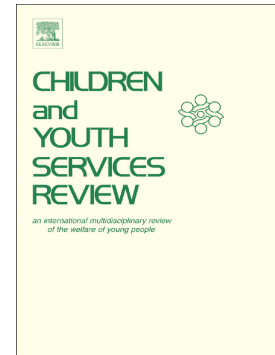# Accepted Manuscript

Daybreak in Dayton: Assessing characteristics and outcomes of previously homeless youth living in transitional housing

Stephanie Casey Pierce, Bryan Grady, Holly Holtzen

Please cite this article as: Stephanie Casey Pierce, Bryan Grady, Holly Holtzen , Daybreak in Dayton: Assessing characteristics and outcomes of previously homeless youth living in transitional housing. The address for the corresponding author was captured as affiliation for all authors. Please check if appropriate. Cysr(2018), doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2018.03.021

Daybreak in Dayton: Assessing Characteristics and Outcomes of Previously Homeless Youth Living in Transitional Housing
Title

Stephanie Casey Pierce [a, *],Bryan Grady [b],Holly Holtzen [b]
Authors and Affiliations

Stephanie Casey Pierce [a, *]
pierce.576@osu.edu

Bryan Grady [b]
bgrady@ohiohome.org

Holly Holtzen [b]
hholtzen@ohiohome.org

[a] The Ohio State University John Glenn College of Public Affairs, Page Hall, 1810 College Road, Columbus, OH 43210, USA

[b] Ohio Housing Finance Agency, 57 East Main Street, Columbus, OH 43215, USA

[*] Corresponding author

Abstract

Each year, more than 1 million American children and youth experience homelessness (Hammer, Finkelhor, & Sedlak, 2002; Office of Applied Studies, 2004). The transient nature of this population makes it difficult to study, but youth homelessness has been identified with a number of problematic outcomes as well as a pathway to chronic adult homelessness (Baker Collins, 2013; Chamberlain & Johnson, 2011). Yet, few empirical studies evaluate the effectiveness of a common intervention for homeless youth—transitional housing. In this paper, we describe the outcomes of homeless youth who participated in a youth-only transitional housing program. We analyze administrative data on 174 youth who entered and exited the Daybreak Transitional Housing program (Daybreak TH) between 2011 and 2014. We find that the majority of Daybreak TH participants were employed at least 20 hours a week at program exit. Youth exited Daybreak TH with higher wages on average, while nearly half achieved educational gains from program entry to exit. Youth who resided in Daybreak TH for 12 months or longer were more likely to achieve positive program outcomes than youth who entered and exited the program in fewer than 12 months. Finally, youth who used drugs and alcohol were less likely than their peers to achieve desired program outcomes, as were those who suffered from chronic illnesses or attention deficit, conduct, or disruptive behavior disorders. We conclude with a discussion of policy implications and areas for future research.

1. Introduction

Each year, more than 1 million American children and youth experience homelessness (Hammer et al., 2002; Office of Applied Studies, 2004). The transient nature of this population makes it difficult to follow and measure, but youth homelessness has been associated with a number of challenges, including mental and physical health issues, crime, and future adult homelessness (Baker Collins, 2013; Chamberlain & Johnson, 2011; Edidin, Ganim, Hunter, & Karnik, 2012; Ferguson, Bender, Thompson, Xie, & Pollio, 2011). While a growing body of scholarship documents the impacts of homelessness on youth, few empirical studies evaluate the effectiveness of a common intervention for homeless youth—transitional housing.

In this paper, we help fill this research gap by describing the outcomes of homeless youth who participated in a youth-only transitional housing program. In particular, we explore changes in education, employment, and wages of homeless youth who participated in Daybreak, Inc., a 24-month transitional housing program in Dayton, Ohio that pairs individualized supportive services with housing for youth aged 18 to 21. Daybreak's two-stage housing model is a unique application of transitional housing. Our study provides descriptive evidence of the effectiveness of this model, both overall and with respect to subpopulations of interest, which is useful for developing an in-depth understanding of the model and its clients that can inform future research.

We structure this paper as follows. First, we describe our conceptual framework and briefly review the literature on transitional housing and the Daybreak model. Second, we describe our empirical framework, including our research questions and statistical approach. Third, we present the findings of our research. Finally, we discuss the implications of our findings, limitations of our research design, and opportunities for further research.

2. Background

Housing interventions vary in terms of target populations, length of stay, and services offered as part of the program. One theory underlying the provision of housing to homeless individuals is that by offering housing as an incentive, individuals will be motivated to work toward self-sufficiency. These

programs often are time-limited and require recipients to be drug- and alcohol-free. This approach undergirds traditional transitional housing and living programs, which often have requirements that individuals must meet prior to gaining access (Shinn et al., 2017).

A second theory underlying housing programs stems from Maslow (1943). Maslow's Hierarchy posits that individuals are unable to achieve higher-order goals—such as building meaningful relationships and personal achievement—when their basic needs, including nourishment and shelter, are not met. Housing First is a model that places individuals into a housing program without preconditions to work their way toward self-sufficiency (Tsemberis, Gulcur, & Nakae, 2004). While the theoretical foundation behind these two approaches differs, the shared goal of housing programs is to help individuals ultimately achieve self-sufficiency. Evaluative literature on housing interventions for homeless individuals often seeks to determine the extent to which interventions help clients reach self-sufficiency.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) offers three primary housing interventions for homeless individuals: permanent housing subsidies, Rapid Re-housing, and project-based Transitional Housing (TH). TH, which began in 1987, under the auspices of the McKinney-Vento Act (Office of Policy Development and Research, 1995), allows substantial variation in the type housing offered, populations served, and supportive services. The number of TH beds declined by 43% from 2007 to 2017 (Bishop et al., 2017; Culhane, Khadduri, Cortes, Buron, & Poulin, 2008). The decrease in TH beds represents a federal policy shift toward the Housing First model and Rapid Re-housing (RRH) programs. This policy shift has been bolstered by recent findings from the Family Options Study, a large-scale experiment commissioned by HUD, compared the impact of these housing interventions for homeless families (Gubits et al., 2016). The study, which involved 2,282 families who were randomly assigned to one of the three interventions or usual care, finds that three years after random assignment, families participating in project-based TH experienced housing and well-being outcomes that were generally equivalent to that of families who received usual care. Moreover, Shinn et al. (2017) find that families who enrolled in the Family Options Study were more likely to be deemed ineligible for TH than

for other interventions, suggesting that restrictive TH requirements may screen out families most in need of intervention. On the other hand, Rodriguez & Eidelman (2017), who use propensity score matching to compare Georgia households participating in RRH to households participating in TH, find no difference between the interventions on the likelihood of returning to emergency shelter within two years after exiting the intervention; the study does not evaluate other outcomes, however.

