



Parents in Partnership program receives the 2012 NACO award.

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Letters to the PIP program from parents in recognition for our continued community support.

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Get information about Parents in Partnership program & Office locations.

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Parents working with other parents toward the goal of reunifying or maintaining their family

All stories are provided by parents and in their own words

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THE PIP POST

NEVER GIVE UP!

Every since birth I've been around gangs and drugs. Both my parents and grandparents where gang affiliated drug addicts/alcoholics. I seen how much respect my family got and at a young age I wanted that same respect. At the age of 11 my mother was taken to jail for the fourth time in my life. But this time the system was trying to lock her up for good and strike her out. My mom was/is my best friend, I can't imagine life without her. I know she wasn't the best mom out there and exposed all of her children to some crazy stuff but she was and is "my everything" and I always have loved her unconditionally.

Therefore, as she was going through trial fighting her 3rd strike, my step dad kicked me out. I was 11 yrs old living on the streets of the San Fernando Valley. My grandfather, who helped raise me every time my mom went to prison took me in but he had gave his life to god, and didn't like the path I was headed down. He put down some rules that I didn't like so I ran away and went back to the streets.

Some of my family caught wind of the situation and relocated me to Palmdale at the age of 12. This only made things worse. I ran away all the time was smoking dope turned out a bunch of teens in the area and I met my new family "MY HOMEBOYS"; they respected me and loved me and took care of me like a little sister. They showed me how to survive on the streets; rob, steal, sold drugs, and prostituted women. I fell in love with one of my homeboys at the age of 13 and we were together until I was 22. When I was 17, I got pregnant and 7 months into my pregnancy my boyfriend went to prison with a 6 year term. January 8th of 2003 I gave birth to a beautiful baby girl, my "Rina". I knew I should stop living the way I was but I wanted to have my cake and eat it too, so I kept living the life style thinking I could still be a good mom at the same time. Boy was I wrong!

In February 2004, I assaulted someone; this person went to the hospital and pressed charges. My house was raided and a couple guns and a lot of ammunition were found. DCFS was called in and my baby was detained. I knew what I had to do to get her back and that's just what I did. In all reality I knew I wasn't ready but I wanted my baby back so I faked the funk

to get her back. Once I got her back, I went back to my old ways. I just wanted to get my feet wet and thought I could be only a weekend warrior and handle business during the week. And again Boy Was I Wrong! So maybe a year after my first case closed I was already knee deep in the mix and was headed down the same path. On Sunday morning November 5th 2006 me, my baby girl and my cousin were at McDonald's when a fight broke out. I jumped in and violently assaulted another gang member in the presence of my three year old daughter. Me and my baby ran and cops were called. My victim was air lifted to the hospital and put in ICU. I got caught and was charged with attempted murder. Once again, my baby girl was detained.

My first court date came around and I was offered 16 years with 85 percent. I turned it down and asked my attorney to try to get me something under 10 years. The next day, I went to dependency court and they made me look like a monster, and recommended my reunification be denied. Well... good news came and my victim made it out of ICU and he was going to make a full recovery; I took a plea bargain and my charges were reduced to assault w/ deadly weapon causing great bodily injury and I was sentenced to 3 years in prison.

After about a year into my term my mom got approved to visit me and she brought my daughter to come see me. We were having such a good time playing, talking, and laughing, among other things. Well... the visit had to come to an end and when my baby girl realized it was time to say bye to mommy, she flipped out. She threw the biggest fit ever and I could do nothing to ease her pain. I tried to go back and give her assurance that I would be home soon but I was told by the correctional officers that I had to return to my housing unit. She kicked, screamed and cried



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the whole time; all I could hear is "I want to stay in jail with my mommy". It killed me to see her hurt so bad and not be able to do anything about it. My mom told me she cried herself to sleep for a long time. At that point I realized that I needed to change for real and that I wanted to be the one to make her feel better, not the reason why she has so much hurt in her heart. Six months later, I got released and didn't know what to do. My aunt gave me a flyer with the name of a parent partner. I called and met up with Gil. I explained the situation and he told me I needed to file a 388 petition to get my reunification reinstated. I didn't know what was gonna happen because she was already on the fast track for adoption. A couple weeks later, I was given a court date to see the judge. At that court hearing my family reunification was reinstated. Six months later I got custody back of my precious baby girl.

Today, we live together happy as can be, and I am a better parent because of everything I had went through. I no longer take my relationship with her for granted. Also, I am now a parent partner and help those who are in the situation I was once in. I have a passion to help those parents that are incarcerated and don't know where to go or who to turn to. I know that its going to be a struggle to get where I want to be but it will all be worth it in the end. There's a saying that says "good things come to those who wait" and one of the things I got out of this whole ordeal was patience and persistence. To all the parents that feel their situation is hopeless, I just want to say "Don't Give Up". No one in this world can love our kids like we can and our kids deserve the best in life and the chance to be anything they want to be and there's nothing like the support of a parent to help them get through those struggles; nothing in this world is anything achievable, life is what we make it. And today we have the choice to do right and do right by our children.

