

Lorinda Garcia:

[intro, recording permission, small talk]

E: (1:18) Can you speak your first name, last name, and what you do for a living, just for the (1:22) record?

L: (1:28) Oh. (1:29) So my name is Lorinda Garcia (1:31) I'm a children service coordinator for life move's motel voucher program.

(1:38) Id love to know more about what your role entails, for anyone who doesn't know, like what this is, just for the audience, and like what the process is to become a case worker or social worker,

(1:50) Um, so my role, I worked up to it. So I joined this agency through an entry level position. I was a residential services coordinator, and I moved up to intake coordinator, and then I moved up to Children's Services Coordinator. So this agency is great in that it has a lot of room for like, growth and, like, many opportunities to, like, learn all angles on how to approach, you know, a family and how to help them and whatnot.

L: (2:20) I'm sorry, what was the question? (2:23) I'm going to do that a lot, girl.

E: (2:24) No, I love it. (2:25) I love it. (2:25) Me too.

L: (2:30) Even in my job interviews, I'm like, what was the question? (2:33)

E: Yeah. (2:34) like, whatever you want to say,, my questions are just here, kind of, like as prompts, anything you hav to share is amazing

L: But so we serve 97 families within this program. The way that they access it is through the county's hub. It's called the here for you hotline. So we only accept families that have children under 18 in this program. And the good thing about this program is it really does give the family time to kind of get out of survival mode. So with other shelters, there's, like, the 30 day limit, there's the 90 day limit.

E: Oh, really?!

L: yeah. So, like, they can only stay for a certain amount of time, and then they kind of have to think on their feet, like, where are we going next? Like, you know. this is such a

complex problem that people are having like that It takes time. It takes a lot of time. **So what I love about this program is it gives a lot of grace and patience for what these families are needing to work on.** Even before it's like Career, Money, housing, like no like, **what do we need to work on before we get to that?** Like, you know, because there are things that, like mental health, like health in general. Like, have you been to the doctor lately? Like, you know, child care, those things have to come first before you can even build and there's wait lists for those things too. So even the families that you know, they'll get here and they'll get on a wait list, and sometimes that's not even enough time to serve them. So we've had families here for two years plus. So, like, they and they're getting out house. Like, our success rate for this program is actually really awesome, yeah. Like, we have, most of our families are exiting the housing either they have a voucher in hand or they just do it on their own, like through getting a job and whatnot.

L: So yeah, **I've been here for six years** going on 7 years. I started with a parking program. It was a pilot program, and then that ended, and then it moved over to MVP. It was first a hotel for covid. It was a covid Relief Hotel. So like people that were high risk health and couldn't be homeless or in conjugated shelters environments, they would refer them to us, and we'd have them a hotel. And then we transitioned it into a permanent thing. And then we transitioned to just families. Because we used to have singles, but we transitioned them to other programs.

E: (5:05) And you guys work with Extended Stay, and, life moves rent out a floor, or?

L(5:10) so it was a mixed bunch. So, like, we had, like, families on every floor at first, but then they decided to just do their first floor for their regular business. So now we just have the second and third floor, yeah, so they have their regular business here, and then we have the second and third floor full of families

Kid walking by knocks:

L: come in!

Kid: Ms. Lorinda, can I come in an order today

L: yeah, I'm gonna be right over there in 15 minutes

Kid: I'll get my stuff ready!

E (5:40): I was just wondering, like, what sort of training you guys get, just in general, for your day to day

L (5:48): Yeah. So what I really love about this program is we have training at least two times a month, I would say, on different subjects. So as a CSC, we don't only focus on the children, because, we have to know what's going on with the parents as well. So like we have conflict management, we have how to work with people who are dealing with hoarding issues. We have substance abuse, motivational interviewing. So that's like a way to talk to people, and kind of like someone who's kind of stuck and scared to make a change, **but you're kind of talking to them and making it seem like it's their decision, like you're putting you're putting it on them again to make that choice, and empowering them to make that choice.** So and then we did recently, **we did substance use with teens and youth.** That one was amazing. Mandated reporting. So we're all mandated reporters here. We have to report to CPS and communicate with them on the regular about any issues we see on site. And then I would say, when it comes to, like, the summer camp, we get tons of training when it comes to the summer camp. **So like, how to facilitate games, how to work with behavior issues.** If the kids are having any behavior issues, how to work with the staff if they're, you know, maybe having some conflict or not feeling motivated. Like, you don't feel that like, oomph in them to, like, get the kids excited about things they kind of have to, like, you know, try to motivate them yourself too. Yeah. So I'm trying to think of other ones we've had

