

Employee Handbook



2021-2022

Queen Anne's County Public Schools
Department of Human Resources
202 Chesterfield Ave.
Centreville, MD 21617

www.qacps.org
410-758-2403

In the event that any information contained in this handbook conflicts with law, Queen Anne's County Public Schools policy or Negotiated Agreements, it is superseded by those documents.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Disclaimer

The Queen Anne’s County Public School System is a complex and ever-changing system. As such, the Superintendent and Board of Education reserves the right to amend, modify or delete provisions in this Employee Handbook without prior notice. These changes will occur administratively in the normal process of change or through direct Board of Education action.

This handbook is designed as a general guide for school system employees, whether full- or part-time, to provide basic information to employees and the school system leadership. The handbook contains brief descriptions of items and often contains references to negotiated agreements, administrative policies and regulations. The handbook is not intended to replace these resources, but rather to provide a reference point of appropriate items which would be useful to all employees.

This handbook is not a contract. The handbook does not replace or supersede any negotiated agreement, Queen Anne’s County Public Schools (QACPS) policy or administrative regulation. The Board of Education and the Superintendent reserves the right to modify or amend any Board of Education policy or administrative regulation at any time. Board of Education policy and regulation will govern if there are inconsistencies.

Overview

Welcome to Queen Anne’s County, the gateway to the Eastern Shore.

The county has a diverse population of approximately 59,600 residents. The demographics of the county are about 86.5% White (Non-Hispanic), 6.63% African American, 2.79% White (Hispanic), 1.56% Two + (Non-Hispanic), and 1.02% Asian (Non-Hispanic).

The Board of Education

Programs and policies of the public schools are established by the Board of Education.

The five board members serve overlapping terms of four years each and are elected from four districts and one member at large. Board members may serve consecutive terms if re-elected.

The student members of the board are generally high school seniors elected by student government representatives as their nominee to the board to serve a one-year term. The student members participate fully, but are non-voting members of the board.

The day-to-day administration of the school system is the responsibility of the Superintendent, who is appointed by the school board. There is no limit to the number of contractual terms a Superintendent may serve.

Chapter 2: Employee Standards

Ethical Conduct for Employees

All employees of QACPS are expected to make every effort to create an atmosphere that nurtures the educational process and provides a safe environment for employees and students.

Employees are expected to act in a professional manner toward colleagues, students, parents, and the community.

Child Abuse/Neglect Policy 506

All employees of QACPS must immediately file a report with the Department of Social Services (DSS) when they have reason to believe that a child has been neglected or physically or sexually abused, or that the child has been the subject of a mental injury.

Dating Between Employees and Students Policy 407

Employees and adult volunteers shall exercise reasonable care in protecting students from harm. Employees and adult volunteers shall exhibit professional and appropriate relationships with students.

Staff Fraternization

QACPS insists on ethical behavior on the part of its leadership and all staff. QACPS seeks to avoid claims of sexual harassment, discrimination, and conflict of interest. All employees need to avoid the merging of professional and personal responsibilities and relationships as it applies to the workplace. All employees shall maintain high standards of professionalism in the workplace and refrain from conduct that would lead to the appearance of impropriety. Violations of these expectations and prohibitions may result in disciplinary action up to and including terminations of employment.

Drug, Alcohol and Tobacco-Free Workplace Policy 408, Policy 204, Policy 527

All worksites within the jurisdiction of the Board of Education are designated as drug, alcohol, and tobacco-free workplaces. Compliance with the standards of conduct in the policy is mandatory. Violations of the policy will result in notification to appropriate law enforcement agencies and disciplinary sanctions which may include suspension or termination of employment.

Drug Testing

Employees will report to work in condition fit to perform their assigned duties. Reporting to work, or to any QACPS facility or sponsored event, under the influence of, or showing signs of the use of drugs or alcohol, is a violation of QACPS policy. Employees are subject to disciplinary action which may include suspension or termination of employment.

