

GENESIS

Opening doors and supporting new families.

Gisela's Story

Gisela and her family firmly believe in education. They value tradition and strive for success. Ever since she can remember, Gisela has been involved in her community and has enjoyed helping others succeed. Gisela got a four-year college scholarship and decided to study in New Mexico. While on winter break her first semester, she was rushed to the hospital for stomach pain. Not only did she find out she had appendicitis; she discovered she was pregnant.

The news shocked everyone, including her boyfriend and parents, who were with her at the hospital. Gisela burst into tears; she couldn't hold her emotions in. At that moment, all Gisela could think about was her future. Should she go back to New Mexico? What if her scholarship didn't transfer? She thought about how much her life was about to change.

When she was feeling better, Gisela was able to think more about her future and her education. "You're young, and they think that you have to dedicate yourself to this child, and you're not going to have time for school; they think it ruins your life," she said. However, Gisela found balance. She decided to stay in Colorado and continue school part-time. This allowed her to find balance with her new role as a mother and continue to be involved in her community.

Salud Clinic connected Gisela to the GENESIS Program. "They told me about the program, and I said, 'I better go and see what this is about because I've never heard of it,'" she said. After having her intake interview, Gisela knew the program was a good fit. "They offered me a lot of support, which is what I needed at the time."

For the first six months of her pregnancy, Gisela's mother did not speak to her. Gisela understood that she had disappointed them; she was the first in her family to go to college. Her older sister was also expecting her first child, but unlike Gisela, her pregnancy was accepted.

While at GENESIS, parent educators offered classes on the basics of caring for a child. "I've always been really open about education, and that's what GENESIS offered – not only support, but education, as well. I had a lot of fear being 18 and not knowing anything about motherhood. After being in the program for



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a few months, my parent educator prepared me to be a mother. She gave me knowledge of what to expect in the first few months," Gisela said. She was able to learn a lot in a few months, especially about breastfeeding. She decided to breastfeed as much as she could. "I got pushback from the community and my family because they would joke around and make fun of my decision. If it wasn't for the support that I got from Kristi (her parent educator), I would have stopped breastfeeding earlier than I did."

After getting her bachelor's degree in Social Work, Gisela is now an independent living advisor at the Center for People with Disabilities. She is able to support the goals set by her clients by creating partnerships. She has also been involved at Casa de la Esperanza as a tutor, a volunteer for I Have a Dream, and she is a resource navigator at many foodbanks in the Metro Area. Gisela also participates on various committees where she is able to continue helping those in need.

