



Maria S. Gomez, R.N., M.P.H.
President and CEO
Mary's Center

Maria Gomez is the founder of [Mary's Center](#), a community health organization that provides health care, education and social services in the DC metropolitan region. The goal of Mary's Center is to provide healthcare early and throughout the individuals' lifecycle, support families and individuals in their own community, and guide individuals to move up the economic ladder through education and training opportunities.

Under Maria's leadership, Mary's Center has grown from an initial budget of \$250,000 serving 200 participants at a basement in 1988 to an annual budget of \$42 million serving over 36,000 individuals at six locations and two mobile units in the District of Columbia and Maryland.

Maria is among the strongest leaders in the region. As testament to her significant commitment to give back to the community, President Barack Obama selected her as one of the 18 recipients of the [2012 Presidential Citizens Medal](#), the nation's second-highest civilian honor.

Maria is frequently recognized for her role in the nation's capital health care system and has become a recurrent health advisor for the District of Columbia Mayor's office. As such, current Mayor, Muriel Bowser, as well as former DC Mayors Vincent Gray and Adrian Fenty, have named her member of their transition team.

Maria is the recipient of numerous awards including the Washington Post Award for Excellence in Nonprofit Management, the Washington Business Journal Women Who Mean Business and the Minority Business Leader Awards, the Washingtonian of the Year, the Washington Examiner's Amazing Change Award, and the Diane Bernstein Children's Champion Award by DC Action for Children, among others. In October 2010 the Washingtonian Magazine named Maria as one of the 45 individuals who shaped Washington DC between 1965 and 2010. The magazine also acknowledged Mary's Center for its role as a "critical piece of the region's healthcare system." In February 2011 Maria was recognized as one of the 19 Upstander leaders in DC for serving as an inspiration to others by making a positive difference in their communities and around the world.

It was Maria's hard work and dedication that led First Lady Michelle Obama to choose Mary's Center as her first official visit to a non-profit organization in February 2009. Since then, Maria has strengthened her ties with the Obama administration and has become a frequent guest of the White House. In May 2010, Maria was one of the 200 guests invited to attend the State Dinner held in honor of the President of Mexico, Felipe Calderon and his wife, Margarita Zavala. In October 2010, the First Lady accepted Maria's invitation to be the Honorary Chair of Mary's Center's annual gala.

In 1995, First Lady Hillary Clinton also visited Mary's Center during the National Immunization Week in recognition of the Center's efforts to get children vaccinated and ready to learn and thrive in school.

Maria currently serves as a board member of the DC Primary Care Association, the Primary Care Coalition of Montgomery County, Sidwell Friends School and United Medical Center. She is also on the Advisory Boards of the DC Fiscal Institute, and SECDCC (State Early Childhood Development Coordinating Council).

Prior to establishing Mary's Center, Maria worked in hospitals throughout the area, from the emergency room to the neurosurgical unit. Later, she transferred to the DC Department of Health as a public health nurse providing both primary care and home-based care throughout every Ward in DC. She also worked with the Red Cross in community education programming and disaster services throughout the country, and at DC Visiting Nurses Association.

Originally from Colombia, South America, Maria immigrated to the United States with her mother at age 13 and attended DC Public Schools. She obtained her Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing from Georgetown University and a Master's degree in Public Health from the University of California at Berkeley.

Maria and Miachel Rexrode have been married for 23 years and have a 19-year-old daughter, Amalia.