

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY HANDS TESTIMONIALS

Introduction

The following testimonials to the success of HANDS speak for themselves. We have chosen to group the HANDS stories loosely around several goals of the program. We hope that you will be as moved and touched by the stories of these families as we have.

Positive Pregnancy Outcomes

P. (HANDS visitor) has been involved in T's (my 17 year old daughter) life for about a year. When T. found herself only 16, pregnant, scared, and single, P. was a blessing sent right down from heaven. The road was very bumpy. P. gave simple guidance and reassurance to my daughter that really made her pregnancy a lot easier to handle.

P. explained what was happening with T.'s body as the pregnancy progressed. The HANDS visitor helped our family deal with all the things that come up with a teenage mother with a "baby having a baby." --*Fleming County*

I am a grandmother to a HANDS participant. My granddaughter is a teenage mother. I wish there had been a program like this when I was younger. I gave up a child because I just couldn't see my way clear to take care of her.

There are things that go on in any teenager's life. A pregnant teenager has more problems to deal with. P. was there to listen and to be a neutral person and not judgmental. --*Breathitt County*

I was so nervous, but my mind was eased with the information I received on childbirth. When I had my beautiful baby boy, I went through postpartum depression for a few days, but I received information on this also so I knew it was normal. If I hadn't been informed, I would have thought I was losing my mind.

I was so scared, but with the information on childbirth, I wasn't so nervous. Being that this is my first child and had no clue on what to expect, I wasn't really as worried. HANDS has really helped me be more alert to the potential dangers around the house.

I am a very proud mother of a very active two year old named A. Through the HANDS program I have learned how to handle her in a calm manner. I learned things about my daughter's growth I never imagined. But most of all A. has learned to trust and love others besides her family. --*Fleming County*

Our visitor has helped me a great deal with what to expect while I am pregnant, what I need to get done before the baby comes and afterwards. She has been like a mom away from home mom to me. --*Montgomery County*

I was very scared when I found out that I was pregnant. I remember meeting M.E. and feeling a sense of relief. She had a lot of information for me on programs that I was eligible for.

On her visits she would bring a white gift bag. I felt so special that someone had taken the time to make me a gift bag. After my daughter was born, the gift bag in turn was for her.

I am thankful that your program offers so much because it is scary being a first-time parent. I feel grateful that we have had M.E. in our lives; she has gone out of her way to meet our needs. --*Northern Kentucky*

In the beginning I was so scared, but when my HANDS visitor talked and gave me information on childbirth, I wasn't so nervous. I had no clue on what to expect such as postpartum depression. I had it and since they had told me about this I wasn't really as worried as I would have been had I not know what I was going through. --*Rowan County*

Family Self-Sufficiency

What would I have done without you sometimes? I remember the first day we met at the doctor's office. I really wasn't sure whether or not I wanted to be a part of the HANDS program. I was scared to death and figured it would help and, hey, it was free. I'm glad I chose to join HANDS. We've been through a lot together, good, bad, happy, and sad. Thank you for everything. --*Northern Kentucky*

L's (HANDS home visitor) mother is wonderful, too. She has been my inspiration and made the difference for me. She is the reason I'm in school now. First she talked me into evening classes at East Carter, then summer school, and now I'm in spring semester a year later! I often wonder if it hadn't been for these wonderful people, would I still be flipping burgers?! --*Carter County*

My HANDS visitor is helping me to raise my daughter. She has guided me back into college and to hold my head up high and not let anyone push me down.

She has also guided me in letting me know the different programs that help single mothers raise their children. --*Menifee County*

I can trust her with anything I tell her and feel comfortable talking to her about things. She is the type of friend every mother needs. C. encourages me to accomplish everything I want to no matter what the odds may

be. She doesn't make you feel uncomfortable when you ask her something that you feel everyone knows but me. *--Morgan County*

The HANDS program has been a great deal of help to me for a new, young mom who is busy with school, trying to raise a baby girl, and also being a wife. She has taught me how to balance my life with everything going on it. She has been the best thing that has happened or been seen down here in Kentucky. *--Magoffin County*

HANDS is not a program that gives money, clothing, food, or furniture. It gives something much more valuable, someone to visit regularly with an A to Z teaching guide about what to expect, what can happen unexpectedly, and how to use things you already have at home to make things and prepare for baby. *--Mason County*

This program has really helped me to be more alert to the potential dangers around the house that otherwise I probably wouldn't have thought of. *--Rowan County*

When we didn't have money for baby's milk, you always helped me get it. And helping us get food when we didn't have any. If it hadn't been for you, I would have lost it all together. You were the only one I could call and talk to. *--Magoffin County*

I was really depressed. If it hadn't been for my mom and S. (HANDS home visitor), I probably would have gone crazy. But she helped me get through it.

