

CONNECTION

EATING DISORDER RECOVERY HAPPENS THROUGH CONNECTION



ESPERANZA STAFF SPOTLIGHT

MARINA RIVERA-RIDENS, MS, RD, LD, CEDRD

Marina Rivera-Ridens, Director of Dietary Services for Esperanza Eating Disorders Center, has completed more than three years of specialized training and supervision by eating disorder experts to earn the prestigious credential of Certified Eating Disorder Registered Dietitian. At this time, there are only two professionals who have earned this certification in San Antonio.

"I feel extremely lucky to have been supervised by some of the leading eating disorder specialists in the country," Marina said. "Their wealth of knowledge and expertise was hands down the most valuable part of the certification process. There are some things you cannot learn from a book. I still seek supervision from Leah Graves every month." Leah Graves, RDN, LDN, CEDRD-S, FAED, has more than 30 years experience treating eating disorder patients at all levels of care. Marina also received supervision from Susan C. Mengden, PhD, CEDS and iadep Approved Supervisor, who is the Founder and Clinical Director of Esperanza EDC. Dr Mengden has more than 30 years of eating disorder treatment experience, primarily in the San Antonio and South Texas area.

"Through the certification education curriculum, I have gained an even deeper understanding of eating disorders and how they affect the brain and therefore effect emotions and mental health. This deeper understanding has helped me to have more compassion for the patients and their struggles," she continued.

Marina began her career as a dietitian specializing in eating disorder treatment in 2014. "I love the individual sessions that I do with patients. Getting to hear their stories and to know them instead of their eating disorder is so important. To be there as one of their guides through recovery is truly a gift, an honor, and the best part of my job."

"As Director of Esperanza EDC's dietary staff, I enjoy providing supervision and helping to train more eating disorder registered dietitians and diet techs. We problem solve as a team and provide support to each other every day. I am grateful for my amazing nutrition team. They really are the dream team," Marina added.

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www.EsperanzaEDC.com

Recovery by Doing in Esperanza's Dietary Department

When asked what makes Esperanza's nutrition treatment approach unique, Marina responded "Our *Recovery by Doing* philosophy is very hands-on for patients from the minute they walk in the door. The fact that the patients start day one with preparing their breakfast and eating with the group speaks to that."

It's so important for patients in all programs to learn to prepare and plate their own meals. Each individual brings their own food, based on meal plan guidance from the dietary department. Cooking classes are part of all programs, with age-appropriate snacks and meals designed for the adolescents. Learning to plate a meal appropriately is something most of us take for granted. But for an individual with an eating disorder, serving themselves takes practice and patient assistance from the dietary staff.

Other dietary activities that allow real world practice are eating meals in restaurants and grocery store outings with Esperanza's dietary staff. Both of these experiences can be overwhelming for those living with an eating disorder, so repeated practice with the guidance of dietary staff allows patients to learn coping skills for the stressful parts of each experience and also how to make healthy choices that will support recovery. These important parts of *Recovery by Doing* have been limited in recent months because of Covid-19 restrictions, however the dietary staff is looking forward to increased activities out in the community in the days ahead.



Marina Rivera-Ridens,
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Director of Dietary Services