

# Community Action in Ohio

Community Action Agencies work to alleviate poverty and empower low-income families in their communities. We change people's lives and improve communities. The Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies represents 50 agencies around the state serving the needs of low-income people in all of Ohio's 88 counties. This blog will share some of the ways in which Ohio's CAAs have helped people in their community.

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## Community Action Gives Ex-Offenders a Second Chance



Fawn's mug shot

Fawn was a drug addict and 12-time convicted felon when she turned to IMPACT Community Action in Columbus. "I was homeless and felt helpless in Cleveland, Ohio. I literally lived on the street with my addiction. My face was plastered as a most wanted fugitive in Cleveland," explained Fawn. "Drug and alcohol abuse became my life and my arrest actually saved my life."

Once released from prison, Fawn attended IMPACT Community Action's Re-Entry Work Readiness and Workforce

Development/Employment Plus programs. The Re-Entry Work Readiness program helps restored citizens capitalize on their second chances by addressing the critical barriers to their successful re-entry into the community. The program is designed to develop and strengthen core competencies pertaining to the participants attitude as it relates to resuming/establishing their roles with their families and communities; their aptitude as it relates to further developing and identifying their gifts and talents; and their accountability as it pertains to their financial responsibilities. The Workforce Development/Employment Plus Program provides cutting-edge training to help dislocated and disadvantaged workers secure and maintain employment that includes computer literacy, résumé writing, mock interviewing, academic course work and financial literacy, as well as one-on-one job coaching.



Fawn after completing IMPACT's programs

While Fawn did not know what to expect from the classes, she knew she wanted to be there and recapture her life. "I needed a family and IMPACT became my family," she said. "I realized while in the 'Mis-Socialization of Incarcerated Persons' workshop that I did not love myself. Because of this, I did not know how to love other people. It was sobering to learn that until I got my life right in my heart, I would continue in the cycle of my own self abuse."

Fawn explained that the programs at IMPACT gave her hope. "I can get up in the morning and look forward to another day. I can pray and not beg God to do something for me that He gave me the power to do for myself," she stated. "Before the Re-Entry program I looked in the mirror and saw a 12-time convicted felon. I did not recognize myself. But now when I look in the mirror, I see a woman that has come a long way. I accomplished something in this program that I so desperately needed. I lost my past and I found myself. I found out that what I did yesterday does not define the woman that I am today.

"I am a woman that is determined, focused and hopeful! I have the potential to be anything that I need to be. I am a tax-paying citizen! I am a part of this great society and most importantly, I am no longer that girl in the mug shot!

"Today, I am gainfully employed! I got a job with benefits! I know this may sound silly, but when you have thought for so long that you would never do something and you finally do, it is incredible! I passed all of my testing and received the Workforce Readiness Credential. I proved to myself that I could do it. I also can go to college. This is one of the best experiences that I ever had a chance to be a part of," concluded Fawn.

*For more information about Community Action programs in your area, visit [www.oaca.org](http://www.oaca.org). Note, not all Community Action Agencies offer these programs.*

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