Investigations

Board of Education members, as a whole nor any individual member, will investigate or act on formal communications or complaints from staff. Rather, Board of Education members shall refer complaints to the superintendent or designee.

Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy 103, Policy 505, Policy 528

QACPS is committed to promoting the worth and dignity of all individuals. QACPS will not tolerate nor condone any act of bias, discrimination, insensitivity or disrespect toward any person on the basis of race, color, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, national origin, religion, socio-economic status, disabling or genetic condition.

Title IX Policy 528

QACPS does not discriminate on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, age, gender, religion, disability, genetic information, national origin, marital status, socioeconomic status, physical characteristics, or sexual orientation in the provision of employment, educational programs, and services. The district is required by Title IX not to discriminate in such a manner.

Title IX applies to complaints filed by students or on their behalf or by employees alleging discrimination or sexual harassment carried out by employees, other students, or a third party. Retaliation is prohibited for reporting sexual harassment committed by employees, students, or third party. Examples include offensive language, visual harassment (posters, cartoons, clothing), offensive touching (patting, pinching, or physical blocking), unwelcome sexual contact, spreading rumors or evaluating someone's sexual orientation, or pressuring someone for sexual activity.

Title IX is prohibited on or off school property, at all school related activities, including by third parties (parents, mentors, vendors).

Report the harassment to the Principal and the Supervisor of Student Services

for students or to the Director of Human Resources for employees. Refer to the BHI Reporting Form/Forms Online.

Acceptable Use of Technology and Electronics Policy 205

QACPS acknowledges that the principles of freedom of speech and privacy of information have important implications relating to computers and electronic communication services. Accordingly, QACPS has adopted Security Policies and Administrative Regulations to reflect the context of its legal and ethical obligations.

To ensure that these policies and procedures are followed, QACPS reserves the right to monitor the use of computer and electronic communication resources. All electronic communications transmitted to or from the QACPS network are considered the property of QACPS, and users are not entitled to any expectation of privacy with regard to the information contained in such communications.

Self Reporting Charge/Arrest Conviction Policy 427

QACPS insists upon maintaining a safe environment for its students and employees. Because employees occasionally are subject to criminal sanctions for conduct both on and off duty as a result of violating local, state, and/or federal laws. QACPS must be informed of all such charges, arrests, and convictions in order to assess each individual situation and maintain safety for all parties involved. It is, therefore, mandatory that each employee self-reports all charges, arrests, and convictions in accordance with policy.

Workplace Bullying Policy 505

Bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, intimidation, hazing, and bias motivated behavior creates a hostile workplace environment and will not be tolerated. The Board of Education is committed to providing all employees with a safe and orderly workplace environment. All complaints of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, intimidation, hazing, and bias motivated behavior shall be investigated in accordance with the procedures set forth in this policy. The school system shall discipline or take other action with regard to members of the school community who engage in unlawful bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, intimidation, hazing, and bias motivated behavior. In some cases acts of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, intimidation, hazing, and bias motivated behavior may be deemed criminal under state and/or federal law.

Chapter 3: Terms of Employment

Absenteeism

Employees must notify their immediate supervisor of an impending absence.

Access to Personnel Files

All employees have an Official Personnel File (OPF) that is maintained in the Department of Human Resources.

Access to an employee's OPF is limited to the employee, the employee's designated representative, administrative and supervisory personnel.

All employees have a right to review their OPF by making an appointment with the Department of Human Resources. In addition, designated representatives who have been given written consent by the employee to review their OPF must also provide a copy of a release authorization signed by the employee prior to the file review.

Employees who require copies from their file must submit such requests in writing to the Department of Human Resources. Picture identification must be presented at the time of the file review. Additional information or questions can be directed to the Department of Human Resources.

Criminal Background Checks and Fingerprinting

All new employees of QACPS are required to undergo a background investigation conducted through county, state and federal agencies to determine employment eligibility.

In addition to the Criminal Background check, all potential employees must comply with regulations stipulated and mandated with HB486 "Child Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct and Prevention Act."