*Precilla Diaz
Palmdale/Lancaster Office*

A FAMILY'S STORY

"This experience made us a stronger, tighter knit family and as long as we stuck together we could defeat anything"

We first came into contact with DCFS when an abuse report came in on December 11th, 2010. Our case stayed open until Jan. 3rd, 2012, a little over 12 months later. The caseworker came to our house stating that she got a call that there was child abuse going on in our home. The call came in because my 11-year-old had lost his glasses and he told the teacher that he would get into trouble for losing them. Our second youngest son is a very emotional kid, he will break down in a heartbeat with the tears and all. So instead of calling us and discussing the situation, DCFS was called. Our experience in the beginning was one of shock when the children were removed from our home without any physical evidence of abuse. We did have other child abuse reports because of custody issues with my ex-husband. When our kids were taken from us my husband was arrested and the worker threatened to arrest me because I wasn't going to allow her to take my 16yr old daughter, 13yr old daughter, 10yr old son, and 4yr old son. We were told that

our kids were taken because our 10yr old had two old parallel scratches on his elbow less than an inch long. Our kids were sent to foster homes and were split apart. This was a tragedy that my 4yr old in fact still makes comments about. We were given a court date five days after DCFS came to our house and on that day the judge returned our children. We agreed to do the classes and the counseling and my ex-husband would have to do the same, in hopes that we could resolve relationship issues in parenting our children.

In the monthly meetings we would attend, the Parent Partners shared their experiences and they were great examples of success. The meetings were a plus because we heard stories and shared our story with parents who were just beginning their own cases. So it was very beneficial for us being involved with the Parents in Partnership Program. When you have access to people with firsthand experience, solutions come at a high rate. You're able to take what you need from each and every individual and apply it

to your own case. Whether it's writing down every call you make to your caseworker to getting all the information that will help you through your case till the end. Today almost one year and a half year since our whole world was turned inside out, we managed to turn everything back around and became a much closer, more defined and stronger family. This experience made us a stronger, tighter knit family and as long as we stuck together we could defeat anything, most importantly DCFS and the court system. The Parent Partner group was there to lend a hand whenever we needed them. The Parents in Partnership is an entity that should be available to families even before they are torn apart, we feel they are a crucial part of easing the woes that come along with having all your rights and the rights of your children taken from you. We are a tight knit family that would do anything for each other and would be able to come through to the other side of this situation arms locked and heads held high. God is good.

*Cory & Saysha Arnett
Palmdale/Lancaster Office*



PARENTS IN PARTNERSHIP RECEIVE NACO AWARD

The Parents in Partnership program has been awarded a 2012 National Association of Counties (NACo) Achievement Award for an effective and innovative program that contributes to and enhances county government in the United States. In this 43rd year of the Achieve-

ment Award program, NACo is extremely pleased with the high caliber of our program. NACo was proud to confer this award and recognize our county's hard work to promote quality, efficient, and responsive management and administration to the communities we serve.



LETTERS FROM OUR PARENTS

This is a letter to recognize you and Parents in Partnership for helping those who are truly in need. I just want to give you my appreciation for all your hard work at Parents in Partnership. Desiree, you have gone above and beyond many times to help me with every problem I faced; Reached out in the midst of my trial and pain and gave me hope. Desiree has been at every TDM meeting and counseled me at every support group. Desiree guided me through the whole process of regaining custody of my daughter by letting me know all of my rights when I thought I had none.

She took time to talk to me even when she was busy with other clients (she always made time for me). Desiree really cares about hurting parents who feel hopeless and lost. I know because I was one of the. With the help of Desiree I got my daughter back after seven months. Desiree has been a blessing in my life; I call her my friend and a sister in Christ! I truly thank God every day for him putting her in my life. Thank you for your support, but most of all for your compassion.

Jennifer Reneer



El Monte Office

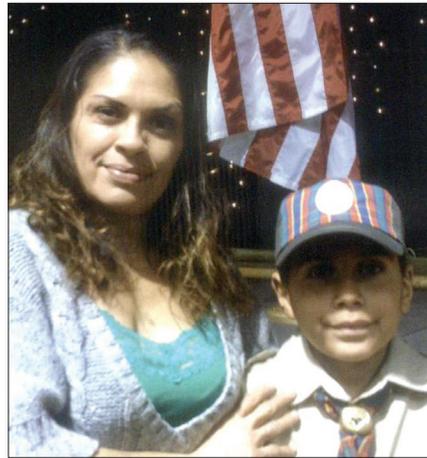
STAFF LEADERSHIP AWARD

Dr. Michael J. Rauso was recognized at the 2012 California Parent Leadership Conference for actively promoting and supporting parents in developing their leadership skills, and in partnering with parents in the planning, implementation or evaluation of agency and community services. Dr. Michael J. Rauso, thank you for your vision and dedication.

