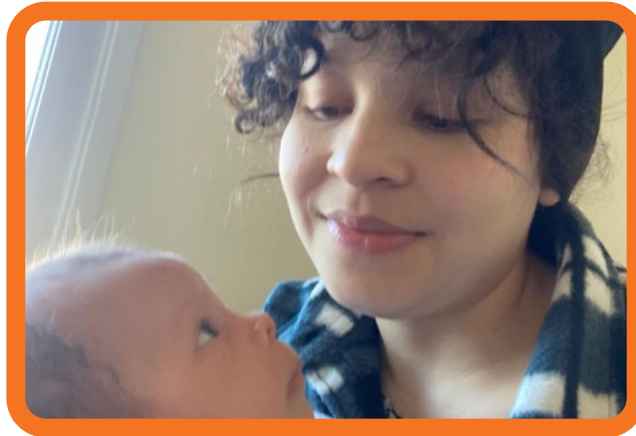


THE PROMISE



Marleen and her baby.

MATERNAL & INFANT WELLBEING IN TIMES OF COVID-19

Marleen is a native of Central America and has been living in San Francisco for the past five years. Last year, a month before her due date, the restaurant where she worked for the past two years went out of business and Marleen was left with her last paycheck to barely pay for a month's worth of rent and with no maternal leave benefits.

During one of the coaching sessions Marleen had with Dannhae Herrera-Wilson, an MPN Family Child Care Specialist Coach, she mentioned that she was very worried and anxious due to the uncertainty of her situation. Marleen was counting on taking paid time off and being able to return to work after the birth of her second child. She also mentioned that back in her country she had been told that because her first child was born via C-Section that she was never going to be able to give birth again. This fear was very palpable.

Due to many fears, lack of information and misinformation from government agencies, including health professionals, many expecting immigrant parents do not access health care services. This can have long-term negative consequences on the wellbeing of mother and child.

Thanks to the referral to one of our MPN partners, La Raza Community Resource Center, Marleen was able to receive much needed emergency funds and allow her to focus on the birth of her baby while figuring out next steps.

As MPN partners with Nurse and Midwives of SF General, Marleen had a midwife who was very supportive and

compassionate. On the day of her labor, not only did she give birth to a healthy baby boy, but she was also able to give birth naturally with minimal pain medication. Throughout her labor, she was also assisted by Doula Telar, a bilingual volunteer doula service in San Francisco. This was a new experience for Marleen as she expressed "I did not know that I could have access to this kind of attention. I did not feel alone. I had with me so many kind people looking after me. I felt that I could trust them. I was treated like a true human being, unlike my first pregnancy back in my country."

In addition, thanks to another MPN partner, Marleen was able to receive much needed emergency funds to allow her for some breathing bonding time with her newborn, as she feels that her new motherhood status is just the beginning of a new life ahead filled with many hopes.

Marleen's positive experience as a birthing mother should not be an exception but the norm, especially during times of COVID-19 pandemic. In Marleen's words, expecting parents should "speak up, ask questions, let go of the fear and know that they're not alone and that they have rights over their bodies."



Parents filling their MFIF in the Parent's Room in César Chávez Elementary School.

SECURING A MEAL FOR EVERYONE

The Multipurpose Family Income Form (MFIF) was known as the “Meal Application”, however in 2022-2023 School Year California (California Meals for All) became the first state in the nation to provide free breakfast and lunch to all K-12 students.

The MFIF has always offered more than just Free or Reduced priced meals to families. With the help of this form, it allows families to know if they qualify for other Benefits they may not be aware of such as California PEBT, PG&E Programs, Discounts for after school programs, and Discounts for SAT Exams. On top of this, it becomes a resource for schools to help increase funding for classroom supplies, staff salaries, and more in support of students’ learning, and even apply to grants.

On Wednesday September 28th, between the collaboration of César Chávez Elementary School, IFR’s Staff, Elia, and Family Success Coach, Magali Valdez-Robles partnered with Noelia Orpeza, Engagement Manager from Student Nutrition Services to push for all Cesar Chavez families to complete and/or check the status of their Multipurpose Family Income Form (MFIF). This effort began at 7 a.m. and (services were continued provided during the rest of the week).

Their set up was quite simple yet very effective. They had a person at the entrance of the school letting families know what was going on, who led the families to the check-in table in front of the Parent Room. At this table families were informed about the importance of the MFIF and those who had already submitted their application, were allowed to check their status thanks to Ms. Oropeza.

Families that needed to apply and/or wanted to reapply after finding out their status, were directed into a classroom where Magali had set up 7 stations for them to be able to work one-on-one with someone. This process made things easy for families to have the support they needed and leave the area quickly as many of them had to go to their jobs. Families had the opportunity to learn more about how the school menu works allowing them to know what their children eat each day.

“We didn’t want people to wait. We wanted them to feel welcome and that we were respectful of their time,” said Orpeza about the collaboration.

The families that were unable to wait for assistance were able to give their contact information to Magali,, who has been reaching out to them to set up a follow-up appointment or help them fill the form over the phone. Thanks to this effort, they were able to support over 50 families early that morning to submit and/or check the status of their MFIF.



THE PROMISE COMMITTEE

Clockwise from top left: Magali, Ana, Liz, and Alejandro. Our mission is to share stories of students, families, and partner organization accomplishments and stories across our network. The Promise newsletter will be published quarterly, so the next one will be in Fall 2022. If you have an idea or would like to share your story, contact Alejandro at (415) 857-2834 or abautista@medasf.org.