who experienced the services and resources she now recommends to her clients. “I’m so grateful to be here. I will never give up on my clients because C.O.R.E. never gave up on me.”