

# Council on Accreditation

## Complaint Policy and Procedures

### **Introduction**

The NRPA Council on Accreditation (COA), in fulfillment of its public responsibility assuring the quality and integrity of academic preparation in recreation, park resources, and leisure services has established the following process for reviewing complaints against the COA, accredited programs, and/or visitors. Any individual, (e.g. student, faculty member, park and recreation practitioner, and/or responsible public citizen) may submit a written complaint concerning the COA, an accredited program, and/or a visitation team member. The COA will act only upon a signed allegation that a Program, visitor representing the COA, or the COA and/or its members appears to be out of compliance or adherence with the accreditation standards or policies. The COA will not intervene on behalf of individuals, nor will it act as a court of appeal for individuals in matters of admissions, appointment, promotion, or dismissal of faculty or students. This policy addresses three distinct procedures: 1) complaints against an accredited program; 2) complaints against the COA/COA members, and; 3) complaints against an approved visitor representing the COA.

### **Procedures for Complaints against an Accredited Program**

The following procedures will be used in the investigation of a complaint against an accredited program.

1. A written, signed complaint is received by the NRPA Accreditation Staff Liaison to the COA.
2. NRPA Accreditation Staff Liaison forwards all written complaints to the COA Chair within three weeks of receipt of the complaint.
3. If the COA Chair, in consultation with the COA Executive Committee, determines that the complaint does not relate to the accreditation standards or policies, within two weeks of receiving the complaint the COA Chair and Executive Committee will notify the complainant in writing that no further action will be taken.
4. If the COA Chair, in consultation with the COA Executive Committee, determines that the complaint relates to the accreditation standards or policies, the complaint will be acknowledged in writing within two weeks of receipt by the COA Chair and Executive Committee and the complainant will be provided a copy of the process for handling the complaint.
5. At the same time as the complainant is notified, the complaint will be forwarded by certified mail to the program head as identified in the most recent self-study response to COA Accreditation Standard 3.02. The administrative officer of the institution (as currently on file with the COA), will receive a copy of the correspondence by first class mail. At the request of the complainant, the name of the complainant will be redacted within the body of the written complaint sent to the program head and administrator.
6. The COA Chair will request that the Program conduct a preliminary investigation and submit an initial report addressing the complaint as related to accreditation standards or

policies. The initial report shall be postmarked no more than 30 calendar days following receipt of the notification, as documented by return receipt of certified mail.

7. The COA Chair may request further information or materials relating to the complaint from the complainant, the institution, or other sources.
8. The COA Chair will appoint a review committee comprised of three COA members to consider the complaint, along with all relevant information. The review committee will recommend appropriate action to the COA at its next scheduled meeting. Complaints warranting immediate action will be adjudicated via a conference call of the COA comprised of a quorum of COA members.
9. Determination of an appropriate action will be based on COA consideration of the complaint, materials relating to the complaint, and the review committee's findings and recommendations.
10. The COA or the COA Executive Committee may determine that consultation with legal counsel is appropriate. As Staff Liaison to the COA, the NRPA Accreditation Manager will work with the COA and legal counsel to develop a plan to address the complaint.
11. If the complaint is determined to be unsubstantiated or unrelated to the accreditation standards or policies, no action will be taken and the complainant will be so notified.
12. If the complaint is substantiated and the COA determines that the Program appears to be out of compliance with the accreditation standards or policies, action will be taken. This action may include, but is not limited to, scheduling a prompt on-site visit of the program, establishing time-delimited conditions, assigning warnings, or withdrawing accreditation.
13. The Program head and administrative officer of the institution will be notified of the COA's decision and action in writing within two weeks of the decision. The complainant will be notified of the final decision and actions following expiration of the reconsideration and appeals process.
14. The Program will have the right to request reconsideration of the COA actions by the COA when the Program provides evidence that the COA did not adhere to its complaint policy and procedures. Any such request must be made in writing and submitted to the NRPA Staff Liaison to the COA within 30 days of receipt of final action by the Council.
15. The complainant will have the right to request reconsideration of the COA actions by the COA when the complainant provides evidence that the COA did not adhere to its complaint policy and procedures. Any such request must be made in writing and submitted to the NRPA Staff Liaison to the COA within 30 days of receipt of final action by the Council.

### **Procedures for Complaints against COA and/or COA Member(s)**

The following procedures will be used in the investigation of a complaint against the COA/COA members.

1. A written, signed complaint is received by the NRPA Accreditation Staff Liaison to the COA.
2. NRPA Accreditation Staff Liaison forwards all written complaints to the COA Chair within three weeks of receipt of the complaint.
3. If the COA Chair, in consultation with the COA Executive Committee, determines that the complaint does not relate to the accreditation standards or policies, within two weeks of receiving the complaint the COA Chair and Executive Committee will notify the complainant in writing that no further action will be taken.
4. If the COA Chair, in consultation with the COA Executive Committee, determines that the complaint relates to the accreditation standards or policies, the complaint will be acknowledged in writing within two weeks of receipt by the COA Chair and Executive Committee and the complainant will be provided a copy of the process for handling the complaint.
5. At the same time as the complainant is notified, the complaint will be forwarded to the COA Executive Committee who will receive all correspondence. At the request of the complainant, the name of the complainant will be redacted within the body of the written complaint sent to the COA.
6. If the complaint involves the COA members, at the request of the COA Executive Committee and with the acceptance of all parties, a past COA member (hereafter termed "COA Designee") will conduct the investigation. If a complaint involves the COA Chair, or a conflict of interest arises, the Vice-Chair will fulfill the Chair duties addressed previously.
7. The COA Designee may request further information or materials relating to the complaint from the complainant, the COA, or other sources.
8. The COA Designee will appoint a review committee comprised of three past COA members to consider all relevant information. The Designee will request that the review committee submit a report addressing the complaint as related to accreditation standards or policies. The report shall be postmarked no more than 30 calendar days following receipt of the notification, as documented by return receipt of certified mail. The review committee will recommend appropriate action to the COA Designee. Complaints warranting immediate action will be adjudicated via a conference call of the COA comprised of a quorum of COA members.
9. Determination of an appropriate action will be based on the consideration of the complaint, materials relating to the complaint, and the review committee's findings and recommendations.

