



YEG YOUTH ACCESS GUIDELINES

AGENCY VERSION

WHAT IS THE YEG YOUTH ACCESS GUIDELINES?

The YEG Youth Access Guidelines (YEG YAG) is a set of guidelines developed in partnership with young people to address barriers and bans¹ they experience from agencies, programs and services that they frequent. The YEG YAG encourages safe and equitable access to these locations, details acceptable behavioural standards developed by the Action Alliance for Youth Inclusion (AAYI) for both young people and agency staff, and explains consequences and processes for unacceptable behaviours.

Independent youth-serving agencies, programs, and services can use these guidelines to inform or replace their respective policies. Agencies who opt in to the guidelines are encouraged to develop and implement their policies within the spirit of reducing barriers to access, improving consistency, and enhancing communication with youth regarding banning practices.

WHAT HAS LED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE YOUTH ACCESS GUIDELINES?

This project was initiated out of the Action Alliance for Youth Inclusion (AAYI)² *Safe Streets* research projects. The *Safe Streets* research has been conducted in phases over the last 10 years. It stems from a collective of agencies and service providers who care about young people who are traumatized and marginalized and service providers who care about having inclusive access to all aspects of community. Specifically, the Youth Access Guidelines aim to:

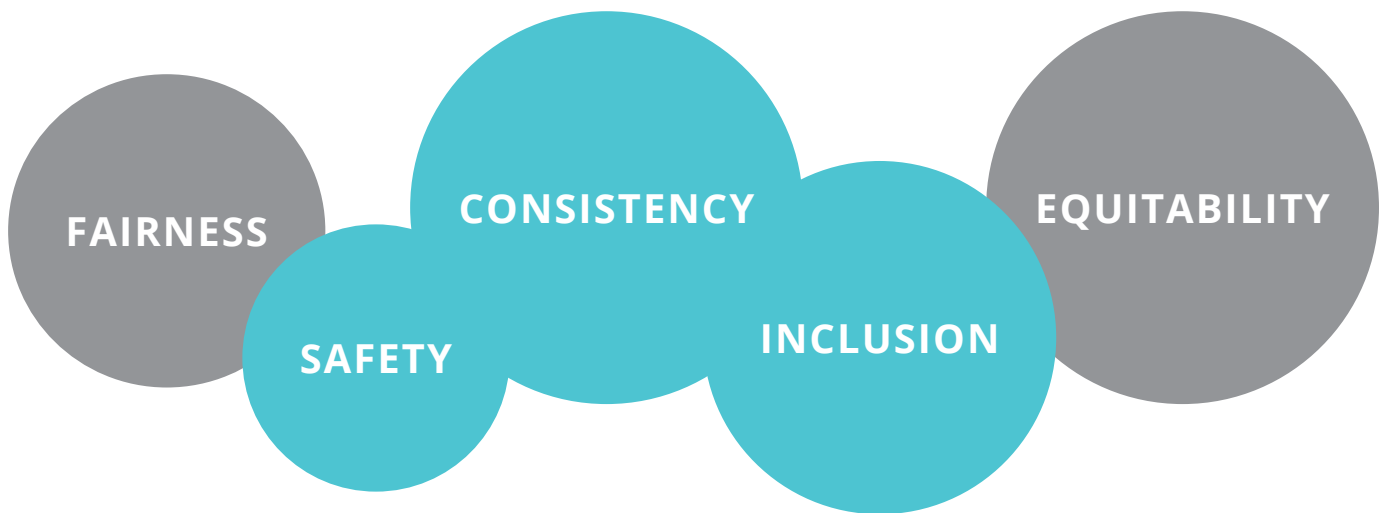
- reduce the number of banning instances experienced by young people;
- encourage and increase positive, safe engagement between young people and authority figures;
- encourage consistency in the process taken to issue a ban which limits youth access to spaces or services;
- encourage agency policy development utilizing the youth access guidelines;
- and promote the social inclusion of young people in spaces they identify as important.

¹ See *Appendix A: FAQs and Definitions* for details on why the term 'ban' is used.

² See *Appendix A: FAQs and Definitions* for membership.