S. talked to me about things I never knew about raising a baby, stuff I thought I knew but I really didn't. *-- Johnson County*

Child Growth and Development

As the first time mother of a beautiful baby girl, I feel all I've learned is one of the most helpful things in our lives. I can always call if I'm in need or have questions. My child and I have enjoyed all the wonderful play things we've been able to borrow.

They talked to us about safety and to my daughter about feelings she may have after the baby comes that are normal. They encouraged her to think about things like what if my baby doesn't look the way I expect? And how to begin bonding with the baby before it arrives. *--Mason County*

It is comforting to know that the HANDS visitor will be there after the baby comes to support and encourage new parents at a time when they may be slightly overwhelmed. *--Mason County*

It's nice to have somebody to check on me. You always wonder when you're a new mom if you're doing things right. -- *Pulaski County*

L. (HANDS home visitor) has offered her support and friendship. She has given me diapers, food, even clothes from her sister. She's helped me in tremendous ways, and in little ways she has showed me she truly cares about what she does. One day after our visit she drove to Lewis County to another girl's house, and she drove all the way back to mine to show me how to use the breast pump, I didn't understand to use, in her spare time. These things show she really cares. I learn things about Walloon's brain growth, and things I need to do to help him grow, and games for him to play to make learning fun. --*Carter County*

We are new parents and are a little ignorant in some things about raising children. If it was not for this program, we would listen to some old wives tales which in turn could hurt my child. But with this HANDS program, they tell us the right medical ways to raise our child. Also while my wife was pregnant HANDS would help and talk to my wife about the things to expect. --*Floyd County*

My baby wanted her bottle 24 hours a day. Then Ms. B. my HANDS visitor showed me photographs of baby bottle mouth, about how sugars rot away baby teeth. She showed me how to break my baby girl of her habit. And now she has a perfect white tooth! --*Covington*

I was very worried about being a first time and young mom. Although unlike many teen moms, I have been married for a year to a very good man.

I was able to take a massage class with the twins that showed me how to relax their little bodies and help their bellies when they had gas. I must admit I was very nervous about rubbing on their tiny bodies.

C. has brought so many things to our family. First of all, she has brought numerous pamphlets to help guide me from teething to helping with learning different feelings. All of this was important to me because I had no idea what to do with two children.

I have definitely been at my wit's end more than once. I'd get all bent out of shape through the week with the twins, and when C. came I would dump it out to her. --*Montgomery County*

Children Live in Healthy, Safe Homes

There is a volume of other information and activities provided by these trained, very knowledgeable and yet caring individuals who come to your home to give one-on-one attention.

The home visitors from HANDS don't come to see how clean your house is, or how well furnished it is. They have helped our family to understand that no question is foolish and that the safety and well-being of mother and baby, both emotional and physical are the main issues during pregnancy.

–Mason County

As a single teen first-time parent, I had a lot of questions. I was prepared going into labor and my house was baby safe when I brought my newborn home.

One thing I love about the program is the wonderful gatherings. All the parents involved and their children get together. These parties allow you to meet people in your same situation and let you know you aren't alone. You're given the chance to get help from these people and you help them. Kind of like a support group.

My counselor talks to me like a person not like a kid with a kid as most adults do. She gives me information on every subject of parenthood and child development so I'm not in the dark.

--Breathitt County

This program has helped my little daughter and me a lot. Not only has HANDS helped me get supplies, but it has provided emotional support as well. I had so many questions and I would have been completely lost without this program. She has helped me by providing a car seat and teaching me how to use it the right way. She has helped me get ready for school. I like how personal this program is and how C. knows specifics about my daughter and me.

–Bath County

I was 17 years old when I found out that I was pregnant. It was a huge shock and a lot for a senior in high school to deal with. C., my HANDS visitor, came to see me as often as I needed her to. She has provided an ear to listen when I just needed someone to talk to, and a shoulder to cry on when my hormones were all out of whack. This program has helped me understand what is going on inside my body and helped me deal with the obvious changes on the outside.

