



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2024.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Prince Edward County
Program Title: "See Us S.M.I.L.E."
Program Category: Organizational Development

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Kimberley Allen
Title: Director of Social Services
Department: Prince Edward County Department of Social Services
Telephone: 434-392-3113 Website: <https://www.princeedwardsocialservices.com/>
Email: kimberley.allen@dss.virginia.gov

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Douglas P. Stanley, AICP, ICMA-CM
Title: County Administrator
Signature:



2024 VACo Achievement Award Nomination
Prince Edward County Department of Social Service

“See Us S.M.I.L.E.”



Executive Summary

Careers in Social Services can be emotionally demanding. Maintaining high morale is crucial for sustaining resilience and preventing burnout among employees. The S.M.I.L.E. (*Strengthening Morale by Including Literally Everyone*) Committee of the Prince Edward County Department of Social Services helps our agency prioritize employee morale and retention, which better positions us to weather uncertainties and adapt to evolving challenges. By investing in a supportive work environment and employee acknowledgement program, we believe our organization can cultivate a loyal and motivated workforce capable of meeting the diverse needs of our clients.

The S.M.I.L.E. Committee is focused on the well-being of employees and the fostering of a positive work environment where individuals feel valued and motivated. This positivity translates into enhanced productivity and a stronger commitment to the agency's mission. Additionally, employee retention helps ensure continuity of service provision and fosters trust within the communities we serve.

The S.M.I.L.E. Committee works to build relationships, understanding and trust amongst agency employees. By retaining our skilled employees, we can capitalize on their expertise, thereby improving service effectiveness and efficiency. Moreover, reducing turnover minimizes recruitment and training costs, reallocating resources towards enhancing client outcomes and program development.

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Introduction

In a post-COVID world, many local public service agencies, such as the Prince Edward County Department of Social Services, face significant staffing issues, affecting morale amongst the employees; a situation that has the potential to impact the provision of benefits and services in a timely and customer-focused manner. With morale at an all-time low, the S.M.I.L.E. Committee was born out of collaboration between the director of the agency and a few employees willing to volunteer their time and talents to illicit feedback from employees and ultimately plan agency-wide opportunities for morale boosting activities, training activities, and personal and professional reflection and growth.

The Challenge/Problem/Situation

The Prince Edward County Department of Social Services faced multiple challenges throughout 2020 and 2021 including the COVID 19 Public Health Emergency as well as a significant transition in leadership, following the retirement of the agency's long-time director. The uncertainty that surrounded both the pandemic and the change in leadership created the perfect storm for major staffing challenges, which ultimately affected the morale of employees. Employees were searching for calm in the storm, as well as ways they could create a safe environment to collaborate and support one another.

The Program

The S.M.I.L.E. Committee is a Director's Advisory Committee that is solely managed by employees of the Prince Edward County Department of Social Services and has received widespread support from the agency director, the Prince Edward County Board of Social Services, the Board of Supervisors and the County Administrator's Office.

All employees receive an invitation to participate on the committee upon hiring; they understand that participation is completely voluntary. The committee maintains membership of approximately 8-10 members of the agency, spanning all three units within the agency (Benefits, Services, and Administration). The Committee utilizes agency wide surveys to gain insight and input from all employees. Meetings are held on a monthly basis, and during such meetings, employee issues are discussed, and activities are then planned. To date, activities have included:

- * Souper Bowl Party (chili/soup cookoff)
- * Valentines Exchange
- * Easter Egg Hunt
- * Freeze-Pop Fridays (summer)
- *Holiday Luncheon/Gift Exchange
- *New Employee Welcome Gifts
- * Child Abuse Prevention Activities
- * ALIVE Suicide Prevention Training
- * New Year Baby Photo Challenge
- * DSS Knowledge-based Scavenger Hunt
- *Community Service (VA Children's Book Festival & Prince Edward Middle School)
- * Self Care Day (mental health, physical health, financial health workshops)
- * Dissemination of Education and Awareness Materials
- * Black History Month
- * Men's Health Month
- * Breast Cancer Awareness
- * Fall Festival & Employee Appreciation Luncheon
- * Friendsgiving Lunch (Thanksgiving)
- * Fire & Evacuation Training
- * REVIVE Training (Narcan)
- * Ice Cream Social
- * Birthday Recognitions
- * Elder Abuse Prevention Activities
- *Random Acts of Kindness/PE PALS
- *Cubicle Decorating Contest

