

The PASS Program “Family” Helps Teens Make Life Changes

The Prevention, Access, Self-Empowerment and Support (PASS) program is an innovative, curriculum-based, statewide prevention program that works with teens who experience challenges in their daily lives, or whose parents have significant mental health diagnoses. To better understand how PASS impacts youth and their families, CCSI staff sat down to talk with Gloria, the grandmother of a recent PASS graduate. Gloria told us that their experiences with the program resulted in both she and her granddaughter making sustained changes and improving their relationship.



How did you and your granddaughter get involved with PASS?

I heard about PASS through word of mouth. My co-worker’s son participated in the program. She said she saw a difference in her son as a result of PASS, so I was interested to see how it could possibly help my granddaughter.

What was your experience like with PASS?

It was satisfying, and it felt like the staff and families in the program, all became like one big family. I first met PASS program staff at the parent workshop, and I put my trust in them when I saw how they interacted with the other parents and teens. As parents and grandparents, we’re all experiencing similar things and have similar goals, so it felt good to hear the other parents’ stories and their concerns. I felt reassured that I wasn’t alone and didn’t need to feel embarrassed. It was great to hear how the other parents were becoming better parents, and it encouraged me to become better too.

I initially wasn’t sure how my granddaughter would react to being a part of a program like this, and I worried she could embarrass me. That wasn’t the case though. The teens gravitated towards the staff they felt comfortable with, and they also bonded with the other teens. They saw their peers achieving, and that encouraged them to meet their own goals.

Have you or family members seen any changes in your relationship with your granddaughter as a result of her participation in PASS?

Yes, our communication with each other has improved. The other kids in the family see changes in me and also with my approach with my granddaughter. Before PASS, when we would have a disagreement, neither one of us would stop talking, and I would always try to have the last word. I’ve learned that I need to back off or walk away sometimes when we’re having a disagreement that’s going nowhere. My granddaughter can be very reactive, but she’s learned now how to express her feelings. She recognizes that it’s helpful for her to relax before speaking. I also understand better now where her behavior is coming from. My granddaughter has had a difficult childhood with traumatic events like her father’s death when she was 10, living in an abusive household, being in juvenile detention, and her mother’s struggle with mental health. I’ve also been letting her make her own choices instead of trying to make her do what I want.

Are there any other differences that you see in yourself and your granddaughter?

Yes, before PASS, my granddaughter wouldn't come home for 2-3 days at a time, and now I trust that she will be home every night. She uses the tools she's learned in PASS, like the eight principles, and not only applies them in her life, but also reminds me of them as well. I see that she wants to achieve now, and wants to be a greater person.

What was it about the PASS program that had an impact on your granddaughter?

The Mentors in the program helped a lot. My granddaughter says she wants to return to the program as a mentor herself! There was also so much wisdom from Neville (Program Manager), Lenora (Program Director), and other parents who have been through the program, that was very helpful.

My granddaughter and I both got a lot out of reading the Jonathan Livingston Seagull book. One thing I learned from the book was that you can always run into barriers in any given situation, but that doesn't mean you give up.

[Click here to learn more about the program](#), and be sure to check out [Psychiatric Services](#), where PASS will be featured in an upcoming 2019 issue. Contact Neville B. Morris, PASS Program Manager, at NMorris@ccsi.org with any questions.