

Training incentives make dream job possible for Madras woman



When Jessica Mendoza started her entry-level job at Jefferson County Public Health in 2018, she had no idea that six years later she would be assisting patients in the county's medical clinic.

"I started as a receptionist at the front desk. I became a community health worker after that and my most recent success was completing my medical assistant certificate, so I've kind of worked my way up," said Mendoza who lives in Madras, a town of about 8,000 people an hour north of Bend.

Mendoza made a living wage, but couldn't afford to pay for the additional training she needed to progress in her career. That's when she heard about a federal grant that could help.

"Jessica was already a great employee who consistently took on new responsibilities. Unfortunately, we didn't have money to pay for professional development, so when we heard about the CLHO grant we encouraged her to apply," said Michael Baker, Jefferson County public health administrator.

In addition to the community health worker and medical assistant trainings, the grant also paid for a medical interpretation course and training-related expenses like the gas Mendoza needed to travel to Bend several times a week. The total cost was nearly \$14,000.

"I'm sure there are a lot of people who can't afford to continue their education, so it would be a huge benefit if CLHO could continue paying for these trainings," said Mendoza, whose newly acquired skills are helping the county build better connections with patients.

"You miss so much when you're using a Spanish interpreter over the phone. When I am there in the clinic, I see patient's expressions and reactions so I can make sure they understand what is being explained. It's a much better experience for patients and providers," added Mendoza.
(do we want to add video ?)