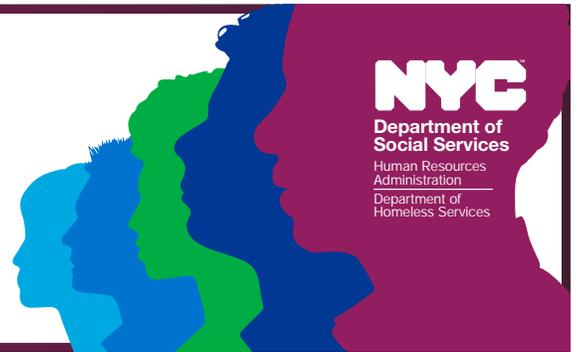


FRONTLINE PROFILES



DSS Frontline Profile: Nadine Porsenna

“When I found out that I am an essential worker, and I wouldn’t be able to work from home, I had a lot of fear,” said Nadine Porsenna. “Honestly, I had a lot of fear of getting sick. A lot of thoughts of, you know, are you prepared for this? Do you have enough masks? Do you have hand sanitizer to carry around you? How are you going to get to work because you do have to get on the public transportation to get to work. And also working with teammates, you don’t know who could have been exposed and who can expose you.”

Nadine is a crisis community coordinator for the Street Homeless Solutions Division of the Department of Homeless Services. Crisis community coordinators offer services to unsheltered New Yorkers and have continued to be out in the community throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

“But then going out and doing the work, you notice that your job, you have to be there every single day. That’s what I noticed. I have to be there every day because my job is a 24/7 around the clock thing. This job, that I do, can’t be a virtual job. I can definitely say it made me a bit braver when it comes to things that I fear.”

While doing street outreach, Nadine uses all the tools in her toolkit. In our city of immigrants, DSS is committed to providing equal access for all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status or language preference. Collectively, our clients speak more than 90 languages. Over the years, we have provided language services by relying on our bilingual staff, our telephone interpretation service and by providing translated documents.

“So during this pandemic, a story that sits on my heart and that I will probably never forget is running into an African American woman who was over the age of 60. And she has been living on the streets for about four years and not just the streets, but also the train. I realized she had a slight accent. I realized she spoke the same language as me. I was born in Haiti and I do speak fluent Haitian Creole. So when I asked her, I said, ‘are you Haitian?’ She said, ‘yes, I was born there.’ So, speaking to her, I flipped it from English to Haitian Creole and we got into the conversation.

“And after that, you saw her opening up a bit more and being a bit more relaxed. And she wasn’t as afraid to speak to us because she felt safe. I explained to her the steps that would be needed to be followed so that she can be checked into shelter. And she looked at me and said, ‘that’s it?’ And I said, ‘that’s it, there’s help out here for you.’ We got her medical care. After that, we caught up with her for the rest of the week to make sure she had a warm shower. She had meals and that she was fine. And the minute she was able to be discharged from the hospital, we checked her into a shelter. And so this day on, she is living in a woman’s shelter and she’s doing great.”

THANK YOU ESSENTIAL
CITY WORKERS!

NYC Human Resources
Administration
Department of
Homeless Services