

# Former BCFS resident returns to counsel children

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SAN ANTONIO—Julie Parra could have given up on her dreams at a young age, cursing the hand she was dealt and turning her back on the world. Instead, she determined to make life better for other children and families.

She was removed from her home at the age of 15, along with three siblings, when physical abuse and neglect was discovered. She spent three months in 1999 at [Baptist Child & Family Services](#)' residential campus in San Antonio before being placed in foster care.



Julie Parra leads a discussion group at the Baptist Child & Family Services residential campus in San Antonio. (BCFS PHOTO)

Despite difficult circumstances, Parra went on to graduate from high school and today is pursuing a bachelor's degree in psychology with hopes to make a difference in the lives of other struggling children and families.

Parra already has a head start on her life's passion. She returned to Baptist Child & Family Services in 2007 as a direct care worker, where she supervises and counsels children at the residential campus who struggle

with the same feelings of anxiety, loneliness and sadness she once faced.

“Many children say, ‘You just don’t understand what it’s like to be in a shelter or foster care.’ But then they talk to Julie and understand that they, too, have control over what happens to them,” counselor Mike Denning said.

Parra spends her time cooking for the children and teaching youth how to make home-cooked meals. She also leads group discussions, applying a biblical perspective as issues arise.

“I always tell the kids that you can’t change where you’ve been, but you can change where you’re going,” Parra said.

“Julie has had to overcome tremendous challenges in her life and is now giving back to the community by helping numerous children and adults face obstacles in their lives,” Denning said. “The thing that makes her so effective in her role is the fact that she has walked in their shoes and come out the other side with hope and a life that makes a difference.”

To find out more about BCFS’ residential services, please visit [www.bcfs.net](http://www.bcfs.net).