

Noreida Reid

My name is Noreida Reid and I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the Connecticut General Assembly for its continued support of the *Supportive Housing for Families* program at The Connection. After hearing my story, you will understand why I am forever thankful to this program and its services.

From 2016 to 2019, my four children and I struggled with homelessness in the Hartford area. It all started when I was forced to leave my apartment and then transitioned into couch surfing from place to place. Eventually, I ran out of friends to stay with and had no choice but to seek emergency shelter. I was thankful for a place to rest at night, but it was not a good place for my children.

Living in a communal living environment greatly impacted my children's social, academic, and emotional well-being. The shelter's necessary curfew and safety regulations conflicted with their extra-curricular activities and their school performance declined due to frequent nights of interrupted sleep. They fell sick more regularly and faced bullying from peers. It motivated me to wake up early every day and apply for jobs, but my efforts never felt like enough. Securing employment and saving for a security deposit was an impossible feat, until Supportive Housing for Families intervened, that is.

A burden was lifted the moment I was admitted into SHF. I received consistent support from my Case Manager, who helped me locate a safe and affordable apartment. The program covered the entire security deposit and rent for a year along with the cost of new furniture. I learned new budgeting techniques and how to navigate community resources. Furthermore, my Case Manager taught me how to advocate for myself and problem-solve, which improved my overall self-esteem and, ultimately, helped me land full-time employment at Burlington Coat Factory.

The biggest difference, though, is that my kids are so much happier. They smile more and are no longer shy. Unlike before, they like to read now and are doing so well in school. The bullying has subsided and we are looking forward to hosting playdates in the future. And compared to most children their age, my kids get really excited to do chores...because they cherish and love their new home.

Words cannot express my appreciation for Supportive Housing for Families, and I am committed to teaching my children the same lessons in courage and strength that I learned from The Connection.