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# Graduate Community Fellowship at Daybreak

Haylee K. DeLuca, Richard T. Ferguson  
The University of Dayton



## Introduction

The Fitz Center for Leadership in Community maintains partnerships with urban neighborhoods and supports students as they engage in community building opportunities. Among the Fitz Center's many community leadership programs, Graduate Community Fellows work with nonprofit organizations in the Dayton community. I have been working with Daybreak, an emergency youth shelter and transitional living program, while pursuing my master's degree in psychology. At Daybreak, one of my educational activities is to work directly with youth by managing the token economy. We use "Daybreak Dollars," which are designed to encourage productive activity, such as employment search and school attendance, through positive reinforcement. I have also collected data for the outcomes team that evaluates Daybreak's programming. The ongoing data analysis is investigating changes in income, education status, depression, and anxiety of youth throughout the course of their involvement with Daybreak. Further, I have case-managed youth in the program to develop skills on budgeting, time management, and other life skills. The experience with the Fitz Center and Daybreak has not only given me a unique opportunity to work with at-risk youth, but has informed my own research interests and graduate study.

## Daybreak

Daybreak is an emergency shelter for runaway and homeless youth, established in Dayton, Ohio in 1975. Daybreak now has five programs within the organization, all designed to aid runaway and homeless youth. In seeking to provide youth with stability, safety and support, Daybreak utilizes results-oriented programming designed to increase life skills and self-sufficiency.

## Programs within Daybreak

### • Emergency Shelter

For youth ages 10-18, this emergency shelter is open 24/7. Each year Daybreak's shelter serves more than 200 youth, providing them with shelter, three meals a day, personal care items, and transportation assistance. Individual and group counseling sessions are also offered. Minors are reconciled with family or placed in a safe alternative. 18-year-olds are aided in finding secure housing.

### • Housing Program

- Transitional Living: 24 on-site apartments for youth 18-24 provide daily supervision, group and individual programming and case management. This program encourages educational development and employment through a Token Economy System, "Daybreak Dollars."
- Community: 30 scattered-site apartments in the Dayton area for youth ages 18-24 provide regular supervision through case managers. This program encourages further development of life skills to obtain and sustain permanent housing.

### • Street Outreach Program

For youth ages 18 and older, the outreach program is designed to assist those living on the street or couch-hopping. Outreach provides youth with appropriate referrals for housing and counseling programs in the area. Additionally, they are provided with food, clothing and transportation assistance.

### • Employment Program

Designed to develop skills for attaining and sustaining employment. The program also provides a work-readiness training program at Lindy & Company, a pet treat bakery.

### • Alma's Place

For youth 18-24 with mental illness or cognitive delay, this residential facility is designed to provide structured programming, focusing on daily living skills and socialization.

## Daybreak Dollars

The transitional living program within Daybreak utilizes a token economy system, Daybreak Dollars, that encourages productivity through positive reinforcement. Youth submit verification for such productive activities as attending school, going to work, volunteering and visiting the doctor. Through these verifications, youth earn Daybreak Dollars, which go toward their rental subsidy. Youth can also "cash out" Daybreak Dollars for necessity items (hygiene-related items, diapers, laundry items) or gift cards. Daybreak Dollars provide a quantitative value and reward system for the youth's various activities leading to life skill development.



## Outcomes

Daybreak utilizes an outcomes team to collect data on the progress the youth make throughout the program. Currently, the outcomes team regularly assesses anxiety and depression levels, life skill development, asset development and monthly income and expenses. This assessment is part of an ongoing process to validate Daybreak's programming and services.

## Case Management

Case managers meet with clients regularly to assist with monthly budgeting, processing of life stressors, crisis intervention and the reduction of anxiety. Using a strengths-based approach, case managers create an individualized service plan for each youth to obtain their goals. They establish specific objectives to be met that will increase self-sufficiency and sustainability.