10. The Designee, COA, or the COA Executive Committee may determine that consultation with legal counsel is appropriate. As Staff Liaison to the COA, the NRPA Accreditation Manager will work with the COA Designee and legal counsel to develop a plan to address the complaint.
11. If the complaint is determined to be unsubstantiated or not related to the accreditation standards or policies, no action will be taken, and the complainant will be so notified.
12. If the complaint is substantiated and indicates that the COA member(s) appears to be out of compliance with the accreditation standards or policies, action will be taken. This action may include, but is not limited to, retraining or dismissal from the COA and/or review of any resultant COA actions or decisions influenced by noncompliance with standards or policies.
13. The COA member will be notified of the COA Designee's decision and action in writing within two weeks of the decision. The complainant will be notified of the final decision and actions following expiration of the reconsideration and appeals process.
14. The COA member will have the right to request reconsideration of the COA Designee actions when the COA member(s) provides evidence that the COA did not adhere to its complaint policy and procedures. Any such request must be made in writing and submitted to the NRPA Staff Liaison to the COA within 30 days of receipt of final action by the Council.
15. The complainant will have the right to request reconsideration of the COA Designee actions when the complainant provides evidence that the COA did not adhere to its complaint policy and procedures. Any such request must be made in writing and submitted to the NRPA Staff Liaison to the COA within 30 days of receipt of final action by the Council.

#### **Procedures for Complaints against a Visitor Representing the COA**

The following procedures will be used in the investigation of a complaint against an approved visitor representing the COA.

1. A written, signed complaint is received by the NRPA Accreditation Liaison to the COA.
2. NRPA Accreditation Staff Liaison forwards all written complaints to the COA Chair within three weeks of receipt of the complaint.
3. If the COA Chair, in consultation with the COA Executive Committee, determines that the complaint does not relate to the accreditation standards or policies, within two weeks of receiving the complaint the COA Chair and Executive Committee will notify the complainant in writing by that no further action will be taken.
4. If the COA Chair, in consultation with the COA Executive Committee, determines that the complaint relates to the accreditation standards or policies, the complaint will be acknowledged in writing within two weeks of the receipt by the COA Chair and Executive Committee and the complainant will be provided a copy of the process for handling the complaint.

5. At the same time as the complainant is notified, the complaint will be forwarded by certified mail to the named Visitor. At the request of the complainant, the name of the complainant will be redacted within the body of the written complaint sent to the Visitor.
6. The COA will conduct a preliminary investigation and submit an initial report to the Visitor addressing the complaint as related to accreditation standards or policies. The initial report shall be postmarked no more than 30 calendar days following receipt of the notification, as documented by return receipt of certified mail.
7. The COA Chair may request further information or materials relating to the complaint from the complainant, the institution, the Visitor, or other sources.
8. The COA Chair will appoint a review committee comprised of three COA members to consider the complaint, along with all relevant information. The review committee will recommend appropriate action to the COA at its next scheduled meeting. Complaints warranting immediate action will be adjudicated via a conference call of the COA comprised of a quorum of COA members.
9. Determination of an appropriate action will be based on COA consideration of the complaint, materials relating to the complaint, the review committee's findings and recommendations.
10. The COA or the COA Executive Committee may determine that consultation with legal counsel is appropriate. As Staff Liaison to the COA, the NRPA Accreditation Manager will work with the COA and legal counsel to develop a plan to address the complaint.
11. If the complaint is determined to be unsubstantiated or unrelated to the accreditation standards or policies, no action will be taken, and the complainant and Visitor will be so notified.
12. If the complaint is substantiated and the COA determines that the Visitor appears to be out of compliance with the accreditation standards or policies, action will be taken. This action may include, but is not limited to, retraining, removal from the COA list of approved Visitors, and/or review of any resultant COA actions or decisions influenced by the Visitor's noncompliance with standards or policies.
13. The Visitor will be notified of the COA's decision and action in writing within two weeks of the decision. The complainant will be notified of the final decision and actions following expiration of the reconsideration and appeals process.
14. The Visitor will have the right to request reconsideration of the COA actions by the COA when the Visitor provides evidence that the COA did not adhere to its complaint policy and procedures. Any such request must be made in writing and submitted to the NRPA Staff Liaison to the COA within 30 days of receipt of final action by the Council.
15. The complainant will have the right to request reconsideration of the COA actions by the COA when the complainant provides evidence that the COA did not adhere to its complaint policy and procedures. Any such request must be made in writing and submitted to the NRPA Staff Liaison to the COA within 30 days of receipt of final action by the Council.