



## A YOUNG MOTHER'S FIGHT TO CONTROL HER SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE LIFE

Alyssa is, in many ways, just like any other young mother in Maine. She has a partner who loves her, a family who cares deeply for her, and a child who depends on her. She's trying to navigate the everyday challenges of motherhood – but Alyssa's story carries a weight that most can't imagine.

Alyssa (name changed for privacy) suffers from substance use disorder. Every day is a battle to stay clean. She attends therapy, takes medication-assisted treatment to prevent withdrawal, and fights to keep her life on track. But when Alyssa walked into the Church of Safe Injection (COSI) in Lewiston, she wasn't just fighting for herself anymore – she was fighting for the life growing inside her. Alyssa was pregnant.

For anyone battling substance use disorder, survival often feels like clinging to the edge of a cliff. The only thing that consumes your thoughts is getting the next dose, the next moment of relief.

To someone with substance use disorder, the drug feels like medicine. For Alyssa, it had become her lifeline. But now, she had another life to protect – her unborn child.

That's when Alyssa met Amy from Maine Family Planning's Reproductive Empowerment Project. In partnership with COSI, we offer compassionate, low-barrier access to essential health services for people using drugs. We provide everything from contraception to STI screenings and life-saving resources.

But in Alyssa's case, Amy knew this was more than a consultation. It was a chance to save two lives.

Alyssa wanted to continue her pregnancy. But doing so meant facing her substance use disorder head-on, enduring the pain of withdrawal, and taking a journey that could jeopardize her pregnancy. Quitting opioids cold turkey can lead to devastating consequences for both mother and baby, from preterm labor to miscarriage.

### **But Alyssa was determined.**

With Amy's guidance, Alyssa was placed in a hospital where providers trained in caring for pregnant people battling substance use disorder could help her detox safely. Through medication-assisted treatment, Alyssa not only survived the withdrawal but carried her baby to term. Against the odds, her child was born healthy.

But Alyssa's journey wasn't over. Amy stood by her side every step of the way – from navigating health care to finding ways to break the news to her family. When the time came, Alyssa returned to Maine Family Planning to have an IUD placed, putting her in control of her sexual and reproductive life and giving her a chance to focus on raising her child.

Today, with the unwavering support of Maine Family Planning and its partner organizations, Alyssa and her baby are not just surviving. **They are thriving.**