

UNLEASHING THE POTENTIAL OF GREATER CHICAGO...NEIGHBORHOOD BY NEIGHBORHOOD

LIVE UNITED®

Maria's Story



Maria and her family immigrated to the Chicago region as refugees in the summer of 2016. Despite knowing no one in the community and only speaking a little English, Maria found the **Infant Welfare Society of Evanston (IWSE)**, looking for childcare assistance. Maria was able to tell the IWSE staff that she wanted to learn English, go to school and make sure her baby Joshua was well cared for outside of the home. An IWSE Family Advocate was able to obtain quick approval for six hours of daily care in the Early Head Start (EHS) program, as the family met the existing federal eligibility criteria. Over a six month period, with the patient persistence and commitment of the IWSE Family Advocate, Maria received daily support as she faced the challenges of learning a new language, enrolling in school, and demystifying the process of securing employment and starting a new life for her family. Throughout this journey, Joshua's teachers provided a consistent, nurturing space for him to grow and develop. Teachers and staff worked on a daily basis to build a system of communication to share the story of Joshua's day and his growth and progress in our program with his mom. Joshua blossomed at IWSE and is now a happy, thriving 18-month-old boy. Maria learned to rely on the teachers and the Family Advocate to help her find resources for other needs, such as extra diapers and formula, and warm clothing, books and toys for her growing boy. She began to see the staff at IWSE as friends she could lean on for support when the journey seemed too hard and the possibilities of her education and viable work for her husband seemed to fade away.

A year later, Maria has made tremendous strides in her English language skill development, has met other families from her home country, secured a part time job, and is now a full time student in nursing school, thus qualifying for CCAP, extending Joshua's day to a full day of the care and resource support that has made such a difference for Maria and her family.



United Way
of Metro Chicago

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