

QUEENS VOICE

We Were All “New” Once – Home Health Pros Say



By Jorene Peters, HHA Supervisor VNS Health March 28, 2023

NEW YORK - One of the most rewarding aspects of my work as a Home Health Aide Supervisor at VNS Health is watching passionate and talented people grow and thrive in their work. Health care is a growing career path, and one way to get your foot in the door is as a home health aide (HHA), providing personal care to elderly or infirm people who need assistance with daily living. Many in the field of personal care go on to learn and expand their skills. The curiosity and compassion that I see in many talented home health aides leads them to make many meaningful contributions to the community and the clients they serve.

At the same time, for someone entering the field, the job of home health aide can seem daunting at first. Jasmin Fearon, a home health aide with VNS Health, experienced this firsthand. It's not easy being in a new country, a new city, or a new job, much less all three at the same time, but when Jasmin first made the move from her home in the Cayman Islands to New York City, in 2022, that's exactly what she was facing.

For the past 14 years, Jasmin had been working in eldercare in Jamaica and The Cayman Islands. When her daughter asked her to move to New York so they could be closer together, Jasmin was thrilled. Next stop: Queens, where Jasmin lives now. She figured it would be a simple transition that would move her forward in pursuit of a career in health care, right here in New York. But it turned out even better than she expected.

Jasmin's new career path started with training to be a HHA at VNS Health, one of the nation's largest not-for-profit home- and community-based organizations. She was excited to get going, but progress in booking actual clients was slower than she'd imagined. Work came in dribs and drabs; sometimes only three or four hours a week.

Everything seemed a bit overwhelming to Jasmin at first. The system for booking appointments took some getting used to, and she felt a little shy about asking for help. Because she was new, only a few supervisors knew who she was and had a sense of her abilities. She hadn't figured on that being a hurdle she'd need to overcome.

Jasmin was also dealing with a lot of unexpected stress around her family back home in Jamaica, as well as the challenges that come with settling into a new country. She was excited to be starting in a new place, but felt awkward and wasn't sure how to move forward. As a result, despite her naturally positive outlook, she started to doubt herself a little.

I first became aware of Jasmin when I returned from leave. Scheduling care for our patients with our home health aides is one of the key elements of my job, and often the most challenging. Even though we have more than 6,000 home health aides in our organization, it's all about making sure you find the right fit for each client—and the right fit for each aide. Each is an individual, with their own special circumstances, and finding the right match is its own special "science."

My goal is always to match the right caregiver with the right patient—to keep an aide's strengths, skills, personality, and even geographic location in mind. We do our best, but sometimes a person needs to be placed very quickly. Until they've "proven" themselves, new workers may not be the first person a supervisor will feel confident pairing with clients.

Not long after Jasmin joined VNS Health, I had just returned from leave and was jumping back into work. I had a lot of spots to fill, including multiple short shifts I needed to schedule. As I combed through the list of recent hires and saw that Jasmin was getting limited hours, I wanted to know more. I reached out to her on the phone, and right away I had a good feeling.

When Jasmin explained the challenges she was having getting assignments from supervisors, I offered my support and shared that I had short shifts that needed filling. Jasmin confided to me later, "When, I heard your friendly voice it melted my heart! I knew somebody cared!" She jumped on every shift I offered. She was enthusiastic, positive, and even willing to do longer commutes because she wanted those hours.

I was also able to provide her with training and support for the app we use to pair HHAs with clients, and Jasmin began to think of the app more as a help, not a hindrance. I also gave her tips on "life in the big city," and offered to be a support for her as she continues to navigate her first year at VNS Health.

I am thrilled to have such a dedicated caregiver working with our patients. It has been a real partnership; from the beginning, I've felt it was important for Jasmin to have an advocate on her side. She needed help, but I needed help too. We have patients we need to serve, and some of us work to schedule that help while others provide that help in the home. We can't do it without one another.

Beyond helping Jasmin learn the ropes and book the hours she needed, it's been rewarding as a supervisor to encourage her to be confident and trust her strengths. She's a kind, intelligent and caring

person. Being new to New York City, she just needed to be reminded of that, and to know that she was not alone. With every passing day, she is finding her way more and more, and feeling more independent in the new life she is making for herself in New York. Most exciting of all is that Jasmin is feeling empowered to grow in her career—moving forward to pursue her dream of becoming a nurse.

We've all been "the new person" at one time or another. That first someone who takes a chance on you is so important in your life and your career. The lesson I've learned from Jasmin is that that the "new" person you don't know much about yet could be the exact person who will help you solve a problem or bring a family comfort and peace of mind. Before you know it, they aren't "new" anymore—they're part of the team.

For more information about Personal Care services from VNS Health, or exploring a career in home health care, visit: [vnshealth.org](https://www.vnshealth.org), or call 1-888-735-8913. <https://www.vnshealth.org/home-care/personal-care/>

Queens Voice is the true voice of Queens, covering local news, events and health tips. This article also ran in the online and print versions of Your Health Voice, Bronx Voice and Manhattan Voice for a total print circulation of 40,000 and 47,520 unique visitors per month.