



## SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2023.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Chesterfield

Program Title: Chesterfield Recovery Academy

Program Category: Regional Collaboration

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Justin Savoy / Dr. Belinda Merriman

Title: Program Coordinator / Director of High School Leadership

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### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Joseph P. Casey

Title: County Administrator

Signature: Joseph P. Casey, Ph.D.

Digitally signed by Joseph P. Casey, Ph.D.  
DN: cn=Joseph P. Casey, Ph.D., o=Chesterfield County, ou=County Administration,  
email=caseyjoe@chesterfield.gov, c=US  
Date: 2023.06.27 12:15:35 -04'00'

Recovery Academy  
(Regional Collaboration Category)

**Abstract of the Program:**

Recovery high schools are designed to provide both a supportive academic environment and a purposeful daily structure to guide students who are recovering from substance use disorder with the goal of graduating from high school. Chesterfield Recovery Academy is an in-person program designed to allow students throughout the Region entry no matter where they are in their high school journey. This innovative program was funded through the Virginia State Legislature and grant funding. The learning outcomes are accomplished through the use of online coursework and a Student Support and Academic Facilitator who help students with their work and academic goals while the therapeutic outcomes are supported by multiple clinicians hired through the local community services board.

**Problem or need addressed by the program:**

Adolescent substance use in Virginia has created an epidemic within the state. Access to drugs and alcohol has been on the rise and is currently moving into the schools. Social media and electronic payment systems construct the perfect connector for youth seeking to experiment with substances and those who wish to capitalize on their curiosity. As a result, students within the Commonwealth are facing a challenge of how to navigate a world where access to drugs and alcohol have become commonplace in their communities.

**Program Description:**

The Chesterfield Recovery Program is a year-long program that combines a therapeutic and academic approach to meet the specialized needs of the adolescent population. Led by the Chesterfield County Public School the program was opened on August 2, 2022 and held its first day of school on September

Recovery Academy  
(Regional Collaboration Category)

8, 2022. Our students are provided the opportunity to recover from substance use and credit deficiencies. The program operates in the Superintendent's Region One area that contains 15 school districts. Eligible population are high school students who have a substance use issue/disorder, abstained from drugs or alcohol for 20 to 30 days, and have received some form of professional treatment (i.e., outpatient therapy, residential facilities, detention centers, etc.). We accept students on a rolling admission basis to assist adolescents and their families in their time of need.

Clinically, Chesterfield County Schools partnered with the Chesterfield County Community Services Board to hire and supervise the clinical staff. In this partnership the expertise of the senior clinicians were utilized to guide the therapeutic approach for treating the student population. The clinical staff is composed of three full time clinicians with varying but relevant backgrounds. The team presents experience in art therapy, trauma-based care, and LGBTQIA+ counseling. In addition, our team has a full-time therapy dog that is onsite every day to provide students comfort in their group and individual sessions with the clinicians. During the week our students participate in at least four group sessions to address obtaining and maintaining sobriety as a whole and how to support their peers on their journey to recovery. Each week students have two of the four group sessions conducted by outside providers. On Mondays, music therapy provided by Healing Sounds, Inc. addresses recovery through musical expression and connection by playing instruments, creating original songs, and interpretation of music in relation to their journeys. Every Tuesday an all-inclusive group conducted by Boyz to Men, Inc. features members who are in recovery themselves and share their journeys with the students. These two group meetings give our participants the opportunity to view sobriety through different avenues of expression and utilize the lived experiences of those on a similar path. The other two sessions are conducted by the housed clinical team where they address topics pertaining to accountability, positive reinforcement of coping skills, and building supportive relationships with peers. In addition, students have check-in

Recovery Academy  
(Regional Collaboration Category)

meetings with their assigned clinician and schedule individual sessions to support them with personal struggles with recovery.

