

I had the opportunity to go to medical school

and I liked doing public health.

So when I came to this country as a refugee in 1999,

I had an opportunity to further my education and my professional skills.

I always wanted to work for the Centers for Disease and Control of Prevention (CDC).

And I got into English for Heritage Language Speakers in 2020.

It kind of segued to working with the federal government.

And I enjoy public service.

I'm doing public service as a thank you for the opportunity

that I had in the United States.

I found my specific position by following directions.

The EHLS, which is the English for Heritage Language Speakers, is an intensive course.

And the instructors have been with the program for years.

They actually coach us on how to put a resume together,

how to get on USAJOBS,

what to look for and the skills that the job needs

so that you can have a successful application and that's what I followed.

I used my language skills at the Library of Congress more.

I did research in Arabic.

I helped in translating documents for other federal agencies

and I also edited those some of the documents  
so that's mainly I used my Arabic language for the research position.  
And my current job at the CDC,  
my day-to-day job entails supporting the mission of the CDC  
which is preventing spread of disease in the United States and globally.

There was an Arabic speaker in my workspace.

She's Egyptian.

She spoke Arabic.

When we are screening passengers that are coming from the Middle East,  
sometimes they don't know English.

So, we tend to speak Arabic and let them know what we are looking for.

And sometimes in the office when we're having downtime

we just chat about food, about culture, about music

because I lived in Egypt for a year,

so we communicated on those different levels.

There are heritage language speakers in my workspace.

The unique skills that they bring,

of course, other than the language is the cultural background.

For example, with Arabic speakers,

the women tend not to speak up even if there is an issue.

So by having an eye contact or looking

and you can start speaking with them in Arabic,

that makes them comfortable to say what they are needed to say.

My work at the CDC contributed tremendously to my professional development.

I am doing what I love.

I have been trained as a physician and a public health professional.

And I'm using my skills actually to help America,

the United States, and the CDC to prevent disease from spreading in the United States and globally.

Working with the federal government contributed to boosting my growth and fulfillment in many ways.

I have become more confident.

I have worked in areas that I never thought I would.

My current job is a public health adviser

working as a contractor for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

And this is my dream job.

I think I can help the Arabic community with my role.

For example, when I was screening

and I was able to help travelers that are coming from the Middle East that don't know English

and they don't understand when we are talking in English and my colleagues are speaking English.

They don't know what they need to show us.

So, I used my language skills to speak to a few passengers

to let them know that this is what we are looking for and that was pretty helpful.

Listen and learn.

Listen at what the instructors are saying.

Take everything in, read, and also advocate for yourself.