

Social Worker Sees the Need for Permanency

For Maya Hivale, a Children's Social Worker (CSW) III in the Santa Fe Springs office, permanency is a priority in both her professional and personal life.

Hivale has been a CSW at the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) for nearly 10 years. During that time, she has touched many lives by encouraging permanent outcomes and successfully advocating for families who work to reunify with their children.

Hivale received her bachelor's of science degree in social work in 1989 from Roberts Wesleyan College in New York and a diploma in art therapy in 1992 from the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario, Canada. Hivale also obtained her master's degree in intercultural studies from Biola University in 1993.

Beginning her career at DCFS in April 2008 in the Santa Fe Springs office, Hivale worked for nearly two years as a Family Maintenance and Reunification social worker. She was then assigned to a specialized program, the Indian Child Welfare Unit. It was there that she proved to herself that permanency could be achieved after working a case that involved two young brothers with no family connections at the time.

Prior being assigned to Hivale, the boys had been in the foster care system for approximately five years. When the case arrived in her hands, Hivale immediately established contact with the young boys' Indian tribe in Alaska. The tribe located the boy's family in a small village in Alaska where they are residing today.

"It was this case that made me realize how many children are in need of a permanent home," explained Hivale. "This is why I work hard to achieve permanency for my clients."

Hivale advocates for permanency with integrity and walks the walk in a very personal way when it comes to permanency. When she and her husband were matched with two siblings from the Orange County foster care system, Hivale put her own needs and wants aside and advocated for reunification with their family.

"These children's biological mother was in compliance with her case plan," explained Hivale. "She was doing well and everyone was ignoring her strengths." Hivale spoke out for the mother and although it was painful to lose the children, it was a greater satisfaction for her to see them reunified with their biological mother.

In 2007, Hivale's dream of becoming a mother finally came true when she and her husband were matched with siblings, then 5 and 6 years old.

"Birth is a miracle, but how we came together--through our adoption journey-- it's a miracle as well," said Hivale.

In her personal time, Hivale continues to advocate for permanency by encouraging others to adopt. She regularly speaks about the benefits of adoption to members of her church and at the Vista Del Mar Foster Family Agency, where she talks to prospective parents about adoption and her own adoption experience.

In her years as a CSW, Hivale has assisted aging-out youth to achieve their educational dreams. She recalls assisting two sisters who were inspired to pursue an education.

“By providing them with the appropriate resources and assistance, these girls’ educational dreams became a reality,” explained Hivale. The girl that dreamed of becoming a social worker obtained her bachelor’s degree in social work from Cal State Dominguez Hills. The other youth was inspired to become a chef and graduated from the Culinary Institute of America.

“This is a stressful job, but it is a bigger honor to be able to help people,” said Hivale. It is this value that drives Hivale to do her best, but most importantly, it is this value that has provided many children with stability, permanency and educational success.

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Pull Quote:

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■ *Maya Hivale, Children’s Social Worker III*

