



YES PROGRAM

— Youth Engaged in Stafford —

Program Handbook

Welcome to the *YES* Program.

Stafford County, in conjunction with Stafford County Public Schools, is pleased to offer a program to 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students who desire to learn more about county government and the people and groups that make it work. This program gives students an opportunity to be a part of the different boards, authorities, committees, and commissions (BACC's) that help develop projects, make recommendations to the Stafford Board of Supervisors, and make decisions for the county. It also provides an opportunity to work with the county's leadership team on projects currently happening within the county. Our hope is that this hands-on experience will provide a greater knowledge and appreciation for the processes that are in place to make this a great county to live, work, and raise a family.

As a representative of Stafford County, you will be expected to follow same policies and rules of that are set in place for county employees and volunteers. In addition, participants will adhere to the Stafford County Public Schools Code of Conduct. Included in this handbook are the policies that are relatable to this program. If you have any questions, please contact your school division representative or the county program coordinator. You will be required to sign an agreement that you have read through the handbook and understand and agree to all of the expectations required as well as a non-disclosure statement. Participation in the program will not begin until the program coordinator receives these documents.

This handbook outlines all the expectations of the *YES* program. Please-read through the handbook carefully.

We hope you enjoy your journey learning about county government.

Application Process:

A. Application submission process.

1. Students must be in the 10th, 11th or 12th grade and attend a high school in Stafford County.
2. Applications must be submitted on or before the posted deadline.
 - a) Applications will be submitted once in a calendar year. Preferably at the beginning of the Fall semester. Those applications submitted after the deadline can be applied for the following school year.
 - b) Late applications will be reviewed on a case by case basis only after those applications that were submitted by the deadline have been reviewed and processed.
3. Each application must be accompanied by a written letter of recommendation, preferably submitted by a current teacher or school administrator.
4. Submit application electronic submission via the Stafford County Website <https://staffordcountyva.gov/yesprogram>

B. Confidentiality.

Each student must sign; and agree to adhere to, a written confidentiality agreement that is included in the application packet. Students must understand that some information shared during BACC meetings may be private and/or sensitive in nature and must not be discussed outside of the meeting with family, friends or the general public.

C. Application Review and Selection.

1. Each application will be reviewed by YES Program staff shortly after the submission deadline. Applications that are incomplete may be rejected or returned to the applicant for completion.
2. If the application is selected, the student will be contacted by email to schedule an in-person interview. The interview will last approximately one half hour and will include an overview of the selected BACC and a formal introduction to the students YES Program Staff Contact.

Attendance Policy:

Participation in this program may require a significant time commitment. Although the program is designed to encompass the **entire school year**, participants are asked to serve **at least one** semester to receive credit for the program. Opportunities are available to serve longer if desired. There will be scheduled meeting times, and functions or projects that require participant attendance outside of those scheduled times. Please make sure that you are available to give the time required before beginning participation in the program.

Committee and Leadership Team meeting schedules are provided under the schedules tab in this handbook. It is expected that participants will attend all scheduled meetings. In the event that a participant cannot attend a scheduled meeting, they must inform the designated committee member of the absence and reason for the absence. Participants are allowed to be absent from two (2) scheduled meetings during their semester term. These absences should be legitimate in nature as determined by the committee member. In the event that a participant is absent more than (2) scheduled meetings their ability to participate in the program will be in jeopardy. A meeting between the designated committee member, the program coordinator, and the school division representative will occur to discuss the participant's continued involvement in the program.

There may be times when meetings are rescheduled due to committee member conflicts, acts of nature, or any other reason. If a meeting is rescheduled on a date or time the participant is expected to make all efforts to attend however, if they are unable to attend it will not count as an absence.

Participants are expected to be on time for all meetings. In the event the participant will be tardy for a meeting they should call the designated committee member prior to the start of the meeting. The committee member may request that the participant not attend the meeting depending on the nature of the topic being discussed. Continued tardiness will not be tolerated and will lead to dismissal from the program.

All participants are required to provide their own transportation. Stafford County Public Schools will not provide transportation to committee meetings.

FOIA policy:

§ 2.2-3700. Short title; policy.

