

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 2000 SESSION

CHAPTER 947

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 2.1-1.1, 2.1-1.3, 2.1-51.27, 2.1-113.1, 2.1-113.3, 2.1-116.01 through 2.1-116.05, 2.1-116.07, 2.1-116.09, 2.1-342.01, 15.2-738, 15.2-1507, and 17.1-405 of the Code of Virginia and to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 2.1-116.07:1, relating to the Department of Employee Relations Counselors; grievance procedure.

[S 732]

Approved April 9, 2000

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 2.1-1.1, 2.1-1.3, 2.1-51.27, 2.1-113.1, 2.1-113.3, 2.1-116.01 through 2.1-116.05, 2.1-116.07, 2.1-116.09, 2.1-342.01, 15.2-738, 15.2-1507, and 17.1-405 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted and that the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 2.1-116.07:1 as follows:

§ 2.1-1.1. Departments generally.

There shall be, in addition to such others as may be established by law, the following administrative departments of the state government:

Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance Department.

Department of Accounts.

Department for the Aging.

Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control.

Department of Aviation.

Department of Business Assistance.

Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Department of Corporations.

Department of Correctional Education.

Department of Corrections.

Department of Criminal Justice Services.

Department for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing.

Department of Education.

Department of Emergency Services.

Department of ~~Employee Relations Counselors~~ *Employment Dispute Resolution*.

Department of Environmental Quality.

Department of Fire Programs.

Department of Forestry.

Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

Department of General Services.

Department of Health.

Department of Health Professions.

Department of Historic Resources.

Department of Housing and Community Development.

Department of Information Technology.

Department of Juvenile Justice.

Department of Labor and Industry.

Department of Law.

Department of Medical Assistance Services.

Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services.

Department of Military Affairs.

Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy.

Department of Minority Business Enterprise.

Department of Motor Vehicles.

Department of Personnel and Training.

Department of Planning and Budget.

Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation.

Department of Rail and Public Transportation.

Department of Rehabilitative Services.

Department for Rights of Virginians With Disabilities.

Department of Social Services.

Department of State Police.

Department of Taxation.
 Department of Technology Planning.
 Department of Transportation.
 Department of the Treasury.
 Department of Veterans' Affairs.
 Department for the Visually Handicapped.
 Governor's Employment and Training Department.

§ 2.1-1.3. Entities subject to standard nomenclature.

The following independent administrative entities are subject to the standard nomenclature provisions of § 2.1-1.2:

Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance Department.
 Department of Accounts.
 Department for the Aging.
 Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.
 Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control.
 Department of Aviation.
 Department of Business Assistance.
 Department of Conservation and Recreation.
 Department of Correctional Education.
 Department of Corrections.
 Department of Criminal Justice Services.
 Department for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing.
 Department of Education.
 Department of Emergency Services.
 Department of Environmental Quality.
 Department of ~~Employee Relations Counselors~~ *Employment Dispute Resolution*.
 Department of Fire Programs.
 Department of Forestry.
 Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.
 Department of General Services.
 Department of Health.
 Department of Health Professions.
 Department of Historic Resources.
 Department of Housing and Community Development.
 Department of Information Technology.
 Department of Juvenile Justice.
 Department of Labor and Industry.
 Department of Medical Assistance Services.
 Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services.
 Department of Military Affairs.
 Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy.
 Department of Minority Business Enterprise.
 Department of Motor Vehicles.
 Department of Personnel and Training.
 Department of Planning and Budget.
 Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation.
 Department of Rail and Public Transportation.
 Department of Rehabilitative Services.
 Department for Rights of Virginians With Disabilities.
 Department of Social Services.
 Department of State Police.
 Department of Taxation.
 Department of Technology Planning.
 Department of Transportation.
 Department of the Treasury.
 Department of Veterans' Affairs.
 Department for the Visually Handicapped.
 Governor's Employment and Training Department.

§ 2.1-51.27. Agencies for which responsible.

The Secretary of Administration shall be responsible to the Governor for the following agencies and boards: Department of Personnel and Training, Department of General Services, Compensation Board, Secretary of the Commonwealth, Department of ~~Employee Relations Counselors~~ *Employment Dispute Resolution*, Department of Veterans' Affairs, Virginia Veterans Care Center Board of Trustees, Commission on Local Government, Charitable Gaming Commission, and Virginia Public Broadcasting

Board. The Governor may, by executive order, assign any other state executive agency to the Secretary of Administration, or reassign any agency listed above to another secretary.

§ 2.1-113.1. Personnel Advisory Committee continued as Personnel Advisory Board; membership; terms.

The Personnel Advisory Committee is continued and shall hereafter be known as the Personnel Advisory Board. The Board shall consist of eleven members, as follows: four management state employees; four nonsupervisory state employees; and three members from the public at large, who shall be appointed by the Governor and subject to confirmation by the General Assembly. The members shall serve for four-year terms and no member shall serve for more than two full successive terms. In addition, the Director of the Department of Personnel and Training and the Director of the Department of ~~Employee Relations Counselors~~ *Employment Dispute Resolution* shall serve permanently as ex officio members without voting privileges. A chairman of the Board shall be elected annually by the Board.

§ 2.1-113.3. Personnel Advisory Committee continued as Personnel Advisory Board; powers and duties.

The Personnel Advisory Board shall exercise the following powers and duties and such others as may be provided by law:

1. Advise the Governor, the Director of the Department of Personnel and Training and the Director of the Department of ~~Employee Relations Counselors~~ *Employment Dispute Resolution* on all matters relating to personnel administration.

2. Review all public employer-employee relations throughout the Commonwealth.

3. Review the Department of ~~Employee Relations Counselors~~ *Employment Dispute Resolution's* program of employee-management relations and make recommendations to improve communications between employees and agencies and instrumentalities of the Commonwealth.

4. Carry out such other functions as the Governor deems appropriate.

5. Review the Department of Personnel and Training's training and management programs, compensation and classification practices, benefit programs, and recruitment practices.

§ 2.1-116.01. Office of Employee Relations Counselors continued as Department of Employment Dispute Resolution.

A. The Office of Employee Relations Counselors is continued and shall hereafter be known as the Department of ~~Employee Relations Counselors~~ *Employment Dispute Resolution* (the Department). The Department shall be under the direct control and supervision of the Governor. Wherever the term "Office of Employee Relations Counselors" is used in any law of the Commonwealth, it shall mean the Department of ~~Employee Relations Counselors~~ *Employment Dispute Resolution*.

B. This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the Employment Dispute Resolution Act.

§ 2.1-116.02. Appointment of Director.

The Department of ~~Employee Relations Counselors~~ *Employment Dispute Resolution* shall be headed by a Director who shall be appointed by the Governor, subject to confirmation by the General Assembly, to serve at the pleasure of the Governor.

§ 2.1-116.03. Director to administer Department; powers and duties.

