



# HomeStory

Stories from the California Home Visiting Program

## **Cristy's Story:** A World of Sharing and Caring

**E**ach time a home visitor is invited into a pregnant woman's living room for an in-home visit, the benefits for infant, mother and the entire family can be profound. The impacts also extend outside that home to positively affect neighborhoods, communities and even other nations, as exemplified by Cristy, who graduated last year from San Francisco's Nurse-Family Partnership, a California Home Visiting Program.

As a direct result of her experience with home visiting, Cristy now serves as a Health Educator at the city's Homeless Prenatal Program. She also facilitates First 5 Mommy & Me classes and became certified in infant massage and trained as a doula to "give back" to her Latina community. Cristy followed this inspiring path after learning about pregnancy and child development from the home visiting program and her nurse, Ivania Quant.

On the job and through her volunteerism, Cristy works with various groups of pregnant women, parents,

### **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. It is a preventive intervention focused on promoting positive parenting and child development, with the ultimate goal of strengthening families and communities.*



*Cristy, a former home visiting participant, now teaches infant massage, among many other parenting and child development classes using skills she learned while in the home visiting program.*

infants and toddlers and says, "I'm reminded of all the things I learned from Ivania in the Nurse-Family Partnership. A lot of activities from Ivania are [related to] child development and I still practice those activities with the babies and toddlers. I explain to my community how important is the baby's going to school or daycare. ... I am changing some minds and it's really important."

Cristy and her husband moved to the United States from Guatemala eight years ago with plans to raise a family here. Cristy was enrolled in English classes when she

*“Any visit I had with Ivania, always I share with my family every week.”*

became pregnant. She was happy, yet also anxious, and felt a sense of relief to learn from a friend about the voluntary home visiting program.

“When I was pregnant, I was so worried because I didn’t have family here,” Cristy says. “I needed someone to help me and advise me on how to care for my health first, and then my baby would be safe inside me.”

When Cristy met Ivania, who also speaks Spanish, the two had an immediate connection. “Ivania is from Nicaragua. This was the best thing because she is Latina and she speaks my language, so I felt really comfortable and happy. I trusted her so much. I treated her like family, and feel like she is my family,” Cristy says.

Ivania helped Cristy understand the importance of exercise, nutrition and talking to the baby—during pregnancy and after the baby was born. As Cristy says, “She explained to me how important it is for brain development, to sing, to talk with your baby. I shared with my husband and he started talking with my baby and singing to her.”

With her newfound knowledge, Cristy also reached out to her five sisters and three brothers—all still living in Guatemala at the time.

“Any visit I had with Ivania, always I share with my family every week,” she says. “Sharing advice that I learned from Ivania, such as how important it is to take care during pregnancy and they need to enjoy with the baby, like singing and talking. I learned how the babies have different areas, like communication, exercise for fine motor skills and socialization, all these things I shared with my family. Our lives changed totally, because in our country this education doesn’t exist.”



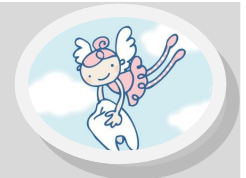
*Cristy, pregnant with her second baby, isn’t anxious because of all she learned from her home visitor, Ivania. Here, she sits in front of a wall chart that Ivania gave her to measure her daughter’s height.*

Ivania has been a public health nurse for 15 years and served as a home visitor for 10 of those years. She now works for the Child Care Health Program as a trainer, and in that capacity sometimes works alongside Cristy at Homeless Prenatal.

Ivania says she is “really proud” of Cristy, “but at the same time I’m humbled. I did a little bit, but she did most of the work. She’s using all the concepts, like you’re the first teacher, loving limits, read to your baby, everything. I have goosebumps and I was like wow. She really absorbed everything and she’s sharing it.”

One of Cristy’s sisters has since moved to San Francisco and Cristy is excited to have a family member close by, because she is now pregnant with her second child. This time around, there is no worry or anxiety. “I’ll just do what I learned from Ivania,” Cristy says.

### *Home Visiting Tooth Fairies*



Former home visitor Ivania Quant now works in San Francisco Public Health Department’s Child Care Health Program, providing training on health and safety, asthma and oral health, among other topics. Oral health is of special interest, she says, because she learned its importance when she was in home visiting.

“I was really surprised to see that a lot of parents don’t know that baby teeth are important, and I was even more surprised to learn that some parents don’t bring their baby or child to the dentist,” she says.

With Ivania as her home visitor, Cristy learned and now shares much about healthy pregnancy and child development, and adds, “The other amazing job Ivania did was she taught my family oral health, and my child loves to brush her teeth and has since she was a baby. She loves to visit the dentist.”



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*What’s your home visiting story? Tell us or sign up for future issues at [HomeStory@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:HomeStory@cdph.ca.gov)*