



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Clean Start, Healthy Beginning: A Day in the Life

Local program encourages mothers to receive prenatal care, lead a drug- and alcohol-free life, and get regular medical care for family members

Butte County, CA. - Teamwork takes on new meaning at Clean Start, Healthy Beginnings (CSHB), a program that encourages mothers to receive prenatal care, lead a drug- and alcohol-free life, and get regular medical care for every family member. Clean Start Healthy Beginnings also provides resources for assistance with bonding, parenting, breastfeeding, education, nutrition, safe and affordable housing and smoking cessation.

This wonderful collaboration of nursing and medical social work is sponsored by Butte County Children & Families Commission, Enloe Children's Health Center, Touchstone Perinatal Program and Enloe Medical Center, with additional participation from Strong Starts Behavioral Health Early Prevention Program and Butte County Public Health Nursing. Clean Start, Healthy Beginnings is also part of First Chance Coalition for Drug Free Babies, which aims at preventing drug- and alcohol-exposed babies through community education.

Enloe CSHB team on a typical day working to keep at-risk children healthy and safe:

Tracy Guerra, an experienced MSW, has started her day by visiting the Labor & Delivery areas at Enloe Medical Center to see women and their newborns who could be at risk. Toxicology screens are reviewed, patients and families interviewed, assessed and referred. Infants whose mothers meet high-risk criteria, such as little or no prenatal care, or history of drug abuse, are screened for drugs. When a toxicology screen is positive, and there are other risk factors present, the medical social worker calls CSD, Children's Services Division. They send a worker to the hospital to interview the mother, review past histories and make a home visit. It is the role of CSD to determine if it is safe for the newborn to go home. High-risk families are offered services, which may include drug treatment, continued testing, public health nursing and follow up with CSD.

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Tracy works closely with the mothers while this assessment is done. She must be quick, calm and reassuring in her determinations. Today there is counseling of a young mother who grieves that she and her newborn will not be going home together. Tracy has helped the mother understand the process and has encouraged her to participate in the Touchstone program, hopefully to learn how to have a drug and alcohol free life. Tracy reminds the mother that if she is successful in the program there is every likelihood she can be reunited with her baby. Another new mother is homeless and Tracy spends time helping the family explore options so they will have a safe place to live upon leaving the hospital. In the afternoon Tracy meets with a multi-agency team to review the status and service needs of the Clean Start, Healthy Beginnings families she and Delores Marcotte, the CSHB nurse educator, are assisting.

Dolores has over twenty years of nursing experience; including pediatrics, home care and attending to sick inmates at the county jail. As the RN connection to Touchstone, her day begins with escorting a pregnant mother to her monthly physician appointment, taking time along the way to talk about diet, exercise and emotional issues. Many Touchstone mothers-to-be have not had a routine physical exam in years and medical issues are numerous. Going with them to answer questions and give support provides another level of critical concern. Then it's time to return to the new Touchstone facility on Cohasset Road in Chico where a young mother is upset after being told her baby's tear ducts are blocked. In language the mother can grasp, Dolores reassures and helps her to understand the condition and treatment. Another mother calls and is unstable because she has stopped taking her psychiatric medication. Dolores calmly and firmly helps the young woman make an appointment with Behavioral Health.

The afternoon finds Dolores doing a health screening of new arrivals to the program. Dolores will weigh and take the blood pressure and medical history of the mothers and assess whether the infants and children have any immediate medical needs, current immunizations and a medical provider. Appointments and/or referrals are made to the Enloe Children's Health Center or other pediatric services for their physicals, immunizations or other medical needs. Next she moves on to her weekly meeting with the Touchstone & Headstart childcare staff to review and educate regarding any concerns staff has for the infants and children in their care. Another activity Dolores undertakes in the day is contacting parents of young children without a primary care provider, who have used the Emergency Room for non-emergency care for their child. She offers assistance in setting up follow up care for the child and educates the family on the resources available to them. Dolores enjoys being an advocate for, and educator of, these women and children because she too was a single mom for many years. She brings great wisdom and life experience to her latest nursing role. She ends her

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day with her CSHB co-worker, Tracy, at the multi-agency team review of services their clients are receiving, looking to fill the gaps.

The safety net has been pulled and stretched again. Day after day the CSHB nurse and social worker identify and help mothers and children at risk, by getting their health needs addressed and supporting education and treatment for substance abuse. This extraordinary team is in the 2nd year of a three year grant and have provided services to over 500 children during that time. Any family living in Butte County, regardless of income, with children age (s) 0 – 5 is eligible for the Clean Start, Healthy Beginnings Program. For more information about how to receive services, please call (530) 332-3841.

About Butte County Children and Families Commission

Research shows that a child's brain develops most dramatically in the first five years and what parents and caregivers do during these years to support their child's growth will have a meaningful impact throughout life. Based on this research, California voters passed Proposition 10 in 1998, adding a 50 cents-per-pack tax on cigarettes to support programs for expectant parents and children ages 0 to 5. Butte County Children and Families Commission distributes approximately \$2 million a year in Prop. 10 revenues to programs and services that meet local needs.

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