E: Cool and like, do you think, like, the training funding, like, does it like, really help shape, like, how you can support the kids? Do you have any like stories or like examples?

L:I mean, absolutely. So, I mean, when it comes to, like, the substance use and, like, the teenagers and whatnot, **so we learned a lot about how to go about approaching that.** And basically, not preaching abstinence is something that I learned.

(7:54) It's something that I kind of was, like, oh, interesting, like, you know. But it is a really, like, **I think it's a really good angle to, like, to go at.** So, like, a teenager, if you tell them, like, you know, like, that is bad, you should not (8:11) do that, like, you know, like, stay away from it, they're only going to (8:15) get more curious.

(8:17) So, what we, like, or what I like to think of is, like, okay, like, this child is maybe (8:24) dabbling in some stuff, but I'm not going to demonize that behavior. (8:27) I'm going to say, hey, like, I'm going to maybe give some advice and, like, but ultimately (8:31) is it your choice (8:34) And I want you to be safe. (8:36) That's my thing, safety.

(8:37) I want you safe and I want you to be alive. (8:39) . So, like, that is the goal with harm reduction, meeting them where they're at . not like saying, No, you have to be completely sober in order to receive care, in order to receive resources

That's another thing that's good about this program. It's a low barrier shelter. (8:55) So, that means that we don't test for drugs. (8:59) So, like, your sobriety doesn't mean that you can't access us.

Yeah, so, we get all walks of life around here, and I just think that the meeting where you are thing is, like, the most important thing, like, the harm reduction, like, view (9:19) on it.

L: Even when it's like the kids, like, you know, even it's like they're saying bad words or, like, you know, they're like, I'm not gonna demonize and say, 'Hey, get out of my room. We can't say that'. Like, no. You kind of work with them. Like, hey. Like, you know, positive reinforcement. 'I noticed that you went all day without saying a curse word today. Thank you. That's so awesome.' Like, you know, whatever you do out there, go for it. You're in here, different, you know, different situation, different audience, you know. So you got to learn Code switching is what we teach them.

The way of life is different in a lot of families. They don't see things that some people might think are wrong and they don't think it's wrong. So in order for them to, like, integrate into like, the professional world, or like, you know, getting a job, or, like, wanting to go to college, like, you know, you have to tweak and make little changes to kind of your behavior and the way you go about things, and it's not changing who you are at your core. It's just adjusting. And you can be whoever you are. We love who you are. Like, you know? We love the experiences and the knowledge that you bring. But also you just have to, like, know, when like boundaries. We teach some boundaries.

E: (10:39) kind of on, like, the topic of boundaries, a little bit, I feel like this is such, I mean, at least from what i can observe, like an emotional job and like, it seems very like,

you know, like high stakes, like, you really are helping his families. Then I'm like, how do you help, like, maintain boundaries to, like, prevent burnout and like, for you guys,

L:(11:01)So for me, I do not internalize anything that the families are like, what's the word like..whats the word. If there is a setback, if there is something that you know you've talked to the family about and you've expressed your concern, and they're kind of telling you, yeah, you're right, like you know we're gonna do different. **And then they kind of like, go back and it's really disappointing, and it's really like it's easy to, like, sit back and be like, man, 'if only I had said something different, or maybe if I had said this, they would have changed their, like, whole life around, like, why couldn't I just, like, say something like, you know that'll like, make it click for them', but it's, it's really so much bigger than just me.** There's so much going on around in their worlds. We have no idea what they're going through in their heads, what they've been through in the past.