YOUTH ACCESS GUIDELINES VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

The YAG values:



The YAG is based on the following principles:

1. Everyone has the right to a physically and emotionally safe environment.
2. Young people and staff are treated equitably recognizing that each is as important as the other.
3. Everyone is honoured regardless of characteristics including but not limited to: age, gender, appearance, ability, sexuality, ethnicity, race or need.
4. A trauma informed approach³ is essential. This requires that communication between youth and staff be open, clear and, if necessary, in writing.
5. Youth have the capacity and deserve the opportunity to discuss and resolve disagreements and to access a restorative appeal process. This requires an accessible, open, fair, and consistent approach.
6. The delivery of fair and consistent consequences for agreed upon inappropriate behaviour will help prevent criminalization of youth.
7. If a ban prevents youth from accessing a needed space or service, it is essential they are connected to alternative services and supports.

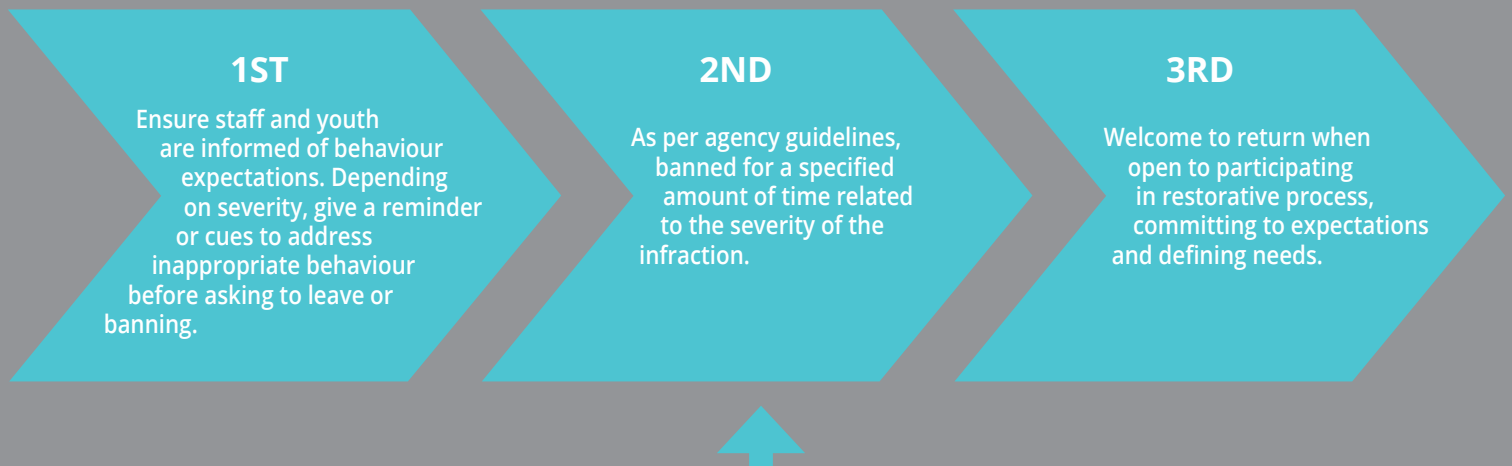
³ See *Appendix A: FAQs and Definitions* for definition.

EXPECTATIONS FOR BEHAVIOUR

The YAG outlines a suggested framework for youth and staff behaviour that is based on the stated values and principles. *Staff behaviour should always follow these Youth Access Guidelines, values, and principles; however, it is of particular importance to be aware when responding to youth behaviour deemed unacceptable. This is to avoid emotionally reactive responses rather than engaging in thoughtful and meaningful processes.*

