

Meet Mira

Glenda Nieves GROUP THERAPIST



MiraVista Behavioral Health Center group therapist Glenda Nieves and her cart full of activities – along with her professional and personal experience - have become a welcomed presence for adult and adolescent patients and, she hopes, are providing a healing way forward in lives frequently challenged by traumatic experience. Glenda facilitates four or five group sessions of about 45-minutes each throughout the day that she said are well attended and where patients are “very encouraging to each other.”

“I am very empathetic with patients,” said Glenda who provides a variety of materials and therapeutic techniques to facilitate communication, promote self-awareness and create a safe and supportive environment to relieve stress and promote calm. Among them, art supplies, music, journals, mindfulness and meditation tools, and books. “They have gone through a lot of traumatic experiences that are painful to hear and I am here with them as they face all their emotions.”

Glenda, who is bilingual and took the position of group therapist this spring, understands such lives, especially those of Black, Indigenous and People of Color, and understands both their resiliency and vulnerability.

She lived in New York City subsidized housing until the age of 7 when the death

of her father from a drug overdose prompted the family to relocate to Central Massachusetts from its Bronx



Glenda Nieves, Group Therapist

neighborhood where residents faced significant physical and mental health challenges living in a chronically-medically underserved area.

Fast-forward decades during which Glenda’s pursuit for higher-level

education led from community college for medical assisting to a bachelor's in criminal justice and ultimately a master's degree in criminology from North Andover-based Merrimack College with career plans that subsequently changed from criminal justice to counseling.

Along the way Glenda became a mother to three now-grown children, a grandmother of five and has witnessed her mother be 30-plus years in recovery.

"All of us here at MiraVista try to make a difference in patients' lives. I am so happy and grateful in what I do and to be part of Team MiraVista."

"I've gone through a lot, a lot, a lot," said Glenda, adding in building her own life "it's been non-stop" with "all good stuff, now, thank God."

Glenda has worked throughout her career with a diverse patient population from survivors of rape to immigrants under the age of 21 who were sexually trafficked to those in recovery with substance use.

She completed certification training in the Latino Addiction Counselor Education Program, and finds her training and cultural background have helped patients resistant to talk therapy understand why it is important to recovery with mental illness and substance use.

"I have told Latino/x patients who don't want to talk to a counselor that it is difficult but it makes a difference to get their thoughts and feelings out," Glenda said. "They will say

they need someone they can relate to, or 'click' with, and they are correct. They have to be able to click with someone in order to express what is going on inside and I encourage them to do that and continue their recovery journey."

She said being a group therapist "can be very overwhelming and challenging" but rewarding in the patient trust that builds and the opportunity to support her patients on their recovery journey.

"Some will hug me at the end of group or when they are about to leave and that makes me feel good,"

Glenda said. "Whenever a patient does leave, I never say everything is going to be alright, but I tell them to stay connected to their community supports and network, to take their medication and know they are not alone. There are resources out there but they have to seek them out. I encourage them to follow their goals and not get discouraged."

She added, "All of us here at MiraVista try to make a difference in patients' lives. Whatever they need, we try to accommodate," Glenda said. "I am so happy and grateful in what I do and to be part of Team MiraVista."

