

Anti-Retaliation Policy for Youth & Young Adults

Retaliation for standing up for yourself and others is terrifying when the consequences can be so high. It could look like getting a worse punishment than others for the same thing, being kicked out of a program suddenly, staff being rude to you at the program, and many other things that make it harder for you to feel able to safely and comfortably use that resource. This policy was created by the Youth Action Board, a group of youth and young adults who have experience with, or are passionate about ending homelessness. As a Youth Action Board made up of youth and young adults who have experience with homelessness, many of us regularly receive housing, food, hygiene items and money from the same resource providers and organizations that we give feedback and criticism to. This dynamic is one of the many things that makes speaking up a lot riskier than it needs to be, but we shouldn't have to feel like we have to be silent so we don't lose a resource we need to survive.

This document is a policy drafted by our Y.A.B. to create a way for you to report if you have been retaliated against for giving feedback or criticism about this organization. Under the "procedures" section, there are several contacts you can reach out to if you are retaliated against - the more information about what happened you can give them, the better. The CoC will ensure that you do not lose any resources during the investigation, and once they have an unbiased picture of what happened, they will work with you and the organization you are receiving resources from to find a resolution. As your peers, you can ask for a Y.A.B. member to be there as a support person so you do not have to go into that meeting alone.

The resolution could mean helping you find other resources that meet your needs, encouraging the organization to find a point of compromise, or helping you find professional mediation services. The CoC will follow up with you for a while after everyone agrees on a resolution to help settle any further conflicts around the situation, and if you have any feedback about this policy or questions about how it works, you can contact Y.A.B. or the contacts under the "procedures" section.

This policy exists to protect participants who give feedback about housing providers. Sharing feedback on housing policies is important for improving programs and making them more accessible and safe for everyone. However, this can be hard or impossible if you're feeling scared you may be retaliated against for giving feedback, because of the power that housing providers have over the resources that you need.

Our hope is that this document will give everyone the confidence they need to give honest feedback that improves our community.

Retaliation could look like:

- Being denied services or resources
- Receiving harsher punishments
- Getting kicked out or removed from a program

The way this policy works is by laying out a process for addressing harm, through

If you think you may have experienced retaliation, please reach out to:

- Contact Shaundell Diaz at sdiaz@communityaction.us (or current Coordinated Entry Specialist- see COC staff list: <https://www.threecountycoc.communityaction.us/staff>)
- Contact the CoC at threecountycoc@communityaction.us
- Contact Lydia Davis at ldavis@communityaction.us or G Parker Welch at gwelch@communityaction.us (or current YAB staff, see Y&WDP staff list: <https://www.communityaction.us/youth-programs-contact-us>)

If you have experienced retaliation, the CoC will do everything in its power to support you in finding a solution.

Vision Statement

Our vision in creating this policy is to ensure that YAB members and youth & young adults feel safe sharing their experiences and giving honest feedback and criticism in YHDP-funded programs without worrying about repercussions or retaliation. This policy is not about youth and young adults receiving special treatment from service providers, but rather will provide a formal course of action and CoC process in case a youth or young adult experiences actual or perceived retaliation from YHDP-funded organizations for sharing feedback about their experiences in programs. Together we are working towards our shared goal of supporting and meeting the needs of youth and young adults that are experiencing homelessness.

Policy

It is expected that YHDP-funded projects will not retaliate against youth & young adults for the feedback or criticism they share. If retaliation occurs, we will take action to address the situation and support accountability. Whether retaliation has occurred will be determined by the CoC on a case-by-case basis. Examples of retaliation could include but are not limited to:

- denying or reducing a youth or young adult's access to services
- enforcing program rules unequally
- treating a youth or young adult differently in response to their participation in YHDP

YHDP-funded projects will provide this policy to new participants upon entry into the program.

Procedure

- Youth/young adult shares issue with the CAPV CoC Program staff (they can share with the YAB and/or with the YAB staff as well, if they choose). Options for contact:
 - Contact Shaundell Diaz at sdiaz@communityaction.us (or current Coordinated Entry Specialist- see [COC staff list](#))
 - Contact the CoC at threecountycoc@communityaction.us
 - Contact Lydia Davis at ldavis@communityaction.us or Georgia Welch at gwelch@communityaction.us (or current YAB staff, see [Y&WDP staff list](#))
- CoC CAPV staff confirms that the youth/young adult is a participant in a YHDP-funded project.
 - If the youth/young adult is not in a YHDP-funded project, this policy would not apply, and CoC CAPV staff will support the youth/young adult to determine another route to address their concern.
- The CoC ensures that the youth/young adult is held harmless during the procedure- any decisions made by the YHDP-funded project that are perceived as retaliation will be put on hold until the procedure is completed.
- CoC CAPV staff contact the YHDP-funded project and ask for documentation (case notes, letters, etc.) of whatever circumstances the participant identified as retaliation, and any relevant info from before the issue arose (in order to help identify whether this is a change in how the agency is treating the participant).
 - CoC evaluates the process the agency took and whether they followed policies appropriately.
- CoC CAPV staff meet with the youth/young adult (and a support person or advocate, if they choose) to hear about the issue.

- CoC CAPV staff will meet with the YHDP-funded project to discuss the issue and work towards a resolution.
 - The youth/young adult may request for fellow YAB members to join the discussion in a peer support role (on an at-will basis) with the CoC and agency staff.
 - YAB members will be expected to keep the discussion confidential.
 - If the CoC CAPV staff determine the situation to not be retaliation, they would still meet with the YHDP-funded project to address the participant's perception of retaliatory behavior and provide support or mediation.
- If the CoC CAPV staff determine that retaliation has occurred, the CoC would hold the YHDP-funded project accountable to address the harm and find a solution that meets the participant's needs.
 - Possible solutions include but are not limited to:
 - The YHDP-funded project could change a decision that they made regarding the participant
 - The YHDP-funded project could change a policy or procedure to prevent future issues
 - The CoC could support the YHDP-funded project/the participant in obtaining mediation or restorative practices to repair relationships and address harm
 - The CoC could advise that the participant has the option to transfer to a different YHDP-funded project to receive housing and services, or could connect them with case management and/or other resources within the community
 - If any party believes that the CoC CAPV staff's decision is unfair or wrong, they can request to meet with the CoC Board of Directors chair.
 - Failure of the YHDP-funded project to follow the CoC's recommendation and/or resolve harm with the participant could impact the project's performance in the next ranking & evaluation process
- Follow-up:
 - Regardless of the outcome of the situation, staff will follow-up with the participant 1-2 months after the process. During the process, the YYA may identify someone involved in the process (CoC staff, YAB member, CAPV staff, etc.) that they would like to follow up with.
 - The CoC will also ensure that the final consequence administered to the participant by the YHDP-funded project will not increase in severity as a result of the participant reporting retaliation.