YOUNG PERSON	RESPECT OTHERS	RESPECT THE SPACE
What are acceptable behaviours for a young person in an agency or facility	Take care to behave in a way that helps maintain the emotional and physical safety of other youth, staff, volunteers, and community members.	Behave in a way that protects the facility, space and property of others.
What are unacceptable behaviours for a young person in an agency or facility	Behaviours that prevent others from safely accessing space or services such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical: violence, fighting, aggression, raging, intimidation, harassment Language: intimidation, making threats, inappropriate or vulgar language, racist or homophobic or religious slurs, excessive swearing, harassment Behaviour: severe intoxication, under the influence of drugs or alcohol, gang recruitment, possession of prohibited drugs or paraphernalia, distribution of or selling drugs, obscene gestures, bullying (physical, cyber, verbal), theft, harassment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coming back when you've been asked to leave Sleeping where not allowed Theft from facility Utilizing services inappropriately; may also include actions like blocking doorways/walkways, skateboarding/cycling, etc. Property damage, or tagging/graffiti
STAFF	RESPECT YOUTH	RESPECT THE PROCESS
When dealing with unacceptable behaviours from an individual, STAFF WILL :	Speak and behave in a calm manner that is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respectful Inclusive Culturally aware Reflects trauma informed principles 	Include in ban documentation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific reason for ban Length of ban Information of contact person for questions or appeal process The parameters of agency access throughout ban
To minimize escalating youth behaviour AND when dealing with unacceptable behaviour from youth, STAFF WILL NOT :	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speak negatively about a youth to influence other staff Gossip or break confidentiality Use sarcasm, belittle, make fun of someone, or put down dreams or goals Enter into power struggles Take things personally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement unfair, inconsistent, or subjective bans Fail to provide ban documentation Infringe on human rights (based on gender, race, spoken language, religion, sexual orientation, political affiliation, nationality or social origin) Practice favoritism

YAG APPROACH TO BANS



IN AN EMERGENCY, DIAL 911 IMMEDIATELY

If there is escalation requiring authorities to become involved, preference is for a harm reduction and trauma informed focus and should be relationship-based when possible.

BEFORE BANNING

1. Staff is witness to or informed of behaviour that is concerning.
2. Staff attempts de-escalation or intervention to avoid need for a ban.
3. Staff believes that behaviour meets criteria for a ban (see above *Expectations for Behaviours* grid).
4. Staff consults a supervisor or a neutral staff, as per agency procedures, to receive second opinion on need for a ban.

APPROACH

First assess safety of staff and individuals in the immediate area; prioritize safety utilizing agency procedures for given situation. If youth is coherent and capable of conversation:

1. Agency should have a specific designate who has conversations with youth about bans, or staff should have a conversation with each other to decide who on shift is best to have this conversation with that particular youth (based on criteria like: strong relationship with the youth, not emotionally affected by the situation, etc.).
2. Agency should have a private space to speak with youth in order to respect their privacy and maintain confidentiality around the situation. This could be a designated space for all such conversations or staff should do the best they can to accommodate privacy in the space they are required to be in (e.g., talk behind a wall, in a hallway, in a cubicle, or the like).
3. Proceed to implementation (see below).

If youth is not coherent or capable of conversation:

1. Youth is assessed as not being capable of conversation regarding cause and conditions of ban due to concerns such as intoxication, psychosis, aggressive behaviours, etc.
2. Youth is asked to leave if safe for the youth, or staff implement alternate interventions (e.g. medical assistance, emergency mental health support, police intervention, etc.).
3. When youth returns to site and is able to understand a discussion on the ban, proceed with steps above and implementation.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Discuss cause of ban with the youth. Staff should remain calm, fact-based, and non-judgmental. Avoid comments intended to cause guilt or shame.⁴
2. Explain ban conditions including which services and locations are affected, for how long, and what needs to be done to return to services.
3. Youth should be provided with documentation⁵ on their ban conditions and process to advocate (if applicable), or be told how to access this information (online, by contacting a specific staff, by dropping in at a specified time, email bans@agency.org, etc.).
4. With the youth, review alternate services that they can access to meet their needs. It is recommended that all agencies have a resource document that can be given to youth. Some examples of existing resource documents include the Rainbow Pages, an LGBTQ2SA+ resource guide, and/or 211, a community data base and resource guide.
5. Create a safety plan⁶ with the youth if necessary for any high-risk situations pertinent to their situation.
6. Youth asked to leave property. In some cases, youth should be provided a “warm hand-off”⁷ to relevant resources (e.g. If youth is being asked to leave a program during severe cold weather, youth could be offered a bus ticket with route info, 211 could be called to connect with the 24/7 Rescue Van⁸ that can provide transport, or other safe transportation options could be found).

*NOTE: It is recommended that the name and identifying information of the youth, on youth documentation, would not appear to protect the youth if document is lost.

⁴ See *Appendix B: Conversation Example*.