Jessica Andrade
Belvedere Office

My case was opened for emotional and verbal abuse. Through the course of my case I found out that I needed a better support system for me and my family. My case was open for about 6 months. I attended the Parents In Partnership Program at the Belvedere office. The Orientation was very helpful. The information that was provided motivated me to advocate for me and my children. I realized that in order to advocate for myself I needed the right tools. Parents In Partnership provided me with those tools. Today, I am motivated to help others that are walking in my path. I've told other parents about Parents In Partnership and I am always promoting the Parent Orientation and Support Groups. Parents In Partnership gave me hope. I reunified with my children in 6 months. My children and I are living in a healthy environment and we are involved in activities that are fulfilling.

Suzzette Merchain-Cota



Belvedere Office

My case opened because of my history with addiction. It was open for 18 months. I had a good experience with the Parents In Partnership Program. The program provided me tools such as the chain of command in which it taught me how to advocate for me and my family. My Life is different because of PIP. It has made me see things differently and it took us out of our shell. We found out there is a better way of living. I was able to reunify with my four kids and live a better life and seeking a career to provide for my family. Today my family and I live in a healthy environment. I appreciate The Parents In Partnership program for everything they did for me and everything they continue to do for families.



Tips for Maintaining a Good Working Relationship with your Children's Social Worker (CSW)

Tips that will help you build a working relationship with your social worker and maintain a team dedicated to encourage and make your family safe and healthy.

- **Develop open communication with your CSW.** Remember your CSW is part of your team; always maintain open and honest communication.
- **Ask for the Chain of Command**
It's important to have all the numbers of all the people that can help you; this will help you to be prepared in case you ever need a problem resolved.
- **Document all your efforts**
Keep track of all your meetings, certificates, and progress reports. Maintain a journal to record everything that happens in your case.
- **Talk to people involved in your case about contact with your CSW.**
Advice people involved in your case that your CSW may be contacting them to ask about your progress.
- **Take charge of your case plan.**
Once the plan is created it is your responsibility to follow your plan. If the plan is not working, ask to meet with your CSW; together you can explore any changes that could be made.
- **Develop a support system.**
As you progress in your case, create a strong network of support for yourself and your family. This can include family, friends, community agency, churches etc.
- **If a concern ever arises, ask your social worker for a case conference.**
Ask for a meeting to express your concerns; both you and your social worker will have the opportunity to come up with a solution.

We Can Help!

If you or someone you know is a parent with an open DCFS case, we are here to help. Parent Partners are available to provide you with guidance, support and information to help navigate the DCFS system. Also, Parent Partners are located in the lobbies of the offices listed below to provide you with local resources and the tools to help you reunify with your children. At your request we will support parents during TDM meetings (availability may vary). Contact us at one of the numbers below.

PARENTS RECOGNIZED AT THE 2011 FAMILY REUNIFICATION WEEK



South County Regional Office

Family Reunification Week celebrates the thousands of families that have successfully reunited with their children throughout Los Angeles County. During the Family Reunification Week 2011 parents in the PIP program, which is a program providing support and guidance to parents whose children have been removed from their care. DCFS officials say the program has been instrumental in the reunification of thousands of children and their families. Many of the parent partners were in

attendance told their success stories at the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services. The Parents in Partnership Program Manager, Nina Powell-McCall was quoted in saying, "The parent partners have the ability to really connect with other parents one-on-one, in a group setting sometimes, from the standpoint of how do you actually live in a different way so that your children can live with you?", as reported on ABC7 News September 15, 2011.

Parents in Partnership Participating Offices



- Belvedere Office ~ 5835 S. Eastern Ave. ~ Commerce, CA 90040 ~ Warmline 323-725-4670
- Compton Office (East) ~ 921 E. Compton Blvd. ~ Compton, CA 90221 ~ Warmline 310-263-2019
- Compton Office (West) ~ 11539 Hawthorne Blvd ~ Hawthorne, CA 90250 ~ Warmline 310-263-2019
- El Monte Office ~ 4024 Durfee Ave. ~ El Monte, CA 91732 ~ Warmline 626-455-4664
- Lakewood/South County Office ~ 4060 Watson Plaza Drive ~ Lakewood, CA 90712 ~ Warmline 562-497-3654
- Lancaster Office ~ 1150 W Ave. J ~ Lancaster, CA 93534 ~ Warmline 661-951-4115
- Metro North Office ~ 1933 S. Broadway, Suite 6 ~ Los Angeles, CA 90007 ~ Warmline 213-763-1757
- Palmdale Office ~ 39959 Sierra Hwy ~ Palmdale, CA 93550 ~ Warmline 661-223-4232
- Pomona Office ~ 801 Corporate Center Drive ~ Pomona, CA 91768 ~ Warmline 909-868-4572
- Santa Clarita Office ~ 28490 Avenue Stanford ~ Santa Clarita, CA 91355 ~ Warmline 661-702-6293
- Torrance Office ~ 2325 Crenshaw Blvd. ~ Torrance, CA 90501 (Warmline Coming Soon)
- Vermont Corridor Office ~ 8300 S. Vermont Ave. ~ Los Angeles, CA 90044 (Warmline Coming Soon)

THIS NEWSLETTER IS CREATED BY THE PIP PARENTS. IF YOU HAVE ANY SUCCESS STORIES YOU WISH TO SHARE, CONTACT RICHARD MATTHEWS AT: RICHMATT88@ME.COM