



PROGRESS REPORT
NOVEMBER 2024

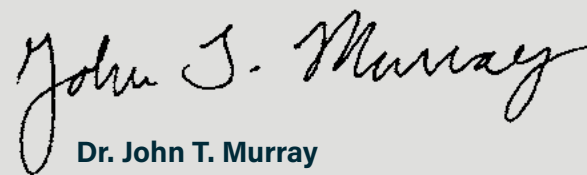
Dear Madam and Sir:

Chesterfield County Public Schools respectfully submits this progress report in connection to language tied to general fund appropriations:

"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 fulfills that reporting requirement. Please contact us if you have any questions or require additional information.

Respectfully,



Dr. John T. Murray
Interim Superintendent
Chesterfield County Public Schools



Justin Savoy
Program Coordinator
Chesterfield Recovery Academy

Nov. 29, 2024

The Honorable L. Louise Lucas

Chair, Senate Finance
and Appropriations Committee
Virginia General Assembly
General Assembly Building, Room 1404
201 N. Ninth St., Richmond, VA 23219

The Honorable Luke E. Torian

Chair, House Appropriations Committee
Virginia General Assembly
General Assembly Building, Room 1223
201 N. Ninth St., Richmond, VA 23219

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 this 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 student support and academic facilitators who help students with their work and have them set academic goals to maintain appropriate academic progress. The student support and academic facilitators are 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 1."

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."





Starting the program

Chesterfield Recovery Academy opened Aug. 2, 2022, with a staff of two: a coordinator and an office manager. A student support and academic facilitator joined the staff at the end of August, which allowed the first students to begin on Sept. 8, 2022. Immediately, the coordinator began contacting schools in Region 1 through mailings, emails, virtual meetings, phone calls and in-person meetings, and by Nov. 10, 2022, enrollment had grown to 10 students. This outreach continues 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.



Region 1 localities

Chesterfield Recovery Academy is open to students in Region 1, which covers these 15 localities: **Charles City County, Chesterfield County, Colonial Heights, Dinwiddie County, Goochland County, Hanover County, Henrico County, Hopewell, New Kent County, Petersburg, Powhatan County, Prince George County, Richmond, Surry County and Sussex County.**

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 1
- Be participating or receiving some form of substance abuse treatment (outpatient/inpatient therapy, residential, etc.)

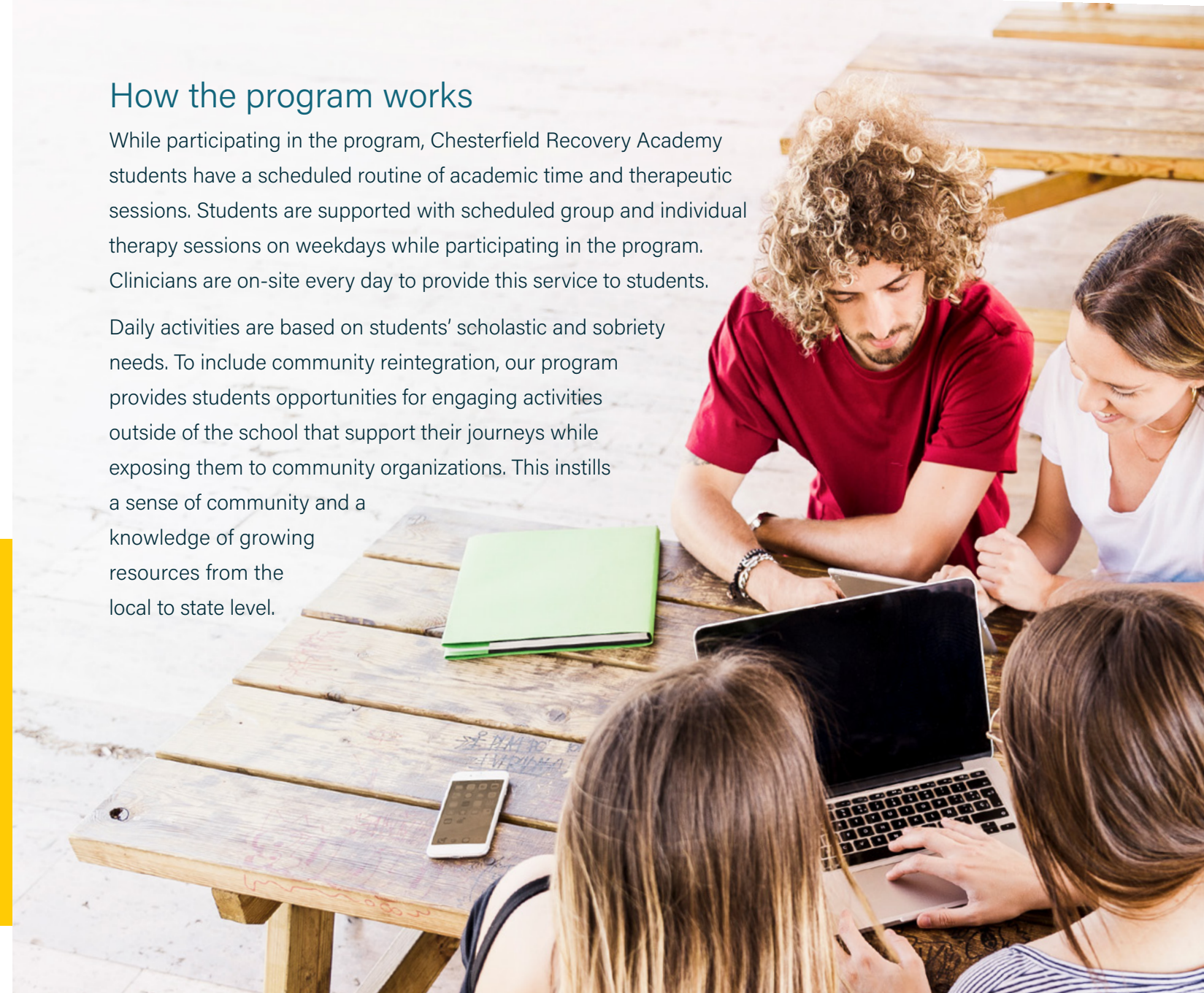
To be considered for enrollment, a referral form must be completed. This leads to an interview with the student and their family, followed by a clinical assessment to determine eligibility and willingness to commit to sobriety and the program.

