



# HomeStory

Stories from the California Home Visiting Program

## Angelica's Story: Teen Mom Chooses What's Best for Baby



**D**espite “reality” TV shows that often negatively portray teen moms, there are many young mothers who deserve accolades for their dedication to their babies. These committed moms seek answers, work hard, and make choices and sacrifices in the best interest of their children.

Consider Angelica, who became pregnant at age 17 during her senior year of high school and joined the voluntary California Home Visiting Program's Nurse-Family Partnership in San Diego County. When Angelica

learned of the opportunity to have a nurse come to her home throughout her pregnancy and her baby's first two years of life, she felt it was a wonderful way to get answers to her many questions. She eagerly signed up in her first trimester.

"I wanted to know more about what I was supposed to expect or any problems that I was going to have," Angelica says, adding that she also wanted "to just have someone that I could connect with."

What Angelica couldn't foresee was the trusting relationship she would develop with her home visiting nurse, Casey Johnson, and the impact it would have on her future. Nor could she predict how much she would learn about her baby girl, who was born three months before Angelica's high school graduation.

### 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.*

### Graduation Celebration

When most teens are relishing in the time before graduation, Angelica was diligently preparing for her new life as a mom. “Not only did she graduate on time, but she breastfed and would go to the [school] nurse's office and pump every break and lunch and store milk for her

baby," Casey explains. "Angelica continued breastfeeding until the baby was a year old."

There were many other changes that first year. Angelica began working at a restaurant, and she and her boyfriend moved in together to rent a room in her parents' house.

The home visits continued, with Casey guiding Angelica through her young motherhood, sometimes talking about college. All the while, the nurse monitored the baby's health and well-being in that important period of infant mental and physical development.

"Casey was a big help," Angelica says. "If the baby was sick, I would call her and say this is happening, what do I do now? Or, I'm noticing this, is that normal?" If not for Casey, Angelica says, "I would always have been at the doctor."

### A Path for the Future

One day, in this close bond between home visitor and new mom, Casey sensed something was bothering Angelica. "Then I saw tears start coming down her cheeks, so I asked her what was going on. She started telling me that she wanted to go back to school and had been wanting to, but her boyfriend didn't think they could afford it and said she would have to wait."

Casey opened Angelica's eyes to financial aid and other ways that she could get help with cost of living expenses to then allow her to go to college.

"I brought out my laptop and we started applying for financial aid. Her first idea was to get her certificate as a medical assistant," Casey explains. They had questions and called the school together. "That led to her setting up an appointment with the counselor, which led to her enrolling."

It hasn't been easy, but Angelica is now a straight-A student. "I didn't really think I was going to go to school until I talked to Casey and then she was like, 'Let's get on it' and we did, and that's why I'm in school," she says,

adding that she is close to becoming a certified nursing assistant, but is also considering a career in phlebotomy and perhaps attending nursing school one day.

*"I really didn't think I was going to go to school until I talked to Casey."*

"Especially because of my daughter, I didn't stop going to school," Angelica says.

"I think there's a stigma that teen moms don't care or that they're just going to toss their baby around or they're not going to be responsible when it comes to meeting the baby's needs ... that they want to be with their friends and don't really want to parent," Casey says.



*Home Visitor Casey Johnson, left, is all smiles with Angelica and her baby.*

"I've seen this opposite side with a lot of my teen moms and especially Angelica. She's extremely dedicated; she's very responsible; she's always put the baby first."

With her child and her career goals center stage, Angelica is poised for a bright future indeed.