The law requires a county board, nonpublic school or contracting agency to require an applicant for a position involving direct contact with minors to submit:

1. The contact information of the current employer, all former school employers and all former employers of the applicant in which the applicant was employed in a position involving direct contact with minors.

2. A written consent form authorizing a current or former employer to release all records relating to child sexual abuse or sexual misconduct involving the applicant.
3. A written statement of whether the applicant has:
 - a. been the subject of a child sexual abuse or sexual misconduct investigation by any employer, arbitrator, county board, state licensing agency, law enforcement agency or child protective services agency (unless certain exceptions, detailed in the law, are met).
 - b. been disciplined, discharged, non-renewed, asked to resign from an employer or has ever resigned or otherwise separated from employment while allegations of child sexual abuse or sexual misconduct were pending or were under investigation, or due to an adjudication or findings of child sexual abuse or sexual misconduct.
 - c. ever had a license or certificate suspended, surrendered or revoked while allegations of child sexual abuse or sexual misconduct were pending or under investigation or due to an adjudication or findings of child sexual abuse or sexual misconduct.

Professional Attire

It is important that QACPS employees present themselves in a professional manner at all times. By doing so, they demonstrate pride in themselves and respect for their workplace and those who visit and do business here.

All employees are expected to dress in professional attire. Good taste in grooming, clothing and hairstyle is the responsibility of each individual. Extremes in attire and appearance should be avoided.

Duty Hours

Duty hours vary widely depending upon the employee's job group and work location. The immediate supervisor of the employee is responsible for establishing the duty hours, provided that the work day and work week parameters established by the negotiated agreement for the appropriate job group are not violated.

Employment Process

The Department of Human Resources oversees the process of employment of individuals to ensure continued delivery of services to students as well as to employees of QACPS. The process is well defined for each type of employee. The process includes the posting, advertising, and interviewing for vacancies. A New Teachers Orientation Program is conducted each year for certificated employees that are new to the district. Other job groups will receive training appropriate to their responsibilities.

Grievance Procedure Summary Policy 112

Each negotiated agreement details the procedure for the appropriate group of employees. The timelines and processes may be different in each agreement. Neither the Board of Education nor any member of administration will take reprisals against any party for participating in the grievance procedure. Reference grievance procedure in negotiated agreements which are posted on the Human Resources website.

Leaves of Absence

Employees may be entitled to leaves of absence of varying types and under varying conditions depending upon the employee group and their eligibility as defined by their applicable negotiated agreement. Detailed information is provided in the negotiated agreement governing each employee group.

Performance Evaluation

One of the most important processes affecting employees is the performance evaluation. Throughout the year, ongoing discussions between supervisors and employees provide an excellent opportunity to assess the work situation, to define future goals, a plan of implementation and training needs. Each employee is evaluated according to a schedule outlined in the respective unit agreement and all evaluations become part of the employee's personnel file. Employees will receive a copy of all such evaluations. Employees should refer to the negotiated unit agreement for the details which specifically relate to them.

Reasonable Accommodation Policy 401

In compliance with Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act, QACPS provides reasonable accommodations to otherwise qualified employees with disabilities. A reasonable accommodation is any change in the work environment or in the way a job is performed that enables a person with a disability to enjoy equal employment opportunities.

Any employee who requires a reasonable accommodation for his/her disability should contact the QACPS Department of Human Resources.

Resignation

Employees must advise their immediate supervisor of a planned resignation. Employees under contract (i.e. Unit I and Unit II) are required to give notice as required by their contract. Non-tenured teachers must give notice no later than May 1 each year. Tenured employees must give notice by July 15 of each year. Other employees are expected to give no less than a two week written notice.

Sick and Personal Leave

Employees should refer to the negotiated agreement for procedures regarding requesting leave, use of leave, and leave accrual.

Teacher Certification

Information regarding certification can be located on the MSDE website or by contacting the QACPS Department of Human Resources.