The Director shall, under the direction and control of the Governor, administer and supervise the Department and shall:

1. Establish a comprehensive program of employee relations management which includes alternative processes for resolving employment disputes;

2. Establish the grievance procedure and a statewide mediation program;

3. Promulgate rules and set hearing officer fees for grievance hearings;

4. For employees who are covered by the grievance procedure, (i) provide forms necessary for the proper use of the grievance procedure, (ii) direct full compliance with the grievance procedure process, (iii) investigate allegations of retaliation as the result of use of or participation in the grievance procedure or of reporting, in good faith, an allegation of fraud, waste or abuse to the State Employee Fraud, Waste and Abuse Hotline and advise the agency head of such findings, and (iv) rule on the qualification of a grievance or the question of access to the grievance procedure;

5. Render final decisions, *containing the reasons for such decision*, on all matters related to procedural compliance with the grievance procedure;

6. Establish a process to select, on a rotating basis, hearing officers *for grievance hearings* from (i) the list maintained by the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court or (ii) *attorneys hired as classified employees by the Department through a competitive selection process*; train and assign such hearing officers to conduct grievance hearings; and evaluate the quality of their services to determine eligibility, *based on objective criteria*, for continued selection; and, *if deemed ineligible for continued selection, establish policies for removing such hearing officers from consideration for future selection*;

7. *Publish hearing officer decisions and Department rulings*;

7. 8. Establish, in conjunction with the Department of Personnel and Training, a training program for human resources personnel on employee relations management and employment rights and responsibilities;

8. 9. Implement a comprehensive training and instructional program for all supervisory personnel

which includes the role of the grievance procedure in harmonious employee relations management. The training program shall also include methods for supervisors to instruct nonsupervisory personnel in the use of the grievance procedure. Use of the grievance procedure to resolve disputes shall be encouraged. In-house resources shall be developed to allow the Department and its personnel to conduct on-site training of this nature for units and agencies of state government throughout Virginia. The Department shall assist agencies in establishing performance criteria for such supervisory personnel;

~~9.~~ 10. Provide information upon the request of any employee concerning personnel policies, rules and regulations, and statutes applicable to the grievance procedure and counsel employees in the resolution of conflict in the workplace;

~~10.~~ 11. Establish and maintain a toll-free telephone number to facilitate access by employees to the services of the Department;

~~11.~~ 12. Collect information and statistical data in regard to the use of the grievance procedure and the effectiveness of employee relations management in the various state agencies;

~~12.~~ 13. Make recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly to improve the grievance procedure and employee relations management;

~~13.~~ 14. Exercise such other powers and perform such other duties as may be requested by the Governor; and

~~14.~~ 15. Perform all acts and employ such personnel as may be required, necessary, or convenient to carry out the provisions of this chapter.

§ 2.1-116.04. Responsibilities of state agencies under this chapter.

A. To fully achieve the objectives of this chapter and to create uniformity, each executive branch agency or department listed in Title 2.1 shall:

1. Require supervisory personnel to be trained in the grievance procedure, personnel policies, and conflict resolution;

2. Familiarize employees with their grievance rights and promote the services of the Department of Employee Relations Counselors *Employment Dispute Resolution*;

3. Cooperate with investigations conducted pursuant to the authority granted by subdivision 4 (iii) of § 2.1-116.03;

4. Participate in the mediation program; and

5. Evaluate supervisors on the effectiveness of employee relations management, including, but not limited to, their handling of grievances.

B. The Department shall monitor agencies' activities under this section.

§ 2.1-116.05. Grievance procedure generally.

A. It shall be the policy of the Commonwealth, as an employer, to encourage the resolution of employee problems and complaints. To that end, employees must be able to freely, and without retaliation, discuss their concerns with their immediate supervisors and management. To the extent that such concerns cannot be resolved informally, the grievance procedure shall afford an immediate and fair method for the resolution of employment disputes which may arise between state agencies and those employees who have access to the procedure under § 2.1-116.09.

B. As part of the Commonwealth's program of employee relations management, the Department shall develop a grievance procedure that includes not more than three successively higher grievance resolution steps and a formal hearing as provided in this chapter.

C. Prior to initiating a written grievance, the employee shall be encouraged to pursue an informal complaint with his immediate supervisor. The supervisor shall have authority to resolve the complaint if it involves actions within his control.

D. An employee may pursue a formal written grievance through the grievance resolution steps if the complaint has been presented to management within thirty calendar days of the employee's knowledge of the event that gave rise to the complaint. Employees' rights to pursue grievances shall not be used to harass or otherwise impede the efficient operations of government.

E. Upon receipt of a timely written complaint, management shall review the grievance and respond to the merits thereof. Each level of management review shall have the authority to provide the employee with a remedy. At least one face-to-face meeting between the employee and management shall be required. The persons who may be present at this meeting are the employee, the appropriate manager, an individual selected by the employee, and an individual selected by the manager. Witnesses may be called by either party.

F. Pursuant to ~~§ 2.1-342.01 A 4 of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and § 2.1-382 of the Virginia Privacy Protection Act of 1976~~, all information *Absent just cause, all documents, as defined in the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia*, relating to the actions grieved shall be made available to the employee by the agency, except as otherwise provided by law, upon request from a party to the grievance, by the opposing party. Information Documents pertaining to other employees nonparties that is are relevant to the grievance shall be produced in such a manner as to preserve the privacy of the individuals not personally involved in the complaint or dispute grievance. A party shall not be required to create a document if the document does not exist.

G. All time limitations prescribed in the grievance procedure, including, but not limited to,

submission of an initial complaint and employee appeal of management decisions, shall be reasonable, specific, and equally applicable to the agency and the employee. Expedited grievance procedures shall be established for terminations, demotions, suspensions, and lost wages or salaries.

H. Within five workdays of the receipt of a written notice of noncompliance, failure of the employee or the agency to comply with a substantial procedural requirement of the grievance procedure without just cause may result in a decision against the noncomplying party on any qualified issue. Written notice of noncompliance by the agency must be made to the agency head. The Director shall render all decisions related to procedural compliance, and such decisions shall *contain the reasons for such decision and shall be final*.

I. Grievances qualified pursuant to § 2.1-116.06 that have not been resolved through the grievance resolution steps shall advance to a hearing which shall be the final step in the grievance procedure.

§ 2.1-116.07. Hearing officers; duties; decisions; costs.

A. Nothing in this chapter shall create, nor shall be construed to create, a property interest in selection or assignment to serve as a hearing officer for grievance hearings.

~~A. B.~~ The Director shall assign a hearing officer to conduct the grievance hearing. All hearing officers shall be selected, on a rotating basis, (i) from the list of administrative hearing officers maintained by the Supreme Court of Virginia pursuant to § 9-6.14:14.1 or (ii) *from attorneys hired as classified employees by the Department through a competitive selection process*. In addition to the training requirements imposed by the Supreme Court, each hearing officer shall *meet the criteria established by the Director pursuant to subdivision 6 of § 2.1-116.03* and attend annually at least one day of training in employment law or state personnel policies and organizations. Such training shall be conducted by the Department or an organization approved by the Virginia State Bar for continuing legal education.

~~B. C.~~ Hearing officers shall have the following powers and duties:

1. Hold conferences for the settlement or simplification of issues;
2. Dispose of procedural requests;
3. Issue orders requiring testimony or the production of evidence;
4. Administer oaths and affirmations;
5. Receive probative evidence; exclude irrelevant, immaterial, insubstantial, privileged, or repetitive proofs, rebuttals, or cross-examinations; rule upon offers of proof; and oversee an accurate verbatim recording of the evidence;

6. For those issues qualified for a hearing, order appropriate remedies. Relief may include reinstatement, back pay, full reinstatement of fringe benefits and seniority rights, or any combination of these remedies; and

7. Take other actions as necessary or specified in the grievance procedure.

~~C. D.~~ The decision of the hearing officer shall (i) be in writing, (ii) contain findings of fact as to the material issues in the case and the basis for those findings, and (iii) be final and binding if consistent with law and policy. ~~In grievances initiated by state employees, the Director of the Department of Personnel and Training shall determine whether the decision is consistent with policy. In grievances arising out of the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services which challenge allegations of patient abuse, the Director of the Department of Employee Relations Counselors shall determine whether the decision is consistent with law. The hearing officer's decision is effective from the date issued and shall be implemented immediately unless circumstances beyond the control of the agency delay such implementation.~~

~~D.~~ Either party may petition the circuit court having jurisdiction in the locality in which the employee is employed for an order requiring implementation of the hearing officer's decision. The court may award attorneys' fees to either party if such party substantially prevails on the merits of the case and the opposing party's position is not substantially justified; unless special circumstances would make an award unjust.

