

**AMENDED
SOMERSET COUNTY YOUTH COUNCIL
BY-LAWS
(Updated September 2022)**

ARTICLE I

NAME AND OBJECTIVES

Section 1 - Name: Somerset County Youth Council (or "Youth Council")

Section 2 - Objectives

- ❖ To provide an open forum to foster communication, education, action, and a place where the Council's ideas and areas of concern can be expressed and planned through activities, events, and community service
- ❖ To plan youth conferences, Safe Nights, community service projects, advocate on youth issues, and develop youth programs where appropriate
- ❖ To be involved as an action group in the County in cooperation with the government, other Councils/Boards, and community programs

ARTICLE II

MEMBERSHIP

Section 1 - Representation

It is the goal of the Council to have a diverse membership representative of Somerset County by encouraging each municipality to have at least one (1) representative if possible. There shall be at least twenty (20) and not more than fifty (50) members.

Section 2 - Membership Qualification

All members must live in Somerset County and be between the ages of 12 to 18 years or in grades 7 to 12. The policy for participation in the Youth Council is consistent with the overall county policy.

Section 3 - Term Limits of Council Members

- A. Terms of appointment shall be for one year.
- B. Member terms will run from September 1st to August 31st.
- C. Reappointment of each member will be annual until they reach the age of 18 or achieves high school graduation or a maximum term of six years.
- D. Returning members must confirm membership by signing a recertification agreement at the start of each term no later than September 30th. Failure to submit the document will result in forfeiting membership.

Section 4 - Application Process

Members of the Somerset County Youth Council shall be chosen through an application process. Interested students shall complete an application form and submit a letter of recommendation from a non-familial adult. The recommender should be able to speak the applicant's character and community involvement. Applications will be available on the Somerset County website and by request.

Section 5 - Appointment of Members

A. The Somerset County Department of Human Services Staff shall review the application and forward selected members to the Board of County Commissioners for official appointment to the Youth Council.

B. The Somerset County Department of Human Services Staff shall appoint appropriate members to the Youth Council on a rolling basis until the maximum membership is reached.

Section 6 – Onboarding Process

New members are required to attend a brief orientation provided by the council officers or selected current members, by their second youth council meeting. The orientation will provide information regarding communication, expectations, committees, and upcoming events/activities.

Section 7 – Member Referrals

Current members can receive credit for new member referrals. The new member must list the current members name on the application. The current member will receive up to two (2) hours of credit for the referral. The credit will be given as an hour worth of credit for the first two consecutive meetings the new member attends after appointment. Members recognized as seniors must refer a new member as their replacement prior to June of the given year. Failure to do so may hinder recommendation letter requests.

ARTICLE III

EXPECTATIONS

Section 1 - Conduct

Each member of the Somerset County Youth Council must conduct themselves in a positive, friendly, professional, and law-abiding manner at all times. When meeting, disruptions including those caused by excessive talking, will be acknowledged with a verbal warning. The second time of a disruption will result in an official warning. A second warning will require the Council Advisor to contact the member's parent/guardian and the member must attend a meeting to address the issue and discuss the status of their continued membership. A third warning will result in dismissal from the council. During meetings, activities, and events participation and cooperation is required from each member. There is zero tolerance for profanity or disrespect toward other members or Somerset County staff. Such behavior will result in immediate removal from the Youth Council.

Section 2 – Warnings

Members will be issued warnings for not upholding the requirements of the council. When a member receives two (2) warnings, they will be required to meet with the Council Advisor. If a member receives three (3) total warnings, they will be dismissed from the council. The behaviors are listed below.

- A. Attendance
 - a. Missing two consecutive meetings
 - b. Missing three meetings
 - c. 4 missed meetings will result in dismissal from the council
- B. Community Service
 - a. Missing two consecutive months of community service
 - b. Missing additional consecutive months of community service
 - c. Failure to have a parent/guardian notify the Council Advisor when unable to make mandatory events by the specified deadline
 - d. Failure to make up mandatory event hours within the calendar quarter
 - e. Excessive lateness to events
- C. Conduct
 - a. Second time a member is addressed for conduct
 - b. Third time a member is addressed for conduct, and parents will be notified
 - c. Fourth time a member is addressed for conduct will result in dismissal from the council

ARTICLE IV

OFFICES

Section 1 - Offices

The Council Advisor shall serve as temporary chair for purposes of presiding over the election of the Somerset County Youth Council. The Somerset County Youth Council shall elect from its members a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Secretary.

