

The Power of Support: Courtney's Story of Healing and Hope Through Child First

Courtney Williams was proud of the life that she had created for herself and her 10-year-old son.

So when she learned she was pregnant with her second child in early 2021, she felt like she had everything under control — until she didn't. Courtney found herself struggling with her health as she was diagnosed with hyperemesis — a severe form of nausea and vomiting that occurs during pregnancy. Courtney's condition affected her so much that she was unable to continue working. It was during this time that her doctor recommended that she connect with Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies, in Palm Beach County, Florida, for additional support.

On top of Courtney having to deal with her health and not being able to work, she was also experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) and emotional abuse, which led her to feel depressed during what should have been a happy time in her life.

"Before all of this happened, I felt like I was successful. I built myself up, and I got a Fortune 100 job with the company of my dreams; I purchased a home for my son and me, and I felt unstoppable. And then, when all of this happened, I felt sick, weak, defeated, and depressed. I felt like I went from being a success to a failure."

Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies connected Courtney with a mental health agency, and she started meeting with a counselor. Courtney opened up to her counselor, but over time, the meetings became less consistent as her counselor believed Courtney was doing well and didn't need much support.

"I know I wasn't visibly breaking down and crying to my counselor, but I felt like I was dying inside. I've always felt I needed to hold my head high, stay strong, and find a way through—but I realized I needed help."

Courtney went back to Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies, where they ended her partnership with her counselor and instead referred her with Child First to better fit her needs. Child First, a program of Changent, provides

mental health intervention and support services nationally through a proven home visiting model that builds and strengthens relationships between caregivers and their children.



They lifted the load and carried me when I couldn't carry myself. They provided my oxygen mask so that I could provide everything else.

-Child First caregiver, Courtney



With support from Child First, Courtney found her strength, reclaimed her future, and created a thriving path for her family.

Healing Through Holistic Support

It was August 2021, and Courtney was six months pregnant with her daughter when she connected with her Child First team, which included Dalecia, a Child First mental health clinician, and Celine, a Child First care coordinator. After her experience with her previous counselor, she was skeptical of working with her Child First team. But Dalecia and Celine took the time to get to know Courtney. They understood the importance of building trust and relationships and they even got in touch with her last mental health agency to help her get a proper goodbye with her previous counselor.

“Dalecia and Celine didn’t make me feel like an anomaly. They took the time to listen, understand me, and help me to open up again. They made me feel welcome and they became family. They supported me with everything I needed for my daughter and even my son.”

Child First partnered with Courtney to learn about her priorities for herself and her family and centered the family in their work. When Courtney started working with Child First, her oldest child was 10 years old. The team supported Courtney with addressing her son’s behavioral health challenges and connected him with Boys Town, a national organization that provides proven, family-centered care for children facing behavioral and emotional difficulties.

“Child First provided us with holistic care and support — they signed us up for holiday events at church, they helped us participate in a book bag giveaway for my son, and they provided so many resources. When I needed diapers for my daughter, they gave them to me, and when I needed support with my mental health and emotional well-being, they were there for me. They lifted the load and carried me when I couldn’t carry myself. They provided my oxygen mask so that I could provide everything else.”

Child First connects families with the resources and services they need to reduce stress for the caregiver and family system, make room for caregivers to enhance their relationship with their child by learning more about themselves and their little one. With the support of qualified clinicians and care coordinators, Child First helps families build confidence on their



Courtney's journey shows how early support can change lives—for moms, for children, and for generations to come.

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parenting journey as they create stable and nurturing homes for their children to grow and develop, helping the family unit heal from trauma and thrive.

“Child First helped me feel strong about my parenting and helped me envision a future for myself and my children. They took care of what we needed so that I could really focus on the program and immerse myself in it, and this cleared the way for me to heal from postpartum depression and PTSD. They put together a self-paced plan we could work on — they created a beautiful path for us to walk through as a family.”



Through healing-centered care and parenting support, Courtney learned how to care for herself—and nurture her children with confidence and love.

Finding Purpose and Paying it Forward

When it was time for Courtney to complete the program, she felt confident in all that she had learned and would be able to implement in her life moving forward.

“I learned how to pay attention to all of my daughter’s cues and what she needs. I also learned that she can feel what I feel, so if I’m anxious, she feels anxious. Now, I have grounding tools and breathing exercises I can use when I need them. One of the biggest things that Child First helped us with was early childhood education, more specifically, Abecedarian work, where the focus is on language and literacy development. There is an intention about how you read books to children and how you can slow down and make it a conversation to help their development.”

Today, Courtney’s daughter is three years old and is thriving; she loves learning, and she’s always asking questions and wanting to understand how things work.

Since being connected with Boys Town, Courtney’s son is also doing well and has the resources and support he needs for his Autism Spectrum Disorder.

“Child First literally changed the trajectory for my whole family. Both of my children are thriving, and we are all so resilient. I’m grateful for all of the support, and I wouldn’t be where I am today without Child First. It was because of the support I received that I was inspired to pursue a new career — I got certified as a doula, and started my business, Zinaya Birthing Co., in 2022 while I was still in the program. They gave me the extra time I needed so that when I graduated, I was on solid ground. Today, I support mothers throughout their pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum journeys and show them the same kind of care that was given to me.”

Courtney continues to be dedicated to paying her experience forward and sharing her story. Today, she is a member of Changent’s Parent Ambassador program, representing Child First and advocating for equitable, high-quality care for children and families who have been historically underserved. Courtney helps bring awareness to Child First nationwide and shares how the program has helped her and her children and continues to impact generations of families with the continuum of care that it provides.

“Sharing my story is a part of me now. I’m dedicated to this work, and it’s a part of my life. We’re making a difference, and we’re doing this for every mom. Because there are still moms out there silently suffering, and we’re doing this work to speak to them and to show them that it’s possible to advocate for themselves. I share how Child First revived me and reminded me of my gifts, skills, and talents — they helped me believe that ‘I can do this.’ And even when life ebbs and flows, it doesn’t need to stop you from moving forward. I know that I now have the tools to be able to manage my stress, find my strength, and know that everything’s going to be okay. Through Child First, I found myself and I found my way back to the unstoppable mom that I always was.”

Learn more about Courtney’s advocacy work through Changent’s Parent Ambassador program [here](#).