

Imagine that your child is constantly in pain, physically and mentally. Imagine that they're battling depression, that they hate themselves, that they want to hurt themselves, and all you can do is watch.

Imagine trying everything you can think of – the doctors, the specialists, the diet changes, the screen time limits, more time outside –everything, and nothing helps. Imagine that things get so bad and out of control, you have to call the police and your child is taken away to a hospital and you have no idea when she's coming home. This was life for my family and my daughter.

She was hospitalized many times for her mental health. She was physically and verbally aggressive, depressed, suicidal and she was harming herself and our family. Me and my husband didn't know what to do. Sometimes, things would get so bad we'd have to call the police. They'd take her to a hospital, we'd wait for days for someone to see her, she'd get well enough to be discharged, we'd take her home, and the whole thing would start all over again. My family was stuck in the cycle for months. It felt endless and we were tired.

Her most recent hospital stay was December 2021. She was really violent with me and my husband and threatened to kill herself. She had cut herself and was struggling with her depression. I would cry all night thinking, when is this going to get better? I felt so helpless. I felt like a horrible parent. Here was my daughter, in so much pain, and I couldn't do anything for her.

When the doctor told us about a program, operated by Youth Villages Massachusetts, and said our daughter could enroll and go HOME, I thought, what do you mean? Every time we go home we just end up back in the ER. When my husband and I were told she could be treated in our house, we broke down into tears. We felt such a huge sense of relief, we could barely even speak. My husband just kept saying "I'm so happy." We were worried at first because we tried everything but the Youth Villages Intercept for Emergency Diversion program was something different and we had hope for the first time.

Our daughter was admitted to the hospital that day at 10pm and in less than 24 hours, she was discharged and back home. Treatment started right away. Her specialist is incredible. I had never seen someone relate to her in the way that our specialist could. One time, our daughter was being really aggressive. She was on the floor screaming that she hated herself and that she wanted to kill herself. I was crying like a baby. The specialist told me to go to the kitchen. Then she got down on the floor and talked to my daughter to calm her down. And I thought

WOW, that's PROGRESS. I truly believe that these services only work because they are so intensive. The specialist came to our house three times a week and she was always available. If we called her, she was there. And they have support available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. That's amazing! No one else does that!

This program created a safe space for my daughter and for our entire family. We finally broke out of the circle of going to the hospital, coming home, getting worse, and going back in the hospital. Their dedication is unlike anything I've ever seen. I could never put into words what they did for my family. We haven't had to take her back to the hospital since we started. She has coping skills that she can use now and she's getting better at dealing with her emotions. This program is a game changer, and proof that state supported programs can make a huge difference. I encourage parents to talk to their doctors about in-home treatment options and applaud the states and organizations that have made these services readily available for families like mine. We finally have hope where there was none before and I can actually see a successful future for my daughter.