E. Except for the employee's counsel or advocate fees, the agency from which the grievance arises shall bear the costs for the hearing officer and other associated hearing expenses.

§ 2.1-116.07:1. Review of hearing decisions; costs.

A. In grievances initiated by state employees, the Director of the Department of Personnel and Training shall determine within sixty days of the decision whether the decision is consistent with policy. In grievances arising out of the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services that challenge allegations of patient abuse, the Director of the Department of Employment Dispute Resolution shall determine within sixty days of the decision whether the decision is consistent with law. The hearing officer's decision shall be effective from the date issued and shall be implemented immediately unless circumstances beyond the control of the agency delay such implementation.

B. Within thirty days of a final decision, a party may appeal on the grounds that the determination is contradictory to law by filing a notice of appeal with the clerk of the circuit court in the jurisdiction in which the grievance arose. The agency shall request and receive prior approval of the Director before filing a notice of appeal. After a notice of appeal has been filed by either party, the agency shall then transmit a copy of the grievance record to the clerk of the court. The court, on motion of a party, shall

issue a writ of certiorari requiring transmission of the record on or before a certain date. Within thirty days of receipt of the grievance record, the court, sitting without a jury, shall hear the appeal on the record. The court may affirm the decision or may reverse or modify the decision. The decision of the court shall be rendered no later than the fifteenth day from the date of the conclusion of the hearing. The circuit court hearing shall be at no cost to the Commonwealth or the grievant.

C. Either party may petition the circuit court having jurisdiction in the locality in which the grievance arose for an order requiring implementation of the final decision or recommendation of a hearing officer.

D. The court shall award reasonable attorneys' fees and costs to the employee if the employee substantially prevails on the merits of a case brought under subsection B or C.

§ 2.1-116.09. State employees.

A. Unless exempted by law, all nonprobationary state employees shall be included in the grievance procedure established pursuant to this chapter and any regulations promulgated pursuant thereto. Employees not covered by such grievance procedure may be covered by an alternative grievance procedure approved by the Department which is consistent with the provisions of this chapter and any regulations promulgated pursuant thereto.

B. The Office of the Attorney General and every legislative, judicial, and independent agency which is not subject to the state grievance procedure shall establish and administer a grievance procedure.

§ 2.1-342.01. Exclusions to application of chapter.

A. The following records are excluded from the provisions of this chapter but may be disclosed by the custodian in his discretion, except where such disclosure is prohibited by law:

1. Confidential records of all investigations of applications for licenses and permits, and all licensees and permittees made by or submitted to the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board, the State Lottery Department, the Virginia Racing Commission, or the Charitable Gaming Commission.

2. State income, business, and estate tax returns, personal property tax returns, scholastic and confidential records held pursuant to § 58.1-3.

3. Scholastic records containing information concerning identifiable individuals, except that such access shall not be denied to the person who is the subject thereof, or the parent or legal guardian of the student. However, no student shall have access to (i) financial records of a parent or guardian or (ii) records of instructional, supervisory, and administrative personnel and educational personnel ancillary thereto, which are in the sole possession of the maker thereof and which are not accessible or revealed to any other person except a substitute.

The parent or legal guardian of a student may prohibit, by written request, the release of any individual information regarding that student until the student reaches the age of eighteen years. For scholastic records of students under the age of eighteen years, the right of access may be asserted only by his legal guardian or parent, including a noncustodial parent, unless such parent's parental rights have been terminated or a court of competent jurisdiction has restricted or denied such access. For scholastic records of students who are emancipated or attending a state-supported institution of higher education, the right of access may be asserted by the student.

Any person who is the subject of any scholastic record and who is eighteen years of age or older may waive, in writing, the protections afforded by this subdivision. If the protections are so waived, the public body shall open such records for inspection and copying.

4. Personnel records containing information concerning identifiable individuals, except that access shall not be denied to the person who is the subject thereof. Any person who is the subject of any personnel record and who is eighteen years of age or older may waive, in writing, the protections afforded by this subdivision. If the protections are so waived, the public body shall open such records for inspection and copying.

5. Medical and mental records, except that such records may be personally reviewed by the subject person or a physician of the subject person's choice. However, the subject person's mental records may not be personally reviewed by such person when the subject person's treating physician has made a part of such person's records a written statement that in his opinion a review of such records by the subject person would be injurious to the subject person's physical or mental health or well-being.

Where the person who is the subject of medical records is confined in a state or local correctional facility, the administrator or chief medical officer of such facility may assert such confined person's right of access to the medical records if the administrator or chief medical officer has reasonable cause to believe that such confined person has an infectious disease or other medical condition from which other persons so confined need to be protected. Medical records shall only be reviewed and shall not be copied by such administrator or chief medical officer. The information in the medical records of a person so confined shall continue to be confidential and shall not be disclosed by the administrator or chief medical officer of the facility to any person except the subject or except as provided by law.

For the purposes of this chapter, statistical summaries of incidents and statistical data concerning patient abuse as may be compiled by the Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services shall be open to inspection and copying as provided in § 2.1-342. No such summaries or data shall include any patient-identifying information. Where the

person who is the subject of medical and mental records is under the age of eighteen, his right of access may be asserted only by his guardian or his parent, including a noncustodial parent, unless such parent's parental rights have been terminated or a court of competent jurisdiction has restricted or denied such access. In instances where the person who is the subject thereof is an emancipated minor or a student in a public institution of higher education, the right of access may be asserted by the subject person.

6. Working papers and correspondence of the Office of the Governor; Lieutenant Governor; the Attorney General; the members of the General Assembly or the Division of Legislative Services; the mayor or chief executive officer of any political subdivision of the Commonwealth; or the president or other chief executive officer of any public institution of higher education. However, no record which is otherwise open to inspection under this chapter shall be deemed exempt by virtue of the fact that it has been attached to or incorporated within any working paper or correspondence.

As used in this subdivision:

"Working papers" means those records prepared by or for an above-named public official for his personal or deliberative use.

"Office of the Governor" means the Governor; his chief of staff, counsel, director of policy, Cabinet Secretaries, and the Director of the Virginia Liaison Office; and those individuals to whom the Governor has delegated his authority pursuant to § 2.1-39.1.

7. Written advice of the county, city and town attorneys to their local government clients and any other records protected by the attorney-client privilege.

8. Legal memoranda and other work product compiled specifically for use in litigation or for use in an active administrative investigation concerning a matter which is properly the subject of a closed meeting under § 2.1-344.

9. Confidential letters and statements of recommendation placed in the records of educational agencies or institutions respecting (i) admission to any educational agency or institution, (ii) an application for employment, or (iii) receipt of an honor or honorary recognition.

