



Ambyr Rose understands the value of second chances better than most. As a young, single mother of three –newly emancipated from foster care – it took some time for her to accept that she couldn't do it alone.



Ambyr with her children, three months after reunifying in 2006.

Struggling with substance abuse and homelessness, some nights spent riding local bus lines so her family would have a place to sleep, Ambyr grappled with the anguish of losing her children to the system.

But with her situation becoming increasingly desperate, Ambyr finally conceded. She called the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) herself after her 18-month-old son was hospitalized with pneumonia for the third time.

“I didn't see my kids for eight months,” she recalls. “When we visited for the first time they didn't even remember who I was, and it broke my heart ... I just really needed to work on myself.”

To regain custody of children, parents and social workers develop a reunification case plan in concert with Dependency Court that includes goals, visitation schedules and other necessary steps. Each family's path to reunification is unique, and may include drug testing or treatment, parent education or counseling.

Last year, nearly 5,000 children were reunified with their parents. While some cases have experienced delays due to the ongoing pandemic, the department continues to work closely with families, attorneys and Dependency Court to return children home and terminate jurisdiction when it is safe to do so.

It's been 15 years since Ambyr made that call. Almost immediately thereafter, she entered a treatment facility while pregnant with her fourth child and set out to get her life on track and get her children back.

Figure 1

Today, Ambyr is one of 31 “parent partners” who support reunification efforts across the county through the department's [Parents in Partnership \(PIP\) program](#). PIPs, as they are commonly known, are mothers and fathers who have successfully navigated the system and reunified with their children.



As PIPs, Ambyr and her peers provide emotional support, information and guidance to parents who have temporarily or permanently lost custody of their children. Like Ambyr, most parent partners became involved with the program because they wanted to give back to the community and support families in crisis. They know from experience how overwhelming and stressful these times are for families, and how important it is for parents to fully understand their rights and responsibilities.

A recent parent survey of the PIP program revealed that the vast majority of respondents find the parent partners relatable, knowledgeable and supportive. More than 90 percent of respondents also reported that

parent partners encouraged them to make positive changes in their lives, empowered them to advocate for their families, and helped them make progress on their cases.



“It is really easy to get lost in this system,” one survey respondent noted. “PIPs have helped me better understand the system and the next steps to take.”

Now in her ninth year of working with the PIP program, Ambyr embodies what life can look like when parents work hard to turn things around. While witnessing parents reunite with their children is the ultimate reward, Ambyr also finds joy in watching parents achieve little milestones along the way.

“At the end of the day, it’s all about healing families and making sure they’re healthy,” she said. “I got in this field to help people, and I absolutely love what I do.”

Report Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect to 800-540-4000

Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services | www.dcfs.lacounty.gov | Follow us on [Facebook](#) & [Twitter](#)