I'm just, we approach it with, like, the non judgmental. And that's how I that's how I kind of, like, don't internalize it, because everybody's a product of their environment, right Like you they're human. Everybody's human. I'm human. I make mistakes. I do things every day that I tell these families not to do sometimes, like, you know, we're not perfect, so it's just preaching to them that it's okay to not be perfect and you're gonna have setbacks, and everybody's human.

And just remembering that for myself, I listen to a lot of podcasts about, like, positive affirmations. I listen to a lot of self help situations. I actually do have a book called, like, something about burnout, like, preventing burnout. Yeah. So, like, I do a lot of self care, and I've been in this line of work for a while.

So, like, maybe earlier on in my career, I was maybe taking the hits a little to my heart, you know, when things would happen, but now I'm just like, what is it gonna do for me to get worked up over this? What is it gonna do for me to add more anxiety to this family? Like, it's my job to come in here and try to ease their anxieties and ease like, you know, especially the non judgmental thing, like, you know, we they don't need another person coming over, talking over them and talking down to them. Like, no,

I would say when it's like, the heavier stuff, like the, you know, if there's, like, domestic violence, if there's things like that happening for a child, sometimes, you know, it's you'll

take it home, but you come back and I don't know, I just feel like I can, like, reset pretty easy. When I leave work, like, you know, I'll take it in my car, but once I'm out of my car in my house, I'm like, Okay, I'm at my house now, And then when I get back over here, I'm like, Okay, let's pick up where we left off. Like, you know. So it's just about having that boundary and being able to separate. But it is hard. It is very hard, honestly,

(14:00)E: yeah, like, being here for so long, kind of, like, you must be here, like, as co workers come and leave. Is it is, like, turnover a high issue, or...?

(14:06)L: it is, yeah, so, um, it is very high, actually, um, I've been the only um, stable staff member of MVP since it started. So, like, everybody is new, like they come and go, Yeah, I think it's because I've switched the position. So I don't, like get stuck in, like one, you know, but, yeah, I do see it a lot.

I don't know what it is. I think, like I said, our positions are entry level, some of them, so a lot of people do use this as, like, a stepping stone to get to where they want to. So like, social work, or, like, they're like, wanting to just do something with the county, or, like, you know, something like that. So I can see that, like they all come and just kind of, like, get the feels and like, be here for a little bit, and then they're like, Okay, I gotta go to the next thing, like, you know, like, maybe that's what it is.

It takes a special person. It really does take a special person to stay and hang and go through the ups and downs that come with being with a nonprofit. Because we don't even like our funding gets renewed every year, you know. So we don't even know if this program is going to be here a year from now, like, you know. So maybe people leave because they want more of a stable like, position, like, in life, our benefits are great. I don't know. Yeah, I don't know why. Like, we're really competitive in how we pay, yeah i dont know why people come and go so much but yea its okay.

(15:36) E: how come this is viewed as a stepping stone?

(15: 41) L: Yeah, that's what I mean. Like, I feel like people work up, like, this is just like a place where people come and then they're going to the next, like, higher thing. Like, okay, so my PD, she was here, she moved to admin, she got promoted. My intake coordinator, she moved to admin. She got promoted. My Case Manager moved to another site, got promoted. Like, you know, so they're, they're kind of, we're all moving. It's a constant move. It's, it's good moves. Like, honestly, it is like, I'm happy for everybody that comes and goes.

Like, you know, I don't think I've had a bad experience. And they were just like, oh, like, That person doesn't need to be here. Can they get rid of them? Like, I wish everybody the best, and however long they're willing to come and be here and help out, like, I'm grateful,

16:27 E: but they're lucky to have you. That's amazing how long you've been here. Like, is there a moment when you were just, like, this is my calling? Or, like, how did you know?

