



HomeStory

Stories from the California Home Visiting Program

Linda's Story: Home Visiting Helps Stop Cycle of Abuse

Watching Linda play with her two daughters, ages 3 years and 6 months, you see nothing of her dark past. A past filled with domestic violence, homelessness, substance abuse and physical abuse passed down from generation to generation. That's because Linda created a new path for her growing family the day she and her mother reached out to the Imperial County Public Health Department's home visiting program.

As Linda shares her story, her home visitor Rosendo Gil is finger painting with her 3 year old. "What color is that?" he asks, as the youngster paints her hand white and carefully imprints it on paper. Rosendo has a rainbow of colors to share, and the sweet little girl recites the name of each color in Spanish and English.

Rosendo began working with this family before Linda became a first-time mom, coaching the pregnant teen and guiding her

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 preventive intervention focused on promoting positive parenting and child development, with the ultimate goal of strengthening families and communities.



Linda has turned her life around—as well as the lives of her two daughters—with guidance from home visitor Rosendo Gil.

in ways to alter the trajectory of her life—and the lives of her children. Soft-spoken but strong in his passion for his clients, Rosendo encouraged Linda to finish high school and assisted her in securing a job and moving to a stable and safer home.

Linda particularly loves reading to her daughters, which is one of many important activities reinforced by her home visitor. At each visit, Rosendo brings resources, books, crafts and



other activities for engaging and interacting. He mindfully teaches this family how to break the cycle of violence and abuse, make healthy decisions and be self-sufficient. As a result, Linda now feels safer physically and emotionally.

Imperial County's home visiting program follows the Healthy Families America model and is one of 24 sites participating in the statewide California Home Visiting Program (CHVP).

Gaining the trust of families—especially those living in challenging conditions—takes time, which is why the voluntary program is so impactful. With home visits covering a span of three to five years, participants and their home visitors have time to break down walls and rebuild lives that are stronger than ever. The long-term, trusting relationships that develop can transform a mother's and her family's lives.

As Linda and her mother can attest, sharing family secrets and history isn't always easy. It was months before they divulged all their experiences to Rosendo, to give him insight into their past. But by working with him, they eventually realized how important it was to acknowledge the past and deal with it before they could create a healthier future.

Over time, Linda's sense of despair has been replaced with self-esteem and confidence. She is now independent and a better mom for both of her children, and she points to her home visitor for making it happen. "Rosendo helped me realize that I need to be there for my kids. I love Rosendo! He's always there when I need him," she says.



Meet Rosendo Gil, CHVP's First Male Home Visitor

Rosendo Gil is proud and honored to have been the first male home visitor in the California Home Visiting Program, which was launched in Imperial County in 2012. Although first in CHVP, he is not the only male home visitor to help women looking for a safe environment where they can get the tools they need to be great mothers.



Rosendo Gil at a home visiting site.

Rosendo's cases are high-risk, such as participants dealing with domestic violence, substance abuse or Child Protective Services encounters. He is a trained nurse who brings medical expertise, as well as empathy, patience and sensitivity in working with the participants he serves.

"I think that it is inside my heart to help people," he says, openly discussing his own childhood living with an alcoholic father who abused his mother. Rosendo, one of 11 siblings, first came to the U.S. as a seasonal farm worker and then moved here permanently at age 19.

He enjoys watching participants reach their goals. "I love that part," he says. "I think they can do it because we start planting the seeds and they start believing in themselves, and then they know that the cycle can be different."

Like other home visitors throughout California, Rosendo is making a difference and helping change the trajectory of his participants' lives, one visit at a time.

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