Termination

Under various circumstances, it may be deemed appropriate to terminate the employment of a QACPS employee.

- The superintendent or designee may terminate, with cause, the employment of any classified employee, pursuant to the superintendent's authority under the Maryland Education Section 6-202 of the Annotated Code of Maryland.
- On the recommendation of the superintendent, the Board of Education or an arbitrator may suspend or dismiss any employee or other professional staff under the Maryland Education Section 6-202 of the Annotated Code of Maryland.
- The employment of a teacher with a one-year conditional certificate is subject to automatic contract termination on June 30 of each year.

The employment of an individual working in a hourly or temporary capacity, such as a substitute teacher, interpreter, etc., is subject to termination at any time to meet the needs of the school system.

In all situations, employees are entitled to due process under the law and per negotiated agreements.

Transfer

The transfer of an employee may be considered voluntary, involuntary or administrative. The provisions governing the transfer of any employee are found in the negotiated agreement. The superintendent has the authority to assign certificated and non-certificated employees to positions within the schools, to transfer or reassign employees as required by the needs of the school district.

Tuition Reimbursement

Employees may be eligible for tuition reimbursement for courses taken that will improve their job performance or apply toward certification requirements with prior approval of the Director of Human Resources..

Tuition reimbursement benefits can change annually based on negotiations between the Board of Education and the different bargaining units. For any additional questions, you may contact the Department of Human Resources.

Verification of Employment

Requests for Verification of Employment must be signed and submitted to the Department of Human Resources.

Weather-Related School Closings and Delayed

Openings Policy 426

Emergency School Closings, Early Dismissals, Late Openings and Special Operational Delays

Changes to school schedules caused by inclement weather or other emergency conditions are announced through the automated telephone notification system, on major area radio and television stations, and are posted on the school system's website (www.QACPS.org). In addition, announcements are posted. *The school system's website remains the best places to check for accurate, up-to-date information.* Please do not call the school or central office to find out about closings and other emergency-related schedule changes.

A "code red" announcement means that all school offices and central office are closed. A "code blue with liberal leave" announcement means that schools are closed for students and teachers, and that school office and Central Office employees may report to work up to one hour late or time designated.

It is critical to keep emergency contact numbers and email addresses up-to-date in the automated calling system.

Chapter 4: Employee Responsibilities

Time and Attendance

All employees are expected to report to their assigned work location at the appropriate reporting time and to leave their assigned location at the appropriate ending time. Employees must clock in and out at their arrival/departure using the ADP time and attendance system.

Exceptional situations that cause a change to the regular arrival/dismissal of employees shall be handled by the immediate supervisor.

Change of Personal Information

Pertinent information should be updated with the Department of Human Resources. If you need to make corrections to your personal information (e.g. address, name change or phone number), you must complete a Change of Personal Information form by contacting the Department of Human Resources.

Respect Confidential Information Policy 501

As employees of the school system, it is imperative that you respect privacy rights of students and staff private information.

The privacy of student education records is safeguarded by the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which prohibits the release of personally identifiable information without the written consent of the parent or eligible student. Access to student education records by persons other than the student and parents is granted only for legitimate and recognized educational purposes. Schools are required to keep a list of every person obtaining information from a student's cumulative education record.

The Department of Human Resources is responsible for keeping a current folder on each school system employee. The folder contains a record of all pertinent pre-employment information, including the application, references, verification of previous employment and education, a record of any change in status, position, or salary of the employee, evaluations and ratings and other information required by law or QACPS policy. All employees or designees authorized by employees have the right to review items in their personnel file, except confidential references pertaining to original employment or promotion. Department of Human Resources Staff are the only personnel with access to the OPF.

Restrict Personal Phone Calls and Personal Computer Use

During the duty day, all employees should restrict the use of school system telephones, as well as personal cell phones, and computers for personal use to situations that are either emergencies or cannot be postponed until the close of business. Employees are not to engage in activity pertaining to other jobs or businesses. Supervisors are directed to observe phone call patterns and computer use and to take appropriate corrective action should any employee abuse the privilege of using school system telephone equipment or computers.