16:42 L: I think I told you that I grew up in poverty. I grew up utilizing a lot of these services. So I stayed in drug programs with my mom. I stayed in foster homes with my sisters and brothers like you know. There were times where me and my mom would be roaming the streets, and we would sleep on a bench like, you know, so and I was on welfare. My family was on welfare, my family was on WIC, like, they got all of the social services, and I was taken care of because of it, like, you know, like I am where I am because of all of those services that were provided to me and my family at a young age. Like, you know, **there's so much potential in people when they're not in constant survival, and you invest in them.** So, like, I love social services. I love programs and benefits. Like, I love that stuff, because **it's not a handout, it's a hand up** for a lot of people.

You know, I knew from when I was very, very, very young that child protective services was a benefit. **I felt protected when they were around** like, you know, like and I I was in the after school programs. **..I would stay after school with my teachers, because I wanted to be around other adults that were like, not like my family, like, you know.** So **I know how important it is to have a adult figure that's not your parents or your family that cares about you, and that's asking, Hey, what's going on? How's your day?** you know, just checking in on you. So it came so early for me. Yeah, it did. **I don't like to see people struggling. I don't like to see people, like, stuck in cycles.** Yeah, yeah. So, like, **that's our job.** Literally, it's like, moves breaking the cycle. It's what we do, like, so I just, like, I ended up here, and I love it.

I mean, I worked at, like, h and r block, I worked at Chipotle, worked at Keymarre, yeah. Like, I did those little things, and then I interviewed for like, a waitressing job, and I didn't get it, and I applied for this one, like, next and I got a call, like, the next day, and like, look, I'm here seven years later. Like, **this was always gonna be where I was gonna end it up.** Like, end up and, like, I tell my bosses, like, I'm not going anywhere. Like, you know, I looove this work. I love this work. Like, I don't think I could do anything else.

19:07 E: I mean I can tell, just like when you guys are with the kids its really amazing watch

19:10 L: yea, and it's so funny, because I don't know, I've never like, so growing up with a family that's not very like, stable and all, like, mentally, well, like, I never, like, wanted kids because, like, I was like, man, it's a huge responsibility to have kids. Like, you know, you can't just, like, pop them out and that's it. Like, you know, you gotta parent them. And I was very scared of it. Like, I was very scared to, like, say the wrong thing to a kid and trigger them and like, Oh my God. Like, I'm never gonna say the right thing. They're gonna tell I'm not being authentic with them. And like they're bullies. They're so mean. Like, I was scared when I first got this job. I was like, I can't even be alone with a kid in a room without getting so anxious.

I don't know why, because **I feel like I just put a lot of pressure on myself, but I just know how important those little interactions can be, and I worked it up so much in my head**, but now I'm, like, so casual, and I'm so comfortable with them and like, it's just so natural now, like, but yeah, even, like, as a kid, I was like, I don't want kids. I don't want to, like, be around kids. Like, I didn't have any siblings, either, so, like, little siblings, so I was very independent.

Like, so, yeah, it's very weird how I ended up in this position, but I love it.

20:32 E: Do you think the switch came from training or just, like, being with the kids?

20:36 L: I think both. I think both, yeah, just exposure therapy, just jumping right into it. I was not somebody that was comfortable with public speaking. I wasn't somebody that was comfortable with being cringe and being made fun of. Like, I don't care what people like say about me now, like, because I've heard the worst from these kids already (laughing), and I'm like, okay, whatever. Like, I don't know. It's just Yeah, you really do learn working with kids that like (pause) I don't know where i was going with that (chuckle).

21:10 E: I was researching like, a little bit about case working, like moves and like, the term that kept coming was, like emotional first responders, which is like it was defined as, like, an individual who provides immediate, empathetic support to people. And I was like, Do you think this is an accurate term like...?

21:30 L: Absolutely. Yeah, I feel like housing, career, all of that is like, that is important, but like, it's the well being of the people that we're serving, like, is what's really, truly important. Like, you can't get to here if you're over here, like, you know, and you don't have anybody trying to, like, give you that hand and like, validate what you're going through, and validate your feelings, and show no judgment. And like, yeah, because I don't know, it is a tough world out there. The world is mean, like, you know, and we don't need more mean in it. So it's, you are here to bring that little light into their lives and to kind of like, show them, like, hey, like, I'm sorry. **Like, the world has been mean. Like, this is a place where, like, we're gonna turn that around, you know. And I don't want you to have the experience here.** And, yeah, like, yeah.

