

San Francisco Child Abuse Prevention Center

San Francisco Child Abuse Council
TALK Line Family Support Center



ABOUT:

The San Francisco Child Abuse Prevention Center is dedicated to the prevention of child abuse and neglect, the promotion of healthy families and the mental health of children. With direct crisis and intervention programs designed to reduce parental stress, enhance parenting skills and provide comprehensive services for families in need, we provide open-ended support and help families break the cycle of violence. As one of the most comprehensive services providers in San Francisco, we also provide education, training programs and public advocacy for child abuse prevention.

SUCCESS:

Baby M is now seven and a half months old. She first came to Respite about four weeks ago. She is very tiny. She weighed approximately nine pounds when she came, and today weighs almost 11 pounds. Baby M's mother, a single woman, adopted her in Guatemala six weeks ago. Baby M lived in an orphanage since birth. Her new mother, who is employed and a student, was unfamiliar with Orphan Syndrome. She did not know that the baby's extreme quietness was a warning sign. "She is a very good baby," the mother told me when she first brought Baby M to Respite, "you never hear her cry." Because I have worked with orphans in Asia and Africa, I recognized Baby M's symptoms. Orphans often cry silently, since their cries are not responded to -- the babies learn to not waste energy crying. When Baby M cries, her eyes stream tears and her arms flail, but she does not make a sound.

I have worked with Baby M's mother and Respite staff, helping them to recognize Orphan Syndrome, and counter the signs. Baby M cannot sit unsupported, and we are working with her to help her gain strength to sit up on her own. Because of her condition, she requires much interaction. We hold Baby M close to us, we touch her often and rub her hands and feet. We put our faces close to her and coo and smile. We respond to her slightest gesture immediately. We dance with her to music and to laughter, we feed her often and put different things in her hands for her to hold and pull and tug. Her somber eyes watch. There are no tears. The day she smiled at me the first time, I wanted to cry. That day, she also smiled at her mother and greeted her with a tiny cooing sound. I know that with consistent work and positive interaction, Baby M will grow to be a happy, healthy little girl. Though we have much work to do, she is off to a good start.

Written by Respite Care Program Director

Source: <http://www.sfcapc.org/index.htm>

Programs & Services:

- *24hr Parental Stress Line (415.441.kids)*
- *Parent Drop-In Center*
- *Children's Playroom*
- *Support Groups*
- *Parent Groups*
- *Respite Care Program*
- *Parent/Child Counseling*
- *Substance Abuse Services*
- *Economic Self-Sufficiency Program*
- *12 Step Meetings*

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