

Keeping Families Together

KFT Family Snapshot



KFT FAMILY SNAPSHOT: JOSE, EVELYN AND DESTINY

Jose remembers the birth of his daughter Destiny as one of the happiest days of his life. Yet it was also one of the saddest. He and his wife Evelyn had been living in a homeless shelter. But because of an open child welfare case involving Evelyn's older daughter from a previous relationship, Jose was not allowed to take Destiny home from the hospital. In fact, child welfare officials wanted to put her in foster care—immediately.

Jose went to court the next day. He fought for and won sole guardianship of Destiny. For now, at least, he was a single father. He took his baby daughter with him to a family shelter and thought about how he was going to give her a better future. He started taking parenting classes while continuing treatment for his longtime heroin addiction.

Then, through the homeless shelter, he made contact with Diversity Works, which operates a supportive housing development for families in the Bronx. Diversity Works got Jose enrolled in Keeping Families Together (KFT), and he and Destiny moved into a new apartment that they could call home. That was more than two years ago.

"This is way different than the shelter," Jose says. When he moved in, KFT gave him furniture for his new apartment. Destiny has her own bedroom and toys. Jose's KFT caseworker helps him manage his paperwork for the various agencies with he's involved.

"They help you out here," Jose says.

After Evelyn's child welfare case was closed, she was allowed to move in with her husband and daughter. Now they all live together in the cozy apartment in the building that has become their first home as a family.

"Soy muy contenta," says Evelyn. "I'm very happy."

KFT FAMILY SNAPSHOT: MICHELLE AND HER SONS

After years of struggling with poverty, drug abuse and shuttling back and forth between homeless shelters with her children, Michelle got her life together. With the help of Keeping Families Together (KFT), Michelle finally had a stable home in a sunny, two-bedroom apartment in the South Bronx with her three young sons.

But suddenly, crisis struck.

One of Michelle's sons, Donovan, now 13, has serious behavioral and emotional problems, including oppositional defiant disorder and attention deficit disorder. He can be physically aggressive, and one night, Donovan attacked his mother with a broom. The only way she could defend herself was to strike back.

The next day, Donovan reported his mother at school for hitting him. The city's Administration for Child Services (ACS) opened a child welfare case against Michelle. Suddenly, she was in danger of losing all three of her sons because of her problems with Donovan.

Michelle's KFT case manager Denise stepped in, interceding with child welfare on Michelle's behalf so that Donovan could remain with his mother while receiving proper treatment and medication. Now Donovan is in psychiatric day care, getting the help that he needs. Michelle's family has stayed intact.

"I don't know what I would do without the services here," Michelle says of KFT. "Sometimes when you need support, you need it right then—not tomorrow or next week." KFT has allowed her to have that kind of support. As a result, she is able to raise her children together—as a family.



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