10. Library records which can be used to identify both (i) any library patron who has borrowed material from a library and (ii) the material such patron borrowed.

11. Any test or examination used, administered or prepared by any public body for purposes of evaluation of (i) any student or any student's performance, (ii) any employee or employment seeker's qualifications or aptitude for employment, retention, or promotion, or (iii) qualifications for any license or certificate issued by a public body.

As used in this subdivision, "test or examination" shall include (i) any scoring key for any such test or examination and (ii) any other document which would jeopardize the security of the test or examination. Nothing contained in this subdivision shall prohibit the release of test scores or results as provided by law, or limit access to individual records as provided by law. However, the subject of such employment tests shall be entitled to review and inspect all records relative to his performance on such employment tests.

When, in the reasonable opinion of such public body, any such test or examination no longer has any potential for future use, and the security of future tests or examinations will not be jeopardized, the test or examination shall be made available to the public. However, minimum competency tests administered to public school children shall be made available to the public contemporaneously with statewide release of the scores of those taking such tests, but in no event shall such tests be made available to the public later than six months after the administration of such tests.

12. Applications for admission to examinations or for licensure and scoring records maintained by the Department of Health Professions or any board in that department on individual licensees or applicants. However, such material may be made available during normal working hours for copying, at the requester's expense, by the individual who is the subject thereof, in the offices of the Department of Health Professions or in the offices of any health regulatory board, whichever may possess the material.

13. Records of active investigations being conducted by the Department of Health Professions or by any health regulatory board in the Commonwealth.

14. Records recorded in or compiled exclusively for use in closed meetings lawfully held pursuant to § 2.1-344. However, no record which is otherwise open to inspection under this chapter shall be deemed exempt by virtue of the fact that it has been reviewed or discussed in a closed meeting.

15. Reports, documentary evidence and other information as specified in §§ 2.1-373.2 and 63.1-55.4.

16. Proprietary information gathered by or for the Virginia Port Authority as provided in § 62.1-132.4 or § 62.1-134.1.

17. Contract cost estimates prepared for the confidential use of the Department of Transportation in awarding contracts for construction or the purchase of goods or services, and records and automated systems prepared for the Department's Bid Analysis and Monitoring Program.

18. Vendor proprietary information software which may be in the official records of a public body. For the purpose of this subdivision, "vendor proprietary software" means computer programs acquired from a vendor for purposes of processing data for agencies or political subdivisions of the Commonwealth.

19. Financial statements not publicly available filed with applications for industrial development

financings.

20. Data, records or information of a proprietary nature produced or collected by or for faculty or staff of public institutions of higher education, other than the institutions' financial or administrative records, in the conduct of or as a result of study or research on medical, scientific, technical or scholarly issues, whether sponsored by the institution alone or in conjunction with a governmental body or a private concern, where such data, records or information has not been publicly released, published, copyrighted or patented.

21. Lists of registered owners of bonds issued by a political subdivision of the Commonwealth, whether the lists are maintained by the political subdivision itself or by a single fiduciary designated by the political subdivision.

22. Confidential proprietary records, voluntarily provided by private business pursuant to a promise of confidentiality from the Department of Business Assistance, the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, the Virginia Tourism Authority, or local or regional industrial or economic development authorities or organizations, used by the Department, the Partnership, the Authority, or such entities for business, trade and tourism development; and memoranda, working papers or other records related to businesses that are considering locating or expanding in Virginia, prepared by the Partnership, where competition or bargaining is involved and where, if such records are made public, the financial interest of the governmental unit would be adversely affected.

23. Information which was filed as confidential under the Toxic Substances Information Act (§ 32.1-239 et seq.), as such Act existed prior to July 1, 1992.

24. Confidential records, including victim identity, provided to or obtained by staff in a rape crisis center or a program for battered spouses.

25. Computer software developed by or for a state agency, state-supported institution of higher education or political subdivision of the Commonwealth.

26. Investigator notes, and other correspondence and information, furnished in confidence with respect to an active investigation of individual employment discrimination complaints made to the Department of Personnel and Training. However, nothing in this section shall prohibit the disclosure of information taken from inactive reports in a form which does not reveal the identity of charging parties, persons supplying the information or other individuals involved in the investigation.

27. Fisheries data which would permit identification of any person or vessel, except when required by court order as specified in § 28.2-204.

28. Records of active investigations being conducted by the Department of Medical Assistance Services pursuant to Chapter 10 (§ 32.1-323 et seq.) of Title 32.1.

29. Records and writings furnished by a member of the General Assembly to a meeting of a standing committee, special committee or subcommittee of his house established solely for the purpose of reviewing members' annual disclosure statements and supporting materials filed under § 2.1-639.40 or of formulating advisory opinions to members on standards of conduct, or both.

30. Customer account information of a public utility affiliated with a political subdivision of the Commonwealth, including the customer's name and service address, but excluding the amount of utility service provided and the amount of money paid for such utility service.

31. Investigative notes and other correspondence and information furnished in confidence with respect to an investigation or conciliation process involving an alleged unlawful discriminatory practice under the Virginia Human Rights Act (§ 2.1-714 et seq.). However, nothing in this section shall prohibit the distribution of information taken from inactive reports in a form which does not reveal the identity of the parties involved or other persons supplying information.

32. Investigative notes; proprietary information not published, copyrighted or patented; information obtained from employee personnel records; personally identifiable information regarding residents, clients or other recipients of services; and other correspondence and information furnished in confidence to the Department of Social Services in connection with an active investigation of an applicant or licensee pursuant to Chapters 9 (§ 63.1-172 et seq.) and 10 (§ 63.1-195 et seq.) of Title 63.1. However, nothing in this section shall prohibit disclosure of information from the records of completed investigations in a form that does not reveal the identity of complainants, persons supplying information, or other individuals involved in the investigation.

33. Personal information, as defined in § 2.1-379, (i) filed with the Virginia Housing Development Authority concerning individuals who have applied for or received loans or other housing assistance or who have applied for occupancy of or have occupied housing financed, owned or otherwise assisted by the Virginia Housing Development Authority, (ii) concerning persons participating in or persons on the waiting list for federally funded rent-assistance programs, or (iii) filed with any local redevelopment and housing authority created pursuant to § 36-4 concerning persons participating in or persons on the waiting list for housing assistance programs funded by local governments or by any such authority. However, access to one's own information shall not be denied.

34. Records regarding the siting of hazardous waste facilities, except as provided in § 10.1-1441, if disclosure of them would have a detrimental effect upon the negotiating position of a governing body or on the establishment of the terms, conditions and provisions of the siting agreement.

