

SARA-

After leaving a bad situation in another state with nothing but the clothes she had on, Sara arrived in Reno battered, both emotionally and physically. She began injecting methamphetamine to treat the pain from the fractures in her ribs and face. Sara knew it is important not to share needles or syringes and though she wasn't exchanging injection equipment herself at Change Point, she was the recipient of something called secondary exchange; someone was exchanging injection equipment on her behalf.

While homeless, Sara made friends with a man who is HIV positive and is utilizing services at Change Point and knows the importance of using sterile injection equipment for every injection to prevent the spread of disease. Her friend feels he is able to educate and advocate for his peers because of the education and resources Northern Nevada HOPES and Change Point provides their clients. He began exchanging supplies for her so she could remain safe and disease free, which was extra important because Sara soon discovered she was pregnant.

After experiencing an excruciating amount of pain in her back and abdomen, Sara sought help at Change Point and they called an ambulance for her to be taken to the hospital. While waiting for help to arrive, Change Point staff got her registered as a new HOPES client and registered for Medicaid and food assistance. Sara said, "I just felt crappy and HOPES [and Change Point] made me feel good coming here, even if they couldn't necessarily help the pain. There were all sorts of reasons for me to want to be around such amazing people who work here." After Sara was released from the hospital, Change Point staff helped Sara get into a shelter specifically for battered women.

Sara continues to seek health care at HOPES and, though they do not offer prenatal care, she feels they have tremendously helped her and her unborn baby in so many ways. Sara and her unborn baby are off drugs and have tested negative for HIV and hepatitis, possibly as a result of the use of clean needles and syringes provided by Change Point. Sara says, "HOPES needs to exist. I might not be alive today if it wasn't for HOPES and Change Point." When asked how syringe exchange has affected her and others she knows, she replied with "Safety! All manners of safety! Change Point not only does syringe exchange, but they do education. Education is wildly important for people to keep themselves safe and how to go about it. Passion is contagious, so if they can ignite passion in one person who is using drugs and not sharing needles, that passion will spread."