

The four stories below are from real people who use and benefit from services offered by The Center. We encourage you to share these with your friends and family. Show them why The Center is so important to you and our community and then ask for their support!

James' Story

James had been hesitant to get tested for several years - even well before the pandemic. He finally came in to get tested at The Center, saying that he knew it was time. His Community Engagement Coordinator on The Center's HIV Services team helped get him comfortable and gave him counseling before his test. James tested positive, and after receiving counseling around his treatment options, he was referred to one of our affiliates who got him an Uber the very same day to get connected to treatment and care. James is still regularly in touch with the HIV Team at The Center, and he is successfully adhering to his medication.

James says, "I had a feeling I was positive, but I was very hesitant to get tested all this time. The folks at The Center made me feel like it was going to be okay no matter what, and they were right!"

Nikolai's Story

As the political environment in Russia became more and more threatening to LGBTQ folks at home, Nikolai, who is living with HIV, and his partner made the difficult decision to make a perilous journey to find safety and community. They came to the U.S. through the southern border and landed in New York, alone and unable to use their housing voucher to find an apartment. Thanks to the close-knit HIV/AIDS activist community in New York, they were referred to The Center, where they not only found connection to a safe apartment, but also signed up for free services like ESL classes, as well as an immigration support group. Nikolai received legal representation for his asylum case, and we are pleased to report that his work authorization was processed in just a few months.

Nikolai says, "It is not easy starting a new life far from home. But The Center helped us with so many services. I can manage my health, and I am not afraid of the future anymore."

Lidia's Story

Lidia came to The Center initially to manage her addiction to crystal meth. She had been homeless and staying on a friend's couch. But then Lidia's daughter became unable to care for her son, and Lidia wanted to make a life change towards sobriety so she could care for her grandson. Since she was also HIV positive, Lidia's case manager at The Center found her emergency housing, and then a permanent studio apartment through the HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA). She is now three months sober and happy to be caring for her grandson.

Lidia says, *"I had never even heard of HASA before they told me about it at The Center. Now I have a home. I am staying clean and taking my meds and I love being here for my daughter and grandson."*

Ousmane's Story

Ousmane had just learned about his HIV diagnosis when his family found out about his sexual orientation and threatened to kill him to "preserve family honor." He left his home in West Africa, where the stigma of HIV/AIDS and homosexuality still persist to this day. He came to New York and went to The Center, where staff made his HIV medical care a top priority. The Center case management team then helped arrange a safe place to live through the NYC HIV/AIDS Services Administration and also found him a Portuguese interpreter to help him secure legal representation for his asylum case.

Ousmane says: *"I feel I had no choice but to leave to save my life. And now I have a home and medical care. I am very grateful."*