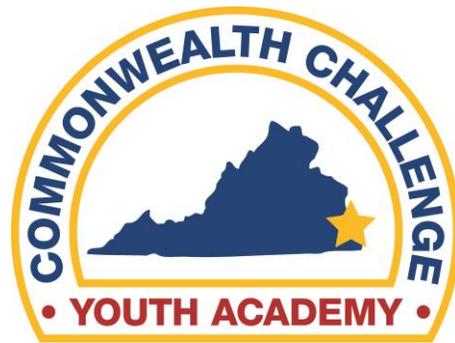


Virginia
Commonwealth Challenge
Youth Academy



Class 55

Parent/Guardian Handbook

6 April 2021– 28 August 2021

CONTENTS

Mission Statement.....	3
Letter from the Director.....	4
Staff Directory.....	5
Cadet Mailing and Email Addresses.....	6
Financial and General Guidance	6
Operations.....	6
Medical.....	8
Visitation/Leave/Pass.....	9
Voluntary Disenrollment.....	9
Cadet Conduct.....	9
Curriculum.....	10
Role of the Mentor.....	11
Phone Calls/ Emergency Contact	11
Miscellaneous.....	12
Support Association.....	13
Appendix A - Pass requirements.....	14

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Virginia Commonwealth ChalleNGe Youth Academy is to intervene in the lives of 16–18-year-old teenagers by providing the values, skills, education, and self-discipline needed to produce responsible, productive citizens, and to do so in a highly structured learning environment.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Welcome to the ChalleNGe family and thank you for trusting us with the care of your child for the next five and a half months. The objective of the ChalleNGe program, sponsored by the Virginia National Guard, is to intervene in the lives of 16–18-year-old teenagers by providing the values, skills, education, and self-discipline needed to produce responsible, productive citizens, and to do so in a highly structured learning environment.

During the residential phase of our program, the Cadets will complete the eight core components, which are: academic excellence, life coping skills, job skills, health and hygiene, responsible citizenship, service to the community, leadership/followership, and physical fitness. The Cadets will receive additional instruction in patriotism, community living, drug and alcohol abuse awareness and team building that is geared toward developing respect for both community and society. Academically, all Cadets work toward attaining their GEDs or will participate in our credit recovery curriculum so they can return to their high schools and complete their High School Diplomas.

Upon graduating from the residential phase of our program, Cadets will enter a twelve-month post-residential phase where they will continue to work with their ChalleNGe career counselor and their mentor on placement opportunities. During this phase, Cadets are required to be enrolled in high school or an institution of higher education such as college or trade school, be successfully employed for 30 hours or more per week or join the military. Both the mentor and all the ChalleNGe staff are ready and prepared to assist the Cadets with placement.

Lastly, we look forward to working with your Cadet over the next 17 and a half months. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me or any member of the ChalleNGe staff at any time.

Sincerely,

COMMONWEALTH CHALLENGE YOUTH ACADEMY



E. Mark Chicoine
Director
Captain, USN (Ret.)

PROGRAM STAFF DIRECTORY

1-757-491-5932, ext. XXX

1-800-796-6472, ext. XXX

You can reach the ChalleNGe staff by dialing either of the above listed numbers and entering the three-digit extension of the person you are trying to reach. If you do not know the extension, press 0 for the receptionist who will transfer you to the person you are trying to reach.

Director.....	E. Mark Chicoine, Ext. 221
Deputy Director.....	Richard Guzman, Ext. 226
Operations.....	Cell (757) 652-7393
Commandant.....	Ext. 224
Lead Teacher.....	Mr. Kreitner, Ext. 233
Lead Counselor.....	Ms. Hand-Cameron Ext. 232
Medical.....	Nurse, Ext. 243
Team Leader.....	Ext. 252 / Cell: (757) 536-1683
Mentor/Post Residential/Placement	Dr. Kargbo, Ext. 240
Admissions.....	Mr. L. Boykin, Ext. 235
Career Counselors.....	Ext. 241, 249, or 253
After Hours Cell Number.....	(757) 536-1683
ChalleNGe Web Site.....	www.vachallenge.org
Visit us on Facebook.....	https://www.facebook.com/CommonwealthChalleNGe

Normal administrative duty hours are from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

1. MAILING ADDRESS

1.1. Mail for cadets should be addressed as follows for both letter mail and packages*:

Commonwealth ChalleNGe
Cadet Last Name, First Initial _____ Plt. _____
253 C Street
Camp Pendleton/SMR
Virginia Beach, VA 23451-0539

*NOTE: When sending a package, we recommend that you save tracking number of the package until you verify that the package has arrived. Quarantining of mail will be a process we will implement during Class 55.

