



Riverside County Public Health

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First-time mothers graduate from Nurse-Family Partnership program after two years

Gabriela Garcia said she did not know the first thing about caring for a baby when she became pregnant two years ago.

“I was 19 years old,” said Garcia, now 21. “I was not prepared at all.”

The Corona resident said she enrolled in the Nurse-Family Partnership program and, after countless talks, late-night text messages and face-to-face meetings with the nurse assigned to her case, the first-time mom said she now has the confidence to raise her son, Jovani.

Garcia, sporting a blue cap and gown, was one of several graduates who spoke Thursday (Oct. 23, 2014) during ceremonies celebrating those who completed the two-plus-year program for first-time mothers. The Nurse-Family Partnership program is operated by the Riverside County Department of Public Health.

“I was skeptical at first,” Garcia told a roomful of family, friends and supporters at the Rubidoux family health clinic. As she spoke, Garcia’s voice cracked with emotion as she described the long journey that started when she learned she was pregnant. Reading from

a speech scribbled on white-lined school paper, Garcia told the gathering she learned many things about being a parent and herself during the months in the program.

“It’s going to be hard not having that extra push,” said Garcia, as she tried to focus on the address while also watching out for Jovani, who was sporting his own tiny cap and gown as he wandered about.

The Nurse-Family Partnership matches first-time mothers with nurses who help the mom through the months of pregnancy, childbirth then follow up with assistance after the baby arrives. The mother and child are visited in their home regularly over two years by public health nurses. The nurse visits include monitoring pregnancy for complications, information on what to expect at the time of delivery, and instructions on how the mother can care for herself and the child at home.

The graduation ceremony at the family care center culminated a journey that started in 2012, soon after the new mothers found out they were pregnant. Along with the mothers, fathers and the children dressed in the traditional graduation garb. Participants came from Riverside, Moreno Valley, Corona, Perris and Grand Terrace.

There were many smiles and hugs as the nurses handed the graduates their gifts and certificates, along with special smooches from the toddlers. Two other graduates spoke of the special bond that developed between themselves and the nurses, who they described as friends and family who often took phone calls or read text messages in the middle of the night asking everything from what to do about diaper rash to tips for stopping a baby from crying.

“I appreciate everything you do,” said Stephanie Oliverio of Grand Terrace as she looked at the group of nurses in the back of the room. Some wiped tears from their faces as Oliverio spoke. “I doubt that I’d make it this far without you.”