

## TEXAS AGRILIFE EXTENSION SERVICE

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Texas 4-H and Youth Development Program

# 2011-2012 RULES AND GUIDELINES

*Revised: July 14, 2011*

## **DISCLAIMER**

The provisions contained in these rules and guidelines do not constitute a contract, express or implied, between volunteers and participants of this program and the United States Department of Agriculture, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, the county governments of the State of Texas, or the Texas 4-H and Youth Development Program (4-H Program.) Texas AgriLife Extension Service reserves the right to change or alter any provision herein without prior notice.

Nothing in these rules and guidelines should be interpreted as creating a constitutionally (state or federal) protected property or liberty interest to participate in the Texas 4-H and Youth Development Program unless one already exists at law. 4-H is an extracurricular activity that is a privilege, not a right; participation is contingent upon eligibility for membership, compliance with program rules, and adherence to Texas AgriLife Extension Service directives. The descriptions of disciplinary procedures set forth in this document are guidelines. The failure of Texas AgriLife Extension Service to strictly adhere to a particular process should not be a basis for overturning the disciplinary action imposed.

The use of the terms “rules and guidelines” in the title of this publication intends to convey that some requirements are mandatory (rules), while others are permissive/discretionary (guidelines).

*This document reviewed by Texas A&M System – Office of General Counsel in July 2011.*

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## MEMBERSHIP AND ENROLLMENT

It is the policy of the Texas A&M University System to extend equal opportunities for membership and participation in 4-H activities to all Texas youth according to all applicable state and federal laws.

Discrimination in the 4-H and Youth Development Program because of socioeconomic level, race, color, religion, national origin, gender, age or disability is contrary to the purposes and policies of Texas AgriLife Extension Service.

### 4-H Members

1. Age Requirements
  - Youth are eligible to participate in the 2011-2012 4-H year if they are 8 and in the third grade or 9 years of age by August 31, 2011 and have not reached their 19th birthday on or before August 31, 2011. (See 4-H Clover Kids section for guidelines involving younger youth).
  - Special education youth who are older than 19 and have not graduated from high school may participate in 4-H and Youth Development programs as members, with approval by the county Extension agent. Participation is limited to the club or county level. County Extension staff have the option, on a case-by-case basis, to allow Special Education youth older than 19 to participate in competitive events at the club or county level.
2. Texas 4-H Age Categories
  - Junior           Ages: 8 and in the 3rd grade, 9 & 10   Birth dates between: Sept 1, 2000 – Aug 31, 2003
  - Intermediate   Ages: 11 to 13                                        Birth dates between: Sept 1, 1997 – Aug 31, 2000
  - Senior           Ages: 14 to 18                                        Birth dates between: Sept 1, 1992 – Aug 31, 1997
3. Other Membership Requirements
  - A youth applies for 4-H membership when he/she either completes an individual paper enrollment form, or individual on-line registration via 4-H CONNECT. Membership is not active until applicants registration is entered onto 4-H CONNECT and approved by the County Office. A youth participates in 4-H by belonging to a chartered 4-H club or county program or any recognized unit of membership in the county where he/she resides.\* Membership cannot be held simultaneously in more than one county or state, but membership may change with residence, as long as the member participates in a given project in only one county or state.
    - *\*Exception - If a 4-H member lives near a county line or if a specific project is not offered in his/her home county and it is more convenient, desirable, or logical to belong to 4-H in another county, he/she may request permission to join 4-H in that county if the county Extension staff in both counties approve. Approval should be in writing. Request to change counties should be based on concerns that affect the youth member developmentally (i.e.: requesting to change counties because the adjoining county's livestock show sale is better will not be approved). If a specific project is not offered in the county of residence, and the 4-H member wants to participate in 4-H project work in an adjoining county, they may; however, they must enter competitive activities through the county in which they have their membership. This agreement of cross-county membership must be renewed annually between the involved county Extension staff and the 4-H member/family.*
    - *See Section 3, for participation in specific events and activities which have additional entry requirements beyond being a member.*
  - Each young person wishing to be part of a 4-H club will be required to pay a participation fee before being granted membership status. Participation fees will be assessed at \$20.00 for those enrolling between September 1, 2011 to October 31, 2011. Beginning on November 1, 2011 for the continuation of the 4-H year, the participation fee will be \$25.00.
  - Each member is enrolled in at least one 4-H project. Project experiences are taught by project leaders, teen leaders and/or junior leaders. Each 4-H member should meet general requirements to complete a project including:
    - Select a project area and record it on the 4-H enrollment form or online registration system (4-H CONNECT).
    - Develop a set of project goals.
    - Participate in at least 5 project learning experiences of 30 - 60 minutes in length.

