

When Alicia learned about Nurse-Family Partnership® she thought it would be good to have some extra support during her first pregnancy. What she found was new confidence in herself and her ability as a mother and some extra support during the COVID pandemic.

At 25, Alicia, who lives in Summerville, S.C., was just three months pregnant when she was referred to Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) and paired with Lori, a nurse with DHEC Lowcountry Region NFP.

“I was a first-time mom. I didn’t know what I was doing, so I was thinking it was good to get all the help I could,” said Alicia. “Lori came to the house and it was awkward at first, but now she’s part of our family.”

Alicia and her partner, Ian, are now the proud parents of 15-month-old Bradley, and nurse Lori is among the first people who hear about his milestones. “When something goes on with Bradley



Alicia and Ian are proud parents of 15-month-old Bradley. Bradley is thriving, and Alicia is still working hard to learn everything she can from NFP nurse Lori.

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or me, Lori is one of the first people I call. She gets the calls or texts of ‘Bradley just cut that tooth we’ve been waiting for’ or ‘Bradley just started walking!’” said Alicia.

Alicia has battled mental health issues since she was young. Being healthy for Bradley and making sure that she was doing the right things as a mom have been at the top of her priority list.

“I’ve never had much confidence, and especially after I had Bradley, I really needed Lori to confirm that I was doing the right thing,” said Alicia. “Having her to bounce things off of and to encourage me was huge. Just to hear her say, ‘You’re doing the right thing. You got this’ means so much.”

For Lori, reassuring Alicia is easy. “Alicia has been so open and engaged in the whole process. She is committed to getting as much as she can out of the program for the benefit of herself and her baby,” she said. “She’s used to handling a lot of adversities and taking them full on. She handles her own health and mental health issues extremely well, and she’s a great advocate for the health of her and her baby.”

Lori was impressed as she watched Alicia start sharing what she was learning from NFP with other moms and start to take on the role of resource for them. “She has taken the initiative to improve her

health and to reach outside of her social circle to build a support system outside of Nurse-Family Partnership and her family. Now she's an advocate for NFP and so much more confident in her own ability."

In spring 2020, everything seemed to be clicking into place. Alicia was becoming a confident and effective mom, Bradley was a happy and energetic little boy, and Alicia and Ian were laying the groundwork to buy a house. Then the COVID pandemic hit.

"At first not much changed with the pandemic. Ian still went to work, I still stayed home with Bradley. Then I got pneumonia, and at first they thought it was COVID. The whole house got quarantined," said Alicia. Two more two-week periods without work followed due to work shutdowns for Ian. "Ian is the main breadwinner in our family. If he's not working, we don't have food, lights, water. We were able to get extensions on bills for a little while, but that doesn't last forever."

After social distancing restrictions were put in place nationwide, Nurse-Family Partnership nurses rapidly shifted from providing in-home visits to communicating with their clients by phone or video conference. "I already had a relationship with Alicia, so I could still encourage her and she still felt like she could reach out to me even though I couldn't visit her. I knew her partner had been without work at different times because of COVID, and I knew they were struggling."

Alicia and her family weren't alone. During COVID, many parents lost jobs or have been unable to work due to COVID. As part of its COVID-19 emergency response, Blue Meridian Partners, a national philanthropic group, provided \$2.2 million to Family Independence Initiative to give directly to NFP families. Up to 4,400 NFP families will be provided with a \$500 cash award to help parents, like Alicia, make ends meet during the pandemic.

Lori nominated the family to receive one of the cash awards. "That saved us," said Alicia. "We were able to get out of the hole and pay the bills we had been putting off. It was a big blessing. It meant so much. We would still be struggling if it weren't for that assistance."



The COVID-19 pandemic caused Nurse-Family Partnership to shift from in-person visits to phone and video conferencing. Bradley and Alicia continue to meet virtually with nurse Lori.

Today, things look much like they did before COVID: Ian is back at work full time, Bradley is still thriving, and Alicia is still working hard to learn everything she can from Lori. "Nurse-Family Partnership – and Lori, in particular – has really centered me. She came in with no judgment, and she helped me make sure I'm doing the right thing. She became part of the family. And, I guess that's the point. They become part of your family so they can help you."

Lori continues to be impressed with Alicia and with all the moms she serves.

"Alicia is like so many of our moms. She has so much more potential than she recognizes. It's a big leap of faith to trust someone and to let someone in. My job is to be nonjudgmental, to be there and to just show up for her," said Lori. "It's another level of bravery to let someone in when you don't know them and you're in this kind of situation. These moms are willing to take the risk if there's a chance they can be a better mom. I feel privileged they let me be part of that."

Alicia was enrolled in NFP as part of the SC Pay for Success project.