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Tanya Norwood is a hard-working single mom who is in the process of a reinvention. She is currently repaving her life with a fresh start. "I am transitioning from my previous job as a case manager to a new career as a paralegal," she said.

Norwood was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, and moved to Dayton, Ohio, when she was 18 years old. Shortly after that she divorced her husband and moved to Columbus. She attended Columbus State Community College and received her associate's degree in legal assisting. "After I received my degree in legal assisting, it was very hard to find a job. I did not have much experience, and no one wanted to give me a chance," Norwood said. She was raising her daughter on her own and needed a source of income. That's when she found her way to the social work arena.

For the past 10 years she has worked in the infectious disease and mental health field. "I have done a lot of case manager duties at Southeast Inc., such as perform crisis intervention, treatment planning, and psychosocial rehabilitation tasks, assessing client needs and conducting support," she said. In her position as a case manager, Norwood worked as a family advocate at the Columbus Urban League. She also performed case manager duties that included, among other things, assisting parents with Head Start program sign-ups.

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Norwood found it difficult to work in this field due to the great empathy she felt for her clients. "It was very hard not to get attached. I can relate to a lot of these people, but also I had a job to do," she said. Norwood said she was one of the few case workers who sincerely cared and wanted to help. It broke her heart that some employees were not there to assist the clients in their time of need. Needless to say, working in this field can be very stressful, and after a much needed break, Norwood decided to go out on a limb and switch careers. "I was very overwhelmed with working in the field of infectious diseases and mental health. Therefore, I had to change careers," she said.

Norwood returned to school to obtain a bachelor's degree, hoping that it would make her more marketable in the legal field. In June of 2009, she received her Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Criminology. All her hard work paid off because she obtained an internship as a paralegal with King Law Offices and is in the process of getting a permanent position with another company. This career switch marks a special milestone in Norwood's life. "My life has been filled with so any trials and tribulations, since I have been afflicted with an illness that promotes limitations for me, but through it all I never gave up," she said.

When Norwood is not working, she demonstrates a deep passion for community service and helping others. She works as an HIV/AIDS prevention counselor at Nationwide Children's Hospital and the Health Department.

Norwood attributes a great deal of her success to COVA



TANYA NORWOOD

TWINKLE LINEN SUIT; BELLE FLORAL SHELL; PEARL RIBBON NECKLACE AND BRACELET; AND BLACK PATENT OPEN-TOE PUMP

(Center of Vocational Alternatives) and to Impact Community Action, non-profit organizations that provided career services to Norwood during her transition. "The biggest advice I would give someone is to talk to a job coach before you decide to change careers. They helped me reconstruct my resume and find a job as a paralegal. Impact even paid me to do their program," she said.

For Norwood, reinvention is an opportunity for renewal. "I hope this transformation improves my confidence. My mind will finally realize that I am filled with turmoil and that I have overcome adversity," she said.