As a partner with the other school districts in the region we ensure that all educational testing and credentialing opportunities are still part of the students' graduation track. All state testing scores and credentials obtained are reported back to the individual student's home school and district. Through the online courses students complete their work at their own pace. As students complete each course they can regain credits that were missed during times of missed days from school. These times of absence can be due to hospitalization, residential treatment, or other reasons related to their substance use history. When a credit is earned it further enables individual growth of accountability in the field of graduation attainment. Being in a nontraditional school setting allows the program to operate in a way that supports curriculum mastery without the time constraints.

Overall, our students are prepared for their transition back into the community. Successful transitional timelines are based on individual goals for recovery and academic success. A student can attend the program for a semester or until their expected graduation date.

We take into consideration the safety of our students and their ability to cope with environmental triggers presented in their home schools and neighborhoods. As a partnership between the program, the student and their family, and outside providers we collaborate on the best option for reintegration.

**Program Cost:**

The primary program costs of the Chesterfield Recovery Academy consist of staff and transportation. Currently Chesterfield Recovery Academy staffing includes one Coordinator, one Student Support and

Recovery Academy  
(Regional Collaboration Category)

Academic Facilitator who is endorsed in special education to provide services, three clinicians, and an office manager. Students attending Chesterfield Recovery Academy from within Chesterfield are transported through existing bus routes mitigating large transportation costs. Students who reside within Region 1 but outside of Chesterfield County and are providing their own transportation are given donated gas cards to offset their costs. Those who require transportation are transported on a case by case basis.

**Program Results/Success:**

As a new program with an operation of five months, our results are recorded each day. Success is based upon individual and group victories in terms of sobriety. As individuals, our students have a variety of lengths of sobriety ranging from a few weeks (new students) to several months. This is to be expected as return to use or “relapse” are a part of the recovery journey. Currently, we have 15 participants in the program and 87% of participants have four or more consecutive negative drug screenings. Clinically, we have 100% participation in the therapy sessions and follow-up meetings.

As it pertains to the academic success of our students there have been major strides made to obtain course credits. Currently, ten credits have been earned ranging from English to Chemistry. This is a success in itself as our students are returning to a school routine that does not include the use of substances as a distraction or coping mechanism. In addition, our students have passed state Standards of Learning (SOL) tests in history and algebra I and WorkKeys writing assessments.

Recovery Academy  
(Regional Collaboration Category)

**Worthiness of an award:**

The Chesterfield Recovery Academy being the first recovery school in the state of Virginia sets itself in the forefront of adolescent focused sobriety. As a new program we are building the foundation and community relationships to create an environment that supports families fighting addiction. With our status and continuing recognition, we are shining a light on the resources for parents who are struggling to help their children and students who are seeking help for themselves or their peers. This program is a multi-community effort that can be replicated over the state in the next few years to help fight the war on adolescent addiction.

**Supplemental Materials:**

- 12.2022 Progress Report (attached)



Progress Report from the  
**Chesterfield**  
Recovery Academy  
December 2022



Nov. 30, 2022

**The Honorable Janet D. Howell**

Chairperson, Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee  
Virginia General Assembly  
Pocahontas Building - Room E509  
900 East Main Street  
Richmond, VA 23219

**The Honorable Barry D. Knight**

Chairperson, House Appropriations Committee  
Virginia General Assembly  
Pocahontas Building - Room W1312  
900 East Main Street  
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Madam and Sir:

Chesterfield County Public Schools respectfully submits the Report to the Legislature: Chesterfield Recovery Academy pursuant to:

*Out of this appropriation, \$864,000 the first year and \$500,000 the second year from the general fund is provided to Chesterfield County Public Schools to assist with establishing a recovery high school as a year-round school with enrollment open to any high school student residing in Superintendent's Region 1 who is in the early stages of recovery from substance use disorder or dependency. Students in the high school shall be provided academic, emotional, and social support needed to progress toward earning a high school diploma and reintegrating into a traditional high school setting. Chesterfield County Public Schools shall submit a report regarding the planning, implementation, and outcomes of the recovery high school to the Chairs of the House Appropriations Committee and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee by December 1 each year.*

This correspondence is the fulfillment of that request. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or require additional information.

