

City of Alexandria

# Children, Youth and Families Collaborative Commission

## SNAPSHOT: OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

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The Children, Youth and Families Collaborative Commission plays an important role in the well-being of children, youth and their families that live in the City of Alexandria. This document provides a snapshot of the Commission's purpose, functions/duties and partners. For more information contact Noraine Buttar, Lead Commission Staff at [noraine.buttar@alexandriava.gov](mailto:noraine.buttar@alexandriava.gov).

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## What is a commission?

Under Alexandria City Code, Sec. 2-4-2, “commission” falls under the umbrella definition of “Committee,” which:

means any board, committee, commission, authority or similar body established by the city council or established pursuant to, or required by, any provision of the laws or regulations of the Commonwealth of Virginia or the United States, which has one or more members appointed or designated by the city council, and which has (i) a fixed membership, including at least one person who is not a city employee, (ii) a defined purpose and (iii) regular or periodic meetings.

The City of Alexandria commissions serve a critical role in public policy development and molding decisions for our community. They act as the voice of the community and provide important information for decision-makers. These bodies compose a formal system through which citizens can advise City Council and City employees on all major issues affecting the City.

Appointments to City Boards and Commissions are made by City Council at the first legislative meeting of the month.

## What is the Children, Youth and Families Collaborative Commission?

The Children, Youth and Families Collaborative Commission (CYFCC) is unique in that it also advises the School Board and employees of the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) on issues affecting ACPS. The City Council established the CYFCC in June 2011, replacing the Early Childhood Commission and the Youth Policy Commission, as a joint commission of the City Council and Alexandria School Board. It is comprised of community leaders and key staff of the City of Alexandria and Alexandria City Public Schools, as outlined below. The CYFCC is governed by Chapter 10 of the Alexandria City Code, Sec. 12-10-1 through 12-10-6.

## What is the CYFCC’s purpose and mission?

**The CYFCC provides advice, advocacy and pertinent information to Alexandria City staff, City Council, School Board and other relevant entities in order to influence policy and decisions that result in better outcomes for children, youth and families in the City of Alexandria.**

**Specifically, the CYFCC provides oversight of the Children and Youth Master Plan (CYMP) and monitors its implementation. The CYFCC remains open to all issues affecting children, youth and families in the City of Alexandria, to most effectively advocate on their behalf. In this vein, from year to year the CYFCC generally adopts specific focus priorities.**

## What are the functions and duties of the CYFCC?

- Submit a vision for the well-being of children, youth and families in the City of Alexandria to City Council. This was accomplished in 2014 with the completion of the CYMP, which continues to serve the CYFCC as a guiding and foundational document.
- Submit an annual report to City Council.
- Review progress toward meeting the CYFCC's vision and plan of action.
- Coordinate responses on emerging and existing issues affecting the city's children, youth and families, including engaging with community individuals and groups, directing issues brought to a Commissioner's attention to the rest of the CYFCC and its committees, and holding public hearings and soliciting other feedback through social media.
- Make recommendations regarding City and School funding for children, youth and family programs and services, including identifying budget priorities consistent with the CYFCC's vision, and submitting letters to the City Manager and School Board during their respective budget cycles.
- Advocate for specific city, state and federal legislative actions, consistent with the CYFCC's overarching policy agenda, including preparing briefing materials and position statements for distribution throughout the community, speaking at public hearings, and writing op-eds.
- Hold public hearings, when deemed necessary, to obtain input regarding children, youth and family issues from the general public.
- Honor individuals who have been instrumental in implementing the strategies of the CYMP at the annual Champions of Children Awards.

## What are the functions and duties of the CYFCC's individual Commissioners?

- Read and understand the City's Guidance Document for Boards and Commissions.
- Attend every meeting. Understand that you are required to attend 75% of all meetings per year. Please email CYFCC staff to be excused if you must miss a meeting.
- Read all distributed material prior to the meeting.
- Actively participate in your committee.
- Follow Robert's Rules of Order.
- Actively participate – know that you bring value to the Commission and you are an equal member, regardless of your position, level of experience, etc.
- Remember whom you represent, and ensure your activities on the CYFCC reflect that.
- Consider becoming an Initiative Owner.
- Advocate through your community and circles for the CYMP.
- Be ready to serve in a leadership capacity on the Commission.

## What is the make-up of the CYFCC?

Alexandria City Code mandates the following composition of the CYFCC:

- 25 voting members, all with 3-year term except as noted below
  - 17 citizen members
    - 6 community members with expertise in children, youth and family issues, public safety, medical/health related profession or non-profit experience (approved by City Council)
    - 2 young adults, age 18-21 (approved by City Council)
    - 6 community members with experiences as parents, guardians, teachers and/or expertise in early childhood, youth or general education policy (approved by School Board)
    - 3 high school students (approved by the youth council; one year term)
  - 4 City employees (identified by the City Manager)
  - 4 ACPS employees (identified by the Superintendent)
- 4 ex-officio (non-voting) members, appointed annually
  - 2 liaisons from City Council
  - 2 liaisons from School Board

In addition to appointed and ex-officio members, the CYFCC also greatly benefits from the support of City staff and citizen volunteers.

## What is the structure of the CYFCC?

In order to work effectively, the CYFCC has six committees:

1. Executive Committee
2. Advocacy and Policy Committee
3. Finance and Grants Committee
4. Outreach and Membership Committee
5. Research and Data Committee
6. Implementation and Monitoring Committee

## Who are our stakeholders and what do they expect from us?

The children, youth, and families who live in the City of Alexandria are the CYFCC's constituents, and the beneficiaries of the CYFCC's efforts.

The CYFCC advises and informs:

- Alexandria City Council, and
- Alexandria City School Board.

The CYFCC partners with any organization or group that is focused on the issues impacting children, youth and families. We are interested in collaborating with and supporting those who

are engaged in developing and implementing a comprehensive, citywide youth development agenda.

Although these stakeholders have diverse needs, the CYFCC provides advisory, advocacy, and oversight services that benefit and meet the expectations of each group. For example, each year the City Council and ACPS develop separate annual budgets and strategic plans every five years to meet the growing needs of Alexandria's residents. The CYFCC maintains ongoing communication with these groups during the budget cycle and recommends budget and other priorities that align with the CYMP and the City and ACPS strategic plans, and in such a way that may align with City/School timelines (specifically, budget season), data sets, and strategic initiatives.

In addition, the CYFCC reviews legislative initiatives and recommends policy and operational changes that impact children, youth, and families in the City of Alexandria. Specifically, the CYFCC engages community groups and organizations to solicit information about activities that support the CYMP and address funding gaps in the City and ACPS budgets. The CYFCC also reviews best practices around the nation. The CYFCC also builds awareness in the City of Alexandria by informing residents about emerging issues and progress on the CYMP and City and ACPS budget initiatives. Whenever there is a program and/or funding deficit in an area that affects Alexandria's children, youth and families, the CYFCC makes recommendations to the City Council and ACPS to address such needs.