School Security

The wearing of identification badges is required for *all* employees while in *any* QACPS facility. Badges are to be worn in a manner that is readily visible and not kept in pockets, desks, purses, cars, etc. If a staff member reports to work without an identification badge, they are to obtain a temporary badge, as soon as possible, from the main office to be worn until their permanent badge is available. Anyone not wearing a badge should be questioned by staff as to their purpose in the building and referred to the main office to be registered.

All employees have a responsibility to ensure that they follow and enforce security directives, policies, and administrative regulations. It is every employee's responsibility to report security violations or security hazards/risks immediately. In today's heightened state of potential terrorism and security concerns, the following security guidance must be followed while working at your school or work location:

- Report suspicious activity and unauthorized visitors to school administrators or the building manager immediately.
- Report criminal activity to school administrators' immediately and/or report violent or dangerous criminal activity to police immediately.
- Do not use or permit students to use unauthorized entrances and exits. Do not prop open doors or circumvent door locks to gain access to facilities or rooms that are locked.
- Do not use or permit students to use fire exits or alarmed doors without specific permission from the principal or the building manager except in the event of an emergency.
- Do not leave laptops computers or other high value equipment that can be easily taken in unsecured areas.

- Avoid bringing high value personal items to work. Do not leave purses or wallets unattended. QACPS does not take responsibility for personal items stolen.
- Lock your automobile and do not permit others access to your personal vehicle. Keep valuables out of sight.
- Park only in designated areas.
- Do not loan building or room keys to anyone without permission of the principal or the building manager.
- Properly secure and account for funds left in your charge. Employees who do not adequately manage or secure funds will be held financially responsible.
- Do not share your account and password with others.

Work Quality

Citizens, taxpayers, parents and students of Queen Anne's County have the right to expect the greatest effort and highest quality work of each employee of QACPS.

Queen Anne’s County Public Schools

Preparing World-Class Students Through Everyday Excellence

In accordance with state and federal laws, and the policies of the Board of Education, QACPS does not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, age, religion, disability, genetics, ancestry/national origin, marital status, sex or sexual orientation in matters affecting employment or in providing educational programs and service, and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. QACPS operates equal opportunity and affirmative action programs for students and staff. The Board of Education of Queen Anne’s County Public Schools is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.

- Employee inquiries or complaints regarding discrimination or Title IX issues such as gender equity, sexual harassment and sexual discrimination should be directed to Dr. Michael Noel, Director of Human Resources, michael.noel@qacps.org or 410-758-2403 ext. 176.
- Student or parent inquiries or complaints regarding discrimination or Title IX issues such as gender equity, sexual harassment and sexual discrimination should be directed to Matt Evans, Director of Student Services, starke.evans@qacps.org or 410-758-2403 ext. 154.
- Inquiries regarding ADA and Section 504 should be directed to Joeleen Smith, Supervisor of Special Education, joeleen.smith@qacps.org or 410-758-2403 ext. 131.
- Inquiries regarding Title II should be directed to Dr. Michael Noel, Director of Human Resources, michael.noel@qacps.org or 410-758-2403 ext. 176.

Inquiries may also be addressed in writing to the appropriate office at Queen Anne’s County Public Schools, 202 Chesterfield Ave, Centreville, Maryland 21617.

External Agencies

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

1-800-669-4000

1-800-669-6820 (TTY for Deaf/Hard of Hearing callers only)

1-844-234-5122 (ASL Video Phone for Deaf/Hard of Hearing callers only)

Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR)

410.767.8600 (Español-marque el 2)

1.800.637.6247

Maryland Relay 7-1-1

U.S. Department of Education (OCR)

Office for Civil Rights

400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20202

(202) 401-2000

1-800-872-5327

Fax: 202-453-6012; TDD: 800-877-8339

Board of Education contact information can be found on the QACPS website.
www.qacps.org

September 2021