



HomeStory

Stories from the California Home Visiting Program

Lupe and Luz's Story: Home Visitor Serves as Health Advocate

Home visitor Lupe Wade was concerned about Luz, who was in her third trimester of pregnancy and a participant in the voluntary California Home Visiting Program through Fresno County Department of Public Health.

Luz had a history of high blood pressure and was on medication, but Lupe knew there were other factors in Luz's life that could adversely affect the health of Luz and her baby. Lupe had learned much from her frequent home visits and ongoing interactions with this first-time mom-to-be.

"Luz immigrated two years ago to reunite with her husband, after living with her mom in Mexico," Lupe explains. "When Luz was at 28 weeks gestation, her mother suddenly died from an aneurysm."

Death of a loved one is devastating, even in the best of circumstances. In Luz's case, she felt even more alone in her pregnancy. She does not speak English, work, drive or have nearby family support. Her husband works more



Home visitor Lupe Wade, left, recognized many factors that were contributing to Luz's high blood pressure and advocated on her behalf during the pregnancy and delivery of her baby girl.

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, support 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.

than 30 minutes away, typically six days a week, at a job where he cannot easily take incoming phone calls.

Lupe was quick to be at Luz's side through this difficult time. The pregnant woman was distraught—and the grief added to a dangerous blood pressure trajectory that led to several visits to her healthcare provider. Luz was often admitted to the hospital to be stabilized and then sent home.

Lupe, a public health nurse working in the program's Nurse-Family Partnership model, offered much-needed health and emotional support as the weeks ensued. She kept a close eye on Luz's blood pressure, and more than once alerted health providers when the numbers were climbing too high.

“I felt like I had someone throughout this process, from my pregnancy to now. ... I am just glad I found this program and my home visitor.”

“At 38 weeks gestation, her blood pressure was even higher,” Lupe says, adding that Luz was also suffering from headaches that were increasing in frequency. Because Luz’s cell phone wasn’t working, Lupe called the clinic on Luz’s behalf and scheduled a visit for that Friday.

“I knew the weekend was coming and her husband was going to work, and with the lack of resources and support, I was worried that something might happen to her and no one would be around to help her,” Lupe explains.

Luz tells how Lupe was there for her appointment and helped explain Luz’s situation to the doctor.

“I was worried that something might happen to her and no one would be around to help her.”

Kristen Rogers, Ph.D., chief of Maternal and Infant Health, which oversees CHVP, explains, “Home visitors can give healthcare providers a larger frame of reference as to the lifestyle and influences that impact maternal and infant health and well-being. They can make appropriate referrals and recommendations based on observations that take place over a period of months and even years.”

On that Friday’s appointment, Luz was admitted to the hospital. Lupe stayed with her until she was settled in and assured she would not be sent home. Two days later, Luz gave birth to a baby girl.



A home visitor continues with the family after delivery to coach the parents and monitor the baby’s health, development and well-being.

“I feel that thanks to Lupe, my baby and I are doing well,” Luz says.

Since that special birthday, Lupe’s role now includes post-partum and infant care and she is “empowering the client to make educated decisions for herself and her baby.” Lupe continues to provide information to promote and teach positive health behaviors and parent/child interactions, and now monitors the growth and development of the baby as well as keeping a watchful eye on mom’s health.

Lupe’s visits to this home will continue until the baby is two, giving this infant a foothold for lifelong health—and Luz appreciates Lupe’s ongoing assessments of her daughter’s health and also their relationship. “The baby sees her and recognizes her ... and laughs with her,” Luz says. Mother, daughter and home visitor have a special connection and enjoy each other’s company.



Home visitor and participant share moments with tears as Luz describes her experience with the program: “I felt like I had someone throughout this process, from my pregnancy to now.

“(Lupe) has accompanied me through many things, from my mother dying, to me being very sick, to my baby’s birth. The best thing is that I met her; she is a very beautiful person. ... I am just glad I found the program and my home visitor.”

It’s a happy—and healthy—beginning for this sweet little girl and her family.



Story by the California Home Visiting
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