

Kearstyn's Story: Addiction, Motherhood & Hope

May 8, 2022 was a major milestone for Kearstyn. While it was her second Mother's Day as a mom, it was just her first with the baby at home.

Kearstyn first started taking pills at the age of 14. Pills soon turned to other things.

"When I first started doing pills it was a social thing," said Kearstyn. But it soon became a need that kept growing. I needed to do more and more drugs just to not feel sick."

When the cost of staying high on Oxycodone got too expensive, she turned to heroin. And at the tender age of 16, she found herself a full-blown heroin addict.

"Addiction runs deep in my family. Pretty much everyone is addicted to something — drugs, alcohol, or something else. I knew better than to start down this path, but I did it anyway."

A few months into the Covid pandemic, she discovered she was pregnant. She went into rehab at 29 weeks. She soon left. She went back again at 32 weeks. She didn't last long.

DCF came knocking on her door soon after. A Family Services worker was assigned to her case. Together, they came up with a safety plan that would allow her baby to live at home.

"I messed up. I told them what they wanted to hear. But I didn't do the things I was supposed to. As a result, my baby didn't come home for almost a year."

"My mother was awarded conditional custody while I worked on getting clean."

Although she kept using for almost a year after her daughter was born, she never missed a visit or a doctor's appointment. She loved her daughter.

She eventually went back into rehab. This time it worked, and her baby was able to go home.

"My Family Services worker and Easter Seals worker helped — a lot. They pushed me HARD, but they also believed in me. They helped me find the supports and services I needed. They hooked me up with rehab services and substance abuse counseling. They helped me find housing and get 3SquaresVT food assistance."

"They also gave me a timeline. To get myself together. I knew I couldn't blow it this time. I needed to do it for my daughter. It took almost losing her to finally get my life back."

Kearstyn has been clean for six months now. Although she still feels guilt for the things she's done, she chooses to look forward. To focus on the love she has for her daughter. And on the pride she feels in herself: For the hard work she put in. For getting her daughter back. And for being a good mom.

“Although I didn't always feel this way, especially in the beginning, I am so grateful to my workers for all their help, support, and tough love.”

Kearstyn now looks forward — with hope and joy — to all of the Mother's Days to come.

DCF's Family Services is the state agency responsible for making sure children are safe and their basic needs are met. We help families develop plans to make their homes safe, keep their children home, and strengthen their families. And we help them put these plans into action.