Respectfully,

*Mervin Daugherty*

**Mervin Daugherty**

Superintendent, Chesterfield County Public Schools

*Justin Savoy*

**Justin Savoy**

Coordinator, Chesterfield Recovery Academy







## Introduction

Recovery high schools are designed to provide both a supportive academic environment and a purposeful daily structure to guide students who are recovering from substance use disorder. In order to fulfill the above mission, Chesterfield Recovery Academy is an in-person program designed to allow students entry no matter where they are in their high school journey. This is accomplished through the use of online coursework and a Student Support and Academic Facilitator who helps students with their work and has them set academic goals to maintain appropriate academic progress.

The Student Support and Academic Facilitator is endorsed in special education which allows for appropriate case management.

As an innovative and pioneering program, our vision statement directs that: *"Chesterfield Recovery Academy aims to be a vehicle of progressive change in the ushering in of an academic culture that holistically addresses the substance use and co-occurring mental health challenges of the youth in Region One."*

Our mission statement that drives our daily progression states: *"We provide a supportive environment that makes academic success during recovery attainable as well as sustainable, emphasizes postsecondary preparedness, and fosters the development of a growth mindset about pursuing healthy choices, positive relationships, and sustained sobriety."*



### **Program Start-Up**

Chesterfield Recovery Academy formally opened on Aug. 2, 2022, with a staff of two, a Coordinator and Office Manager. The Student Support and Academic Facilitator joined the staff at the end of August which allowed the first students to begin on Sept. 8, 2022. Since coming on board, the coordinator has been making contact with schools within the Superintendent's Region 1 through mailings, emails, virtual meetings, phone calls, and in-person meetings. This outreach will continue in order to boost awareness of the program and help schools be mindful of identifying students who would benefit from enrollment at Chesterfield Recovery Academy. The goal is to reach a total of 20-25 students; as of Nov. 28, there are 10 students enrolled from the following localities: Chesterfield and Henrico.

### **Screening and Enrollment**

To be eligible for enrollment in Chesterfield Recovery Academy, the student must:

- abstain from drugs and alcohol for at least 20-30 days;
- be enrolled in a school within Region One
- be participating or receiving some form of substance abuse treatment (i.e., outpatient /inpatient therapy, residential, etc.).

To be considered for enrollment, a referral form must be completed. This leads to an interview with the student and their family followed by a clinical assessment to determine their eligibility and willingness to commit to sobriety and the program.

When accepted into the program, student academic records are requested from their home school, and information is also requested from their mental health or substance abuse providers. Staff works with the family and the transportation department to determine how the student will be transported to the program. Once this information is received, the student's academic standing is evaluated, and courses are scheduled through CCPS Online/ PACE based on their needed requirements for graduation. The process from referral to full enrollment can take up to five business days.





## How the Program Works

Chesterfield Recovery Academy students are supported with scheduled group and individual therapy sessions each day of the week while participating in the program. A Senior Clinician and two additional clinicians are on site every day to provide this service to students. Each clinician is specialized in different areas. The Senior Clinician is a registered Art Therapist, one clinician is a certified Yoga instructor and the other is trained in LGBTQIA+ therapeutic practices. As needs are identified within the program and the population, the Senior Clinician will implement a family support group and a parent group. These groups are focused on developing healthy relationships and creating a support network for parents in the program.

While participating in the program, students have a scheduled routine of academic time and therapeutic sessions. Students' daily activities are based on their scholastic and sobriety needs. Each student completes three hours of academic time where they work to recover missed credits or maintain their current grade level. Scheduled therapy groups from in-house clinicians and outside organizations are conducted daily. As additional therapeutic support, individual sessions are scheduled to address each student's recovery goals, the creation of a support network, and establishing long-term sobriety goals. In order to increase student support, a parent group will be implemented in the beginning of the spring semester to further the education and understanding of

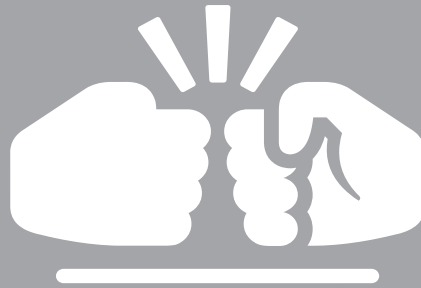
students' recovery goals, parental/family support, and creating a support network in the community.