Importantly, while both Rodriguez & Eidelman (2017) and Gubits et al. (2016) include youth, i.e., individuals aged 18 to 24, neither study evaluates youth as a subgroup nor explicitly includes youth-centered TH programs. Likewise, other frequently cited studies on TH focus either on families (Burt, 2010) or on other subgroups such as young mothers (Fischer, 2000), ex-offenders (Lutze, Rosky, & Hamilton, 2014), survivors of domestic violence (Long, 2015), or adults with severe and persistent mental illnesses (Siskind et al., 2014). Although an estimated 1 million children and youth experience homelessness each year in the United States (Hammer et al., 2002; Office of Applied Studies, 2004), only a little is known about the effectiveness of transitional housing interventions that aim to serve this population. While homeless youth aged 18 and over are eligible to receive services from adult shelter and housing programs, they may be reluctant to seek such services, perhaps due to histories of trauma, which has been found to be prevalent among homeless youth (Coates & Sue, 2010; Gwadz, Nish, Leonard, & Strauss, 2007; Hadland et al., 2012; Keeshin & Campbell, 2011). Most studies to date about homeless youth assess the challenges this population faces (Ferguson et al., 2011; Keeshin & Campbell, 2011) rather than evaluate programs designed to resolve them.

2.1 Transitional Housing for Homeless Youth

In this paper, we use the term "transitional housing program" in a general way to describe a short-term housing intervention with supportive services designed to help people experiencing homelessness transition to permanent housing by providing short-term housing, often with supportive services. In the United States, two federal agencies, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) provide funding for housing programs for homeless youth. HUD defines homeless youth as those aged 18 to 24. In 2017, 8% of TH beds were

designated for youth, and TH beds comprised 43% of all beds designated for youth (Bishop et al., 2017). Through the Family & Youth Services Bureau (FYSB), HHS administers the Transitional Living Program (TLP), which provides housing to homeless youth ages 16 to 22 for approximately 18 to 21 months. TLP currently provides funding to 236 grantees (Family & Youth Services Bureau, 2018). A third federal funding stream, Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, is administered by HHS and supports Independent Living Programs, which can include short-term housing services, for youth who age out of foster care.

The body of research on homeless youth in the United States focuses primarily on the correlates of homelessness for youth and adolescents rather than the effectiveness of programs aimed to intervene or prevent homelessness. Existing studies tend to be qualitative in nature, often seeking youths' perceptions of their experiences in transitional housing programs. For instance, Holtschneider (2016) conducted semi-structured, open-ended interviews with 32 individuals who had participated in and exited a youth TLP in Chicago between 2003 and 2013. Respondents emphasized the importance of building relationships while in TLP and finding other youth who shared similar childhood experiences. Participants also noted the importance of their relationship with staff members, an element echoed in other research on homeless youth (Altena, Beijersbergen, & Wolf, 2014; Black et al., 2018). Siegel (2016) conducted online surveys of participants of TLPs in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul, Minnesota, area and found that participants generally reported satisfaction with staff, programming, and access to medical and mental health services.

Other qualitative research relies on interviews and surveys of service providers. Interviews with service providers of four TLP in New England revealed extensive variation in implementation across the programs (Bartlett, Copeman, Golin, Miller, & Needle, 2004). Variation in implementation across housing interventions for homeless individuals is similarly discussed by Rodriguez & Eidelman (2017); this speaks to the overall issues of the generalizability of findings within this body of research.

A few studies analyze administrative data on youth participants of transitional housing programs or use mixed methods. Giffords, Alonso, & Bell (2007) find that 93% of youth who participated in a New York-based TLP developed independent living skills, while 91% participated in an educational program, job training, or employment, and 87% moved to appropriate housing. Nolan (2006) found that a majority

of LGBT youth (77%) who participated in a TLP designed specifically for LGBT homeless youth exited the program to a safe housing situation, while 43% increased their level of education during their time in the TLP.

The body of research on transitional housing and living programs for homeless youth is sparse, with the studies presented above representing the much of the evaluative literature on such programs. Therefore, we turn to the literature on transitional housing and living programs designed specifically for youth aging out of foster care. Though a substantial proportion of youth who age out of foster care experience homelessness (Dworsky, Napolitano, & Courtney, 2013), these studies represent but a subpopulation of homeless youth—a subpopulation that may experience housing programs differently from others (Berzin, Rhodes, & Curtis, 2011; Siegel, 2016) and thus should be recognized as such.

A recent review of interventions for youth aging out of foster care (Woodgate, Morakinyo, & Martin, 2017) reveals both promising findings and the need for more methodologically sound research. The authors' review of 68 studies reveals generally positive findings for interventions, including housing interventions like transitional housing, transitional living, and independent living programs with housing components. Studies reviewing housing interventions generally find that the interventions help reduced homelessness among participants while other studies find that participants often achieve positive outcomes with respect to education and employment. However, Woodgate notes that the body of research suffers from methodological weakness, particularly with respect to small sample sizes, biased and nonrandomized samples, and lack of control or comparison groups.

To the authors' knowledge, just one study uses random assignment to evaluate participation in TLP on foster youth outcomes. MDRC conducted an evaluation of the Youth Villages TLP in Tennessee and has documented the findings at implementation (Manno, Jacobs, Alson, & Skemer, 2014), one year after implementation (Valentine, Skemer, & Courtney, 2015), and two years after implementation (Skemer & Valentine, 2016). The studies find mixed results for the program. While participants experienced modest increases in employment and earnings two years after TLP relative to the control group, as well as higher levels of reported housing stability and economic well-being after one year, there

was no significant difference between TLP participants and control group participants with respect to education, social support, or criminal involvement (Skemer & Valentine, 2016).

