



HomeStory

Stories from the California Home Visiting Program

Brittiney's Story: From Homeless to Helping the Homeless

A year ago, Brittiney had given up. She was not excited about being pregnant with her third child and says, “I was not in good shape physically; I didn’t care, and I hadn’t cared for years prior to that. I just gave up.”

She and her boyfriend of nine years had recently moved their family from North Carolina to California to be closer to Brittiney’s family. “We were living with a cousin, and their expectation—and ours as well—was to quickly transition out, but we didn’t realize how big a difference there was in renting requirements from state to state,” she says.

Fast forward to this family of five now settled in a home of their own. Not only is Brittiney employed, but she has found her “calling” in her work at a local homeless shelter. There, she emphasizes resources and support, just as she received when she enrolled in Butte Baby Steps and met her home visitor, Margarita.



Brittiney, right, reclaimed her life and connection with her three children, and credits her home visitor, Margarita, for encouraging her and offering a number of resources for emotional support, housing stability and more.

What is Home Visiting?

Home visiting is a voluntary program that pairs pregnant and newly parenting women with a nurse or trained professional who makes regular visits in the participant’s home to provide guidance, coaching and access to prenatal care and other health and social services. Home visiting is preventive intervention focused on promoting positive parenting and child development, with the ultimate goal of strengthening families and communities.

Home visiting pairs pregnant women and new moms with a trained professional who provides coaching, education and connection to resources to offer the best possible start for babies of at-risk families.

Brittiney joined the program when she was just a few months pregnant, and the empowered woman of today is not the participant Margarita first met. “In the beginning, she appeared very depressed, not caring about herself,” the home visitor says. “She had very low self-esteem. She did not appear to be excited about the pregnancy.”

"Honestly, without the program and Margarita, I don't think I would have ever found my own place." - Brittney

Home visitors work with their clients until the babies are a few years old, and in those first meetings with Brittney, Margarita made sure to offer resources for day-to-day stability.

"Her mind was in emergency mode, like what are we going to eat today," Margarita explains. She encouraged Brittney's job search and quickly connected her with support for housing assistance, as well as weekly counseling to learn coping skills and how to deal with depression.

"Honestly, without the program and Margarita, I don't think I would have ever found my own place," Brittney says, reflecting on the last few years of living in motels or with friends and family. "I was homeless, and I feel like I relate to a lot of people in my work because I've been through it."

Margarita also shared with Brittney her own hardships, including having been a very young mother and raising a daughter with special needs. Because of those experiences, the home visitor was well versed in accessing resources and knew which could benefit this participant.

Also, that personal sharing fostered a deeper bond and level of trust. Brittney says she could tell that Margarita really cared, and that led to open and honest conversations, regardless of the topic: "I could see her



You could say life is more like a walk in the park for Brittney's happy children, now living in their own home with mom and dad.

being a part of our lives for a very long time, somebody that I could call and talk to about anything."

"Brittney has had big challenges that she's overcome, and more than anything, to see her smiling now, seeing her connecting with the baby, her progress is amazing," Margarita says, adding that Brittney has worked hard to become more self-sufficient. "I provided the resources, but she followed up on her own."

As the home visitor and participant continue their journey, they are now out of "emergency mode" and focusing on child development and healthy living. Brittney says that Margarita helps her look at her interactions with her children in a ways that are more positive, like finding humor in kids' messiness: "It makes me stop in a moment where I would want to get frustrated and look at it differently."

This participant's resilience is astounding. In less than a year, Brittney has found a home, a job, a sense of community and most of all, hope—for herself and for her family's future.

122,000 California children under the age of 6 are estimated to be homeless.

Data source: The National Center on Family Homelessness

73% of CHVP sites identify housing as one of the top three local gaps in services.

Data source: CHVP Brief 2014

CHVP's issue brief, "The Housing Challenge," offers local and state resources for home visitor and their clients:

<https://archive.cdph.ca.gov/programs/mcah/Documents/CHVP.Brief.Housing.Final.pdf>



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