Family Navigator program charts Clark County woman's path to recovery

Clark County woman seeks help, gets sober, regains custody of children

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Rachel Grant, left, a family navigator, and Rebecca Greiner, a senior family navigator, pose for a portrait at Recovery Cafe of Clark County. (Elayna Yussen for The Columbian) Photo Gallery

Last year, Child Protective Services responded to a call at Rachel Grant's house after her husband found 3 ounces of methamphetamines she had intended to sell. Her urine test came back positive, and by Aug. 2 Child Protective Services had taken custody of her children.

By Aug. 11, Grant was sober, and she has remained so ever since.

“At first, I was extremely angry and pissed off at CPS. I was angry at the system,” Grant said. “That kind of was the wake-up call. That was my rock bottom, when my kids were taken.”

It was also a new beginning. Shaken by the loss of their children, Grant and her husband committed to recovery and earning the right to put their family back together. Their efforts were made possible by a “family navigator” at Recovery Café who so inspired Grant that now, with her family whole again, she has become a family navigator herself.

Grant’s addiction

Grant started smoking marijuana at 14 and started using meth and cocaine in her 20s, spending six years using meth off and on. Grant has four biological kids and a stepson. With her two youngest, she used meth until she got pregnant, then stopped using while pregnant and breast feeding — but quickly relapsed after the fact, she said.

On top of battling with addiction, Grant and her husband were in a domestic violence-filled relationship, both taking part in verbal and emotional abuse, she said. As a result, the family had several interactions with Child Protective Services in the past. But Aug. 2, 2021, was different — their kids were actually taken away this time.

“Next thing I know my kids are gone,” Grant said. “We went to pick them up from day care, and they weren’t there.”

Grant’s youngest two children were placed in foster care, her stepson went to live with his biological mother full time and her older two were with her parents.

“It was the slap in the face I needed,” Grant said. “I took it as a blessing, as they’ve given me a chance to get my life together. So I jumped in full blown into my recovery.”

By Aug. 11, her second-oldest child's birthday, Grant was no longer using. By Aug. 13, her husband was no longer drinking. Together, they dove into sobriety and worked toward creating a safer home for their kids.

Working toward recovery

For Grant, recovery became a full-time job. She enrolled in substance abuse treatment, the Xchange Parents for Parents Program, Helping Professionals Wellness Center and the Recovery Café. Together, she and her husband enrolled in court-ordered domestic violence classes but went even further by attending church and relationship classes, as well.

In September 2021, Grant's attorney introduced her to Rebecca Greiner, currently the family navigator supervisor at the Recovery Café.

"I built that connection with her because she had been there. … She knew what I was feeling because she's gone through CPS and gotten her kids back," Grant said. "It just kind of gave me that glimmer of hope. If she can do it, so can I."

At the time, Greiner was a recovery coach, working to support people in recovery. As a peer, she has lived experience with addiction. As of Jan. 3, Greiner will be celebrating nine years sober. In 2013, on Greiner's birthday, her child was taken away by Child Protective Services and Greiner spent around two years working to regain custody.

"I know that helplessness," Greiner said. "I took all of that tragedy that absolutely crushed me when they took my children and tried to make it into something positive so I can help others … because I don't ever want a parent to have to feel the way that I felt."

As a recovery coach, Greiner's role was to walk alongside Grant and support her as a peer who had gone through a similar process.

By going above and beyond court-ordered services, immersing herself in the recovery community and the support of people like Greiner, Grant had her kids back Oct. 29, 2021, the day after her birthday.

“I listened to what my attorney and Rebecca said. And one thing that still sticks in my head is ‘We will only work as hard as you want us to work and as hard as you work,’” Grant said. “So the harder I worked, the harder they worked.”

Grant’s children were with her parents and in foster care for just shy of three months. Her case was open for a total of eight months, according to Grant. In the three months they were away from home, Grant was able to focus on her recovery and spend that time dedicated to creating a safe home for her kids. They have remained in her custody since Oct. 29, 2021.

“I like looking at them every day. Knowing what I’m staying clean for and what I’m doing to better my life for,” Grant said. “It’s just kind of an eye-opener — I want to be around for my kids.”

In January Grant took her membership at Recovery Café one step further and began training to be a recovery coach. By May, she was a circle facilitator, leading a weekly support group.

A role model for others

Soon after hitting the one-year mark of membership at the Recovery Café, Grant was hired as a family navigator, a program started by Greiner in May.

The Substance Use Disorder Family Navigator program is dedicated to supporting families battling with addiction, recognizing that addiction is a generational disease, according to Greiner. Instead of just focusing on the individual, the Family Navigator program works to support the whole family. This often means working with parents who have lost custody of their children.

“The Family Navigator program is really working with people who are working to either keep their kiddos or get their kiddos back and figuring out how to navigate that system,” Grant said.

Many of the families are referred to the Family Navigator program by law enforcement or the court system and the program even works with some incarcerated families.

Grant is currently working with five families as their Family Navigator.

Just as Greiner served as an example for Grant, now Grant is able to play that role for other people. As of Sunday, she will be 16 months sober.

“I want to be that glimmer of hope that she was for me, for others,” Grant said.

For more information about Recovery Cafè of Clark County and the Substance Use Disorder Family Navigator Program, visit recoverycafecc.org.