Another study that includes a comparison group, albeit one not randomly assigned, is Rashid (2004), which evaluated the outcomes of 23 former foster care youth in Avenues to Independence, a housing program operated by Larkin Street Youth Services in San Francisco. The program offered a supervised living environment and supportive services for youth aged 18 to 23. Results indicate that all clients had been placed in stable housing (i.e., living independently or with family or friends) and held a job at discharge, compared with only a 13% employment rate at entry. Jones (2011) also uses a comparison group in an examination of the long-term outcomes of former foster youth who resided in transitional housing versus youth who chose other living arrangements after discharge from care. Youth who initially lived in a transitional housing unit were more likely to be employed, less likely to use drugs and alcohol, and less likely to have interactions with the criminal justice system than did youth who discharged to other living arrangements.

Another example of a foster youth housing program is the Foster Youth Housing Initiative (FYHI), a multifaceted grant program in the San Francisco Bay Area that provided funding for services, housing, and capacity building to multiple organizations to focus on emancipated foster youth (Latham, Drake, Cuevas, & Sugano, 2008). Under FYHI, six grantee organizations provided various housing solutions, including scattered-site housing options and rental subsidies. In addition to the housing interventions, supportive services were provided to participating youth. Eighty-three percent of FYHI participants (n=586) across the six programs were described as having sufficient income to remain stably housed at exit; clients' hourly earnings increased by an average of $2.28 during their time in FYHI. Gains in educational attainment and physical and mental health were observed, as was a substantial increase in custodial rights for FYHI youth with children.

Gains in participant education were also found among participants of an Ohio-based housing program for former foster youth, the Lighthouse Independent Living Program (ILP) in Cincinnati, Ohio (Kroner & Mares, 2009; Kroner & Mares, 2011; Mares & Kroner, 2011). Lighthouse ILP uses a

scattered-site housing model and provides case management, clinical treatment, life skills training, employment services, and education for youth aged 18 and older. Lighthouse ILP focused on three key objectives for participants: completion of a high school diploma or equivalent, employment, and independent housing. Lighthouse youth stayed an average of ten months. Only 11% of participants achieved all three goals at exit, though most did finish high school (Mares & Kroner, 2011). The major risk factors for non-attainment were mental health issues, history of delinquency, parenting, and cognitive impairment. Older youth and clients staying longer in ILP also had better outcomes on average.

2.2. Daybreak's Youth-Targeted Housing Intervention

Founded in 1975 with 10 emergency shelter beds, Daybreak was Dayton's only accredited facility for runaway and homeless youth (Pierce, Grady, & Holtzen, 2016). By 1989, Daybreak operated 35 scattered-site housing units throughout the Dayton area. Daybreak has since expanded its program offerings to include a 16-bed emergency shelter, 54 units of transitional housing, and programs ranging from street outreach to employment assistance. Daybreak's design integrates the two theories that underpin housing programs for homeless individuals. Daybreak's stated mission is to end youth homelessness in the Miami Valley region of Ohio using evidence-based programs that provide safety and stability to its clients (Daybreak, n.d.), which highlights their emphasis on fulfilling clients' basic needs. However, the organization also requires that participants abide by the program's rules and expectations. Youth aged 18 to 24, are referred to Daybreak via the Montgomery County Continuum of Care (CoC) and may apply to participate in the Daybreak Transitional Housing program (Daybreak TH). To qualify, applicants must have experienced homelessness per the definition established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) (i.e., living on the streets, in an emergency shelter, or somewhere not fit for habitation), earn less than 30% of the area median income, have no other viable housing option, have no active psychosis or chemical dependency, pose no viable threat to others living in the communal living environment, and agree to Daybreak's lease rules and expectations. Daybreak's design includes three primary elements:

1. **Five Core Areas of Youth Development**

Daybreak has structured its housing program to help youth achieve short- and long-term gains in five core areas: housing, physical and mental health, life skills, income and employment, and education (Garber et al., 2012). Daybreak offers programming for its clients to guide them in each of these areas, such as job training, counseling, life skills training, and GED courses. Daybreak has produced a logic model detailing these core areas and the short- and long-term expectations of the outcomes associated with each area (2012, p. 114).

2. **Trauma-Informed Care**

Many youths who become homeless have experienced complex trauma (Garber et al., 2012). Thus, Daybreak hires counselors and clinicians training in trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy. Moreover, Daybreak uses a broader trauma-informed care model for interacting with its clients and understanding how trauma may affect youth seeking Daybreak services. By implementing this model across all Daybreak programming, the organization aims to help youth manage their trauma while making strides toward self-sufficiency.

3. **Short-Term Housing**

The youth Daybreak serves are in a transitional period of their lives. Their brains are still developing as they become adults; therefore, Daybreak staff members argue that the most appropriate housing model is short-term and structured, gradually offering clients additional independence as they progress through the program. Daybreak staff note that college is, in some sense, a transitional housing program, and thus argue that a short-term housing program is the best vehicle for delivering services to homeless youth, as most are not interested in long-term or permanent housing. Daybreak TH typically places new clients in one of 24 apartments in an on-site, highly structured service environment in which they receive incentives for attending programs in accordance with their case plans. At a minimum, Daybreak requires its housing program participants to meet with program staff at least once weekly, develop a daily activities schedule, and obtain employment or be enrolled in an education or training program. As youth progress through Daybreak TH, they transition to one of 30 off-site apartments and gain more independence and responsibility (Garber et al., 2012). This two-stage housing model, in which youth graduate from on-site

to project-based housing, aims to help youth progress from a structured environment to an independent living situation while improving their financial condition and developing the skills they need to live on their own. Daybreak TH provides rental assistance, which gradually decreases over time as youth become more financially independent. Daybreak initiates transition planning two to three months before a youth leaves the program and offers two years of aftercare services, including counseling, emergency support, employment support, and skill training. All Daybreak TH youth work with a case manager and have access to a range of supportive services, including mental health care, child care, job training, social support, and nutrition education.

By combining structured housing services with trauma-informed care and evidence-based programming aimed at helping youth advance in five core areas of development, Daybreak believes its model provides youth with a service option that is superior to other available housing options. In this study, we investigate the effectiveness of this approach by examining three main client outcomes: educational attainment, employment status, and income. Our study contributes to the body of evaluative research on transitional housing programs for homeless youth, by investigating outcomes of youth participating in Daybreak's unique, two-stage housing model and by providing additional evidence on the short-term outcomes of youth who participate in a transitional housing program.