2. EMAIL

2.1 We encourage you to email your cadet at **CadetEmail@vachallenge.org**. Ensure you put your cadet's name and platoon number in the subject line. Emails will be printed and distributed to the cadets daily. You will not receive a reply as the cadets do not have access to personal email while in the program.

3. FINANCIAL AND GENERAL GUIDANCE

3.1. **Program Cost**: Parents are NOT required to pay tuition or other costs associated with Commonwealth ChalleNGe Youth Academy operations. The program is **FREE** to those who are accepted. There is a packing list of personal clothing items that the cadets are required to bring with them on the first day of class. This packing list is the only required out of pocket expense for the cadets. The packing list was mailed along with the Academy acceptance packet. If you have not received this list, please let one of our staff know.

NOTE: You may be invoiced by the State of Virginia for any destruction of state property or for lost/destroyed ChalleNGe uniform items by your Candidate/Cadet.

3.2 **Social Security Card/Birth Certificate**: Each cadet is required to submit a copy of his/her social security card or resident number as well as a copy of their birth certificate or passport prior to enrollment. No candidate will be enrolled without providing a copy of these documents.

3.3. **Recreation/Weekend Activities**: There will be limited off-post weekend activities due to COVID-19. Some extra-curriculum activities will be conducted in the confines of the Challenge containment area.

4. OPERATIONS

4.1. **Days at ChalleNGe** Your cadet is required to be at ChalleNGe for a **minimum of 147 days** to graduate.

**** **IMPORTANT NOTE**: It is imperative to take care of all appointments prior to attending Challenge. Staff will transport cadets to their appointment while at Challenge. We will continue to operate in a closed environment due to COVID-19 restriction until further notice.

If you take your cadet out on a pass or your cadet departs early or returns late from pass and it was not authorized by the Commandant, then you risk *your cadet not meeting the 147-day requirement and not graduating but rather receiving a certificate of attendance.*

4.2. **Parent Questions** The Commandant is responsible for all aspects of the Teach Advise and Train (TAC) staff and operations that impact cadet life. Parents should direct questions regarding their cadets to the Commandant. If the Commandant is unavailable to answer a question, the Team Leader, Counselor, Platoon Chief or TAC Officer will be assigned to do so. All questions will be answered in a timely manner. The ChalleNGe Commandant can be reached at extension 224 and the Team Leader extension is 252.

4.3 **Hours of Operations** Normal administrative duty hours in building 253 are from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Team Leader is scheduled around the clock, seven days per week. After normal duty hours you may call the Team Leader at 757-491-5932, ext. 252 and follow the instructions given by voice mail or call the ChalleNGe duty cell (757) 536-1683.

4.4 **Barracks Operations** All staff remain on alert and continuously monitoring for COVID-19. Procedures have been put in place to ensure the safety and security of your cadet's health and welfare. Adjustments to barracks configurations and berthing of Cadets to create as much distance as possible have been completed. Your cadets will be quarantined for 14 days upon arriving at Challenge and remain with their platoon until the completion of the quarantine. Cadets will be issued masks as part of their initial issue. If a Cadet requires off campus medical treatment, they will quarantine for 14 days upon return to ensure they were not exposed to COVID-19

4.4 **COVID-19 Preventive Measures:** Cadets will be:

- a. Monitored daily to ensure their well-being.
- b. Monitored daily to ensure hand and canteen washing.
- c. Verify that all Candidates and Cadets have a mask.
- d. Monitor for symptoms related to Covid-19 and taken immediately the nurse and follow the isolation instructions.
- e. Perform constant handwashing while on duty in the barracks, dining room, and academic area.
- f. Monitor the isolation building, barracks, and common areas periodically to ensure protocols are followed.
- g. Monitored to ensure staggered head-to-toe bunks and extra space in barracks and showers, chow line screen maintaining CDC guidelines for social distancing.

5. **Medical** Medical screening to include a COVID-19 rapid test will take place during the day of in-processing. Each platoon will be isolated from other platoon to avoid cross-infection possibility during the 14-day quarantine period. During the 14-day quarantine cadets will be monitored and will not leave campus for any reason. All will wear masks made of cloth and washed every night. Sick call will be conducted daily and any cadet displaying any symptoms will be brought to medical immediately. A daily schedule of cadets needing to be seen will be adhered to by all staff and cadets.