To include community reintegration, our program provides students with the opportunity for engaging activities outside of the school that support their journeys while exposing them to community organizations. This instills a sense of community and a knowledge of growing resources from the local to state level.

## Program Costs

The greatest program costs are related to personnel. Chesterfield County Public Schools funds the Coordinator, the Student Support and Academic Facilitator, and the Office Manager positions through the state-appropriated funds. Currently, the Senior Clinician and the two additional clinicians are funded through grants provided by the Community Services Board.

A second key area of cost for the program is transportation. Students who are already enrolled in Chesterfield County Public Schools travel via existing routes. Students from elsewhere in the region are transported via CCPS transportation or parent transport. CCPS is fortunate to have a transportation department that is able to navigate the various options at a reasonable cost to the program and an education foundation, the Chesterfield Education Foundation, that is also able to support students as needed.



## Community Support

Chesterfield Recovery Academy is already benefiting from strong community support through both donations and volunteers. A few examples:

1

Principal Roger Oser of William J. Ostiguy High School, a member of the Association of Recovery Schools, provided technical assistance as the program was being organized. Through calls facilitated and funded through the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, Mr. Oser provided key information about organizing a recovery high school.

2

VCU Rams in Recovery helped educate students about healthy choices on the road to sobriety, community support networks, and post-secondary support provided for students in recovery who attend VCU. Additionally, the organization provided training to staff on being recovery allies.

3

The Boys to Men mentoring program provides a weekly inclusive therapy group that focuses on building confidence, recognizing accountability, and understanding the short- and long-term effects of maintaining sobriety.

4

Healing Sounds LLC is a partner that conducts music therapy in group sessions. Twice each month, the music therapist conducts musical interventions geared toward accomplishing nonmusical goals (i.e. reduction of usage, full sobriety, and healthy expression of emotions).

5

The 2 End The Stigma Foundation made a monetary donation to assist with the creation of a mindfulness corner created to give students a safe space for personal time and artistic expression.

6

The JHW Foundation Inc. supported the program by providing the students with an array of seating options for the classroom and the mindfulness corner. During group sessions, students use these accommodations which are designed to facilitate ease in participation and being open with struggles.



## Looking Forward

Chesterfield Recovery Academy is committed to supporting high school students in recovery with substance use disorder throughout the Superintendent's Region 1 area. In the coming months, the coordinator will continue with active outreach to all Region 1 schools to share information about the program and to help enroll students who would benefit from this programming. Administration has set the goal of 25 students with representation from all partnering districts by May 2023.

Currently, transportation is provided through CCPS as most costs are consistent with traditional student routing. However, we estimate costs will increase as more students enroll in the program and travel from greater distances. As a result, requiring additional buses/routes and possible private car transportation. This is in addition to the gas cards that are provided for students and their families that provide their own transportation.

Career and technical education programming and work-based learning opportunities will be added to help students determine their path after high school. Additionally, the Academy staff will continue to build upon the current community partnerships to provide wrap-around services for students and to cast light on the recovery process.



### Conclusion

As the first recovery high school in Virginia, our staff is committed to creating hope and opportunity for students who need it most. Facilitating recovery through a structured environment and a network of support is our daily focus; ensuring the continued sobriety and success of the student population in Region 1 is the main priority. Understanding the substance-use crisis that plagues our community, educating the diverse populations about substance-use disorder, and creating resourceful partnerships focused on curtailing and eventually stopping the problem are the aims of this program. We are working toward having representation from each district in our region in the near future and setting a standard for the program to be replicated throughout the state.



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