3. Methodology

3.1. Hypotheses

In this paper, we examine changes in key outcomes from program entry to program exit among youth who participated in Daybreak TH. The goal of this research is to examine the outcomes of youth who participate in a youth-centered transitional housing program. We considered three outcomes: educational attainment, employment, and wages, at exit from Daybreak TH. We then further explore demographic and other characteristics associated with changes in these outcomes. We hypothesize that youth who participate in Daybreak TH will increase educational attainment, be more likely to hold steady employment, and demonstrate an increase in wages from program entry to program exit.

3.2. Data

Administrative data collected by Daybreak staff at entry and exit were used for this study. The final dataset included records for 174 youth who both entered and exited Daybreak TH between August 1, 2011, and October 15, 2014. Youth enrolled in Daybreak TH during the study period but still in the program on October 15, 2014, were excluded to ensure that there were paired observations (i.e., at entry and exit from Daybreak TH) throughout the dataset. The Institutional Review Board at the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services approved the research protocols.

This study focuses on three key outcomes for youth participating in Daybreak TH: educational attainment, employment, and wages. These outcomes stem from Daybreak's aforementioned Five Core Areas of Youth Development, which includes health, education, employment, life skills, and housing. In this paper, we focus exclusively on education and employment due to incomplete or unverifiable date in other domains. Educational attainment was measured at entry and exit using self-reported last grade level completed. Grade levels ranged from seventh grade to some college. Employment was also measured at entry and exit, with youth categorized as either unemployed, employed full-time (at least 40 hours per week), or employed part-time (20 to 39 hours per week). Additionally, monthly wage data were collected to determine earnings from employment and were used as a continuous variable. Income data exclude other cash benefits that may be obtained while in Daybreak TH.

3.3. Analysis

Frequencies were used to summarize the characteristics of the population with respect to demographics, life experiences, medical and housing histories, and achievement of desired objectives in the Five Core Areas of Youth Development. Then, chi-square tests were performed on crosstabs of categorical data to determine whether participants were equally likely to increase educational attainment, increase wages, or work 20 or more hours per week at exit based on client characteristics and histories.

4. Results

4.1 Demographics of Daybreak TH Participants

Table 1 shows the demographics of youth participating in Daybreak TH. The majority of clients (87%) entered Daybreak TH at stage-one—on-site housing. Of those clients, 56 (37%) graduated to stage-

two—scattered-site housing—before exiting the program. Of the 22 clients who entered Daybreak TH at stage-two, all but one exited at stage two; one client opted to switch to stage-one housing prior to exiting Daybreak TH. Over half (56%) of Daybreak TH clients were aged 19 and younger at the time of program entry and 58% were female. Twenty percent of Daybreak TH participants were white non-Hispanic, with nearly all others reporting that they were African-American non-Hispanic. A full sixth of clients identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual. A third of clients had a history of placement in the foster care system. Sixteen percent reported having a parent in jail and over half had one or more parents with a substance abuse disorder. Two-thirds experienced neglect and more than 60% were subject to physical abuse, while a third of clients had been sexually victimized. Nearly 40% of females were pregnant or parenting at program entry. Daybreak TH clients also had appreciable physical and behavioral health challenges at entry. Half of the clients were diagnosed with mood disorders, such as depression, while one in three were diagnosed with an adjustment disorder, like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Nearly two in five clients had used alcohol or illicit drugs within the prior month.

Due to federal funding requirements, youth must be living on the street or in an emergency shelter immediately prior to accessing Daybreak TH. More than half of residents reported living on the streets within the previous two years, while two-thirds reported living in an emergency shelter (including the emergency shelter inside Opportunity House) and two-thirds reported a history of couch hopping. Overall, one in four clients reported prolonged homelessness defined for the purposes of this study as experiencing one or more forms of homelessness for at least seven consecutive months.

Table 1: Description of Daybreak Housing Program Clients (n=174)

Characteristic	Number	Percent
Age at Entry		
18 or below	41	24
19	56	32
20	49	28
21 or above	28	16
Gender		
Female	101	58
Male	73	42
Race/Ethnicity		
White, non-Hispanic	35	20
Nonwhite and/or Hispanic	139	80
Sexual Orientation		
Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual	31	17
Not Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual	143	83
Lived with Neither Biological Parent	**60**	**34**
Lived in Foster Care and/or Group Home	**58**	**33**
Parent(s) Incarcerated at Entry	**28**	**16**
Criminal History	**73**	**42**
Parent(s) Abused Drugs or Alcohol	**93**	**53**
History of Trauma		
Prior parent or guardian neglect	114	66
History of physical abuse	106	61
History of sexual abuse	52	30
Witnessed domestic violence	78	45
Witnessed community violence	67	39
HS Diploma or Equivalent at Entry	94	54
Employed at Least 20 Hours per Week at Entry	78	45
Parenting Status		
Parenting or pregnant at entry	45	26
Living with a child while in Daybreak TH	24	14
Chronic Health Issue	**32**	**18**
Mental Health Diagnoses	**308**	--
Adjustment disorders	55	32
Anxiety disorders	38	22
Attention-deficit, conduct, and disruptive behavior disorders	33	19
Mood disorders	89	51
Previously Couch-Hopped	**117**	**67**
Less than a month	10	6
One to three months	38	22
Four to six months	30	17

Seven or more months	39	22
Previously Lived on Streets	**88**	**51**
Less than a month	43	25
One to three months	17	10
Four to six months	13	7
Seven or more months	15	9
Previously Lived in Any Emergency Shelter	**117**	**67**
Less than a month	44	25
One to three months	55	32
Four or more months	18	10
Experienced Prolonged Homelessness	**46**	**26**

