



## **Changent Welcomes New Parent Ambassadors to Champion Families Nationwide**

**Former participants of Child First and Nurse–Family Partnership will share their stories and advocate for maternal and child health, strengthening evidence–based home visiting programs.**

**DENVER, COLO. (December 8, 2025)** — Changent has announced its fifth cohort of Parent Ambassadors—former participants of the Child First and Nurse–Family Partnership® (NFP) programs—who will serve as trusted voices for families and champions for maternal and child health nationwide.

Parent Ambassadors are well-trained spokespersons for Changent, using their lived experiences to elevate the impact of Child First and Nurse–Family Partnership, both programs of Changent. Through storytelling and advocacy, they help strengthen systems of care and ensure that every family has the opportunity to thrive. Their work reflects Changent’s guiding commitment: *Programs with Impact. Healthier Futures.*

This year’s cohort marks a significant expansion of the program, increasing in size from previous years to include 11 Parent Ambassadors. Over the past seven years, Changent’s previous Parent Ambassadors have collectively contributed more than 830 volunteer hours per cohort, sharing their journeys and advocating for policies that improve the health and well-being of families across the country.

The 2025–2027 Parent Ambassadors will engage in a range of advocacy efforts, from participating in State Education and Advocacy Days to sharing their stories with policymakers on Capitol Hill. Their work will play a key role in advancing maternal and child health priorities, including the reauthorization of the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program in 2027, a vital funding source for evidence-based home visiting. Parent Ambassadors will also help advance broader maternal and child health initiatives to further strengthen the well-being of families supported by Changent programs.

“Parent Ambassadors represent the heart of what Changent stands for,” said **Dr. Meghan López**, chief program and network officer at Changent. “They embody the strength and potential within every family we serve. By pairing personal experience with leadership and advocacy, they are helping to build healthier futures and lasting change for generations to come.”

## Meet Changent’s Parent Ambassadors

**Changent is proud to introduce the newest members of its Parent Ambassador program:**

**Abbie Bennett, Indiana** — Abbie is a 2024 graduate of Nurse-Family Partnership who achieved her goals of stability, health, and safety as a new mom with support of her NFP Nurse, receiving education and connections to essential resources along the way. Abbie works as a Project Coordinator for the Indiana University Health NFP team. Before this role, she spent a decade in crisis intervention and advocacy for families affected by domestic and sexual violence. She is passionate about supporting mothers and children—both individually and through systemic advocacy. Abbie and her young son enjoy crafting and exploring parks and museums together.

**Julia Boyd, California** — Julia completed the Nurse-Family Partnership program in 2021, receiving guidance and support that helped her navigate a challenging first pregnancy and postpartum period. She is the proud mother of two daughters. A social work professional, Julia holds a Master of Social Work from Howard University and is working toward licensure as a clinical social worker, specializing in postpartum mood and anxiety disorders. She is passionate about maternal mental health, family wellness, and community advocacy. In her personal time, Julia enjoys exploring local attractions with her children, practicing yoga, and reading.

**Laura Covington, North Carolina** — Laura is a 2023 graduate of Nurse-Family Partnership, which supported her through a high-risk first pregnancy and helped her build confidence as a new mother. She has a young son and works in customer service while pursuing higher education at Wake Technical Community College, focusing on communication, sociology, psychology, and public speaking. Laura has experience in nonprofit and advocacy work and is passionate about supporting mothers and families. She enjoys family time, cooking, gaming, and community involvement, and she strives to merge career growth with personal purpose.

**Katie Ickes, Pennsylvania** — Katie is a 2020 graduate of Nurse-Family Partnership, where her nurse's support helped her build confidence and stability as a new mother and empowered her to create a better future for her family. She has a young son and works as a behavioral health technician at an inpatient mental health and addiction recovery center while pursuing her bachelor's degree in psychology and addiction counseling. Passionate about fitness, laughter, and faith, Katie finds joy in helping others and cherishing time with her family.

