

## Caring Support Helps Mom on a Challenging Road

When Leah finally called Haven's Crisis Line, the Women Support Worker (WSW) on the other end asked if she was safe, and Leah broke down. She couldn't remember the last time she had felt safe.

Five years ago, Leah had begun suffering from chronic back pain that had prevented her from working. Not long after, she had become addicted to the pain killers prescribed to help her. On permanent disability, she had struggled to find safe places for her and her young son to live.

When Leah met Johnny, she and her son were living in an unsafe rented room. Johnny offered Leah a small apartment in the basement of his house and she jumped at the opportunity.

After they moved into the apartment, Johnny often invited Leah and her five-year-old son upstairs in his home and they got to know him quite well. When Leah couldn't afford her prescription, Johnny offered her his 'pain pills.' Most mornings, Johnny drove her son to school.

One night, Johnny entered her apartment and raped her. He said she owed him for all the pain pills and for taking care of her son. Every night, he appeared. When he was drinking, it was worse. Leah was constantly scared. She didn't stop him because she was worried he would throw them out or, worse, lash out at her son. She quietly started looking for another place to stay, but couldn't even find a room to rent.

One day, after Johnny had left the house to drive her son to school, Leah called the Haven Crisis Line that she had seen on a website.

An assessment was done based on Leah's situation to determine whether or not the shelter was the best place for her and her son. Half an hour later, Leah was at Haven's Transition House. The WSW conducted an intake to gather all the needed information and discussed Leah's options. They created a safety plan for her and her son.

They called the school to make sure her son would be safe until they could pick him up. They gave Leah clothing and toiletries, and, per her request, brought her to the hospital to see the Forensic Nurse Examiner.

The following days were difficult for Leah; she was experiencing withdrawal symptoms and she had to explain their situation to her son. The patient, knowledgeable transition house staff knew how to support both of them during those trying times.

Staff supported Leah to call various social service agencies that might be able to help Leah with the addiction and back pain. Leah and her son were placed on waitlists for counselling at Haven, and she was referred to Haven's Outreach Program to discuss housing.

Leah has a long and challenging road ahead of her, but having caring, knowledgeable support and referrals has given her what she needs to start.

*"I had nowhere else to go. Coming to Haven saved my life and kept my son safe."*



\* For privacy reasons, this story and all names are fictional, but it speaks to the experiences of some of our clients.