4.2 Description of Outcomes of Interest: Education, Employment, and Wages

Table 2 provides a summary of the overall improvement of Daybreak TH youth on the three outcomes of interest: education, employment, and wages. Overall, 73% of youth achieved positive results on at least one of the three outcomes of interest. Fifty-two percent of youth did so on two of three outcomes, while 27% did so across all three outcomes. Almost half (47%) of clients increased their educational attainment while in Daybreak TH. At entry, 54% of Daybreak youth held a high school diploma or equivalent; at exit, this increased to 68%. Seventy-eight clients were employed when they entered Daybreak TH; at program exit, 101 youth were employed and most (n=95) were employed at least 20 hours a week. Among youth who were unemployed when they entered Daybreak TH, just over half (n= 48) gained jobs while in Daybreak TH. Not all employed youth maintained employment from entry to exit; 25 previously employed youth were unemployed when they exited Daybreak TH, though just two of these clients had been employed full-time at entry. Full-time employment increased from just 9% of Daybreak TH clients at entry to 24% at exit. Across all clients, regardless of employment status, exactly half earned more in monthly wages at the end of the program than when they entered Daybreak TH. Ninety-five clients (55%) were employed at least 20 hours per week at exit versus 78 (45%) at entry. Overall, monthly wages more than doubled during their time in Daybreak TH, with the client average increasing from $210 at entry to $440 at exit; wages increased for 87 clients, or half the study population. Excluding those who were not employed at entry or exit, the average monthly wage increased from $468 to $758 (see Figure 1).

Table 2: Change in Outcomes of Interest from Entry to Exit

Outcome	Entry	Exit	Change
Education			
Held HS Diploma or Equivalent (n=174)	94	118	+26%
Enrolled in Postsecondary Education (n=174)	36	49	+36%
Employed (n=174)	78	101	+29%
Average Monthly Wages			
All Daybreak TH Clients (n=174)	$210	$440	+110%
Clients Employed at Entry OR Exit only (n=126)	$468	$758	+62%
Clients Employed at Entry AND Exit only (n=53)	$507	$788	+55%

Figure 1: Average Monthly Wages of Daybreak Housing Clients at Entry and Exit
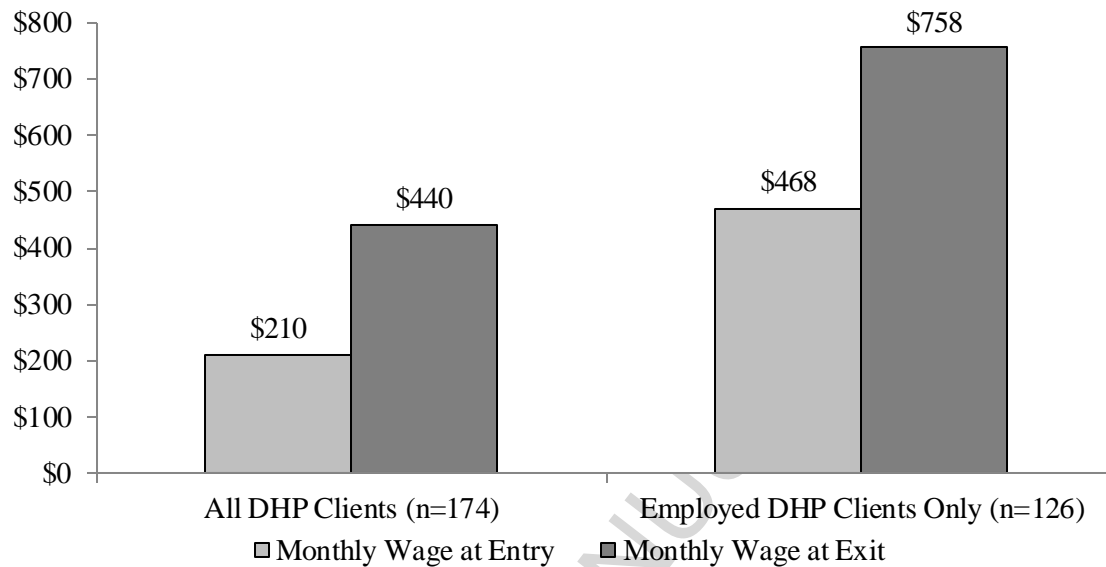
4.3 Characteristics Associated with Program Outcomes

Chi-square analyses were conducted to investigate the relationship between client characteristics and outcomes of interest (all correlations include data from all clients, i.e., n=174). Nine client characteristics reported at entry were found to be associated with educational attainment. White, non-Hispanic youth were less likely to achieve educational gains than were other Daybreak TH participants (p<0.01), the overwhelming majority of which were African American (p<0.01). Female clients were more likely to increase their education attainment (p<0.05). Clients who reported substance use or had criminal histories were less likely to increase their education (p<0.01). Similarly, clients diagnosed with attention deficit, conduct, and/or behavior disorder; clients with histories of emergency shelter stay; clients who had lived with neither biological parent prior to entering Daybreak TH; and clients who reported witnessing community violence were less likely to achieve educational gains (p<0.05). Finally, we found a strong positive correlation between the length of stay in Daybreak TH and increased educational attainment (p<0.001).

We found fewer differences in employment outcomes among clients. As with educational attainment, there was a strong positive correlation ($p < 0.001$) for length of stay and employment at exit, while clients diagnosed with attention deficit, conduct and/or disruptive behavior disorder were less likely to be employed at least 20 hours at exit ($p < 0.05$). Clients with chronic health issues were less likely to be employed ($p < 0.05$), as were clients who had been unemployed when they entered the program ($p < 0.01$).

Finally, with respect to wages, length of stay was again highly significantly correlated with increased wages ($p < 0.001$). Clients with a chronic health issue at entry were less likely to experience income gains ($p < 0.01$). In addition, housing history was a relevant factor; individuals who had experienced couch hopping, as well as those with a prior period of prolonged homelessness (i.e., seven or more months in at least one type of housing instability), also were less likely to see wage increases than those without such histories ($p < 0.05$).

