



HomeStory

Stories from the California Home Visiting Program

Whitney's Story: Gaining Self-sufficiency One Visit at a Time

Korey is an energetic toddler, happily bounding from activity to activity. Since before he was born, his mother has had regular home visits from Abies Lawani, a public health nurse at Stanislaus County Health Services Agency.

When Abies walks in for this visit—with Korey approaching 21 months of age—she's a familiar and welcome sight to the youngster. She's brought a toddler-size doll, and Korey immediately shows interest. When Abies hands it to him, he carefully places it on the couch, retrieves a new diaper and proceeds to "change the baby."

While Korey moves on to other toys that grab his attention, Abies and Korey's mother, Whitney, talk about parenting, nutrition, weaning and other important topics. They discuss ways in which Whitney has dealt with Korey's temperament.

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.



Korey shows great interest in his home visitor's doll and proceeds to "change the baby."

"My child is fun, loving, very cuddly, but very independent," Whitney says. "From the moment he was born, he was his own self. He has his own will and his own ways."

She tells Abies that talking to Korey about his emotions during temper tantrums calms him down. "It's working!" she says, as the women high-five across the table.

Achieving Goals

Home visitor and participant talk and read about love and trust. Then Korey joins them, sitting on his mother's lap. Abies demonstrates with the doll, as they all share some joyful moments singing and moving to "Jelly on the Plate."

It's intentional play that promotes meaningful interactions between mom and baby.

“Since [Whitney] has been in the program, she has gotten a job, a car, coordinated child care for her child and was able to quit smoking.” — Home Visitor Abies Lawani

Moments like these punctuate the positive influences of home visiting. Whitney has been an involved participant since signing up for the California Home Visiting Program’s Nurse-Family Partnership when she first found out she was pregnant. She was a single mom-to-be, without money, unemployed and unsure—but still looking ahead at what she could provide for her baby.



Whitney (left), Korey and Abies have a long-time relationship—having had home visits since early in Whitney’s pregnancy.

“I wanted to be the best role model and the best example that I could be,” Whitney says.

Home visitor Abies praises Whitney’s progress and commitment to achieve her goals. “I’m proud of Whitney’s ability to continuously grow as both a mother and a self-sufficient woman. Since she has been in the program, she has gotten a job, a car, coordinated stable child care for her child and was able to quit smoking. She is dedicated to learning about meeting the needs of her child, including making the decision to exclusively breastfeed.”

Whitney says the program helped her keep on track with goals: “When you see it week by week, you can really see the progress and you can go from there. It’s really motivating.”

Fewer ER Visits

Since Korey was born, Abies has provided wellness and developmental assessments as part of her home visits. She also shares valuable knowledge to help build Whitney’s confidence as a mother. For example, Korey is a picky eater, so there are ongoing discussions during home visits about ways to ensure he is getting proper nutrition. Also, because Korey has always been active and gets his share of bumps and bruises, the home visitor serves as a reassuring soundboard.

“If I didn’t have Abies, I would be taking Korey to the ER every day! I talk to Abies about things that concern me,

about what happened and how he’s doing, if he had a fall and is this normal after he’s had a fall, and all that. Without her, I’d be a regular in that ER!” Whitney says.

Abies and Whitney share a bond that is deeper than nurse and patient. Theirs is a relationship built on communication, trust and a mutual interest in providing the best opportunities for Korey’s health and happiness.

“I love this experience,” Whitney says. “This has been the best experience of motherhood that I’ve had. This is really going to stick with me. This is more fulfilling than a lot of the other things I could ever do for [Korey]. This program is great!”

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Abies says she enjoys the opportunity to educate and empower women to “be their best self, regardless of the situation or circumstances that life has brought them.”

“I think the program provided [Whitney] with the support and guidance necessary to be both self-sufficient and a strong caregiver. I have seen her transition from a nervous new mom to an expert in her maternal role! I also think having an outside individual that supports her in achieving her goals has helped to build her self confidence over time. Sometimes all we need is someone that truly believes in us to help us achieve our goals!”

Whitney’s confidence in herself and as a mother reflects in Korey’s ear-to-ear grin.

What’s your home visiting story? Tell us or sign up for future issues at HomeStory@cdph.ca.gov

