

Engaging Youth. Building Supports. Strengthening Opportunities.



Hi. I am Sylvia, a 20-year-old hairstylist, a college student, and a great coworker. I am the youngest of eight children from a Christian household, and my foster story begins when I was removed from home at age 14. At this moment, I can say the best part about my journey has been the chance and opportunity to reinvent myself. I am doing so much better and have grown so much as I learn from my past experiences and reach toward my goals for the future.

Juggling School, Work, and Multiple Foster Homes

By my sophomore year of high school, I had lived in three different foster homes due to behavioral issues. During my stay at the third foster home, I really wanted to show that I was not a problem child and that I could adapt if I had a welcoming environment. Unfortunately, that was not the case, and I ended up in another unwelcoming environment. In addition, my foster family bought a house during my stay with them, so I had to move schools again. This was a challenge since I was already playing catch up with my credits to graduate on time. I ended up being homeschooled.

At 16 years old, I got my first job at McDonalds to support myself. I started slacking in school because I was working at least 30–35 hours every week. I also started struggling at work because I was burnt out from trying to include school in my busy schedule. My boss was not understanding and did not schedule shifts to help me balance work and school. This was not easy to deal with, but every week, I did the best I could.

Finding Support and Self-Sufficiency

Eventually, I was assigned to a teacher at my homeschool who really cared and understood my situation. She worked closely with me all the way until I aged out of care. Another supporter was my social worker, who helped me get my first apartment through a transitional housing program with Walden Family Services. After moving around and living with friends and siblings, I am finally blessed with my own space. I could not be more grateful for my social worker and the others who helped me during each transition between foster homes.

It's important to know that a lot of foster youth end up relying on only themselves or the people around them, even if they come into the system with family. We sometimes end up stuck in the system even if we have loved ones trying to get us home. Sometimes, we only have our social workers and maybe a counselor to lean on for support. I appreciate every worker who has helped me over the years.

They have definitely come into my life and given me the support I needed. I now know about so many resources I had no clue I could even receive. I feel that once I age out of my transitional housing program, I will be equipped with skills and resources to live a full adult life without help or even public assistance. Since joining the program, my goals have been to mature, evolve, and be self-sufficient. If I can achieve self-sufficiency in the last year here, all my goals will be met. I am currently in college and thriving. Wish me luck!

Walden Family Services is headquartered in San Diego County, CA. To learn more about its programs visit its [website](#).



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