⁵ See *Appendix C: Ban Documentation Example*.

⁶ See *Appendix D: Safety Plan Example*.

⁷ See *Appendix A: FAQs and Definitions* for a definition.

⁸ See *Appendix A: FAQs and Definitions* for more information.

FOLLOW UP

1. Document ban information internally, as staff should be able to give consistent information on bans. There should either be designated staff who can access the information on any ban and youth should be directed to talk to them regarding ban info, or if all front line staff have access to the ban info they should access an individual youths information in the documentation before discussing with a youth to ensure that misinformation is not given.
2. Debrief the situation as a learning opportunity for staff after a ban is implemented. Staff should be able to reflect on their own actions and what they could have improved on, and discuss techniques for self-care after stressful situations. If no formal or existing debrief format exists for your organization, AAYI recommends using a framework that has staff reflect on what went well, what was tricky, and what they would do differently in a similar situation in the future.
3. If a youth attempts to contact, or shows up at the agency, remind them of the ban length and advocacy process. Youth should be provided with a warning before involving police.

END OF BAN

1. A ban will expire with time. At this point, youth may immediately be able to access an agency's space and/or service or youth will be required to go through additional negotiated processes that must be met before youth can access space and/or services. Ensure that this is negotiated with the youth and outlined in your banning documentation.
2. This negotiated process may vary by agency but it is recommended they include a conversation on: a) what happened that caused the ban including what the expectations are that were not met; b) what the youth would do differently if the same type of situation were to arise again and what the next consequences will be should the expectations not be met; and c) supports that may help the youth with anything they identified as a barrier to following these expectations.
3. If any consequences beyond the ban are deemed necessary, these should follow a restorative justice model⁹ (e.g., a youth damaged property and as restitution they will be required to help repair the damage or do other facility maintenance/cleaning).
4. Youth should be reminded of rules and expectations in order to set them up for success in following them. If helpful, a *behavioural contract* could be utilized for ongoing issues.
5. Once ban is lifted, youth should return to a welcoming environment.

These guidelines have been developed by the Action Alliance for Youth Inclusion (AAYI)¹⁰ from the Youth Bans: Policy, Implementation, And The Perspectives Of Youth And Stakeholders (<https://www.homelesshub.ca/resource/youth-bans-policy-implementation-and-perspectives-youth-and-stakeholders>) research and final report. Some components were adapted from the Lake Haven Centre - Youth Access Protocol: <https://www.lakehavencentre.com.au/media/9604590/lake-haven-centre-youth-access-protocol-2019.pdf>

⁹ See *Appendix A: FAQs and Definitions* for a further definition

¹⁰ See *Appendix A: FAQs and Definitions* for membership



Photo Credit: the City of Edmonton

YEG YOUTH ACCESS GUIDELINES

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) AND DEFINITIONS

WHO ARE THE MEMBERS OF AAYI?

AAYI or the Action Alliance for Youth Inclusion was formerly known as the Old Strathcona Community Mapping and Planning collaborative (OSCMAP) and has historically included members from a number of agencies including, but not limited to Children's Services Edmonton Region, City of Edmonton Citizen Services, Edmonton Public Library, iHuman Youth Society, M.A.P.S. Alberta Capital Region, Neighbourhood Empowerment Team/The Family Centre, Old Strathcona Youth Society (OSYS), Youth Empowerment and Support Services (YESS), and others.

WHY DOES AAYI AND THE YEG YAG USE THE TERM 'BAN' AND WHAT DOES IT REFER TO?

The term 'ban' is used to reflect the language used by youth when referring to bans, suspensions, or any other restriction placed on accessing or frequenting a space.

WHAT IS HARM REDUCTION?

There is no universally accepted definition of harm reduction. It is defined by Alberta Health Services¹ as the use of policies, programs and practices that aim to minimize harm. Harm, in the context of YEG YAG, are negative health, social, and legal impacts.

Harm reduction is grounded in justice and human rights - it focuses on positive change and on working with people without judgement, coercion, or discrimination. By meeting people where they are at, these individuals are recognized as part of the community and can feel supported rather than isolated, creating safer communities where people are more likely to seek help when they need it.

¹ <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/Page15432.aspx>

WHAT IS RESTORATIVE JUSTICE?