When accepted into the program, a student's academic records are requested from their home school and information is 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 and from the program. Once this information is received, the student's academic standing is evaluated, and courses are scheduled through CCPSOnline/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

While participating in the program, Chesterfield Recovery Academy students have a scheduled routine of academic time and therapeutic sessions. Students are supported with scheduled group and individual therapy sessions on weekdays while participating in the program. Clinicians are on-site every day to provide this service to students.

Daily activities are based on students' scholastic and sobriety needs. To include community reintegration, our program provides students opportunities 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. The coordinator, student support and academic facilitators and office manager positions are funded through state appropriations. Additionally, state funds cover program operations such as instructional materials and professional development. Currently, the senior clinician and the two additional clinicians are funded through grants from 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, parent transport and student drivers. As a supporter of the program, Henrico County Public Schools provides morning transportation for their students at CRA, and CCPS covers afternoon transportation home. CCPS is fortunate to have a transportation department that is able to navigate the various options at a reasonable cost to the program and a foundation, the Chesterfield Education Foundation, that is also able to support students as needed through gas card reimbursements



Community support

Chesterfield Recovery Academy continues to benefit from strong community support through donations and volunteers. A few examples:

Swift Creek Family YMCA provides students a weekly opportunity to play sports, work out and build healthier routines.

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. Thanks to facilitation and funding through the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, he provided key information about organizing a recovery high school.

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

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

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

The 2 End The Stigma Foundation made a monetary donation to help create a mindfulness corner to give students a safe space for personal time and artistic expression.

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



Year 3 update

Enrollment

On Aug. 20, 2024, Chesterfield Recovery Academy began its third year of operation with an enrollment of 17 students from Chesterfield County, Hanover County, Henrico County, New Kent County, Petersburg and Richmond. The staff continues outreach to all Region 1 school divisions about enrollment processes.

Student Demographics





Facility

Since its beginning, Chesterfield Recovery Academy has educated students in a high quality facility located at 13900 Hull Street Road in Midlothian.

In fall 2024, the program added a student-centered space for mindfulness created in partnership with 2 End the Stigma. The new space is named Scott's Corner in memory of the twin brother of 2 End the Stigma founder Jill Zebrowski Cichowicz.

Other improvements include a work area and additional offices next to the original facility footprint. These spaces better accommodate clinicians' work with students and include access to a larger room for group therapy, art therapy and drama therapy. In the future, program administrators would like to further expand facilities to include a sensory room and an exercise room to support general physical activity as well as physical activity requirements for health and physical education classes.

Academic update

Over the course of two years, the program has provided services to over 50 students and is striving to reach more young people in the region.