5.1 Medical staff is on site at Commonwealth ChalleNGe, Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Saturdays from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. to issue medications, treat minor illnesses and injuries. More serious medical issues are referred to a local hospital. Emergency services are provided by the Virginia Beach Rescue Squad. If warranted, you will be informed of your cadet's medical condition after a visit with our medical staff. If a medical situation occurs where your child must be taken for immediate medical attention, our medical staff or Team Leader will notify you of the situation and will advise you as to where the child is being taken for treatment.

5.2 *While treatment provided by our medical staff is at no cost to you, Commonwealth ChalleNGe will not pay for health care services provided outside of our clinic.* All charges for outside medical treatment to include doctor visits, hospital visits, clinical testing, and prescription medications will be the responsibility of the Cadet's parent or guardian.

5.3. *Parents or guardians must provide their own health care insurance or guarantee payments.* If your health insurance policy requires you to claim a Primary Care Physician (PCP), you must notify your PCP and ask for a referral. In some circumstances, it may be easier to change your PCP during the residential phase. Generally, HMOs will cooperate when informed of the residential nature of this program. Parents or guardians are responsible for co-payment costs or expenses not covered by their health insurance.

5.4. We encourage parental involvement when a medical issue arises. **Please be aware that medical appointments scheduled during the residential phase of the program are strictly controlled and it is necessary to coordinate the scheduling of the appointment with the ChalleNGe medical staff.** Challenge staff will transport cadet to their appointments. child both to and from the appointment. Elective treatment and non-emergency dental care are not recognized by ChalleNGe as necessary to remove your child from daily participation. You may contact our medical staff at (757) 491-5932 ext. 243 or 244 with questions or concerns you may have.

5.5. All prescription medication must be paid for and provided by the parent or guardian. All prescription and over-the-counter medicine must be turned into the medical staff during in-processing. All medications will be held by the medical staff in a locked facility. Only the medical staff or a trained TAC Officer can dispense medications to the cadets. If a prescription is ordered as the result of treatment at our contract clinic or a local hospital, our medical staff can coordinate filling the prescription at a local pharmacy; however, the parent or guardian is responsible for payment. Often, this can be accomplished by contacting the pharmacy directly and providing credit card information for payment. For additional information or details, please contact our medical staff.

5.6. **Immunizations:** Parents must provide their cadet's immunization records. These forms must be submitted prior to or during in-processing at Commonwealth ChalleNGe. A current immunization for tetanus/diphtheria and TB skin test is required. Cadets will not be enrolled without these records

6. VISITATION/LEAVE/PASS

6.1 **Visitation:** *No visitations until further notice due to COVID-19.* Due to the strict contact protocol while at challenge there will be no visitations. Increased virtual contact with home in lieu of visits as an option for conferences for staff and parents for class 55.

6.2 **Cadet Passes:** Tentative 1st pass 26 May-1 June 2nd pass 30 June-7 July (4th of July)

6.3 **Homesickness:** This may be a problem for some cadets. Parents/guardians can assist by being optimistic and positive about the program when talking with your cadet prior to the class start date. During in-processing, good-byes should be brief, yet provide the cadet with the knowledge that their families care about them. Parents/guardians can help by writing friendly encouraging letters, and sending cards, or emails to their cadet at least once a week, but more often if possible. Parents/guardians can also help by writing an initial letter or even a quick note while you are waiting for your cadet to complete in-processing. Do not forget to tell them how proud you are of them for volunteering for this program. Encourage other family members and friends to write as well, especially other members in the household such as siblings. In turn, we will encourage the cadets to write home to their families while they are here.

7. VOLUNTARY DISENROLLMENT

7.1. The Commonwealth ChalleNGe Youth Academy is strictly a voluntary program, we cannot keep a cadet here against their will. If a cadet wishes to voluntarily disenroll from the program, we will take the following actions:

7.2 The cadet will be counseled by several members in their chain of supervision to determine the reason that the cadet wishes to disenroll and to see if we can encourage them to stay.

7.3 The parent/guardian will be contacted prior to making a final disenrollment decision.

7.4 If the cadet does decide to voluntarily disenroll, they will be separated from the other cadets while waiting to depart the ChalleNGe campus.