- Restorative justice, as defined by the Alberta Restorative Justice Association, is an approach focused on repairing harm when a wrongdoing or injustice occurs in a community. Depending on the process or technique used, restorative justice involves the victim, the offender, their social networks, justice agencies, and the community.
- Restorative justice views crime as more than breaking the law – it recognizes the harm that these incidents cause to people, relationships, and the community. It seeks to restore relationships and creates an environment where all involved are given the opportunity to be heard.
- A restorative process has the following elements:
 - It is voluntary
 - It respects all of the participants
 - It is held in a safe place
 - It has informed consent
 - It holds the person responsible for the harm accountable

WHAT IS A TRAUMA INFORMED APPROACH?

- A trauma-informed approach, according to Alberta Health Services², is an approach that acknowledges the existence and significance trauma (past and present) plays in the actions and behaviours of individuals. The approach includes ensuring safety of both young people and staff, using supportive practices and environments to engage young people, being youth-focused through collaboration and choice, and acknowledging the strength and resilience of the individual.
- Three key elements of a trauma-informed approach are:
 - Realizing how often trauma occurs
 - Recognizing how trauma affects all individuals involved with the agency, organization, or business
 - Responding by putting this knowledge into practice

² <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/mh/hi-amh-tic-definitions.pdf>

WHAT IS TRAUMA?

Trauma refers to experiences that cause intense physical and psychological stress reactions. Experiences can refer to one event, a series of events, or a set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful and have lasting adverse effects on the individual's physical, social, emotional or spiritual well-being³.

WHAT IS A "WARM HAND-OFF"?

- This refers to ensuring that youth are connected with alternative services and supports as needed. Providing a warm hand-off means going beyond giving youth experiencing a ban the information about alternative services and supports by connecting them to the service provider or alternative agency and ensuring they receive what they need.
- A Safety Plan⁴ can be a way to help provide a warm hand-off.

HOW LONG SHOULD A BAN LAST?

This document is a general guideline. Length of bans may be different for individual youth depending on the circumstances around a particular incident. For example, this may include:

- What the youth is experiencing at this time
- Extenuating circumstances such as being provoked by other youth, ongoing conflict with a staff member, etc.
- Relationship to organization and length of time connected to the organization
- Out of character reaction by the youth
- Weather conditions

For these and other reasons, the length of the ban needs to be part of the negotiated process, or if the youth is unavailable or it is not appropriate to involve the youth in the negotiation, decided in a team decision by the organization.

³ <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/mh/hi-amh-tic-definitions.pdf>

⁴ See Appendix D: Safety Plan Example

WHAT ARE THE GROUNDS FOR DISCRETION TO REMOVE A BAN EARLIER?

- Some examples and suggested grounds for ending a ban early include but are not limited to the following:
 - Apology from youth
 - Restitution
 - Interactions with mental health supports
 - Reconciliation circles
- This should be clearly communicated with youth either during the banning process or in documentation provided to them. This may differ depending on the organization or agency but should be discussed as a part of implementing these guidelines.

WHAT DOES A VERBAL WARNING SOUND LIKE?

- A verbal warning should:
 - Be factual
 - Non-judgmental
 - Ensure youth know the rules
 - Use relationship-based language, not punishment-based
 - Assume youth will comply
 - If possible, provide youth with options
- Some examples:
 - “Hi Sean, are you okay? Can you wake up and look at me? Good, I’m glad you’re doing okay. I’m sorry, but our policy doesn’t allow sleeping here. You can stay awake or you can head out for a bit. You’re welcome to come back later today or tomorrow as long as you can remain awake.”
 - “Dawn, can you please keep your voice down? We need to respect everyone else using the space today. I understand you’re upset and I would like to keep talking to you, but I need you to keep the volume down or, if you want, you can take a break outside and come back in when you’re ready.”
- If your agency uses a 3 strike policy or similar of progressive warnings, the second warning can be short and to the point as you’ve already reminded or informed the youth of the policy or rule. Re-iterating their choices or the possible consequences is often enough. For example:

- “Sean, this is the second time we’ve had to wake you up today. If you can’t stay awake, you’ll have to head out for the day.”
- “This is the second time we’ve had to ask you to keep your voice down. You know if we have to ask again, you’ll need to leave for today.”