22:23 E: Do you think the kids come to like, I know you guys are saying, like, how, like, an outside perspective is important. I'm like, do you think the kids come to you for a lot of, like, emotional support, or do you think they turn to their families more or if that's hard to say?

22:38 E: It's definitely case by case. **We have like, the set group of kids that will come in every single day, that will want to talk to us, like 'hey can i talk to you in the other room,** something happened at school. Like you know they just want to tell us about their day. Or there was some drama over here on the weekend, like, let's talk." **Like, you know, they do love to come in and vent and just be in our presence. It's really awesome.** Like, these kiddos are leaving today and it's like, Ah, it's crazy. Because, like, they come in every single day, and Rachel comes in and she wants to talk every single day, and it's just yeah, I forgot the question again. Sorry.

23:38 E: haha I forgot the question to. I love that just about, like, the stories of the kids coming.

23:35 L: Like there are, especially like, when we see that the families are a little distant from each other, we'll take that little extra thing and be like, Hey, what's up? Like, come join our activity later. Like, come by. Come on. Hang out. Like, you know you want to help set up. Do you want to like, come **just like, really showing how important and how like,** really, not cherish, But I'm so sorry. We're word. I'm so sorry, **valued that their presence is and even in our lives, like,**

you know, like I was saying, there's a lot going on in these worlds, these parents are dealing with a lot a lot of the time, so maybe they don't have a lot of you know, time to focus on their children, or they get lost in that. And, yeah, **we're just here to just be that figure for them.**

24:30 E: Is there, like, a moment when you realize, like, how impactful this job was, and like a reason you like the cost of the job, but also, like the reason, like, why you're still choosing to which I know you kind of covered, but like anything else surrounding that,

24:44 L:

a specific moment, oh my gosh. I don't know there's so many, so many. I just like seeing that, seeing a kid come into us, reserved and shy and quiet. It and kind of like seeing the growth in just like the change that happens even after a couple interactions with them, it's it's like, amazing to see them open up and show their entire authentic self. That is what I really love. Because, I mean, all it takes is a person to just get it out of them. Like it's in there, it's in every single child. They want to participate. They want to feel like they're important, and they want to help, you know, like I asked them all this time, what do you guys want to do in our room? Like, you know, it's not just us planning these things and you're going to do them. Like, we want to know what you guys want to do. This is for you guys. This is your room. What kind of snacks you guys want in here? **Like, their opinions matter in our room, their opinions matter with us.** Yeah, and, you know, as a kid, you get brushed off a lot, like, honestly you do so that carries a lot of weight in itself, when their face lights up when they see that we got the snack, you know, from Costco. Like, Oh, my God, you got it. **Like, these little things matter so much.**

I mean, the thank you cards are nice,. So like, sometimes when the families leave we get a nice thank you card and, like, they're very like, God, they really like, help remind me of why im here, like a lot.

Seeing a family get housed, I mean, and them just with complete joy and no worry on their face, in like, the first time in a very long time, like, you know.

26:40 E: Thats amazing. We kind of already talked about it but s there anything just like you would want to say that, like you're not normally given the space to say, or anything important about your work that you think is overlooked? just opening the space up, in case you have any final thoughts or questions.

27:05 L: ummm i dont know (pause)

27:13 E: Or like what do you hope your legacy would be like if someone can remember you?

27:19 L: Oh, my legacy is just these kids and like, so for me I remember the adults that made a change for me in my life, very young, like my fifth grade teacher, Miss Chacon, like Mrs. Poole in seventh grade, I used to sit in her office and do Sudoku with her, like, you know, like, I want to be somebody that they remember as a really positive person and they think, like, wow, like, that was really awesome. Yeah, that's literally it like, **I just want them to get self confidence from me. I want them to feel motivated. I want their worlds to feel bigger after knowing me.**

Closing compliments and small talk