



Finding Diego was not easy given the limited information provided to the Agency. The diligent efforts of the DCF team resulted in a phone call to paternal relatives and an e-mail to Diego - Alexis needs you!

"It made me feel terrible," Diego stated when describing the first contact with DCF and the discussion about Alexis and her living environment. He began questioning himself. "Could I have just stuck around more? Helped more?"

Things needed to move fast and with the Department's support, a plan was made to have Alexis live with her father. "We need to have her in your custody," he was told.

Finally.

"I told you something was going on," Diego stated.

That special day Diego saw his little girl again will be one he will never forget. While showing restraint not to upset her, they hugged, talked, and began the car ride to her new home.

Alexis has been living with her father and half siblings for several months. The transition has gone positively while Diego understands the impact all of this has had on Alexis. "I just want her to be happy," he explained. "I realize stability like this is not what she is used to."

Diego also embraces the ongoing role Alexis' mother will play in her life and he has every intention of supporting that relationship.

"I realize she loves her mom," Diego stated and that it will take time to "undo" negative perceptions Alexis may harbor towards him given what she was told at such a young age and even how the Agency was weaponized.

What does this father want most of all for his daughter? "I want her to keep that innocence."

The engagement and relationship between social workers and those they serve is paramount to success. Diego expressed much gratitude to Social Worker Kelsey Brewer for her support. "It was a pleasure to have her guide me. She helped a lot," he explained.

"As long as DCF workers are like her, the parents will feel safe to be able to do what they need and have to do," he added. "She is a great, great, great person."

"I've enjoyed being part of this father's journey and watching him grow and flourish as a single parent to not just Alexis, but his other children as well. Diego showed a great understanding and willingness to learn about his daughter's experiences, how they affect her, and how he can best support her going forward," stated Kelsey. "The bond and support that this family had for one another was amazing to see. I can say confidently that this will forever be one of my best experiences as a social worker."

Diego has keen insights into the multiple systems he was involved with to find and support Alexis. What would he tell other parents, especially fathers, about working with DCF?

"Do what you can if you love your kids," he stated. "You guys are only there to help." Diego acknowledges the power state government wields and how intimidation is a factor when engaging with families. "All worries will go away," if you work with the Department he pointed out.

"Unfortunately, you guys will go away too. You have been a great help."

Congratulations Diego on this incredible story and we all wish you and your family the best!