**Itsy Jestin, New York** — Itsy is a 2025 graduate of Nurse-Family Partnership in Brooklyn, where the team's support and guidance helped her build confidence and community as a new mother. She has a young son and is completing training to become a certified lactation consultant while serving in a social services internship at Sanctuary for Families in NYC. Passionate about restorative justice and community support, Itsy aims to empower other parents through advocacy. She enjoys exploring nature with her family, quality time with her husband, and nurturing her growing children.

**Ashleigh Ligon, Washington** — Ashleigh graduated from Nurse-Family Partnership in 2017, which supported her as a first-time mother of twins with complex medical needs and limited maternal guidance. Now a mother of six, she brings her lived experience to her work as a full-spectrum doula, certified lactation counselor, and parent leader. Ashleigh serves on multiple councils and initiatives focused on family-centered policy and systems change. She holds associate and bachelor's degrees and is passionate about storytelling and elevating parent voice. In her free time, she enjoys family travel, reading, and cheering on her children at their activities.

**Zaeva Mercado, Texas** — Zaeva is a 2016 graduate of Nurse-Family Partnership, where she gained support and guidance while navigating parenthood as a single mother. She has two young sons and works as a Success Coach in Adult Education, helping adult learners overcome barriers and achieve their academic and personal goals. Zaeva holds an associate degree in liberal arts with a focus on photography and communications and uses her storytelling skills to create authentic, relatable content. She enjoys family activities, photography, and maintaining a positive outlook on life.

**Octavia Quarles, Tennessee** — Octavia is a 2013 graduate of Nurse-Family Partnership, where her nurse's guidance during a high-risk pregnancy provided critical support and helped ensure her child's safety. She is the mother of four children and works as a third-grade ELA and social studies teacher while pursuing a

doctoral degree in health sciences and healthcare administration. Passionate about advocacy, Octavia has shared her NFP story nationally to highlight the program's impact. She enjoys music, fitness, and making a positive impact on her family's lives.

***Bianchi Torres, Pennsylvania*** — Bianchi is a former program participant of the Child First program, where, in 2025, the team's support helped her overcome past trauma and gain confidence as a single parent. She has two children and works as a medical coder, holding certifications in billing, coding, and professional coding, with aspirations to expand into clinical healthcare. Passionate about community support and advocacy, Bianchi values the power of a village in raising children. She enjoys family time, nature walks, exploring parks, and trying new restaurants, while continuing to set goals for herself and her family's future.

***Monique Vasquez, Michigan*** — Monique is a 2022 graduate of Nurse-Family Partnership, which helped her build trust, access resources, and gain support as a new mother. She has a young daughter and balances parenting with operating her own Mexican catering business, serving her community, and advocating for early childhood development through multiple state and local initiatives. Despite health challenges, including renal failure and a transplant, Monique remains committed to supporting families, particularly those who struggle to trust systems. She enjoys family time, music, games, road trips, and sharing her faith and positivity with others.

***Shemya Wilson, Ohio*** — Shemya is a 2025 graduate of Nurse-Family Partnership, where the support of her nurses helped her navigate personal loss, graduate school, and early motherhood. She has a young son and works as a mental health therapist, holding a master's degree in social work and a bachelor's in criminal justice with a minor in Africana studies. Shemya is the creator of HUGS (Helping Unite Generations in Sisterhood), a mentorship initiative for women, and is passionate about advocacy, education, and community building. She enjoys family activities with her fiancé, Christain, fitness, reading, and fostering connections across generations.

The Parent Ambassadors began their tenure in September 2025, meeting monthly in preparation for their first in-person training in Denver. There, they completed "Advocacy 101" sessions, deepened their understanding of Changent's programs, and connected as a national network of parent leaders ready to drive change.

To learn more about the Parent Ambassador program and follow their journey, visit [changent.org/family-leadership](https://changent.org/family-leadership).

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**About Changent**

**Changent** is a national organization dedicated to improving health outcomes by scaling and supporting data-driven programs that create lasting, multigenerational impact for children, families and communities. As the umbrella organization for **Child First** and **Nurse-Family Partnership®**, Changent works to ensure every child and family has access to the resources they need to thrive. Through innovative partnerships, inclusive care and a commitment to long-term transformation, Changent empowers healthier futures for generations to come.