Across all program outcomes, the strongest empirical result was that the length of time a client stayed in Daybreak TH was associated with educational progress and positive employment outcomes. Figure 2 illustrates this finding across each of the three outcomes assessed here. Attention deficit, conduct, and/or disruptive behavior disorder was also a statistically significant impediment to all positive program outcomes. Substance use was associated with reduced client gains for education and employment. Chronic health issues, race/ethnicity, criminal history, and prior emergency shelter stay were all associated with at least one program outcome. Table 3 summarizes these results.
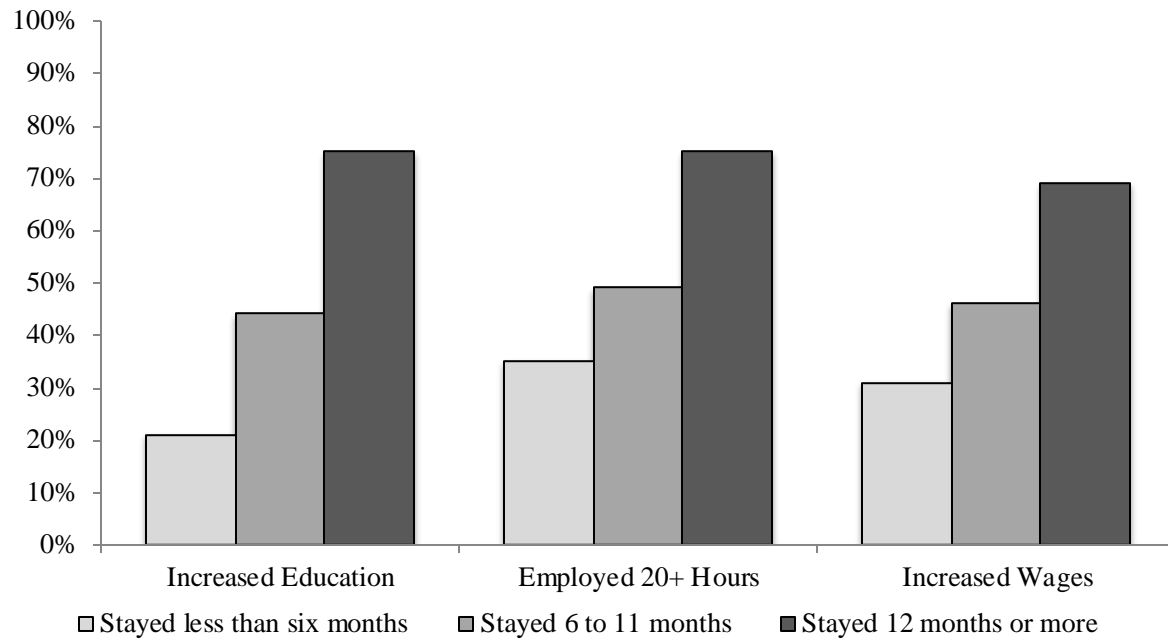
Figure 2: Percent of Daybreak TH Clients Achieving Positive Outcomes by Length of Stay (n=174)

Table 3. Bivariate Relationships between Program Outcomes and Client Characteristics (n=174)

Characteristic	Increased Education			Employed 20+ Hours			Increase in Wages		
	No	Yes	χ^2	No	Yes	χ^2	No	Yes	χ^2
Length of Stay			43.24***			21.21***			19.78***
0-5 months	51	11		40	22		43	19	
6-11 months	23	18		21	20		22	19	
12+ months	18	53		18	53		22	49	
Chronic Health Issue			0.67			4.62*			7.51**
Yes	19	13		20	12		23	9	
No	73	69		59	83		64	78	
Attention Deficit, Conduct, and/or Disruptive Behavior Disorder Diagnosis			6.44*			5.46*			3.03
Yes	24	9		21	12		21	12	
No	68	73		58	83		66	75	
Substance Use			9.78**			3.66			3.48
Yes	46	22		37	31		40	28	
No	46	60		42	64		47	59	
Race/Ethnicity			10.36**			0.64			0.04
White, non-Hispanic	27	8		18	17		18	17	
Nonwhite and/or Hispanic	65	74		61	78		69	70	
Criminal History			8.37**			1.42			2.86
Yes	48	25		37	36		42	31	
No	44	57		42	59		45	56	
History of Emergency Shelter Stay			5.33*			0.00			0.23
Yes	69	48		53	64		57	60	
No	23	34		26	31		30	27	
Gender			3.88*			0.33			0.59
Female	47	54		44	57		48	53	
Male	45	28		35	38		39	34	
Lived with Neither Biological Parent			4.02*			0.52			0.00
Lived with neither biological parent	38	22		25	35		30	30	
Lived with at least one biological parent	54	60		54	60		57	57	
Witnessed Community Violence			4.21*			1.26			0.22
Yes	42	25		34	33		35	32	
No	50	57		45	62		52	55	
Prolonged Homelessness			2.60			3.12			5.79*
Yes	29	17		26	20		30	16	
No	63	65		53	75		57	71	
History of Couch Hopping			0.08			2.51			4.41*
Yes	61	56		58	59		65	52	
No	31	26		21	36		22	35	

Notes: Signs indicate the direction of statistically significant correlations (if applicable) based on chi-square tests. Asterisks indicate statistical significance level (* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001). All other characteristics had no statistically significant correlations with any program outcome.

5. Discussion

This study contributes to the limited body of work examining supportive housing solutions for transition-aged youth. In this study, we compare changes in educational attainment, employment, and wages of Daybreak TH clients at program entry and program exit. We further explore how characteristics of Daybreak TH youth are associated with changes across these outcomes. The strongest predictor of progress toward educational and employment objectives was length of stay, whereas youth with attention deficit, conduct, or disruptive behavioral disorder diagnoses; substance use; and criminal histories tended to fare worse than their peers in achieving gains across the outcomes of interest. It is not necessarily surprising that youth with more complex challenges would fare worse than peers with fewer challenges, despite Daybreak's trauma-centered approach to care and service delivery. However, this finding points to the need for research that explores the effect of transitional housing on subpopulations of homeless youth. Such programs evolve and change over time to incorporate new practices. Daybreak, for instance, has made several changes to its practices since we completed data collection for this study in 2014, including programmatic changes to incorporate new, evidence-based practices and to comply with HUD and HHS regulations and performance standards.

Most studies to date about supportive housing for transitional aged youth assess the challenges this population faces (Ferguson et al., 2011; Keeshin & Campbell, 2011) rather than evaluate programs designed to resolve them. By contrast, the present study seeks to assess key outcomes for youth who participate in a youth-centered transitional housing program. Our results align with many empirical findings from Mares & Kroner (2011), namely that those who stay in the program longer and do not have mental health challenges are more likely to succeed in youth housing programs. The finding that youth who participate longer in transitional housing achieve more positive outcomes is not surprising, in that it takes time to increase education, gain employment or increase hours of employment, and increase earnings. Youth participating in Daybreak TH received support in achieving these goals, such as job training, assistance with job placement, and assistance with attaining a GED and accessing other

educational opportunities. However, it is important to note that our research design does not allow us to rule out the role of maturation as a reason for improvement on outcomes of interest.

