



HomeStory

Stories from the California Home Visiting Program

Evelyn's Story: Home Visitor's Encouragement and Support Make the Difference

Evelyn wasn't afraid when she found out she was pregnant at age 18. She'd been a hands-on big sister and was planning to marry the father of the baby. What Evelyn was uncertain about, however, was what she needed to know about pregnancy, labor and delivery. She also wondered if she could raise a child while following her dream of becoming a registered dental assistant.

Early on in her pregnancy, Evelyn enrolled in Contra Costa County's Nurse-Family Partnership home visiting program where she met Maritza, her public health nurse. The nurse came to Evelyn's home on a regular basis to monitor mom's and baby's health and development, and she also taught Evelyn about pregnancy, breastfeeding and parenting skills. The bond between the home visiting nurse and client was strong, and Maritza's role included helping Evelyn with her relationship with her parents, as well as working together to identify Evelyn's goals and steps to achieve them.

"Evelyn's first goal was to have a healthy pregnancy, and she



As a teen mom, Evelyn was unsure about becoming a registered dental assistant. Her home visiting nurse, Maritza, encouraged her and helped her identify steps to achieve her career goals—and be a great mom!

accomplished that goal," the home visitor says. The nurse was concerned when Evelyn wasn't gaining weight, and provided her with a list of healthy foods and recommended she eat every two hours. "I did reach the goal of gaining 25 pounds," Evelyn says.

Evelyn's next goal was to attend an accelerated dental assistant program. It was a daunting task, given her baby was just a few months old, she was breastfeeding, and the intense course meant long hours of classes and homework each day.



Evelyn and her daughter Janelle

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.

“Sometimes I would burst out crying in front of Maritza and say, ‘I can’t do it; it’s a lot’ and she would say, ‘I believe in you.’ It gave me motivation to keep going.” —Evelyn

“It was pretty hard to be in school. It was a fast-paced program and intense. At home, I would breastfeed on one side, and write my homework on the other side,” Evelyn says. “At school, I would pump during my breaks and sometimes just go in the car and pump there.”



At left, Evelyn and her daughter Janelle proudly show their new home to their home visiting nurse, Maritza. Encouraged by Maritza to fulfill her dreams, Evelyn is now a registered dental assistant (below).

Many times, Evelyn wanted to give up, but Maritza continued to support and encourage her. Evelyn says, “Sometimes I would burst out crying in front of Maritza and say, ‘I can’t do it; it’s a lot,’ and she would say, ‘I believe in you.’ It gave me motivation to keep going.”

Evelyn finished the 10-month program with honors and then reached for her next goal: to become a registered dental assistant, which meant passing state board examinations.

Maritza says, “I remember Evelyn telling me it was a hard test, and I told her, ‘You’ve done amazing work. You’ve gotten A’s on all your previous exams. You can do this!’ I offered those encouraging words, supporting what she had done and was capable of doing. And then she passed the exam on the first try!”



“Maritza was so supportive, always encouraging me, saying she’s proud of me. She definitely helped me build my confidence,” Evelyn says. “When you have kids at such a young age, you lose friends from high school along the way, and she was always there for me.”

When Evelyn’s daughter turned 2 years old, mom and baby graduated from the home visiting program. Maritza says she couldn’t have been more proud. “She has accomplished so much and worked so hard. She told me recently that she had one more item to add to her story: She and her husband bought their first home. That is so nice! We all dream of buying our own home and it’s come true for them.”

Indeed, it’s a dream come true for this young couple, who once lived with their parents and then rented a room in what Evelyn refers to as “some stranger’s house.” Today, they have their own home, a beautiful and healthy daughter, and a strong foundation as they look to grow their family and their lives together.



Smile! The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Oral Health Program offers an array of resources for keeping a baby’s gums and teeth healthy and strong. Here are a few tips, but also check out their “Resources for Pregnant Women and Infants” and “Resources for Children” on the [CDPH Oral Health website](#).

- Wipe baby’s gums with a clean, damp washcloth (or soft baby-size toothbrush) after every feeding before teeth come in.
- When the first tooth appears (usually around 6 to 10 months), brush baby’s teeth twice a day.
- Don’t put baby to sleep with a bottle filled with milk, juice or sugary drinks.

For information on dental insurance and accessing services, visit [Find Oral Health and Dental Services](#).