



HomeStory

Stories from the California Home Visiting Program

Keelah's Story: Building a Business for a Better Life

The first thing you notice about Keelah is her smile. It brightens the room and makes you feel instantly happy and at ease. She openly talks about her “miracle baby” Makaylah, who was born after multiple miscarriages. This pregnancy outcome was different—and this time around, Keelah had the California Home Visiting Program in Alameda County on her side.

“I normally couldn’t hold a baby past four months, so with this pregnancy, once we got between four and six months, I had a lot of questions,” Keelah says, flashing that contagious smile as she explains how her home visiting nurse, Rashawnda, has always provided answers to her questions about motherhood.



Home visitor Rashawnda, right, provides Keelah and her daughter Makaylah with at-home nursing support and also connected the single mom with resources for self-sufficiency.

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 visits typically start during pregnancy and continue at least through the child’s second birthday. Because of a lack of family support, Keelah has turned to Rashawnda for more than medical information. “My mom was on drugs when I was pregnant, so I didn’t have help. I basically didn’t have a mom, dad, sister, no one,” Keelah says, adding that Rashawnda has attended doctor’s appointments, assembled the crib and bassinet, helped with the car seat and stroller, filled out warranties and much more. “That support helped because I was really all by myself.”

The home visitor saw in Keelah an independent young woman who wanted to provide for her daughter and be the best mom she could be. Keelah was raising

“Keelah embodies someone who is ready and willing to go to the next level and do what it takes to exit out of public assistance.” - Jesus Verduzco

Makayla on her own—a single, working mother who was also cleaning a couple of houses to help make ends meet.

“She’s one of those clients who really wants to succeed, and she’s always open to any type of progression that is going to help her do better for herself and her daughter,” Rashawnda says. The home visitor worked with her client on setting goals, one of which was to turn the cleaning side-jobs into a thriving business.

Becoming business savvy

Rashawnda referred Keelah to Alameda County Public Health Department’s Financial Tools and Solutions Program, managed by Jesus Verduzco. The program provides an array of resources, starting with classes on financial education and planning. Participants can then opt into connecting with resources based on their specific needs. Keelah aspired to own an eco-friendly cleaning service that was affordable for seniors and low-income families.

She selected the Small Business Development/ Entrepreneurship pathway. That led to a workshop series offered through the county’s partnership with the local Mandela Marketplace, which helped Keelah develop a business plan, website and marketing materials.

“Keelah embodies someone who is ready and willing to go to the next level and do what it takes to exit out of public assistance,” Jesus says. “You can see the drive in



Thanks to Alameda County’s home visiting program, Keelah connected with resources and launched an eco-friendly cleaning service.

her and she’s always smiling, despite setbacks or difficulties she may encounter along the way. She’s so resilient.”

Keelah says, “Being in home visiting has given me a networking system, going into the educational classes and entrepreneur program. So basically, if I didn’t know Rashawnda, I wouldn’t have any of these resources to help me out.”

Growth opportunities

Within just a few months, Keelah’s cleaning service has grown to now include both residential and commercial clients. She plans to expand to a team of employees, allowing her to be at home with Makaylah while managing the business.

“Being in home visiting has given me a networking system...” - Keelah

She credits her home visitor and the home visiting program with her success as a mother as well as an entrepreneur. “I tell people, if you have dreams and you’re trying to go somewhere, you have someone to support you (in this program). You have people that want you to succeed. They want to see you go from where you’re at now and help you get to where you’re trying to go, or even beyond.”

Keelah smiles again, this time looking lovingly at her happy, healthy daughter.