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- Regularly complete at least one project goal.
- Attend educational programs that are available in the community or county on a particular project.
- Develop life skills and leadership skills by teaching others.
- Conduct citizenship activities related to the selected project.
- Marriage and parenthood are not barriers to 4-H membership, provided other requirements are met.
- A youth who is accepted as a 4-H member is entitled to all the rights and privileges of membership in connection with 4-H. Specific events and activities may require that rules be established beyond being a 4-H member. When this is the case, the responsibility for establishing and monitoring such rules rests with the organizational leadership in charge of the event or activity. Such rules, once made, should be made known to all 4-H members and their families. The rules must not violate the rights, or discriminate against any protected class of individuals and should be so stated as to be inclusive in nature.

### Clover Kids

In support of the youth development mission of 4-H, the purpose of the 4-H Clover Kids Program is to help youth learn social skills, reinforce formal school programs through informal, noncompetitive experiential educational projects and activities, develop self-esteem and build family strengths. The annual participation fee does not pertain to Clover Kids.

These rules and guidelines are based on youth development research indicating competitive events and competitive judging are inappropriate for Clover Kid aged youth.

#### 1. Age Requirements

- Texas AgriLife Extension Service extends a limited version of the 4-H experience to youth in grades K-2 as "4-H Clover Kids." This age category is further defined as youth who are eligible to enroll in Kindergarten on September 1 and have not entered (started classes) the third grade on September 1.
- Clover Kids are not eligible to serve as club officers, nor are they eligible to participate in activities, recognition programs, and competitive events reserved for older youth.

#### 2. Enrollment

- Any chartered 4-H club may organize a "4-H Clover Kids" group within the club.
- A school, day care center, community center, neighborhood, or group may sponsor and organize a 4-H Clover Kids group, with the aid of volunteers trained by the county Extension staff or their designees.
- Each 4-H Clover Kids member may participate only through organized learning groups under the guidance of qualified and trained volunteer 4-H leaders.
- Members can be enrolled using individual or group enrollment forms.

#### 3. Approved Projects and Recognition

- Emphasis is on providing project-related learning experiences and forms of recognition which are age appropriate and based on current youth development research. The individual project is the basis for a significant part of the education in 4-H. Projects and curricula approved by Texas AgriLife Extension Service for Clover Kids include:
  - Curricula
    - Hatching In The Classroom
    - Yea 4-H!
    - Junior Master Gardener
  - Projects
    - Rabbits
    - Food & Nutrition
    - Healthy Lifestyle Education
    - Safety
    - Photography
    - Computer Science
    - Horticulture
    - Recreation
    - Companion Animals
    - Sport Fishing
    - Clothing & Textiles
- Projects are restricted to those mentioned above which the youth can, by themselves, understand, manage, and care for and for which the youth can master the associated subject matter knowledge.
- Projects for Clover Kids ARE NOT to be entered into competition.

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- Projects are not eligible to be entered into competition in traditional 4-H program events and activities reserved for the 9 (or 8 and in the third grade) to 19 age group.
- Projects may be exhibited at an appropriate Extension approved 4-H Clover Kids event.
- In presentations and exhibits, Clover Kids will be presented participation awards only, with recognition based upon completing and exhibiting the product or skill. No judging or placing shall be permitted.