8. CADET CONDUCT

8.1 Commonwealth ChalleNGe Youth Academy is a program with a distinctly military look and feel. As such, it uses a strict code of conduct to enforce policy and discipline. Violations of this code will result in punitive action; however, ChalleNGe strictly enforces a hands-off policy and corporal punishment of cadets IS NOT used by the staff nor will it be tolerated. Serious incidents of cadet misconduct may result in dismissal from the program. Serious offenses include, but are not limited to:

- a. Use/possession of drugs/alcohol
- b. Use/possession of weapons or explosives

- c. The presence of a cadet in the barracks of the opposite sex
- d. Any sexual activity between cadets
- e. Deliberate destruction, abuse, or misuse of program property or the property of others
- f. Making threats or demonstrating actual acts of aggressive or violent behavior or the use of abusive language to other cadets or staff members
- g. Creating an unsafe environment (escalating negative behavior, starting fires, etc.)
- h. Unauthorized absence from the academy

9. **CURRICULUM** - There are eight core components of the Commonwealth ChalleNGe curriculum.

9.1 **Academic Excellence** - All ChalleNGe participants attend daily academic classes preparing them for testing for the General Education Development (GED) credential or Credit Recovery. Evaluation of a cadet's grade level progress during the Residential Phase is measured using the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) testing process.

9.2 **Life Coping Skills** - Cadets learn skills designed to last a lifetime. Increased self-esteem and self-discipline are gained through a combination of classroom activities, group discussions, and a structured living environment. Cadets learn how to identify and self-regulate emotions such as anger, grief, frustration, and stress and how to utilize conflict resolution strategies. ChalleNGe provides the educational resources necessary to foster fiscal responsibility, helping cadets understand personal finance, basic banking, obtaining, and managing good credit, and preparing and managing a personal budget. Taught by the Counselors.

9.3 **Job Skills** - Cadets prepare for long-term, gainful employment. Career exploration is accomplished through career assessment and interest inventories, job-specific skills orientation and awareness, and training in area vocational centers. Specific classroom activities focus on developing individual resumes, completing job applications, and preparing for and conducting job interviews. Taught by the Career Counselors.

9.4 **Health and Hygiene** - Cadets learn the value of a healthy, well-balanced lifestyle. ChalleNGe offers a holistic approach that combines physical and mental well-being as cadets explore the effects of substance abuse and sexually transmitted diseases on their over health and well-being. Cadets learn the physical and emotional benefits of proper nutrition through participation in classes and structured group discussions. Taught by Medical Staff.

9.5 **Responsible Citizenship** - Cadets discover their role in the democratic process and learn their rights, privileges, and obligations as United States citizens. The U.S. Government structure and processes, along with individual rights and responsibilities at the local, state, and national level, are addressed in the classroom environment, in the student government process, and through practical experiences within local communities. Those who are eligible register for selective service and to vote. Taught by Academics.

9.6 **Service to the Community** - Cadets realize the value and importance of giving back to the community while performing a minimum of 40 hours of service to the community. These activities provide additional opportunities for career exploration and enhance community-needs awareness in Cadets. Operations department lead the efforts.

9.7 **Leadership/Followership** - Cadets develop strong character while identifying and applying individual moral and ethical standards to perform various roles and responsibilities in a structured group environment. They learn to willingly comply with established rules, regulations, and procedures; perform basic military customs and courtesies; define and recognize leadership skills, traits, dimensions, and components; employ leadership skills while performing in a leadership position; maintain a personal living area; and function as an effective team member. Taught by Operations

9.8 **Physical Fitness** - Physical fitness becomes an integral part of cadet daily life. Cadets perform physical training based on the President's Challenge, a test battery based on data collected from a variety of sources including the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports National School Population Fitness Survey. Taught by Operations

9.2.2. Cadets who are on the GED track will be enrolled in an assessment-based curriculum that will help prepare them to take the GED test toward the end of the residential phase. Cadets who are taking the GED test are **required to have an official state identification card** to take the GED test. We highly encourage you to obtain a state identification card for your child prior to them reporting to Challenge.

9.2.4. Cadets will be administered a series of vocational interest surveys while enrolled in Commonwealth ChalleNGe to include the military's ASVAB Test.

10. **ROLE OF THE MENTOR**

10.1. All candidates of the Commonwealth ChalleNGe Youth Academy are required to have a mentor by week 13. The mentor must commit to support the cadet during the 22-week residential phase and for the first 12 months of the post residential phase. Mentors are the integral link between the cadet and the ChalleNGe staff and are the prime source of information regarding cadet progress during the 12 months post residential phase. The mentor also serves as a resource for the graduate and provides advice and counsel regarding school, job, or any other area that helps the cadets in reaching their post-residential goals. We ask the parents to work closely with the cadet, mentor, and post-residential staff in developing a "Post Residential Action Plan" to assist cadets in reaching their goals.

