

# My Awesome Job: Rebecca Gallager, Senior Director, Adolescent and Family Support Services



"We're constantly adjusting the programming and adding new initiatives, because the needs of a community are always changing," says Rebecca Gallager, the senior director of Adolescent and Family Support Services at the Family Health Centers at NYU Langone.

Rebecca Gallager directs various community-based programs at the [Family Health Centers at NYU Langone](#) that address the social drivers of health. In her role, she provides oversight for health education and case management services for youths and families while ensuring teens have the support they need to help reduce risky behavior. Here, in Gallager's own words, is why she loves her job.

**It's rewarding to uncover hidden strengths in others.** One of our afterschool programs, called [Project TRACK](#), provides teens with resources to transition successfully into college and careers. Our focus is on helping young people identify and build on their strengths. Many of our kids have heard, "You're not good at this" too many times. But maybe someone is a natural leader and just hasn't realized it yet. So, our staff might give them a leadership role in one of the cooking classes we offer to help them realize their latent abilities. It's amazing when program participants start to see themselves in a different light.

**We eliminate barriers to achieving a high school diploma.** [Project Reach Youth](#) offers people who were unable to complete high school an amazing high-school equivalency program. We teach at all levels, so someone could come in at a first-grade or a twelfth-grade level and work toward a diploma. Many students who join the program say they feel fully supported, which may not have been the case during high school. No one will make fun of them for asking questions. It's an inclusive environment, and there's no age limit. If a 60-year-old wants to go back to school, we welcome them.

**The success stories keep me inspired.** Another program we offer, called [Project SAFE](#), helps prevent unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. We provide sexual-health workshops to raise awareness about how to reduce risk. We also help teens access birth control, emergency contraception, health care, and testing for pregnancy, STDs, and HIV. When our staff provide health education workshops, they recruit audience members to become "peer educators." This gives teens the opportunity to train with us, develop their leadership skills, and give back to their communities. One of our program supervisors, Leonor Perea, started as a peer educator in high school and was hired as a health educator after college. She got her master's degree in public health and is now a manager for Project SAFE. Stories like Leonor's inspire me every day.

**We help keep parents in the conversation.** We offer sexual health workshops for parents, too, since many may feel uncomfortable talking about sexual health with their kids. It can be hard to know where to start. We arm parents with the information they need to discuss HIV prevention and pregnancy prevention. And we explain that it's not just about one conversation. Rather, we encourage parents to build daily communication habits and help them navigate a range of tough subjects, like what to expect during puberty or what a healthy relationship looks like.

**My job is awesome because ...** I'm able to see the positive impact our programs have on people in the community every day. When someone has overcome obstacles to getting their high school diploma, and now they're able to go to college

or be hired for a job that wasn't possible before, it's a wonderful, positive outcome. We try to make the programs at the Family Health Centers accessible to everyone who can benefit from them. Plus, I'm always learning. We're constantly adjusting the programming and adding new initiatives, because the needs of a community are always changing. The challenge of staying ahead of those changes is one of the reasons I love my job.

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