During the 2023-24 school year, Chesterfield Recovery Academy provided services for 22 students — and 11 of those students graduated. Ten seniors graduated at the end of the spring semester, and one graduated over the summer.

Academics during the 2023-24 school year included students successfully completing more than 100 courses and 36 Standards of Learning assessments. Additionally, Chesterfield Recovery Academy integrated field trips that allowed students to participate in health and wellness activities on a rotating basis at the local YMCA in addition to the virtual PE curriculum.



Chesterfield Recovery Academy continues to meet the nuanced educational needs of students in recovery from substance use disorder. Through strong, collaborative relationships with CCPSOnline and each partner division's school counseling and special education departments, Chesterfield Recovery Academy's three-person academic team leverages the accessibility of dynamic educational technology with high quality, in-person academic support, individualized test preparation and remediation, classroom management and academic mentorship.

As Chesterfield Recovery Academy continues to evolve, plans are underway to enhance academic offerings next school year with more direct instruction, beginning with English courses first, then Algebra I and history courses. Chesterfield Recovery Academy's academic team looks forward to continuing to blaze the trail for recovery high schools in Virginia.



Clinical update

The Chesterfield Recovery Academy clinical team provides supportive counseling, recovery, crisis and case management services for all enrolled students. By providing a safe place to learn and develop healthy coping skills while reflecting on their individual relationships with substance use, the program encourages students to work toward sobriety and recognize that recovery often follows a nonlinear path.

The clinical team helps students understand the root causes of substance use by addressing co-occurring mental health needs and actively supporting multiple pathways to recovery. The trauma-informed approach integrates many models and approaches such as stages of change, motivational interviewing, SMART recovery, cognitive-behavioral therapy, art therapy and mindfulness.

During the 2023-24 school year, the clinical team conducted over 200 clinical/recovery groups and 1,500 individual supportive counseling sessions. Students achieved over 79 months of sobriety demonstrated through on-site screenings. Chesterfield Recovery Academy began hosting bimonthly parent nights to provide parents and guardians of our students with education, support and community.

In the fall of 2023, Chesterfield Recovery Academy welcomed its first recovery navigator, Nadia McNeeley, through a partnership with Virginia Recovery Corps. Then in August 2024, she joined Chesterfield Recovery Academy in a permanent capacity as a peer recovery specialist. The clinical team now consists of two full-time clinicians, a clinical coordinator, a peer recovery specialist and therapy dog Lettie.

An exciting partnership was forged with Virginia Commonwealth University's collegiate recovery program, Rams in Recovery. Chesterfield Recovery Academy was included in their seminar initiative and their students planned and led weekly groups with Chesterfield Recovery Academy students to help them build their recovery identity through practicing alternative coping skills, multiple pathway mutual aid meeting education and college students telling their stories. Rams in Recovery has also provided a resource for community, support and housing for our students transitioning to VCU after graduation. Chesterfield Recovery Academy was honored to be recognized as their 2024 Community Partner of the Year and looks forward to continuing the collaboration moving forward.

Connections

Over the course of the year, Chesterfield Recovery Academy had the opportunity to host and speak with many stakeholders, community members, regional representatives and allies. These included the Honorable Ghazala Hashmi, who is the chair of the Virginia Senate Committee on Public Education, and Nelson Smith, who is the commissioner of the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services.

Since its beginning, Chesterfield Recovery Academy has been laying the foundation for Virginia to implement an impactful adolescent recovery program. Our goal is to help advance the efforts for supporting the community in the battle against adolescent drug use. Being composed of educational and mental health partners, Chesterfield Recovery Academy aims to help shape and navigate how community partners can align their goals to provide wrap-around support for those in recovery. Program staff members have been able to share and demonstrate our program's operations with other Virginia school districts interested in opening their own recovery programs. Chesterfield Recovery Academy facilitated several information sessions on how to operate, staff and maintain a recovery school.



Successes and recognition

Chesterfield Recovery Academy has been recognized on many fronts and platforms:

- ❑ Presented during a [White House summit for youth in recovery](#) in September 2023. Chesterfield Recovery Academy was the only program in the country to provide student participants.
- ❑ Won the Best Large County Achievement Award in 2023 from the Virginia Association of Counties.
- ❑ Won a 2022 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties.
- ❑ [Featured in Showcases for Success](#) by the Virginia School Boards Association.
- ❑ Attracted news coverage: [60 Scripps TV stations including WTVR-Channel 6](#), [Richmond Family Magazine](#) and [RVA Parenting on Channel 12](#).

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 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 continue working toward student representation from each district in Region 1 and setting a standard for the program to be replicated throughout the state.



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