RANCHO DAMACITAS
CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

MEET OUR YOUTH

Maria

In her own words, Maria describes herself as "very hardworking, determined, patient, outgoing and always open to new opportunities." At Rancho Damacitas, we think she is an inspiring young woman.

Originally from Fresno, CA, she entered foster care at the age of 10. After several years of moving around, living in nine foster placements, she returned home to her biological mother, but the severe abuse and neglect resumed and she returned to foster care at age 16 where she remained until reaching young adulthood.

> "having a healthy family, to not repeat the past, and to have a different life."
>
> Maria, 19
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> *Statement on her long-term goals*

As a single mother, Maria now has dreams of making a better life for her and her young family. Although she suffered through extreme circumstances, she held onto her hope for a better life and does not allow her past to define her future. Ambitious and determined to succeed, within two weeks of joining *Project Independence* (Rancho Damacitas' transitional living program for foster youth over 18), Maria got a job and enrolled in a vocational training program in the medical field. Maria takes four different buses to and from her medical assisting and scribe program four days out of the week.

Like many of her peers from foster care, Maria is grateful for the support she receives and wants to give back to her community. She plans to do this by working at a local hospital, providing care for the ill and by "helping patients to feel better." Ultimately, she plans to become a registered nurse. Among her top long term goals are "having a healthy family, to not repeat the past, and to have a different life."

In her own unique way, Maria is striving to achieve the mission and vision of Rancho Damacitas. We are proud to have Maria join *Project Independence* and look forward to watching her soar!