--Rowan County

Without you I don't think B. or the boys and yes, me, could have made it through all of those hard times. You have been our guardian angel. Thank you being our guiding light and watching over us.

-- Morgan County

S. helped me with showing me ways to help C. (our 10-month old baby boy) sleep and telling me things to do to help him when his stomach hurt, like what kind of food to give him and what not to feed him.

She told us things like to help him sleep to put him in bed every night at the same hour. Knowing that kind of thing and having someone to help with questions has helped us so much.

-- Floyd County

My HANDS visitor has taught me lots of things, like infant massage, my baby's stages, how to help my baby learn new things, all about bathing and feeding. C. always answers my questions, and she never hesitates to be there for me when I need her the most. --*Morgan County*

We discuss different things I might do to improve my son's motor skills, exercise, diet, etc. She is not only good at giving and getting me information and advice that I need, but she also can just sit back and let me talk about things that bother me.

I'm a first time mom who is a part of this program. You learn how to help your child develop in healthy ways. Plus they work with you on succeeding in life, with education. HANDS will help you get on your feet and succeed. You can learn that you don't have to have someone take care of you. You can do it on your own with just a little help.

I'm now in school studying to get my GED. That is something I thought I would never accomplish. And all because my HANDS worker put me in the right direction.

I am a young single mother of twins, a boy and a girl. My HANDS visitor is someone I can talk to if I am having a bad day. Trust me I have really dumped a lot of emotions on her. She just lets me get it out. My mom keeps saying that she wished they had this program 19 years go when I was born. One more thing, there are a lot of single real young pregnant girls out there who are scared and don't have anyone. Being a mother can be hard, but with HANDS I get a lot of support—caring, love, and other things we need.

I ended up in a crisis situation, alone and pregnant. The HANDS program has been a great help to me. --*Floyd County*

She taught me about mimicking. I'd never really heard of that before. She showed me how the sounds between little K. and us can help him with language skills.

We've been able to learn more about what he should be doing at his age. I learn something every time she comes. --*Madisonville, Hopkins County*

Home visiting has helped me with being a better mom. I've learned about laying J my baby on his back, instead of his stomach. I've learned about the windows of opportunity to watch for the time and ways to help him grow and learn. J has now been drinking out of a cup from the age of 5 months old.

I am 16 years old and I am four months pregnant. Since I joined the HANDS program, I have learned so much about child development, health care,

child care, and breastfeeding. This has helped me because now I know what to expect.

I have a two-month-old baby girl. I think the HANDS program is a great idea for pregnant women because it helps them develop their child better, because they give out information on things like shaking baby syndrome, breast feedings, and tons of needed information about babies. *--Rowan County*

My HANDS visitor is guiding me through what is now the biggest challenge in my life and that is raising a child. I have babysat and read books from the doctor's office, but I find the best advice comes from my friend, Mrs. V.

Sometimes I get discouraged because I'm used to making everybody happy. When I don't meet these demands, I feel like I am letting my family down, but my visitor reassures me. I can hear Mrs. V. saying, "Now, baby, you've got to get some rest." She always lets me know that I'm doing well and that she is proud of me.

My boyfriend and I are very happy to have Mrs. V. When my boyfriend sees Mrs. V., he talks to her as if she is a part of the family. He is usually shy but there is something about Mrs. V.'s presence that makes us all very comfortable. When we around Mrs. V., she makes us feel like we are 'parents of the year.' And with her help, I believe we will be. *--Rowan County*

The HANDS program helps me to understand that there are going to be tough times in teen parenting and that I always have backup no matter what the circumstance is. I have so many questions about what my baby needs it becomes frustrating. But Mrs. G. is there with ways to care for my baby. *--Rowan County*

I am 17 years old, and I have been in this program for about a year and a half. My HANDS supporter, C., has done an excellent job helping me understand what my child needs to be doing, what precautions I need to take in making sure he stays safe. *--Morgan County*

Other Family Needs

My daughter M. was admitted to Central Baptist Hospital in critical condition. She was 30 weeks pregnant with her first child. He was delivered by C-section on that morning and had to be placed on the vent the first week of his

life. While his mother was fighting for her life on the 3rd floor, he was on the 2nd floor. Without the help of M's HANDS visitor, we would not have made it.

My daughter died after 18 days. Her son Z. came home to us when he was a month old. Today he is a normal healthy three-year-old. God bless the HANDS group that was there for support and care. --*Bath County*

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Kentucky Department for Public Health

HANDS

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