The notable finding that white, non-Hispanic youth were less likely to achieve educational gains than other participants also aligns with Jones (2011), who found similar ethnoracial disparities. Specifically, Jones studied a group of foster youth who were given the opportunity to reside in a transitional housing program for up to one year after discharge from foster care. Jones found that white youth were less likely to be discharged to the transitional housing program; discharge to the transitional housing program was, in turn, associated with several positive outcomes, such as higher likelihood of employment, less substance use, and fewer criminal justice interactions. Moreover, multivariate analysis revealed that white youth were more likely to experience housing instability regardless of housing arrangement at discharge. Jones speculates that it is possible that youth of color may have reaped more of a benefit from the program than white youth, perhaps due to increased rates of risk stemming from socioeconomic inequities. This could also be the case for Daybreak. Selection bias could also be a factor, such that racial differences associated with self-selection into Daybreak that could be associated with increased educational attainment. In either case, this finding points to the need for additional research on the impact of youth-centered transitional housing programs on subpopulations of youth.

There are some crucial limitations to this analysis. First, this study is designed to compare youth to themselves at Daybreak TH entry and exit. Thus, findings are descriptive and should not be interpreted causally. We do not have a counterfactual to tell us whether Daybreak TH youth would have fared better, worse, or the same had they not participated in the program. Further, because this study does not employ a control or comparison group of youth who did not participate in Daybreak TH, we cannot rule out the possibility that any changes in client outcomes were the result of maturation or another unobserved factor rather than program participation. Further, due to selection bias, findings cannot be generalized to all homeless youth. Youth who are suspicious of authority figures or social services agencies may be less likely to seek out assistance and, therefore, may be underrepresented herein. Also, as noted earlier, HUD's definition of homelessness further excludes youth who are couch-hoppers unless those individuals

spend at least one night on the streets or in a homeless shelter, a barrier may exclude some potential

clients from entry to Daybreak TH.

From a statistical perspective, all relationships discussed here are the result of bivariate analysis.

This means that groups (e.g., males and females) being compared are not evaluated on an "all else being

equal" basis, ignoring any differences between them. It is possible, then, that some relationships are

actually spurious, meaning that the observed effect is actually a result of a third, unobserved variable.

However, successful regression modeling would require a larger number of clients to conduct and would

need to be specified properly to account for all potential confounding factors.

Future research is necessary to determine the long-term outcomes of homeless youth who

participate in Daybreak TH or similar transitional housing programs. To the authors' knowledge, there

has yet to be a randomized, controlled study evaluating the effectiveness of youth transitional housing or

other housing programs for homeless youth. This study, notably, tracks clients only while in supportive

housing; ideally, such studies would follow former tenants for some time, but obtaining consent to do so

from those who may not wish to be reminded of their prior history of homelessness or may still be

housing insecure would be challenging. Further, there has been little or no comparison of between

different types of housing programs to determine which program(s) perform best, and as noted, there is

much room for methodological refinement. These are critical areas for future research and expanding our

understanding of how best to serve homeless youth.

References

Altena, A. M., Beijersbergen, M. D., & Wolf, J. R. L. M. (2014). Homeless youth's experiences with shelter and community care services: Differences between service types and the relationship to overall service quality. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *46*, 195–202. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2014.08.019

Baker Collins, S. D. (2013). From Homeless Teen to Chronically Homeless Adult: A Qualitative Study of the Impact of Childhood Events on Adult Homelessness. *Critical Social Work*, *14*(2), 61–81.

Bartlett, M., Copeman, A., Golin, J., Miller, D., & Needle, E. (2004). *Unlocking the Potential of Homeless Older Adolescents: Factors Influencing Client Success in Four New England Transitional Living Programs*.

Berzin, S. C., Rhodes, A. M., & Curtis, M. A. (2011). Housing experiences of former foster youth: How do they fare in comparison to other youth? *Children and Youth Services Review*, *33*(11), 2119–2126. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2011.06.018

Bishop, K., Brune, M., De Sousa, T., Hashizume, M., Morrill, T., Nava, A., … Jones, M. (2017). The 2017 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress, (December), 100.

Black, E. B., Fedyszyn, I. E., Mildred, H., Perkin, R., Lough, R., Brann, P., & Ritter PII, C. (2018). Homeless Youth: Barriers and Facilitators for Service Referrals. *Evaluation and Program Planning*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2018.02.009

Burt, M. (2010). *Life After Transitional Housing for Homeless Families*. Washington, DC.

Chamberlain, C., & Johnson, G. (2011). Pathways into Adult Homelessness. *Journal of Sociology*, *49*(1), 60–77. https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783311422458

Coates, J., & Sue, M.-M. (2010). Out of the Frying Pan, Into the Fire: Trauma in the Lives of Homeless Youth Prior to and During Homelessness. *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, *37*(4), 65–96. https://doi.org/10.3868/s050-004-015-0003-8

Culhane, D. P., Khadduri, J., Cortes, A., Buron, L., & Poulin, S. (2008). *The 2007 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report to Congress*. Washington, DC.

Daybreak. (n.d.). About Daybreak. Retrieved July 13, 2017, from http://daybreakdayton.org/index.php?/About/About-Daybreak.html

Dworsky, A., Napolitano, L., & Courtney, M. E. (2013). Homelessness during the transition from foster care to adulthood. *American Journal of Public Health*, *103*(S2), S318–S323. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2013.301455

Edidin, J. P., Ganim, Z., Hunter, S. J., & Karnik, N. S. (2012). The mental and physical health of homeless youth: A literature review. *Child Psychiatry and Human Development*, *43*(3), 354–375. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10578-011-0270-1

Family & Youth Services Bureau. (2018). *Transitional Living Program Fact Sheet*. Washington, DC.

