

REAL STORIES FROM REAL GRANDFAMILIES

Maria's Story

My husband and I are Grandparents raising our Grandson. He has been living with us since he was six months old. He is now six years of age.

In the early stages of this journey, looking back, I realize just how naive my husband and I were when it came to the use of drugs. It began with a phone call from my Stepson informing my husband and me that he and his family were being evicted from their apartment. We did not hesitate to allow them to move into our home. What would happened to the baby if we said "no"?

And so, our long journey began. Both parents in and out of rehab facilities and jail. The Mom getting behind the wheel of her car after a night our "partying" with her girlfriend. This led to a horrific car accident where her passenger almost died. Our Grandson's Mom left the hospital with minor injuries while her friend was clinging to life. Once released from the hospital, his Mom went to a rehabilitation center and directly to jail for ten months. During this time, my Stepson and Grandson were still residing with us. And my Stepson had custody of the baby. He was seven months old. The custody for my Stepson did not last long because two months later, he overdosed on heroin. Thankfully, the Paramedics were there to save his life. My Stepson went to the hospital and then was placed directly into a detox and rehabilitation facility. Since both parents were no longer able to care for their son, the Department for Children and Families stepped in. They suggested we petition the Court for an emergency custody hearing. We were heard by the Judge and were granted temporary custody of the baby.

From this point on, my husband and I were in and out of Court for years pertaining to this matter. As it turned out, both parents held onto their sobriety for short periods of time. At one point, both parents moved back into our home. During this time, the Mom got pregnant. At her delivery, she and the baby tested positive for opiates. Both Mom and baby moved in with us. At nine days old, I had to perform CPR on the baby. Sadly, this precious boy passed away. The Medical Examiner's office diagnosed the death as being SIDS but we suspected that drugs were involved. When our Grandson was four years old, his Mom delivered another baby. This time the hospital had to detox the baby from opiates. This baby never came home to us. His other Grandmother stepped in as his Foster Mom when he was two weeks old. This child is now two years of age. Unfortunately, this Grandmother is in the middle of a legal custody battle because his Dad is fighting for custody of him.

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While in the middle of this madness, I was blessed to have found the *Grandparents raising Grandchildren Support Group*. Honestly, they were a Godsend. Not only did I meet a beautiful group of women, but I also made some very strong relationships with these ladies which I cherish to this day.

During our meetings, we had guest speakers come to answer our questions and educate us on the custody laws, workers from other organizations to assist us, and a staff member from DCF who was very informative. This is just to name a few. Some of our meetings consisted of our latest trials and tribulations of our lives. Just having women you trust there to listen in certain circumstances is all you need.

It was such a relief when I realized that there were other people dealing with similar situations as I. And to have a sense of comfort knowing that these people were there for support. After three years of meeting, I'm happy to announce that we are still going strong!

My story ends happily. At age 5 1/2, my husband and I were allowed to adopt our Grandson! His Mom and Dad signed their parental rights away.

I now know that God gave me the patience and perseverance to do my best for our little guy. And in the end, we were presented with this precious gift in him!

God Bless,

Maria