WHAT DOES MOVE-ON WARNING SOUND LIKE?

- Similar to a banning, move-on or final warnings should be mindful of the youth’s needs and safety. A warm hand-off should be strived for whenever possible. For example, a youth being asked to move-on when it’s cold outside should be afforded the opportunity to wait for a ride or given a bus ticket and route information if it is safe to do so.
- When telling a youth to move on, staff should remain calm and speak in a calm manner to avoid the risk of escalation.
- For example:
 - “Sean... Sean. Hi Sean. I see you’re falling asleep again, and this is the third time we’ve had to wake you up. You’re going to have to head out for today, but you’re welcome back tomorrow. Do you have somewhere to go tonight? Yes, we can call AGENCY for you and see if they have a bed.”
 - “Dawn, I know you’re having a rough time. Unfortunately, I am going to have to ask you to leave for the day as I’ve already reminded you twice that you can’t yell in the space. AGENCY is open until 6 p.m. and you can grab a meal and chat with staff about what’s going on for you. Come back another time this week and we can finish this paper work.”

WHAT DOES AN APPEALS PROCESS LOOK LIKE?

- If your agency already has an existing appeals process, be consistent in using that process for all youth.
- If your agency does not have an appeals process, some examples include:
 - A reconciliation circle that brings together the youth and anyone else involved or harmed by the events that led to the banning. This allows for a communal engagement process and understanding. It involves bringing in all the partners to gain the context necessary to move forward with the youth (e.g., Edmonton Police Service, schools, agencies, workers, families, mentors, etc.). This is a type of restorative justice practice. For more details on how to

conduct a reconciliation circle, see here: <http://restorativejustice.org/restorative-justice/about-restorative-justice/tutorial-intro-to-restorative-justice/lesson-3-programs/circles/>

- An appeals process could also be as simple as having youth contact a specific person or staff member at your agency and arranging a meeting to discuss the ban and any term of re-accessing the agency.
- Consider having a spectrum of appeal options. A minor incident or ban could only require a simple appeal while a more major issue could require a more major appeal.
- Always ensure the ban documentation indicates what the appeal process will look like and how to initiate it. Ensure the youth understand their options.

WHAT DO I DO IF MY AGENCY IS THE ONLY AGENCY IN WHICH A YOUTH IS ACCESSING SERVICES?

- This is where a warm hand-off (see definition above) is important. Consider what other services might be available and connect the youth to those services or other supports as needed. Consider if the youth may be having a rough time in your space but doing well in others. Will the ban impact their access or their behaviour in other spaces?
- If there are truly no other ways for youth to access services or supports, consider the severity of the incident. Are there safety implications? If not, is a ban the best choice for the individual? Could an appeals process be initiated immediately?

APPENDIX B

CONVERSATION EXAMPLE

SAMPLE CONVERSATION WITH YOUTH WHEN IMPLEMENTING A BAN:

Hey Jeffrey, can I talk to you for a few minutes about the fight?

Aw man, I know I need to leave, whatever, I don't want to talk about it.

Yeah, you will need to leave but I'd really like to chat with you about what happened and what the consequences will be so that you understand what you can still access and when you can come back to program.

FINE, whatever, that kid was running his mouth off...

Can we have this conversation over there, it's a little more private.

Yeah, I guess.

Thanks. So you were saying the kid was running his mouth off?

Then he called me goof, so I got mad and had to put him in his place.

I understand that you were angry, is there something you think you could have done differently to express that anger that didn't involve trying to curb stomp him?

You mean like breath and shit, count to 10? That never works for me.

Have you ever been in a situation where you felt really angry but didn't hurt the other person?

Uh, I guess, I was really pissed at my girl last week but I don't hit girls so I just had to walk away, I left the place and didn't come back for like an hour.

That's impressive, that takes a lot of self-control to be able to walk away when you're mad. If walking away worked in that situation maybe you could try doing that with men too. What do you think would

be different if you had walked away in this situation?

Well for starters I wouldn't be having this lame conversation with you, but I also wouldn't be kicked out, or get arrested if that kid snitches...

So maybe it's worth trying next time?

Yeah I guess.

If I see you getting angry in the future would it be helpful for me to come and remind you to take a walk.

