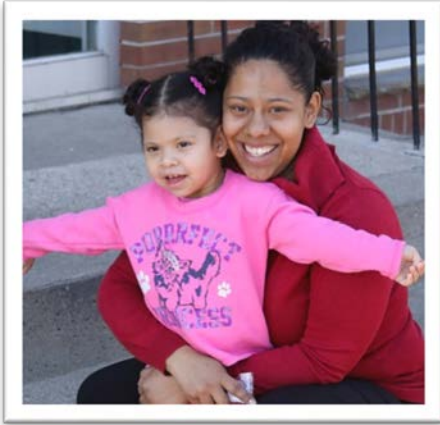




Marissa's Story



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Not a Shelter – This is a Home

At 22 years old, Marissa had been working in retail since she graduated high school. She was the Assistant Manager at a retail store, but she had no maternity leave benefits so losing one source of income for 3 months sent her and her daughter’s father spiraling into homelessness. Since the couple couldn’t afford rent, the stress of homelessness and other factors drove them apart.

When Gina was 7 months old, Marissa arrived at the House of Hope door. She shares that “It was awful. I blamed myself as a parent. I wished that I had been more stable before I had Gina.” Homelessness was hard on her daughter; yet Marissa found that House of Hope’s daily structure, routines, and parenting program helped her to manage Gina’s behavior and rebuild their life. “When I first arrived, a staff member told me, ‘this is not a shelter – this is a home.’ I didn’t believe her at first but later I knew it was the truth. I am so glad I was able to stay at House of Hope – I was safe and stable and loved, and I learned a lot.”

Learning to Manage Money

Marissa shares that “The very best education that I received was the Budget Buddies program for financial training and support.” Now Marissa shares what she has learned: “It is very important to learn how to manage money. A lot of women don’t know the value of money. In order to have a stable family and stay out of homelessness, you need to be able to manage your money.” And Marissa does exactly that – in her own apartment. She is building a new life that includes a new “network of support”: friends and neighbors who help each other with daycare so that they successfully juggle their working schedules.

It has been a long haul, but Marissa admits, “I am proud of myself. It took a long time to be where I am at. I am not ashamed of my stay in shelter. Sometimes I felt insecure and I felt that I was a bad mom. But now I know that nothing is going to stop me. With the right help, I feel like I can overcome any challenge.”