



# HomeStory

Stories from the California Home Visiting Program

## Darlynn's Story: Resilient, Responsible, Resourceful

**D**arlynn stood in front of the home visiting graduation podium and eloquently spoke of her past, present and bright future. She talked about graduating from community college and high school, and heading down the homestretch toward earning her bachelor's degree in Health Care Management.

Darlynn exemplifies determination, yet she is quick to credit the home visiting program with helping her deal with unexpected changes in her life. "Everything was going great, then I found out I was pregnant. I was 18 and just starting college at the time," she says, noting that she was using birth control.

The news of her pregnancy set a different path for the resilient teen, and she pushed onward. She enrolled in the voluntary Solano County Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), part of the California Home Visiting Program, to learn about pregnancy and parenthood. When Darlynn and her boyfriend, Zach, met their home visiting public health nurse, Jill, there was an instant connection.

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



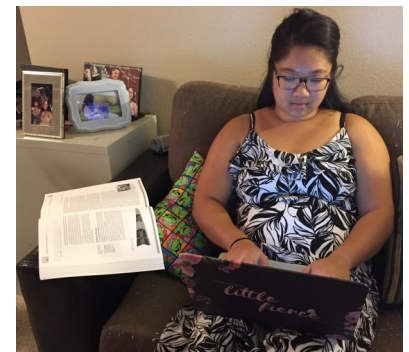
Left to right, Zach, Aiden and Darlynn with their home visiting nurse, Jill

"Jill was awesome. She came in, and it was like we had known each other forever," Darlynn says. "She didn't care that we were barely out of high school. She didn't judge us, and for someone from the outside to come in and not judge us like the rest of the world, it was really nice." Jill was like Darlynn's "second mother" and an important part of her support system.

The two regularly met, with Jill providing information and education on pregnancy, parenting, child development and milestones. The home visitor also helped the couple—now married—with their relationship development, career options and self-sufficiency.

Jill says she immediately saw many strengths in Darlynn and was impressed: She's so bright

*Darlynn wasn't sure she could be a student AND a new mom, but she did—and she is now close to attaining a college degree.*



*“We are much more confident in being first-time parents with all the information and resources that we had.” —Darlynn*

and really wanted to learn and get everything right. She was highly motivated to have a healthy pregnancy, to be a great mom, to breastfeed, and she also wanted to continue her education.”

Jill connected Darlynn to resources to expand her support network and boost her parental knowledge, such as Le Leche League for breastfeeding and nutrition information, CalWORKs for employment options and social services for self-care. Darlynn says gaining access to so many resources that she would otherwise not know about was invaluable.

Home visits continue through the child's second birthday, so Jill was able to build Darlynn and Zach's confidence over time as a couple and as new parents. “I’m so thankful for Jill,” Darlynn says. “Every time I needed her, she was there. She’s so much more than just a home visiting nurse to me; she’s almost family and we love her.”



Upon Jill’s recommendation, Darlynn became a member of her local home visiting Community Advisory Board (CAB), which looks at ways to best serve vulnerable populations. Darlynn told her story, networked with health care professionals and provided input from the client perspective. She brought Zach and her son to some of the meetings. Jill explains that her presence and perspective brought a sense of urgency, because the CAB members could see “these were real people with real struggles.”

Darlynn, now 22, reflected on her home visiting experience: “One thing I learned is that we’re so much stronger than I would have ever known possible as teenage parents. We are much more confident in being first-time parents with all the information and resources that we had. Without NFP and without Jill, I really don't think we would be where we are today.”

## Fewer Visits to the ER with Home Visiting Support

A 15-year follow-up study reported by the evidence-based Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) shows that among the other significant outcomes for nurse-visited families, there is a **56 percent reduction in emergency room visits** for accidents and poisonings.

Home visiting client Darlynn in Solano County can attest to that, explaining that Jill, her home visiting nurse, was often one of her first calls when something happened with her young son. Darlynn says she would have gone to the ER and incurred large co-pays much more often if not for Jill.

Darlynn explains that by participating in the home visiting program, she learned about safety and caring for her baby, and was provided helpful reference materials. She often referred to information Jill had given to her about temperature and other situations to determine if her son needed to see a doctor.

In addition to the NFP model, the California Home Visiting Program offers the evidence-based Healthy Families America model and serves 23 counties throughout the state.



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