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January 31, 2015

Survivor Story: Genocide Survivor to Labor Trafficking Victim

Sabine was the only member of her family to survive the genocide in Rwanda, so she agreed when a wealthy family offered her a chance to move to America with them. Shortly after arrival, however, she was imprisoned in their home; forced to work around the clock and made to sleep on the kitchen floor. Finally, after six months of servitude, Sabine was allowed to go to church for an hour each Sunday. On one visit, she was approached by a kind Rwandan man who learned of her situation and helped her escape. He took Sabine to one of our partner agencies and who immediately referred her to Polaris.

Before participating in the Transitional Housing program, Sabine was afraid of everything. She did not want to leave the apartment after 4:00 p.m. because it was too dark, and was afraid to walk to the Polaris office by herself. She had never been independent in the U.S., so even going to the grocery store or using a gift card terrified her. Her Polaris Case Manager not only accompanied her when shopping, but also conducted case management sessions in her transitional housing home, where she felt safe and secure. Because of her attentive Case Manager, after only three months, she was able to visit the office on her own. She also began shopping on her own and familiarizing herself with the neighborhood. When she came to Polaris she spoke no English, but after taking English lessons she is now conversational. She became the most enthusiastic and eager student in our Job Training program, and continued to visit the center to practice the computer skills.

Names, identifying information, and case details may have been changed to respect confidentiality and protect the individuals we serve.

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