35. Appraisals and cost estimates of real property subject to a proposed purchase, sale or lease, prior to the completion of such purchase, sale or lease.
36. Records containing information on the site specific location of rare, threatened, endangered or otherwise imperiled plant and animal species, natural communities, caves, and significant historic and archaeological sites if, in the opinion of the public body which has the responsibility for such information, disclosure of the information would jeopardize the continued existence or the integrity of the resource. This exemption shall not apply to requests from the owner of the land upon which the resource is located.
37. Records, memoranda, working papers, graphics, video or audio tapes, production models, data and information of a proprietary nature produced by or for or collected by or for the State Lottery Department relating to matters of a specific lottery game design, development, production, operation, ticket price, prize structure, manner of selecting the winning ticket, manner of payment of prizes to holders of winning tickets, frequency of drawings or selections of winning tickets, odds of winning, advertising, or marketing, where such official records have not been publicly released, published, copyrighted or patented. Whether released, published or copyrighted, all game-related information shall be subject to public disclosure under this chapter upon the first day of sales for the specific lottery game to which it pertains.
38. Records of studies and investigations by the State Lottery Department of (i) lottery agents, (ii) lottery vendors, (iii) lottery crimes under §§ 58.1-4014 through 58.1-4018, (iv) defects in the law or regulations which cause abuses in the administration and operation of the lottery and any evasions of such provisions, or (v) the use of the lottery as a subterfuge for organized crime and illegal gambling where such official records have not been publicly released, published or copyrighted. All studies and investigations referred to under clauses (iii), (iv) and (v) shall be open to inspection and copying upon completion of the study or investigation.
39. Those portions of engineering and construction drawings and plans submitted for the sole purpose of complying with the Building Code in obtaining a building permit which would identify specific trade secrets or other information the disclosure of which would be harmful to the competitive position of the owner or lessee. However, such information shall be exempt only until the building is completed. Information relating to the safety or environmental soundness of any building shall not be exempt from disclosure.
40. Records concerning reserves established in specific claims administered by the Department of General Services through its Division of Risk Management as provided in Article 5.1 (§ 2.1-526.1 et seq.) of Chapter 32 of this title, or by any county, city, or town.
41. Information and records collected for the designation and verification of trauma centers and other specialty care centers within the Statewide Emergency Medical Services System and Services pursuant to Article 2.1 (§ 32.1-111.1 et seq.) of Chapter 4 of Title 32.1.
42. Reports and court documents required to be kept confidential pursuant to § 37.1-67.3.
43. Investigative notes, correspondence and information furnished in confidence, and records otherwise exempted by this chapter or any Virginia statute, provided to or produced by or for the (i) Auditor of Public Accounts; (ii) Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission; (iii) Department of the State Internal Auditor with respect to an investigation initiated through the State Employee Fraud, Waste and Abuse Hotline; or (iv) committee or the auditor with respect to an investigation or audit conducted pursuant to § 15.2-825. Records of completed investigations shall be disclosed in a form that does not reveal the identity of the complainants or persons supplying information to investigators. Unless disclosure is prohibited by this section, the records disclosed shall include, but not be limited to, the agency involved, the identity of the person who is the subject of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, and the actions taken to resolve the complaint. If an investigation does not lead to corrective action, the identity of the person who is the subject of the complaint may be released only with the consent of the subject person.
44. Data formerly required to be submitted to the Commissioner of Health relating to the establishment of new or the expansion of existing clinical health services, acquisition of major medical equipment, or certain projects requiring capital expenditures pursuant to former § 32.1-102.3:4.
45. Documentation or other information which describes the design, function, operation or access control features of any security system, whether manual or automated, which is used to control access to or use of any automated data processing or telecommunications system.
46. Confidential financial statements, balance sheets, trade secrets, and revenue and cost projections provided to the Department of Rail and Public Transportation, provided such information is exempt under the federal Freedom of Information Act or the federal Interstate Commerce Act or other laws administered by the Surface Transportation Board or the Federal Railroad Administration with respect to data provided in confidence to the Surface Transportation Board and the Federal Railroad Administration.
47. In the case of corporations organized by the Virginia Retirement System (i) proprietary information provided by, and financial information concerning, coventurers, partners, lessors, lessees, or investors and (ii) records concerning the condition, acquisition, disposition, use, leasing, development,

coventuring, or management of real estate, the disclosure of which would have a substantial adverse impact on the value of such real estate or result in a competitive disadvantage to the corporation or subsidiary.

48. Confidential proprietary records related to inventory and sales, voluntarily provided by private energy suppliers to the Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy, used by that Department for energy contingency planning purposes or for developing consolidated statistical information on energy supplies.

49. Confidential proprietary information furnished to the Board of Medical Assistance Services or the Medicaid Prior Authorization Advisory Committee pursuant to Article 4 (§ 32.1-331.12 et seq.) of Chapter 10 of Title 32.1.

50. Proprietary, commercial or financial information, balance sheets, trade secrets, and revenue and cost projections provided by a private transportation business to the Virginia Department of Transportation and the Department of Rail and Public Transportation for the purpose of conducting transportation studies needed to obtain grants or other financial assistance under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (P.L. 105-178) for transportation projects, provided such information is exempt under the federal Freedom of Information Act or the federal Interstate Commerce Act or other laws administered by the Surface Transportation Board or the Federal Railroad Administration with respect to data provided in confidence to the Surface Transportation Board and the Federal Railroad Administration. However, the exemption provided by this subdivision shall not apply to any wholly owned subsidiary of a public body.

51. Names and addresses of subscribers to Virginia Wildlife magazine, published by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, provided the individual subscriber has requested in writing that the Department not release such information.

52. Information required to be provided pursuant to § 54.1-2506.1.

53. Confidential information designated as provided in subsection D of § 11-52 as trade secrets or proprietary information by any person who has submitted to a public body an application for prequalification to bid on public construction projects in accordance with subsection B of § 11-46.

54. All information and records acquired during a review of any child death by the State Child Fatality Review team established pursuant to § 32.1-283.1, during a review of any child death by a local or regional child fatality review team established pursuant to § 32.1-283.2, and all information and records acquired during a review of any death by a family violence fatality review team established pursuant to § 32.1-283.3.

55. Financial, medical, rehabilitative and other personal information concerning applicants for or recipients of loan funds submitted to or maintained by the Assistive Technology Loan Fund Authority under Chapter 11 (§ 51.5-53 et seq.) of Title 51.5.

56. Confidential proprietary records which are voluntarily provided by a private entity pursuant to a proposal filed with a public entity under the Public-Private Transportation Act of 1995 (§ 56-556 et seq.), pursuant to a promise of confidentiality from the responsible public entity, used by the responsible public entity for purposes related to the development of a qualifying transportation facility; and memoranda, working papers or other records related to proposals filed under the Public-Private Transportation Act of 1995, where, if such records were made public, the financial interest of the public or private entity involved with such proposal or the process of competition or bargaining would be adversely affected. In order for confidential proprietary information to be excluded from the provisions of this chapter, the private entity shall (i) invoke such exclusion upon submission of the data or other materials for which protection from disclosure is sought, (ii) identify the data or other materials for which protection is sought, and (iii) state the reasons why protection is necessary. For the purposes of this subdivision, the terms "public entity" and "private entity" shall be defined as they are defined in the Public-Private Transportation Act of 1995.

57. Records of law-enforcement agencies, to the extent that such records contain specific tactical plans, the disclosure of which would jeopardize the safety or security of law-enforcement personnel or the general public; or records of emergency service agencies to the extent that such records contain specific tactical plans relating to antiterrorist activity.

58. All records of the University of Virginia or the University of Virginia Medical Center which contain proprietary, business-related information pertaining to the operations of the University of Virginia Medical Center, including its business development or marketing strategies and its activities with existing or future joint venturers, partners, or other parties with whom the University of Virginia Medical Center has formed, or forms, any arrangement for the delivery of health care, if disclosure of such information would be harmful to the competitive position of the Medical Center.

59. Patient level data collected by the Board of Health and not yet processed, verified, and released, pursuant to § 32.1-276.9, to the Board by the nonprofit organization with which the Commissioner of Health has contracted pursuant to § 32.1-276.4.