Ferguson, K. M., Bender, K., Thompson, S., Xie, B., & Pollio, D. (2011). Correlates of street-survival behaviors in homeless young adults in four U.S. cities. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, *81*(3), 401–409. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-0025.2011.01108.x

Fischer, R. L. (2000). Toward Self-Sufficiency: Evaluating a Transitional Housing Program for Homeless Families. *Policy Studies Journal*, *28*(2), 402–420. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0072.2000.tb02038.x

Garber, R., Beckwith, K., Bunkley, L. S., Michel, E., Kramer, L., VanDerSluijs, T., … Minton, C. (2012). *Daybreak: Changing Lives Creating Futures: Year One Process Evaluation*. Columbus, OH.

Giffords, E. D., Alonso, C., & Bell, R. (2007). A transitional living program for homeless adolescents: A case study. *Child and Youth Care Forum*, *36*(4), 141–151. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10566-007-9036-0

Gubits, D., Shinn, M., Wood, M., Bell, S., Dastrup, S., Solari, C. D., … Klerman, J. (2016). *Family Options Study: 3-Year Impacts of Housing and Services Interventions for Homeless Families*. Washington, DC.

Gwadz, M. V., Nish, D., Leonard, N. R., & Strauss, S. M. (2007). Gender differences in traumatic events and rates of post-traumatic stress disorder among homeless youth. *Journal of Adolescence*, *30*(1), 117–129. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2006.01.004

Hadland, S. E., Marshall, B. D. L., Kerr, T., Qi, J., Montaner, J. S., & Wood, E. (2012). Suicide and history of childhood trauma among street youth. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, *136*(3), 377–380. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2011.11.019

Hammer, H., Finkelhor, D., & Sedlak, A. (2002). *Runaway/Thrownaway Children: National Estimates and Characteristics. Human Trafficking: Data and Documents.* (Vol. Paper 20). Washington, DC.

Holtschneider, C. (2016). A part of something: The importance of transitional living programs within a Housing First framework for youth experiencing homelessness. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *65*, 204–215. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2016.04.009

Keeshin, B. R., & Campbell, K. (2011). Screening homeless youth for histories of abuse: Prevalence, enduring effects, and interest in treatment. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, *35*(6), 401–407. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2011.01.015

Kroner, M. J., & Mares, A. S. (2009). Lighthouse independent living program: Characteristics of youth served and their outcomes at discharge. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *31*(5), 563–571. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2008.10.011

Kroner, M. J., & Mares, A. S. (2011). Living arrangements and level of care among clients discharged from a scattered-site housing-based independent living program. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *33*(2), 405–415. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2010.11.001

Latham, N., Drake, E. B., Cuevas, R., & Sugano, E. (2008). *Foster Youth Housing Initiative: Final Evaluation Findings*. San Francisco, CA.

Long, S. M. (2015). Navigating Homelessness and Navigating Abuse: How Homeless Mother Find Transitional Housing While Managing Intimate Partner Violence. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *43*(8), 1019–1035. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop

Lutze, F. E., Rosky, J. W., & Hamilton, Z. K. (2014). Homelessness and Reentry: A Multisite Outcome Evaluation of Washington State's Reentry Housing Program for High Risk Offenders. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *41*(4), 471–491. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854813510164

Manno, M., Jacobs, E., Alson, J., & Skemer, M. (2014). *Moving into adulthood: Implementation findings from the Youth Villages Transitional Living evaluation*. New York, NY.

Mares, A. S., & Kroner, M. J. (2011). Lighthouse Independent Living Program: Predictors of client outcomes at discharge. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *33*(9), 1749–1758. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2011.04.028

Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, *50*(13), 370–396. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346

Nolan, T. C. (2006). Outcomes for a Transitional Living Program Serving LGBTQ Youth in New York City. *Child Welfare*, *85*(2), 385–407.

Office of Applied Studies. (2004). *Substance Use among Youths Who Had Run Away from Home. The NSDUH Report*. Rockville, MD.

Office of Policy Development and Research. (1995). *Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Programs PD&R Report to Congress January 1995*. Washington, DC.

Pierce, S. C., Grady, B., & Holtzen, H. (2016). *Impact Evaluation and Roadmap to Youth Housing*. Columbus, OH.

Rashid, S. (2004). Evaluating a Transitional Living Program for Homeless, Former Foster Care Youth. *Research on Social Work Practice*, *14*(4), 240–248. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049731503257883

Rodriguez, J. M., & Eidelman, T. A. (2017). Homelessness Interventions in Georgia: Rapid Re-Housing, Transitional Housing, and the Likelihood of Returning to Shelter. *Housing Policy Debate*, *27*(6), 825–842. https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2017.1313292

Shinn, M., Brown, S. R., Spellman, B. E., Wood, M., Gubits, D., & Khadduri, J. (2017). Mismatch Between Homeless Families and the Homelessness Service System. *Cityscape (Washington, D.C.)*, *19*(3), 293–307. https://doi.org/10.2307/26328368

Siegel, J. (2016). *Building A Better Stepping Stone: Homeless Youth Perceptions of Transitional Housing Programs* (No. Paper 675). St. Catherine University.

Siskind, D., Harris, M., Kisely, S., Siskind, V., Brogan, J., Pirkis, J., … Whiteford, H. (2014). A retrospective quasi-experimental study of a transitional housing program for patients with severe and persistent mental illness. *Community Mental Health Journal*, *50*(5), 538–547.

https://doi.org/10.1007/s10597-013-9654-y

Skemer, M., & Valentine, E. J. (2016). *Striving for independence: Two-year impact findings from the Youth Villages transitional living evaluation*. New York, NY.

Tsemberis, S., Gulcur, L., & Nakae, M. (2004). Housing First, Consumer Choice, and Harm Reduction for Homeless Individuals with a Dual Diagnosis. *American Journal of Public Health*, *94*(4), 651–656. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.94.4.651

Valentine, E. J., Skemer, M., & Courtney, M. E. (2015). *Becoming Adults: One-Year Impact Findings from the Youth Villages Transitional Living Evaluation*. New York, NY.

Woodgate, R. L., Morakinyo, O., & Martin, K. M. (2017). Interventions for youth aging out of care: A scoping review. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *82*, 280–300. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2017.09.031

Highlights

- The majority of transitional housing participants exiting the program were employed at least 20 hours a week, had increased their level of education, or had increased their monthly wages.
- Staying in transitional housing at least 12 months improved youth outcomes at program exit.
- Youth with reported substance use, chronic illness, and certain behavioral disorders were less likely to achieve outcomes of interest.