Section 2 - Officer Duties

All Officers shall participate as voting members and attend 100% of the Council meetings. The duties of the officers shall be as follows:

A. The Chairperson shall preside at the meetings of the Somerset County Youth Council and be charged with the administration of the affairs of the council with assistance from the Council Advisor. The Chairperson shall be the official representative and spokesperson for the Youth Council to outside organizations and the public. The Chairperson is responsible for creating the meeting agenda and sending reminders. Additionally, the Chairperson shall inform members if they are not meeting attendance requirements. The Chairperson shall appoint special committees as needed.

B. The Vice-Chairperson is responsible to inform members of the required and planned activities and events of the council. The Vice-Chairperson is also responsible for administering all correspondence for events including sign-up sheets. The duties of the Vice-Chairperson shall be to perform all duties and responsibilities of the Chairperson in the absence of the Chairperson. The Vice-Chairperson shall also serve in such capacities as assigned by the Chairperson.

C. The Secretary shall conduct a roll call at the start of the meeting and determine a quorum for the meeting. The Secretary is responsible for recording the attendance and minutes of all council meetings and posting them to the Youth Council Google Drive account within two weeks of the meeting. The Secretary shall reach out to members when they are absent to provide a copy of the meeting minutes. The Secretary may delegate these responsibilities to the staff person, as needed. The Secretary shall preside at the

Somerset County Youth Council meetings and perform the duties and exercise the power of the Chairperson during the absence of both the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson.

Section 3 - Election of Officers

The officers of the Youth Council shall be elected annually. To be eligible for office, members must be a member for at least one year prior to appointment. Interested Youth Council members must complete an application and submit a new letter of recommendation from a non-familial adult to be considered for candidacy. The letter should outline the member's leadership. The officers of the Youth Council shall be elected by a majority vote of the voting members present. All nominees must be in good standing and meet the requirements of member attendance and community service.

A. A member must be present to vote for officers. There will be no absentee ballots or votes allowed for elections.

B. If a member is not present to address the Youth Council, they will not be eligible to run for office.

Section 4 - Term Officers

The term of all offices shall be for one year; however, that all officers shall continue to hold office until their successors are appointed. In the event an office holds no nomination at the time of an election, an officer may hold the office for a consecutive year. Officers of the Somerset County Youth Council shall be elected at the annual organization meeting held in June of each calendar year.

Section 5 - Vacancies of Officers

Officers unable to remain in good standing regarding attendance, community service and conduct, will be removed from their position. Should a vacancy occur in an office of the Somerset County Youth Council by resignation, removal, or by some other reason, the office shall be filled by an election for the vacant office at the next regular meeting of the Somerset County Youth Council. The replacement will serve only for the remainder of the term. In the event an officer chooses to resign, they must provide a written letter of resignation to the Council Advisor.

ARTICLE V

MEETINGS AND ATTENDANCE

Section 1 - Regular Meetings

A. All regular meetings of the Somerset County Youth Council shall be open to the public. Regular meetings shall be held once a month on a date and time fixed by the council. The council will hold a minimum of ten meetings a year. There will be no regular meeting held in the month of December. All regular meetings shall be by the call of the Chairperson in consultation with the Somerset County Council Advisor, or designee. The agenda will be prepared in collaboration with the Council Advisor.

B. All members shall receive notice in writing at least a week before and a reminder the day of the meeting date.

C. All members are required to stay for the duration of the meeting and remain in the meeting space until their ride has arrived. Members must be picked up promptly, no later than ten minutes after the conclusion of the meeting.

Section 2 - Special Meetings

Special meetings may be called upon the request of the Chairperson. Requests for special meetings shall be sent via electronic mail, or by telephone, to the Council Advisor at least 48 hours before the time of the meeting. This request shall include the reason or reasons for requesting a special meeting. The Council Advisor shall notify every member of the Youth Council via electronic mail or by telephone. No subjects other than those stated in the notice shall be considered at the special meeting.

Section 3 - Annual Organizational Meeting

The June meeting shall be the annual organizational meeting. Annual elections shall take place at this meeting. The yearly meeting dates will be presented as well.

Section 4 - Quorum

A quorum shall be (1/3) of the voting membership. No official business can be conducted at any Council meeting unless a quorum has been reached.

Section 5 - Voting

All decisions of the Youth Council shall be arrived at by the majority vote of the members present.

Section 6 - Attendance

Attendance at regular Youth Council meetings is expected from all members. Members shall attend at least 8 or 75% of the Youth Council meetings in a year. If a member cannot attend due to sickness or will be late, the member shall notify the Council Advisor and Chairperson before 4:00 p.m. the day of the meeting. If a member misses two (2) consecutive meetings, they will receive a warning. Warnings will be received for additional meetings missed. If a member misses four meetings within a year, they will be dismissed from the council. Excessive lateness to meetings-more than 15 minutes-will be subject to made up through community service. Make ups must be completed within the calendar quarter or the member will receive a warning.

