

Daniel's Story

My earliest memory is of Dad begging people for money. When the pennies were few, we – Dad, my brother, two sisters, and I – slept on flattened cardboard boxes. I was hopeful for a good meal when folks gave more; but, Dad usually got drugs or alcohol for himself instead of food for us. I would get scared when he drank or used drugs because when he did, he blamed us for everything: for mom leaving him, for losing his job, for losing our home, for just about everything bad that happened to us. That is when he hit us.

We missed lots of school and when we did go, we were embarrassed because our clothes were dirty. I tried to stay away from other children; I didn't want them to see my bruises or know I didn't have a home. The one good thing about school was that I knew I would get lunch! It was during lunch that a teacher noticed the dark bruise on my arm. I tried to cover it up. I knew Dad would be mad. But her kindness changed our lives.

My teacher called Child Protective Services; and, we went to live with our aunt. The first night in my new home was one of mixed emotions. I wanted to believe I was safe, but many long months of homelessness, neglect and abuse made me doubt that something better could happen in my life. My aunt tried to sooth my concerns saying the angels were looking out for us. I still worried about how we would stay fed, clothed and, most importantly, together.

We went to ChildSafe for what my aunt called a forensic interview. Away from the eyes and ears of my family, I felt safe enough to tell everything my father had put us through. I told them of the nights spent on the street, all the times he hit us, how we often wouldn't be allowed to go to school, and how we were almost always hungry.

ChildSafe even had special staff that kept in close contact with my aunt to be sure she had the support she needed to continue caring for us. After many visits with my ChildSafe counselor, I began to start feeling safe again. I know that none of what happened is my fault. I was actually excited to start middle school!

As I graduate from high school this year, I look back on that first day at ChildSafe and can only say "thank you"- not just from me but also from my three younger siblings. ChildSafe was integral in changing the trajectory of our lives.

"ChildSafe had taken the form of angels by giving our family the help we needed."- Daniel's Aunt,
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