60. Records of the Medical College of Virginia Hospitals Authority pertaining to any of the following: an individual's qualifications for or continued membership on its medical or teaching staffs; proprietary information gathered by or in the possession of the Authority from third parties pursuant to a promise of confidentiality; contract cost estimates prepared for confidential use in awarding contracts for

construction or the purchase of goods or services; data, records or information of a proprietary nature produced or collected by or for the Authority or members of its medical or teaching staffs; financial statements not publicly available that may be filed with the Authority from third parties; the identity, accounts or account status of any customer of the Authority; consulting or other reports paid for by the Authority to assist the Authority in connection with its strategic planning and goals; and the determination of marketing and operational strategies where disclosure of such strategies would be harmful to the competitive position of the Authority; and data, records or information of a proprietary nature produced or collected by or for employees of the Authority, other than the Authority's financial or administrative records, in the conduct of or as a result of study or research on medical, scientific, technical or scholarly issues, whether sponsored by the Authority alone or in conjunction with a governmental body or a private concern, when such data, records or information have not been publicly released, published, copyrighted or patented.

61. Confidential proprietary information or trade secrets, not publicly available, provided by a private person or entity to the Virginia Resources Authority or to a fund administered in connection with financial assistance rendered or to be rendered by the Virginia Resources Authority where, if such information were made public, the financial interest of the private person or entity would be adversely affected, and, after June 30, 1997, where such information was provided pursuant to a promise of confidentiality.

62. Confidential proprietary records which are provided by a franchisee under § 15.2-2108 to its franchising authority pursuant to a promise of confidentiality from the franchising authority which relates to the franchisee's potential provision of new services, adoption of new technologies or implementation of improvements, where such new services, technologies or improvements have not been implemented by the franchisee on a nonexperimental scale in the franchise area, and where, if such records were made public, the competitive advantage or financial interests of the franchisee would be adversely affected. In order for confidential proprietary information to be excluded from the provisions of this chapter, the franchisee shall (i) invoke such exclusion upon submission of the data or other materials for which protection from disclosure is sought, (ii) identify the data or other materials for which protection is sought, and (iii) state the reason why protection is necessary.

63. Records of the Intervention Program Committee within the Department of Health Professions, to the extent such records may identify any practitioner who may be, or who is actually, impaired to the extent disclosure is prohibited by § 54.1-2517.

64. Records submitted as a grant application, or accompanying a grant application, to the Commonwealth Neurotrauma Initiative Advisory Board pursuant to Article 12 (§ 32.1-73.1 et seq.) of Chapter 2 of Title 32.1, to the extent such records contain (i) medical or mental records, or other data identifying individual patients or (ii) proprietary business or research-related information produced or collected by the applicant in the conduct of or as a result of study or research on medical, rehabilitative, scientific, technical or scholarly issues, when such information has not been publicly released, published, copyrighted or patented, if the disclosure of such information would be harmful to the competitive position of the applicant.

65. Information which would disclose the security aspects of a system safety program plan adopted pursuant to 49 C.F.R. Part 659 by the Commonwealth's designated Rail Fixed Guideway Systems Safety Oversight agency; and information in the possession of such agency, the release of which would jeopardize the success of an ongoing investigation of a rail accident or other incident threatening railway safety.

66. Documents and other information of a proprietary nature furnished by a supplier of charitable gaming supplies to the Charitable Gaming Commission pursuant to subsection E of § 18.2-340.34.

67. Personal information, as defined in § 2.1-379, provided to the Board of the Virginia Higher Education Tuition Trust Fund or its employees by or on behalf of individuals who have requested information about, applied for, or entered into prepaid tuition contracts or savings trust account agreements pursuant to Chapter 4.9 (§ 23-38.75 et seq.) of Title 23. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to prohibit disclosure or publication of information in a statistical or other form which does not identify individuals or provide personal information. Individuals shall be provided access to their own personal information.

68. Any record copied, recorded or received by the Commissioner of Health in the course of an examination, investigation or review of a managed care health insurance plan licensee pursuant to §§ 32.1-137.4 and 32.1-137.5, including books, records, files, accounts, papers, documents, and any or all computer or other recordings.

69. Engineering and architectural drawings, operational, procedural, tactical planning or training manuals, or staff meeting minutes or other records, the disclosure of which would reveal surveillance techniques, personnel deployments, alarm systems or technologies, or operational and transportation plans or protocols, to the extent such disclosure would jeopardize the security or employee safety of (i) the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts or any of its warehouses; (ii) any government store or warehouse controlled by the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control; (iii) any courthouse, jail, detention or law-enforcement facility; or (iv) any correctional or juvenile facility or institution under the supervision

of the Department of Corrections or the Department of Juvenile Justice.

70. Records and reports related to Virginia apple producer sales provided to the Virginia State Apple Board pursuant to §§ 3.1-622 and 3.1-624.

71. *Information furnished in confidence to the Department of Employment Dispute Resolution with respect to an investigation, consultation, or mediation under Chapter 10.01 (§ 2.1-116.01 et seq.) of this title, and memoranda, correspondence and other records resulting from any such investigation, consultation or mediation. However, nothing in this section shall prohibit the distribution of information taken from inactive reports in a form which does not reveal the identity of the parties involved or other persons supplying information.*

B. Neither any provision of this chapter nor any provision of Chapter 26 (§ 2.1-377 et seq.) of this title shall be construed as denying public access to (i) contracts between a public official and a public body, other than contracts settling public employee employment disputes held confidential as personnel records under subdivision 4 of subsection A; (ii) records of the position, job classification, official salary or rate of pay of, and records of the allowances or reimbursements for expenses paid to any officer, official or employee of a public body; or (iii) the compensation or benefits paid by any corporation organized by the Virginia Retirement System or its officers or employees. The provisions of this subsection, however, shall not require public access to records of the official salaries or rates of pay of public employees whose annual rate of pay is \$10,000 or less.

C. No provision of this chapter shall be construed to afford any rights to any person incarcerated in a state, local or federal correctional facility, whether or not such facility is (i) located in the Commonwealth or (ii) operated pursuant to the Corrections Private Management Act (§ 53.1-261 et seq.). However, this subsection shall not be construed to prevent an incarcerated person from exercising his constitutionally protected rights, including, but not limited to, his rights to call for evidence in his favor in a criminal prosecution.

§ 15.2-738. Modification of grievance procedure.

Notwithstanding the provisions in Chapter 10.01 (§ 2.1-116.01 et seq.) of Title 2.1, and §§ 15.2-1506, and 15.2-1507, to the contrary, in any county which has the county manager plan of government provided for in this chapter, a grievance procedure may be established which permits an Equal Employment Opportunity officer, except the Director of the Department of ~~Employee Relations~~ *Counselors Employment Dispute Resolution* appointed pursuant to § 2.1-116.02 and any employees thereof, to be present at any step of a grievance procedure established under § 15.2-1506. Such officer shall not be an advocate or representative on behalf of either the grievant or management.

§ 15.2-1507. Provision of grievance procedure; training programs.

A. If a local governing body fails to adopt a grievance procedure required by § 15.2-1506 or fails to certify it as provided in this section, ~~the state grievance procedure shall be applicable~~ *the local governing body shall be deemed to have adopted a grievance procedure which is consistent with the provisions of Chapter 10.01 (§ 2.1-116.01 et seq.) of Title 2.1 and any regulations adopted pursuant thereto* for so long as the locality remains in noncompliance. The locality shall provide its employees with copies of the applicable grievance procedure upon request. The term "grievance" as used herein shall not be interpreted to mean negotiations of wages, salaries, or fringe benefits.