ARTICLE VI

COUNCILMEMBER PARTICIPATION

Section 1 - Community Service

All Somerset County Youth Council Members are required to attend and participate in community service events. The minimum requirements for community service hours are one (1) hour a month or three (3) hours per calendar quarter. Calendar quarters are defined as September-November, December-February, March-May, June-August. Council members cannot go two (2) consecutive months without completing community services hours. If a member fails to maintain this requirement, they will receive a warning. Warnings will be received for additional consecutive months missed. Members enrolling during the year will have their minimum service hours prorated at a rate of one (1) hour per month. Members are expected to participate fully in events to receive credit. Below is a list of required events held throughout the year. If a member cannot attend due to a conflict, the member must have their parent/guardian contact the Council Advisor by the specified date to be excused. If a member fails to have their parent/guardian contact the Council Advisor, they will receive a warning. Members must also make up the hours within the calendar quarter.

1. Members are required to attend the Somerset County Youth Council's Conference and Somerset County Safe Night.

2. Members must attend at least one Adopt-A-Road activity each year.
3. Members must sign-up for two Youth Council 4-H Fair booth shifts.
4. Members must attend any public Somerset County Youth Council-sponsored event.

Section 2 - Committees

The following standing committees shall be established. The Chairperson may appoint Committees as needed to perform specific duties or to delegate certain tasks to be performed. Each committee must select a committee chair to provide a brief report at each regular meeting on updates regarding their planning or any relevant news. The committee chair is responsible for serving as the spokesperson for the group and communicating with the Council Advisor and council officers. Each committee must sponsor a minimum of one (1) awareness program and one (1) community service activity a year. Participation for each committee must be evenly distributed.

Education:

The Education Committee will explore topics surrounding education, students, and school. The Education Committee can educate, advocate, and discuss topics related to funding, technology, higher education, the workforce, and topics beyond the classroom.

Environmental:

The Environmental Committee will explore topics surrounding the physical environment on Earth. The Environmental Committee can educate, advocate, and discuss topics related to climate change, agriculture, biodiversity, sustainability, and laws and policies.

Diversity & Inclusion:

The Diversity & Inclusion Committee will explore topics surrounding diversity & inclusion in schools, workplaces, and communities. The Diversity & Inclusion Committee can educate, advocate, and discuss topics related to culture, LGBTQ+, microaggressions, disability, and socioeconomic class.

Substance Use & Prevention:

The Substance Use & Prevention Committee will explore topics surrounding substance use & prevention in schools, home, and communities. The Substance Use & Prevention Committee can educate, advocate, and discuss topics related to addiction, recovery, stigma, treatment, and laws and policies.

Health & Wellness:

The Health & Wellness Committee will explore topics surrounding health & wellness as it pertains to individuals and groups/families in school, home, and workplace settings. The Health & Wellness Committee can educate, advocate, and discuss topics related to mental health, physical health, spiritual health, financial health, and social health.

Section 3 - Work Groups

Work groups may be formed as sub-committees, throughout the program year to work on specific projects and areas of interest. The Officers may notify any Work Group of termination once its duties have been performed.

Persons failing to meet the criteria outlined will be asked to resign.

ARTICLE VII

ROLE OF SOMERSET COUNTY

Section 1 - County Staff to the Youth Council

- A. The Council Advisor and Somerset County Department of Human Services Staff will attend all meetings and events and assist the Youth Council as needed.
- B. Staff shall be employed by the County government to support Council activities and will be supervised by the Human Services Director.
- C. Staff shall not have voting privileges at meetings of the Council.
- D. A Human Services staff member shall serve as the Youth Council representative to the Somerset County Youth Services Commission and report on Youth Council activities to the Commission.
- E. Matters concerning the staffing of the Council shall be decided by the Somerset County government.

Section 2 - County Officials

- 1. Commissioner liaison to the Somerset County Department of Human Services
- 2. Director of Somerset County Department of Human Services

ARTICLE VIII

BY-LAWS AND AMENDMENTS

Section 1 – By-Laws and Amendments

The by-laws of the Youth Council shall be reviewed once each year. The bylaws may be amended at a regular stated meeting provided one-third of the members of the Youth Council approve the amendment in a roll call vote, providing further that the amendment is part of the agenda for the meeting and the membership has been notified in writing. By-laws and amendments must be approved by the County Staff of the Youth Council to take effect.