11. **PHONE CALLS EMERGENCY CONTACT**

11.1 **Telephone Calls:** After the Cadets have complete the ACCLIMATION PHASE of the program (the initial two weeks), they will be granted telephone privileges. **Cadets will be restricted to ONE 3-5-minute telephone call per week which will occur on Saturdays and Mentors on**

Sundays beginning on week 13. Long distance calls (out of the U.S.) will not be paid for by Commonwealth ChalleNGe. Cadets who wish to make long distance or toll phone calls will be required to have a telephone card. Cadets will not be allowed to use the telephone after 9:00 p.m. unless previously approved by the Commandant or Director of Operations.

11.2 **Family Emergencies:** In the event of a family emergency, parents/guardians or family members should contact the Commandant/OPS/Deputy or if unavailable, a representative listed on page 5. We request that you notify the ChalleNGe staff member of the nature of the emergency **PRIOR TO** notifying your cadet as we would like to have a staff member present when a cadet is informed of sad or unexpected bad news. Please let other family members and friends know about this.

12. **MISCELLANEOUS**

12.1 **Personal Items:** Electrical appliances (except for male razors), electronic devices, MP3 players (only for Silver/Gold Phase), iPods, radios, video games, cellular phones, posters, knives, guns, expensive jewelry, food etc., are prohibited. Any unauthorized items that are found will be confiscated. **Staff members are not responsible for any lost, stolen, or broken items, even if the item had been confiscated.** Please ensure your cadet does not try to bring these items with them on the first day of class as they will go through an amnesty check upon arrival and these items will be removed from their possession. In addition, cadets/parents/guardians will be held financially responsible for any lost items of clothing or equipment issued to them by Commonwealth ChalleNGe.

12.2 **Cadet Grooming:** Due to COVID restrictions male cadets are required to come to Challenge the first day of in processing with a haircut. Both male and female cadets are required to keep their hair neat and trimmed and must conform to the ChalleNGe grooming standards. Radical hair styles and color are prohibited. Males will be required to shave all facial hair. Military uniform standards will be adhered to regarding grooming and wearing of the uniform.

12.3 **Jewelry:** Cadets may wear an inexpensive BLACK watch. No Bluetooth watches like Apple Watch. No other jewelry is authorized.

12.4 **Sneakers:** Only ALL BLACK, low top running shoes with laces, inexpensive are authorized wear.

12.5. **Tobacco/Nicotine:** No tobacco, no nicotine product use or possession policy for cadets, staff, and visitors.

12.6 **Religious Services:** Non-denominational virtual services will be conducted on Sundays as available by Chaplain Collins. Attendance at religious services is strictly voluntary.

13. SUPPORT ASSOCIATION

13.1 The Commonwealth ChalleNGe Support Association (CCSA) is very active in supporting the morale and welfare of the cadets. We encourage all parents/guardians and mentors to get involved with the association. It is a nonprofit 501c3 organization.

13.2 **Fund Raising:** The primary goal of fund raising is to fund scholarships

13.3 **Scholarship Program:** Please contact Deputy Director Guzmanto submit an application

13.4 **How to get involved:** If you would like to get involved in the Support Association, please notify one of CCSA members or contact the CCSA President, Mr. Clarence E. Perry at:

Clarence E. Perry
Pres. CCSA
1549 Harbor View Cove
Virginia Beach, VA 23464
757 374 2408 (Cell)

Email: ceperry15@verizon.net

Visit CCSA on Facebook..... <https://www.facebook.com/VACCPA>

APPENDIX A: IMPORTANT DATES AND REQUIREMENTS

PASS DATES:

1st pass 26 May 2021 - 2 June 2021 (Memorial Day)

2nd pass 30 June 2021 - 7 July 2021 (4th of July)

Pass brief date/time will be announced on our Facebook page

Placement Requirement Forms information will be provided during the pass brief.

** Upon returning from pass please ensure your cadet has dinner. Do not give them any NIGHT meds that are to be given before bedtime if your cadet arrives before 7:00 p.m. The Team Leader will distribute the medication. If you arrive after at 8:00 p.m. then give the cadet, the night med and inform the Team Leader. **

FAMILY DAY – TBD

GRADUATION: Tentative 28 August 2021