



BRENDA RODRIGUEZ



READY, SET, SMILE | MINNEAPOLIS, MN

DUAL TRAINEE SUCCESS

MN DUAL TRAINING
GRANT PROGRAM

COMMUNITY
HEALTH WORKER

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Minnesota Dual Training Grant awards up to \$150,000 in grants to employers utilizing dual-training models. The grant reimburses employers for costs associated with related instruction resulting in industry-recognized degrees, certificates, or credentials. The dual-training model pairs on-the-job training with formal related instruction to foster skilled employees and enhance company culture.

Dual trainees may benefit from up to \$6,000 a year from the Dual Training Grant. Dual trainees can participate in dual-training programs for up to four years through the grant.

- ✓ Launched into a new and rewarding career during the pandemic
- ✓ Inspired to help others in her community
- ✓ Earned Community Health Worker Certificate at Normandale Community College

Brenda Rodriguez, 36, has launched into a brand new, rewarding career with the help of the Dual Training Grant. The COVID-19 pandemic caused her to lose her restaurant service industry job, requiring her to quickly pivot into something new.

Brenda decided to enroll in the Community Health Worker certificate program at Normandale Community College, which is where she learned of the Dual Training Grant and internship opportunity at Ready, Set, Smile, a dentistry and education organization.

“It seemed too good to be true, but it was the best decision to pursue this. Everything was in a whole package,” recalled Brenda. The Dual Training Grant completely covered her tuition at Normandale, and Brenda was able to begin working at Ready, Set, Smile immediately to receive her on-the-job training while working toward her certification.

“Even the learning was easier because we were putting what we learned in school into action,” said Brenda. She earned her certificate in May 2022 - a proud moment for Brenda and her teenage son. “I wanted to show my 16-year-old son that its never too late to pursue education and achieve your dreams.”

Brenda finds her role as a Community Health Worker to be incredibly rewarding, feeling fulfilled with her work every single day. She is also bilingual in Spanish, which has proved to be an essential skill to assist the many young students that Ready, Set, Smile serves. Ready, Set, Smile staff visit school sites to provide dentistry care, and many students are receiving dental care for the first time.

“I couldn’t be more thankful for the Dual Training Grant and Ready, Set, Smile. This program sets everything up for you. You just have to go to school, go to work, and it’s all taken care of,” said Brenda. “It lifted so much stress off of me. I’m so proud of doing this, being able to succeed, and provide a better future for my son and I.”