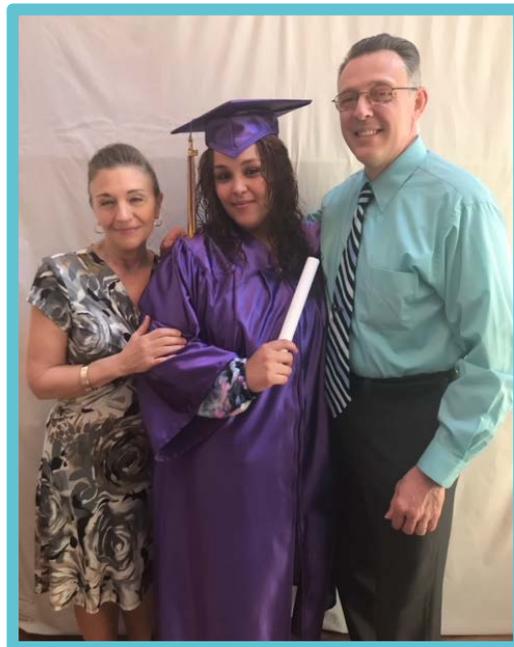


Foster Care as a Support to Families, Not a Substitute for Parents

Becoming a Team: Working Together Toward Reunification

I became pregnant with my son, King, when I was 24 years old. I was really excited because I had always wanted to be a mother. I had been with King's father for over 6 months and was committed to making us a family. King was born in February 2015. I was so happy and wanted to be a good mother to King more than anything else in the world. Unfortunately, King's father struggled with drugs and was violent toward me. Even though I was afraid of him, I was committed to being together as a family. If I did not help by bringing money into the home, he would hit me. I kept telling myself that if I could only keep him happy, he would not hurt me, and he would be a good father to King. I stole items like jewelry to keep our family together. Then, when King was 3 months old, I was arrested for stealing.



The Division of Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P) became involved and placed him with a foster family that I did not know. I was angry with CP&P and the world. I could not believe that CP&P took my son. I became depressed and felt worthless. I felt alone and could not trust anyone. I could not sleep at night because I worried about King.

The turning point in my life came during one of my visits with King. Linda and Darius, King's resource parents, placed a note for me in his diaper bag. I knew nothing about them before that point. They were complete strangers to me.

The note said that my son was in good hands, and they also enclosed a picture of King. It was the first time after King was taken that I felt a moment of peace. I realized that Linda and Darius did not judge me and did not write me off as an irresponsible and unfit parent. I also realized that they didn't want to take him away from me.

They came to my next visit with King so that we could all meet. I still felt as if I was a stranger to my own baby. He didn't know me. He was crying and, even though I kept trying to rock him, he couldn't be soothed. I looked to Linda to help me care for him. She came over and helped me calm him. At that moment, Linda and I became a team. She saw that I cared enough for King to ask for help, and I saw someone who saw me as King's mother. Linda and Darius were on my

side! They were not trying to take King away from me, but they were helping me be the best mother I could be. From that point on, we became a family. They opened their home to me, invited me to King's medical appointments, and we even began to celebrate birthdays and holidays together.

It's important to know that Linda and Darius did this completely on their own and, in fact, they were advised by CP&P not to have visits with me because of King's father's gang ties. They looked past the stereotypes and saw me for me. King was returned to me 9 months later. With Linda, Darius, and their adult daughter and son supporting me completely in my motherhood, I was able to get my high school equivalency certificate, a dental assistant license, and my driver's license. I am now raising King and his younger siblings with Linda and Darius still very much part of our lives.



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Children's Bureau

