

HOPE Homes: Paula's Story



Paula was in a bind. She'd been staying with her Grandma's neighbors in an overcrowded apartment. They'd set a deadline: Paula had to be out in a week. Paula, a 20-year-old high school graduate with a job nearby at a fast food restaurant, called HOPE 4 Youth Drop-In Center. The next day, HOPE Homes Specialist Brenda Pritchard was sitting outside on the steps of the apartment complex, working with Paula to fill out a "Circle Map." They identified people who were "Always," "Sometimes" and "Maybe" there for Paula, as well as people she didn't want in her Circle. Paula's completed map showed the apartment complex constituted a supportive community for her, so helping Paula stay near her support system—and her new job—became an obvious priority. The limited emergency housing options were further away and Paula didn't have a car.

When Paula expressed interest in the HOPE Homes program, Brenda and Paula completed the "Good Fit Questionnaire," which established that Grandma could provide safety and stability. But after Grandma declined, Brenda was surprised to hear Paula suggest another neighbor, Anna, who Paula initially didn't want inside her Circle. But it turned out Anna, who also passed the "Good Fit Questionnaire," has a soft spot for Paula. Yet, as someone on a fixed income, she would need financial support in order to host.

Next, Brenda needed to check with the landlord, as HOPE 4 Youth can only support arrangements that are transparent. But when Brenda called him, he at first said no because of previous drama in the complex. But after Brenda patiently explained she'd be available to mediate any complaints, the landlord agreed. Brenda then met with Anna and Paula to create the "Shared Expectations Hosting Agreement," a strength-based contract that describes how Paula can contribute to the household, establishes house rules and includes \$150 monthly to the landlord, \$25 to Anna for giving Paula rides, and \$25 to Paula for groceries. Brenda also arranged for Housing Heroes to deliver furniture the day Paula moved in.

Without the financial incentive provided by HOPE Homes and Brenda's case management, we're uncertain where Paula would be today. Instead, she is staying with a caring adult, who is helping Paula learn to cook, budget, and obtain her driver's license. Anna has also committed to helping Paula register for community college so Paula can achieve her dream of becoming an RN!