A. This chapter may be cited as "The Virginia Freedom of Information Act."

B. By enacting this chapter, the General Assembly ensures the people of the Commonwealth ready access to public records in the custody of a public body or its officers and employees, and free entry to meetings of public bodies wherein the business of the people is being conducted. The affairs of government are not intended to be conducted in an atmosphere of secrecy since at all times the public is to be the beneficiary of any action taken at any level of government. Unless a public body or its officers or employees specifically elect to exercise an exemption provided by this chapter or any other statute, every meeting shall be open to the public and all public records shall be available for inspection and copying upon request. All public records and meetings shall be presumed open, unless an exemption is properly invoked.

The provisions of this chapter shall be liberally construed to promote an increased awareness by all persons of governmental activities and afford every opportunity to citizens to witness the operations of government. Any exemption from public access to records or meetings shall be

narrowly construed and no record shall be withheld or meeting closed to the public unless specifically made exempt pursuant to this chapter or other specific provision of law. This chapter shall not be construed to discourage the free discussion by government officials or employees of public matters with the citizens of the Commonwealth.

All public bodies and their officers and employees shall make reasonable efforts to reach an agreement with a requester concerning the production of the records requested.

Any ordinance adopted by a local governing body that conflicts with the provisions of this chapter shall be void.

Dress Code:

While attending county functions participants are required to follow county dress code policy as outlined below:

Appropriate Work Attire:

This section of the policy establishes that each employee's dress, grooming and personal hygiene shall be appropriate to the work situation. It also sets the parameters for a Casual Friday.

During work hours, employees are expected at all times to present a professional, businesslike image to visitors, prospects, and the public. Acceptable personal appearance is an ongoing requirement of employment with the County. Dress, grooming and personal cleanliness standards contribute to the morale of all employees and affect the business image we present to the public. The County does not permit radical departures from conventional business dress, personal grooming, and hygiene standards.

*Office workers and any employees who have regular contact with the public **must** comply with the following personal appearance standards:*

*Their dress must be acceptable in similar business establishments. Examples of acceptable attire include business suits, or blazers with pants, skirts or dresses. **Employees shall not wear** suggestive attire such as clothing that exposes the abdomen, chest, buttocks area or cleavage; halter tops; clothing made of sheer fabrics or form fitting materials; **jeans**, athletic clothing, shorts, rubber flip flops, non-County T-shirts, novelty buttons, torn or altered clothing and similar items of casual attire that do not present a businesslike appearance.*

At the discretion of the County Administrator or department head, an employee may be allowed to deviate reasonably from the standards specified in this policy if such deviation is for a bona fide religious belief.

Employees shall consult their immediate supervisor or department head if they have questions as to what constitutes proper work attire.

The first time a participant comes to a meeting/function inappropriately dressed, they will be sent home to change or will not be allowed to attend the meeting/function. The second time may result in dismissal from the program.

Academic Standing:

Participation in the *YES* is a privilege. As part of the program, students are required to be in “Good Academic Standing” with their school. If at any time during the program the student is not in good standing they will be put on probationary period. If the student is able to bring their grades back up to “Good Standing” they will be allowed to continue their participation.

Meeting Guidelines:

- Students can attend meetings.
- Students can sit at the table with the BACC members.
- Students can verbally ask questions when invited by the BACC.
- Students can share their opinions when asked by the BACC.
- Students cannot participate in discussion of motions.
- Students cannot vote.
- Students should not have text conversations with BACC members during meetings.
- Students should not have side-bar discussions with audience members during the BACC meeting.
- Students should not make suggestions to applicants who are before a BACC.

Confidentiality Agreement

During some of the meetings that you will attend, information may be shared that is considered confidential in nature. Any information that is classified as confidential shall not be repeated to anyone outside of the meeting. There may be circumstances where the information may need to be shared outside of the meeting, those involved will provide a release of information which will indicate where and with whom the information can be shared.

By signing below you are agreeing to keep information shared during meeting confidential and understand the consequences of sharing this information with parties not privy to the information.

I _____ understand the confidentiality policy and will follow the policy as directed. I also understand that if I breach confidentiality it will lead to dismissal of the program.