Yeah, sometimes all I can see is the anger so that might help, I dunno.

K, I can definitely do that for you and help you with that when you're back. In the meantime, you know there needs to be a consequence for this type of action right? You really hurt that kid.

Yeah, I know.

You know our chart that you signed off on when you did your intake, the one that's posted around the building? Any assault on a youth is an automatic two month ban. Then you can advocate to come back. Do you know what the advocacy process is here?

Not really.

It means you'll meet with our supervisor. She'll mostly want to know what happened and what you'll do differently if something like this comes up again. So basically the strategy we just talked about, so you have a head start already. You can even start practicing walking away and when you have that conversation you could mention if it's been successful for you in the two months or if it didn't work at all and you want some help thinking of different strategies. There's also a great anger management program that I can give you some info on if you decide this is something you want to work on, I'll write the website on the back of this resource list, which you can also take with you. You won't be able to come on to this property while you are banned, but this doesn't affect your access to our other program, you can keep going to there.

Oh, K, that's cool. Could you guys send my bag over there?

I can actually grab that for you before you head out today. I'm going to fill in the ban document with you here and give you a copy so you don't have to memorize all of this too. So, 2 month ban, whenever you're ready to advocate after that you can call this number and book an appointment with the supervisor, or if you lose this paper you can just google the agency number and ask for her. You know her, right?

Yeah, she helped me with my housing referral.

Cool, that's who you'll meet with. If you have any issues with the ban itself and don't believe it's fair you also have the right to appeal it. That also goes to her, so you can call that same number and she will have a look over the file and videos.

Nah, I know what's up.

I know you eat here a lot, do you know where else you can go to get some meals when you're banned?

I can get bread on Mondays from that church. I'll just grab a bunch for the week.

Yup, that's a good one. There is also agency x that does hot breakfasts every weekday just down the road, I'll highlight them here on this resource list. And this one might be great for you to check out too, they hand out sandwiches every day at 4pm. Are you still crashing on your cousin's couch?

Yup.

Is that still a safe place for you?

Pretty much.

K, well if something goes wrong and you don't feel safe anymore there is a list of shelters on here too.

Yeah, I know them.

Good. Is there anything else you are worried about?

Am I going to have to start the housing stuff all over again?

No, this will have no affect on your housing referral. You are still able to contact your housing worker too, do you have his number?

Yeah.

Great, if you lose it just call us and we'll find it for you. If we get a call from them looking for you, is there a number or email we can try to reach you at for updates?

I don't have a phone but you can use my email. I'll check it at the library.

K. I think that's everything then, here's your copy of the ban rules and that resource list. Like I said, if you lose anything feel free to call us if you have a question. Otherwise, just remember to reach out to our supervisor or swing by after that two months to book an appointment for advocacy. Make sense?

Yeah I get it.

Thanks for taking the time to go over all of this with me. I'll make sure to let the supervisor know how cooperative you were so she can take that into consideration for your advocacy. Come with me to grab your bag and then I will walk you to the door.

APPENDIX C

BAN DOCUMENTATION EXAMPLE

BAN INFORMATION AGENCY NAME

Length of ban _____

Last day ban is effective _____

Programs/locations you are banned from for this time

- ☐ All
- ☐ _____

When the ban is over you can

- ☐ Start accessing immediately
- ☐ Book a time to talk about how you can return
 - ☐ To book advocacy please contact _____ at _____

Terms of ban

- ☐ Do not access property during ban
- ☐ Access these services by appointment only _____

Resources still available to you from agency

- ☐ Call youth worker _____ during business hours for updates or referrals at _____
- ☐ Questions about your ban or want to appeal? Email bans@agency.org
- ☐ SPACE FOR ADDITIONAL INFO AS NEEDED

APPENDIX D

SAFETY PLAN EXAMPLE

AGENCY NAME

NAME:

DOB:

DATE:

DURATION:

STAFF:

STAFF 2:

SAFETY PLAN

GOAL:

I am safe.

PLAN:

1. What things/situations put me at risk?
2. The best way for me to deal with this is...
3. These are my placement options and supports I can call on...
4. Ways I will let staff know I am safe:

SIGNATURES:

YOUTH

STAFF or OTHER SUPPORT