

Delaying Retirement to Get the Job Done



(r) Dianne Velez, RN, BSN, IBCLC, Lactation Consultant, Women & Children's Health Services

When Dianne Velez first set foot in NYC Health + Hospitals/Metropolitan it was July 1984 and she was 23 years old.

She had just graduated nursing school and knew about the hospital because her Grand Uncle lived across the street and members of her family got care there.

On a whim she popped into the nursing office to get information about jobs.

But as Dianne tells the story, when Gladys Ramos, the Director of Nursing at the time, found out that Dianne could speak both Spanish and English fluently she said, "would you like to start tomorrow?"

And the rest is history!

Dianne built a long and fulfilling career at Metropolitan Hospital focusing her considerable energy on Women's Health programs and building the department.

"I always loved the mothers and babies" Velez says.

Through the years, Velez helped educate hundreds of families, and kept learning and growing, ultimately achieving 4 certifications: Lactation Consultant, Childbirth educator, Bereavement Counselor, and Spanish Interpreter.

But as she closed in on her 39th year of work and her 62nd birthday, Dianne felt tired, and had other interests such as volunteering in the community. So, she had scheduled her retirement for December of 2022. That was almost a year ago. It turns out, there was unfinished business to attend to.

The highly coveted "Baby Friendly" designation, which gets renewed and awarded every 5 years, had not been secured for the 2023 cycle.

That last time Metropolitan Hospital was awarded this designation was 2017, and the work requires all-hands-on-deck to document and report new policies, protocols and guidelines that have been put in place to make a hospital officially Baby Friendly. The designation comes from Baby Friendly USA: it's considered a major accomplishment and a feather in the cap for any hospital that earns it.



It is an official recognition of excellence in care and Dianne Velez was not going anywhere without it.

“My nurses kept telling me, you can leave! The hospital will take care of this. But I said No Way! It would be unethical to go now,” she says.

So, the retirement has been postponed. All the paperwork and documentation and hard work involved in applying for this important badge of honor will be submitted prior to January of 2024, and a decision may take about 4 months. In addition to earning the designation, Dianne also wants time to train and mentor nurses who can fill her giant shoes.

Then, and only then, with a full heart and a satisfied smile, will Dianne Velez retire in December 2024.