How Program Fulfills Awards Criteria -- Innovation/Partnering/Model for Other Communities

Since its inception, the S.M.I.L.E. Committee has endeavored to be creative in the projects and programs it has sponsored. These have included activities both within and outside the agency, professional and personal development programs, and instructional and social events. We believe the range of projects makes the S.M.I.L.E. Committee innovative, and also one that could be easily emulated by most local government departments/agencies. The Committee has also partnered with local businesses and other community organizations and entities to carry-out its programming in a budget-friendly way.

Financing and Staffing

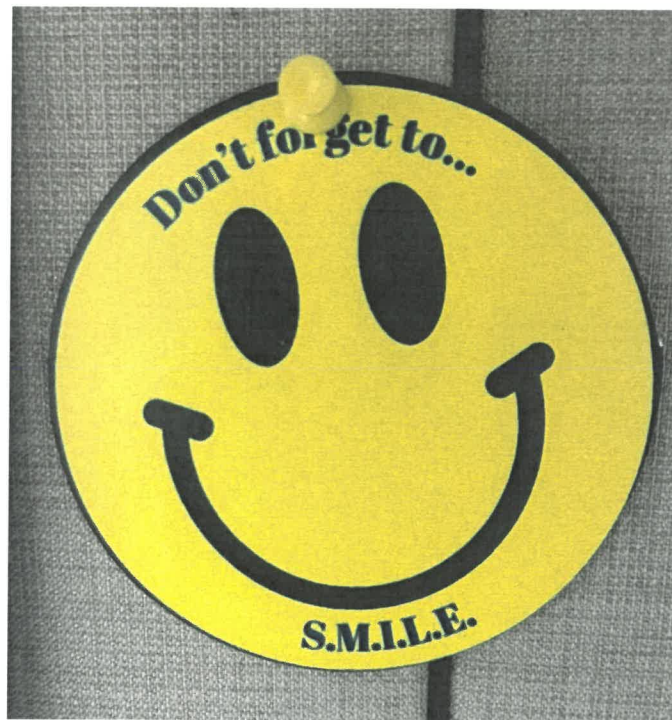
Activities of the S.M.I.L.E. Committee are funded in part through the committee's creation of an agency "Snack Shack," an employee-run concession stand offering snacks and drinks for purchase throughout the day. The "profits" from the Snack Shack are held by the Department for use by the S.M.I.L.E. Committee. Additionally, local-only funding approved by the Prince Edward County Social Services Board supports agency activities. The total estimated annual budget of the S.M.I.L.E. Committee is \$500.00.

Tangible Results or Measurable Outcomes of the Program

Since the formation of the S.M.I.L.E. Committee in 2021, the culture of the agency has shifted to focus on employees, in order to hear and fulfill their needs. The S.M.I.L.E. Committee has promoted collaboration between agency units, which previously operated in silos and created a very isolated work environment for employees. The S.M.I.L.E. Committee has been active in building

morale within the agency, while looking to address diversity and inclusion issues that had previously plagued the agency. The group comprised of workers, from within each of the agency's units, has planned multiple events in a coordinated effort to ensure the voice of each and every employee is heard, to recognize and embrace differences, to celebrate successes, and to learn and grow through the difficult times. The members of the committee wholeheartedly have bought into the parallel process of engaging with their peers in a positive manner that ultimately translates into positive engagement with the clients and community. This special group is committed to making a difference whether it be within the walls of our building or within the Prince Edward community.

See Us S.M.I.L.E.



Caption: S.M.I.L.E. Committee Logo.



Caption: At its January 9, 2024 meeting, the S.M.I.L.E. Committee was recognized by the Board of Supervisors as “Employees of the Month”.



Caption: The S.M.I.L.E. Committee hosted a training for the agency at Hampden-Sydney College to discuss employee engagement and to explore the culture of the agency.



Caption: S.M.I.L.L.E. Committee members partnered with local officials and the community to “meet and greet and high-five” Prince Edward County Middle School Students on the first day of school.



