Nevada Youth Action Council Newsletter

May 2023 edition

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| Nevada Youth Action Council in white text over the council logo: a blue-purple stylized mountain range with a black background. |

## People with disabilities and housing

Not even the tip of the iceberg

Shelter is one of our most basic needs. It is hard to overstate just how important it is to our wellbeing to be able to walk into a room, close the door securely behind us, and go to sleep. Having a stable place where we can let our guard down and rest protected from the elements is critical to our survival. Building a life worth living cannot happen without shelter. Unfortunately, people with disabilities often have a very unstable access to shelter that could be lost any day without warning. That is if they have access to shelter at all.

 As stated by the federal US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), housing discrimination on the basis of disability is illegal. It is illegal under the Fair Housing Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and a bunch of other federal and state laws that would take forever to list here. You might think that with so many laws making housing discrimination illegal it would be hard to discriminate. But according to the National Fair Housing Alliance 2018 Fair Housing Trends Report, it is actually quite common. In fact, a majority of housing discrimination complaints are made on the basis of disability. And it isn’t just mean individuals responsible for the discrimination. It is arguable that such discrimination is inherently built into the system.

 According to ongoing data analysis from the Technical Assistance Collaborative (TAC) there are 4,556,131 individuals living on SSI, otherwise known as disability income. Disability income is 841$ a month at best. People that rely on SSI have an average income of only 9,156$ a year. The average rent of a barebones one bedroom apartment in the US is 1,111$ a month. So, 127% of a person’s income on SSI. Not only does SSI not even cover one month’s rent, it leaves a grand total of 0$ left over for other necessities. Like clothes, transportation and food: something that is required to continue living. With SSI income being so low, it creates a reality where people living on SSI without rental assistance are priced out of every rental housing market in the entire country. Is that not discrimination?

 For the millions of people that get priced out of housing and priced out of their communities, what happens? Homelessness is a frequent outcome. In fact, people with disabilities make up a majority of people that are chronically homeless. That is individuals that have: “1) been continuously homeless for at least a year; or 2) experienced homelessness at least four times in the last three years for a combined length of time of at least a year” as defined by the National Alliance to End Homelessness. Those that avoid homelessness often end up living in an institution (and institutionalization is a whole other can of worms for another time). More people still have the misfortune of experiencing both homelessness and institutionalization at different points in their lives.

 If you want assistance getting involved and helping to change this status quo, please reach out to the Youth Leader, Cody Butler at CodyButler@adsd.nv.gov . Every voice matters.

If you are interested in serving on a council by and for youths with disabilities, please visit:

https://www.nvsilc.com/get-involved/join-the-youth-group/

#### “Homelessness is a profound assault on dignity, social inclusion and the right to life. It is a prima facie violation of the right to housing and violates a number of other human rights in addition to the right to life, including non-discrimination, health, water and sanitation, security of the person and freedom from cruel, degrading and inhuman treatment.”- Leilani Farha, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing