



# DCFS at Work Investing in Los Angeles County families every day

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## A grandmother's faith-filled journey through kinship caregiving

In 2021, Evelin and her husband Julio traveled from Oregon to California for what was intended to be a short stay with their daughter and granddaughters. But what they found changed everything and turned a brief trip into a permanent promise to raise three young sisters. As Evelin tells it, the couple arrived just in time to “rescue” their grandchildren — then ages 11, 5 and 3 — who were living in unsafe conditions with their mother in the Antelope Valley.



**With faith as their compass, Antelope Valley residents Evelin and Julio are raising their three granddaughters — ages 15, 9 and 7.**

“The girls were happy when they saw us,” the grandmother recalled. “They said, ‘We’re finally going to eat.’ And I cooked for them.”

For years, Evelin had watched her daughter struggle with addiction. But during this visit, they learned that their eldest granddaughter had been repeatedly caring for her younger sisters during their mother’s sporadic days-long absences. That was when the grandparents decided to leave behind the life they’d built in Oregon and move to California to raise their grandchildren.

“My blood runs through their blood,” Evelin said. “They’re my life. Who’s going to take care of them better than we are? There’s nobody better than family.”

Across Los Angeles County, around half the number of children entering foster care are now being raised by kinship caregivers — relatives and close family friends who step in when biological parents cannot safely raise their children. This familial relationship provides a vital safety net that preserves cultural ties and supports increased long-term stability.



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Research, such as a 2017 study published in Child Welfare, attests to better outcomes for children who are raised by family; they experience greater stability and long-term well-being; are more likely to become independent, contributing members of society; and are less likely to face further abuse, neglect or involvement with the juvenile justice system than those in non-relative foster care.

To help maintain stability when a child cannot remain safely at home due to abuse or neglect, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) prioritizes placement with trusted relatives or close family friends and offers immediate support, including monthly stipends and help with child care, food, clothing, tutoring, legal services, healthcare, mental health services, need-based financial aid and assistance for outdoor and recreational activities.

With support from DCFS, Evelin and Julio have attended parenting and trauma-informed care classes and leaned into a bevy of resources available through DCFS Relative Support Services to navigate the emotional, legal and logistical complexities of kinship care. Today, they are in the initial stages of the process to adopt their granddaughters. DCFS social worker Mayra Briseno, who visits the family twice a month, credits Evelin's religious beliefs with giving her the strength to care for the girls.

Evelin prays daily for wisdom and guidance and draws on both her faith and love for family to stay positive. She and Julio also rely on nature to keep them grounded, often taking the girls on hikes to breathe fresh air, enjoy the sunshine and connect as a family.

"They're very united," Briseno said. "The grandparents are very loving. They're always willing to do anything for the kids. And I know to these girls, their grandparents are everything."

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**- Evelin**