

Head Start parents who
have become early
childhood professionals.

Aveen Amedi

Lakes and Prairies Head Start

CATEGORY 4 WINNER



Aveen Amedi came to the United States in 1997 from a small country in northern Iraq called Kurdistan. Aveen and her family sought asylum because her father was working with an American organization. Saddam Hussein was threatening the family and they feared for their safety. Aveen arrived in the U.S. with her parents and siblings after a short stay in a refugee camp. It was hard for Aveen to leave her homeland of Kurdistan. She had just finished college with a degree in education. Now she needed to start over learning a new language and building a new life for herself. Aveen worked for 9 months to bring her fiancé to the U.S. from Kurdistan so that they could marry and start a family. Aveen was able to complete the required paperwork and was overjoyed when her husband joined her in the U.S. They married and had their first child. When Aveen's son Avan was a preschooler she was able to enroll him in Head Start in Fargo, ND. She loved the program and the staff. Aveen took volunteering in the classroom very seriously and both she and her son learned English along with so many other skills. The family later moved to Dilworth, MN and had a daughter named Shaveen. Once again Aveen sought out the Head Start program. With her teacher's encouragement, Aveen began to spend more and more time volunteering in the Head Start classroom, washing tables, playing with the children, and doing other tasks to help out. Aveen enjoyed working with children. She enrolled in the Rural MN CEP program and began working at Head Start in an on-the-job training position. When a position as a Teacher's Assistant opened up in 2008, Aveen was hired by the program. She had so many skills to bring to Head Start—a strong work ethic, interpreting skills, and a willingness to learn all she could about working with children and partnering with their parents. Aveen worked as a Teacher's Assistant for 5 years, earned her Child Development Accreditation (CDA) and had another baby. It was a natural transition for Aveen to accept a long-term substitute teaching position in the classroom. In this position Aveen realized her leadership skills and her talent for running her own classroom. Aveen realized that being transplanted to the United States had meant she could still realize her dream of being a teacher. Aveen taught in the classroom until this fall when she accepted a position as a home visitor for the Head Start program. Because she loved the classroom so much Aveen was skeptical about whether she would like the transition to working with families in their homes. She soon realized that her bilingual skills and her past experience gave her much credibility with diverse families. Aveen visits 11 families, all of them Kurdish like herself. Aveen is able to teach New American families the value of education and getting engaged in their children's every day learning. She helps families access basic needs and set family goals, all in a culturally respectful manner. In the 3 months she has been Home Visiting, Aveen has had 100% attendance for each family each week! Families working with Aveen are also on the floor playing and reading with their children—she recently brought in \$5,068.00 in in-kind dollars from her home based group for the month of December. Aveen gives credit to the Head Start program. She said, "Head Start believes in me more than I do in myself. They see things about my character that I don't see." Aveen Amedi found a new home in the United States almost 20 years ago and also found a new career in Head Start. As a past parent and a Head Start professional, Aveen is a wonderful representation of what Head Start can do and what it has to offer everyone no matter where they come from.