Each grievance procedure, and each amendment thereto, in order to comply with this section, shall be certified in writing to be in compliance by the city, town or county attorney, and the chief administrative officer of the locality, and such certification filed with the clerk of the circuit court having jurisdiction in the locality in which the procedure is to apply. Local government grievance procedures in effect as of July 1, 1991, shall remain in full force and effect for ninety days thereafter, unless certified and filed as provided above within a shorter time period.

Each grievance procedure shall include the following components and features:

1. Definition of grievance. A grievance shall be a complaint or dispute by an employee relating to his employment, including but not necessarily limited to (i) disciplinary actions, including dismissals, disciplinary demotions, and suspensions, provided that dismissals shall be grievable whenever resulting from formal discipline or unsatisfactory job performance; (ii) the application of personnel policies, procedures, rules and regulations, including the application of policies involving matters referred to in subdivision 2 (iii) below; (iii) discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, political affiliation, age, disability, national origin or sex; and (iv) acts of retaliation as the result of the use of or participation in the grievance procedure or because the employee has complied with any law of the United States or of the Commonwealth, has reported any violation of such law to a governmental authority, has sought any change in law before the Congress of the United States or the General Assembly, or has reported an incidence of fraud, abuse, or gross mismanagement.

2. Local government responsibilities. Local governments shall retain the exclusive right to manage the affairs and operations of government. Accordingly, the following complaints are nongrievable: (i) establishment and revision of wages or salaries, position classification or general benefits; (ii) work activity accepted by the employee as a condition of employment or work activity which may reasonably be expected to be a part of the job content; (iii) the contents of ordinances, statutes or established personnel policies, procedures, rules and regulations; (iv) failure to promote except where the employee

can show that established promotional policies or procedures were not followed or applied fairly; (v) the methods, means and personnel by which work activities are to be carried on; (vi) except where such action affects an employee who has been reinstated within the previous six months as the result of the final determination of a grievance, termination, layoff, demotion or suspension from duties because of lack of work, reduction in work force, or job abolition; (vii) the hiring, promotion, transfer, assignment and retention of employees within the local government; and (viii) the relief of employees from duties of the local government in emergencies. In any grievance brought under the exception to ~~provision~~ *clause* (vi) of this subdivision, the action shall be upheld upon a showing by the local government that: (i) there was a valid business reason for the action and (ii) the employee was notified of the reason in writing prior to the effective date of the action.

3. Coverage of personnel.

a. Unless otherwise provided by law, all nonprobationary local government permanent full-time and part-time employees are eligible to file grievances with the following exceptions:

- (1) Appointees of elected groups or individuals;
- (2) Officials and employees who by charter or other law serve at the will or pleasure of an appointing authority;
- (3) Deputies and executive assistants to the chief administrative officer of a locality;
- (4) Agency heads or chief executive officers of government operations;
- (5) Employees whose terms of employment are limited by law;
- (6) Temporary, limited term and seasonal employees;
- (7) Law-enforcement officers as defined in Chapter 10.1 (§ 2.1-116.1 et seq.) of Title 2.1 whose grievance is subject to the provisions of Chapter 10.1 and who have elected to proceed pursuant to those provisions in the resolution of their grievance, or any other employee electing to proceed pursuant to any other existing procedure in the resolution of his grievance.

b. Notwithstanding the exceptions set forth in subdivision 3 a above, local governments, at their sole discretion, may voluntarily include employees in any of the excepted categories within the coverage of their grievance procedures.

c. The chief administrative officer of each local government, or his designee, shall determine the officers and employees excluded from the grievance procedure, and shall be responsible for maintaining an up-to-date list of the affected positions.

4. Grievance procedure availability and coverage for employees of local social service departments and boards, community services boards, redevelopment and housing authorities, and regional housing authorities. Employees of local social service departments and boards, community services boards, redevelopment and housing authorities created pursuant to § 36-4, and regional housing authorities created pursuant to § 36-40 shall be included in (i) a local governing body's grievance procedure or personnel system, if agreed to by the department, board, or authority and the locality or (ii) a grievance procedure established and administered by the department, board or authority which is consistent with the provisions of Chapter 10.01 (§ 2.1-116.01 et seq.) of Title 2.1 and any regulations promulgated pursuant thereto. *If a department, board or authority fails to establish a grievance procedure pursuant to clause (i) or (ii), it shall be deemed to have adopted a grievance procedure which is consistent with the provisions of Chapter 10.01 (§ 2.1-116.01 et seq.) of Title 2.1 and any regulations adopted pursuant thereto for so long as it remains in noncompliance.*

5. General requirements for procedures.

a. Each grievance procedure shall include not more than four steps for airing complaints at successively higher levels of local government management, and a final step providing for a panel hearing.

b. Grievance procedures shall prescribe reasonable and specific time limitations for the grievant to submit an initial complaint and to appeal each decision through the steps of the grievance procedure.

c. Nothing contained in this section shall prohibit a local government from granting its employees rights greater than those contained herein, provided such grant does not exceed or violate the general law or public policy of the Commonwealth.

6. Time periods.

a. It is intended that speedy attention to employee grievances be promoted, consistent with the ability of the parties to prepare for a fair consideration of the issues of concern.

b. The time for submitting an initial complaint shall not be less than twenty calendar days after the event giving rise to the grievance, but local governments may, at their option, allow a longer time period.

c. Limits for steps after initial presentation of grievance shall be the same or greater for the grievant than the time which is allowed for local government response in each comparable situation.

d. Time frames may be extended by mutual agreement of the local government and the grievant.

7. Compliance.

a. After the initial filing of a written grievance, failure of either party to comply with all substantial procedural requirements of the grievance procedure, including the panel hearing, without just cause shall result in a decision in favor of the other party on any grievable issue, provided the party not in

compliance fails to correct the noncompliance within five workdays of receipt of written notification by the other party of the compliance violation. Such written notification by the grievant shall be made to the chief administrative officer, or his designee.

b. The chief administrative officer, or his designee, at his option, may require a clear written explanation of the basis for just cause extensions or exceptions. The chief administrative officer, or his designee, shall determine compliance issues. Compliance determinations made by the chief administrative officer shall be subject to judicial review by filing petition with the circuit court within thirty days of the compliance determination.

8. Management steps.

a. The first step shall provide for an informal, initial processing of employee complaints by the immediate supervisor through a nonwritten, discussion format.

b. Management steps shall provide for a review with higher levels of local government authority following the employee's reduction to writing of the grievance and the relief requested on forms supplied by the local government. Personal face-to-face meetings are required at all of these steps.

c. With the exception of the final management step, the only persons who may normally be present in the management step meetings are the grievant, the appropriate local government official at the level at which the grievance is being heard, and appropriate witnesses for each side. Witnesses shall be present only while actually providing testimony. At the final management step, the grievant, at his option, may have present a representative of his choice. If the grievant is represented by legal counsel, local government likewise has the option of being represented by counsel.