Caption: The S.M.I.L.E. Committee set up safety training for all agency employees with the Farmville Volunteer Fire Department to learn how to use fire extinguishers.



Caption: S.M.I.L.E. Committee members planned and hosted a Fall Festival Employee Appreciation Luncheon that included pumpkin decorating, trivia games, a corn-hole tournament, with door prize raffles and a luncheon donated by local businesses and restaurants.



Caption: The S.M.I.L.E. Committee organized an “elder-abuse prevention wear purple day”. The half-day program included speakers from Piedmont Senior Resources Area Agency on Aging and the Centra Pace program.

Ending 2022 with S.M.I.L.L.E

MENTAL HEALTH CONVERSATION
 OCTOBER 19, 2022
 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
 Join us for a conversation with your supervisor and/or a peer about mental health. This is a safe space to share your experiences and learn from others.

CUBICLE DECORATING CONTEST
 OCTOBER 19, 2022
 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
 Show off your creativity and decorating skills by competing in our cubicle decorating contest. Prizes will be awarded to the winners.

Join Our First Annual FRIENDS & FAMILY
 NOVEMBER 18, 2022
 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
 Spend time with your friends and family in a festive holiday setting. There will be food, drinks, and entertainment.

Holiday Gift Exchange
 NOVEMBER 18, 2022
 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
 Bring a gift to exchange with your colleagues. It's a fun way to celebrate the season.

Cookie Swap
 DECEMBER 15, 2022
 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
 Bring a dozen cookies to swap with others. It's a delicious way to end the year.

Kicking off 2023 - S.M.I.L.L.E Style

YOU ARE INVITED TO VALENTINES DAY EXCHANGE
 FEBRUARY 14, 2023
 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
 Bring a Valentine's card to exchange with your colleagues. It's a sweet way to start the year.

Cubicle Whiz
 FEBRUARY 14, 2023
 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
 Show off your cubicle decorating skills in a friendly competition. Prizes will be awarded to the winners.

S.M.I.L.L.E COMMITTEE SUPER BOWL PARTY
 FEBRUARY 14, 2023
 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
 Celebrate the Super Bowl with a party featuring food, drinks, and entertainment.

JOIN OUR EGG HUNT
 FEBRUARY 21, 2023
 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
 Hunt for colorful eggs in a fun and festive setting. Prizes will be awarded to the winners.

HARVEST FESTIVAL
 SEPTEMBER 26, 2023
 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
 Celebrate the harvest season with a festival featuring food, drinks, and entertainment.

Spring & Summer S.M.I.L.L.E Sources

LA PAROTA LUNCHEON MIXER
 APRIL 11, 2023
 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
 Join us for a two-hour lunch mixer. One lucky person will win a gift card for free lunch!

FOOD TRUCK DAY
 APRIL 11, 2023
 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
 Enjoy a variety of food trucks in a fun and festive setting. Prizes will be awarded to the winners.

WE'RE CREAM SOCIAL
 APRIL 11, 2023
 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
 Celebrate the start of the school year with a cream social featuring food, drinks, and entertainment.

COMMUNITY SERVICE DAY
 APRIL 11, 2023
 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
 Participate in a community service project to support a local organization. Prizes will be awarded to the winners.

PRINCESS EDWARD HIGH SCHOOL
 APRIL 11, 2023
 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
 Support Princess Edward High School with a donation or purchase. Prizes will be awarded to the winners.

Fall & Winter S.M.I.L.L.E Gatherings

HARVEST FESTIVAL
 SEPTEMBER 26, 2023
 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
 Celebrate the harvest season with a festival featuring food, drinks, and entertainment.

ESCAPE ROOM
 SEPTEMBER 26, 2023
 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
 Solve puzzles and escape a room in a fun and challenging setting. Prizes will be awarded to the winners.

FRIENDSGIVING
 OCTOBER 13, 2023
 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
 Celebrate the season with friends and family in a festive setting. Prizes will be awarded to the winners.

HOLIDAY PARTY
 NOVEMBER 18, 2023
 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
 Celebrate the holiday season with a party featuring food, drinks, and entertainment.

WINTER WONDERLAND
 DECEMBER 15, 2023
 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
 Celebrate the winter season with a party featuring food, drinks, and entertainment.