



Emilia Ford now helps other plan members pass the GED.

## From Mentee to Mentor

**Emilia Ford earned her GED with support from AmeriHealth Caritas' Mission GED® program. Then she began assisting health plan members herself.**

**Emilia Ford was determined.** After dropping out of high school at age 15 and giving birth to her daughter, she set a goal for herself to open up her career possibilities: She would earn her general equivalency diploma (GED). It wouldn't be easy, but it would be worth it.

"I just knew I had to further my education to pursue jobs that I wanted," Emilia says.

With a young child to care for, it was hard to find time to prepare for the GED exam. Years passed. Then in 2017, she learned from a relative that her Medicaid benefits offered through AmeriHealth Caritas' Southeastern Pennsylvania plan supported GED exam prep. Emilia called her plan and connected with Bonnie, a coach with the plan's Mission GED program.

As she has with many other members, Bonnie helped Emilia sign up for prep classes, connect with nonprofit organizations that offer tutoring support, and register and pay for the tests. (The program, which launched in 2013, also offers child care and transportation.)

But if you ask Emilia, now 26, Bonnie did much more than help with logistics. Every two weeks, they would connect to see how things were going. "When I spoke to her, it was on a personal level," Emilia says. "She let me know I was not alone."

The mentorship inspired Emilia to not only pass the GED exam last year. Soon afterward she began an internship in the AmeriHealth Caritas plan's member services department—and in August 2018 was hired into a full-time role to help members pass the GED.

"I feel attached to this role because I've been the other person on the phone," Emilia says. "I can relate. It makes the members feel comfortable and trusting."

She has helped more than 70 members prepare for the GED—including more than 20 who have passed the exam. She's part of a small group of health insurance plans across the country that offer a GED benefit. The idea is that because low education levels and poor health are correlated, insurers can boost members' health and thereby reduce costs by helping people further their education.

The core of her job, Emilia says, is to motivate people.

"Whatever you do to advance toward your goal, even if it's a small step forward, counts. Keep trying, keep pushing forward." ■