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January 5, 2015

## Survivor Story: Tricked by a Man She Trusted

Several years ago, Gabriella lived in Colombia with her family and worked at a grocery store. As the eldest child, she had to provide for her mother and sisters after her father committed suicide. A childhood friend of Gabriella's moved to the United States some years before, and he offered to help her move to America every time he visited Colombia. He promised he would help her to find work in a restaurant so she could better support her family. After a year, she agreed.

The next thing she knew, Gabriella was taken to the U.S. and forced into prostitution. Not only was she held in debt bondage for \$10,000, but she was told that if she tried to escape, her family would be harmed. For five long years, Gabriella lived as the property of her traffickers. She was moved to a different brothel almost every week, never knew where she was, and wasn't able to seek outside help. Unfortunately, Gabriella's story is not unique. Polaris regularly assists victims of human trafficking who are left without homes, employment, family, or friends. Fortunately for Gabriella, Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) caught her trafficker. Gabriella was rescued through a raid that ICE did on the brothel where she was held. ICE referred her to Polaris for services.

Gabriella met with one of our case managers at least once a week for much needed emotional support and comprehensive care. Polaris assisted Gabriella in finding an apartment for her and her 2-year-old daughter, helped her enroll in ESL classes, and provided her with employment assistance.

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

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