9. Qualification for panel hearing.

a. Decisions regarding grievability and access to the procedure shall be made by the chief administrative officer of the local government, or his designee, at any time prior to the panel hearing, at the request of the local government or grievant, within ten calendar days of the request. No city, town, or county attorney, or attorney for the Commonwealth, shall be authorized to decide the question of grievability. A copy of the ruling shall be sent to the grievant. Decisions of the chief administrative officer of the local government, or his designee, may be appealed to the circuit court having jurisdiction in the locality in which the grievant is employed for a hearing on the issue of whether the grievance qualifies for a panel hearing. Proceedings for review of the decision of the chief administrative officer or his designee shall be instituted by the grievant by filing a notice of appeal with the chief administrative officer within ten calendar days from the date of receipt of the decision and giving a copy thereof to all other parties. Within ten calendar days thereafter, the chief administrative officer or his designee shall transmit to the clerk of the court to which the appeal is taken: a copy of the decision of the chief administrative officer, a copy of the notice of appeal, and the exhibits. A list of the evidence furnished to the court shall also be furnished to the grievant. The failure of the chief administrative officer or his designee to transmit the record shall not prejudice the rights of the grievant. The court, on motion of the grievant, may issue a writ of certiorari requiring the chief administrative officer to transmit the record on or before a certain date.

b. Within thirty days of receipt of such records by the clerk, the court, sitting without a jury, shall hear the appeal on the record transmitted by the chief administrative officer or his designee and such additional evidence as may be necessary to resolve any controversy as to the correctness of the record. The court, in its discretion, may receive such other evidence as the ends of justice require. The court may affirm the decision of the chief administrative officer or his designee, or may reverse or modify the decision. The decision of the court shall be rendered no later than the fifteenth day from the date of the conclusion of the hearing. The decision of the court is final and is not appealable.

10. Panel hearings.

a. Qualifying grievances shall advance to the final step as described below:

(1) With the exception of those local governments covered by subdivision a (2) of this subsection, the final step shall provide for a hearing before an impartial panel, consisting of one member appointed by the grievant, one member appointed by the agency head and a third member selected by the first two. In the event that agreement cannot be reached as to the final panel member, the chief judge of the circuit court of the jurisdiction wherein the dispute arose shall select the third panel member. The panel shall not be composed of any persons having direct involvement with the grievance being heard by the panel, or with the complaint or dispute giving rise to the grievance. Managers who are in a direct line of supervision of a grievant, persons residing in the same household as the grievant and the following relatives of a participant in the grievance process or a participant's spouse are prohibited from serving as panel members: spouse, parent, child, descendants of a child, sibling, niece, nephew and first cousin. No attorney having direct involvement with the subject matter of the grievance, nor a partner, associate, employee or co-employee of the attorney shall serve as a panel member.

(2) Local governments may retain the panel composition method previously approved by the Department of Employee Relations Counselors *Employment Dispute Resolution* and in effect as of the enactment of this statute. Modifications to the panel composition method shall be permitted with regard to the size of the panel and the terms of office for panel members, so long as the basic integrity and independence of panels are maintained. As used in this section, the term "panel" shall include all bodies

designated and authorized to make final and binding decisions.

(3) Local governments shall not be required to have an administrative hearing officer in any case, but may do so in employee termination or retaliation cases at their option. When a local government elects to use an administrative hearing officer as the third panel member in an employee termination or retaliation case, the administrative hearing officer shall be appointed by the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court. The appointment shall be made from the list of administrative hearing officers maintained by the Executive Secretary pursuant to § 9-6.14:14.1 and shall be made from the appropriate geographical region on a rotating basis. If a local government elects to use an administrative hearing officer, it shall bear the expense of such officer's services.

(4) In all cases there shall be a chairperson of the panel and, when panels are composed of three persons (one each selected by the respective parties and the third from an impartial source), the third member shall be the chairperson.

(5) Both the grievant and the respondent may call upon appropriate witnesses and be represented by legal counsel or other representatives at the panel hearing. Such representatives may examine, cross-examine, question and present evidence on behalf of the grievant or respondent before the panel without being in violation of the provisions of § 54.1-3904.

(6) The decision of the panel shall be final and binding and shall be consistent with provisions of law and written policy.

(7) The question of whether the relief granted by a panel is consistent with written policy shall be determined by the chief administrative officer of the local government, or his designee, unless such person has a direct personal involvement with the event or events giving rise to the grievance, in which case the decision shall be made by the attorney for the Commonwealth of the jurisdiction in which the grievance is pending.

b. Rules for panel hearings.

Unless otherwise provided by law, local governments shall adopt rules for the conduct of panel hearings as a part of their grievance procedures, or shall adopt separate rules for such hearings. Rules which are promulgated shall include, but need not be limited to the following provisions:

(1) That panels do not have authority to formulate policies or procedures or to alter existing policies or procedures;

(2) That panels have the discretion to determine the propriety of attendance at the hearing of persons not having a direct interest in the hearing, and, at the request of either party, the hearing shall be private;

(3) That the local government provide the panel with copies of the grievance record prior to the hearing, and provide the grievant with a list of the documents furnished to the panel and the grievant and his attorney, at least ten days prior to the scheduled panel hearing, shall be allowed access to and copies of all relevant files intended to be used in the grievance proceeding;

(4) That panels have the authority to determine the admissibility of evidence without regard to the burden of proof, or the order of presentation of evidence, so long as a full and equal opportunity is afforded to all parties for the presentation of their evidence;

(5) That all evidence be presented in the presence of the panel and the parties, except by mutual consent of the parties;

(6) That documents, exhibits and lists of witnesses be exchanged between the parties in advance of the hearing;

(7) That the majority decision of the panel, acting within the scope of its authority, be final, subject to existing policies, procedures and law;

(8) That the panel decision be provided within a specified time to all parties; and

(9) Such other provisions as may facilitate fair and expeditious hearings, with the understanding that the hearings are not intended to be conducted like proceedings in courts, and that rules of evidence do not necessarily apply.

11. Implementation of panel decisions.

Either party may petition the circuit court having jurisdiction in the locality in which the grievant is employed for an order requiring implementation of the panel decision.

B. Notwithstanding the contrary provisions of this section, a final panel decision rendered under the provisions of this section which would result in the reinstatement of any employee of a sheriff's office, who has been terminated for cause may be reviewed by the circuit court for the locality upon the petition of the locality. The review of the circuit court shall be limited to the question of whether the panel's decision was consistent with provisions of law and written policy.

§ 17.1-405. Appellate jurisdiction - Administrative agency, Virginia Workers' Compensation Commission, and domestic relations appeals.

Any aggrieved party may appeal to the Court of Appeals from:

1. Any final decision of a circuit court on appeal from (i) a decision of an administrative agency or (ii) a grievance hearing decision issued pursuant to § 2.1-116.07;
2. Any final decision of the Virginia Workers' Compensation Commission;
3. Any final judgment, order, or decree of a circuit court involving:

- a. Affirmance or annulment of a marriage;
 - b. Divorce;
 - c. Custody;
 - d. Spousal or child support;
 - e. The control or disposition of a child;
 - f. Any other domestic relations matter arising under Title 16.1 or Title 20; or
 - g. Adoption under Chapter 11 (§ 63.1-220 et seq.) of Title 63.1.
4. Any interlocutory decree or order entered in any of the cases listed in this section (i) granting, dissolving, or denying an injunction or (ii) adjudicating the principles of a cause.
- 2. That wherever in the Code of Virginia the term "Department of Employee Relations Counselors" is used, it shall be deemed to mean the Department of Employment Dispute Resolution.**