### **4-H Enrollment**

The 4-H year runs from September 1 to August 31. County Extension Staff are expected to keep a record of all 4-H members and volunteers enrolled. Under special conditions, a youth may be required to change his/her county of residence frequently. In such cases, county Extension Staff are encouraged to help members remain actively involved. 4-H members transferring from one county to another should be accepted by that county and given full credit for their past 4-H work and achievements.

## CHARTERING 4-H CLUBS

All 4-H clubs must be chartered annually to be recognized as an organized and functioning 4-H club and for authorization to use the 4-H name and emblem. The processing of 4-H club charter information is completed online via 4-H CONNECT and is due by the date designated by the Texas 4-H and Youth Development Program.

Each club's charter information is required to be sent to the Texas 4-H and Youth Development Office and to National 4-H Headquarters in Washington D.C.

Military 4-H clubs that are hosted on federal military bases are not permitted to obtain an EIN and receive their certification for tax purposes through other entities.

The minimum requirements a club must meet to receive a charter include:

- Five or more members from more than one family
- One or more teen and/or adult leaders
- Initial plan of operation (for at least 3 months in advance)
- Elected officers
- Each member enrolled in at least one 4-H project experience
- An official, and approved, club or group name
- Club by-laws, including an Extension-approved dissolution clause

The following information for chartered 4-H clubs must be maintained on file in the County Extension Office:

- Proof of chartering through the 4-H CONNECT system.
- 4-H Bylaws – updated and revised annually; bylaws must also include an Extension-approved dissolution clause
- 4-H club information (meeting dates & location)
- Names of current club officers and club managers
- Club contact person and contact address
- Annual plans for club
- Fund raising request forms
- Annual audit report
- EIN Form (issues by the IRS)
- Copy of IRS form 990 or 990-N, filed annually, or proof of attempt to file annually (See Section 7 for additional guidance)

### Chartering County 4-H Groups and Organizations

County 4-H groups or organizations wishing to use the 4-H name and emblem must complete the charter process in order to be granted permission for its use. Examples of such groups include: parent/leader associations, 4-H Councils, county 4-H committees, 4-H Ambassadors, etc. The processing of 4-H club charter information is completed online via 4-H CONNECT and is due by the date designated by the Texas 4-H and Youth Development Program.

In order to complete the request for a charter, 4-H Groups and Organizations wishing to use the 4-H name and emblem must provide:

- Membership/Contact List
- Meeting Location
- List of Elected Officers

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- Group Name and Year Group Began
- By-laws, including an Extension-approved dissolution clause
- Annual financial review documents

### 4-H Support Groups with Their Own Board of Directors

Groups that wish to use the 4-H name and emblem as part of their marketing and structure, but are not under the supervision of Texas AgriLife Extension Service, and have their own board of directors should be issued a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) concerning the use of the 4-H name and emblem. Examples would be youth livestock shows, fairs, independent fund raising groups or booster clubs. A sample MOU is posted on the Texas 4-H Management Website under Resource Development at:

[http://texas4-h.tamu.edu/volunteers/management\\_guide/index\\_management\\_guide\\_vol.php](http://texas4-h.tamu.edu/volunteers/management_guide/index_management_guide_vol.php)

### Terminating a 4-H Club/Group Charter

Reasons to pull a charter may include, but are not limited to:

- Unlawful discriminatory practices.
- Not submitting required county paperwork including club reports, member enrollment forms, and volunteer applications.
- Club leadership not attending scheduled club manager training and workshops.
- Practices that are not considered youth developmentally appropriate.

The following steps should be taken:

- The county Extension Staff should meet with the club manager and outline the concerns and follow up in writing. Give a defined period of time to remedy the situation.
- If it becomes necessary to move forward with pulling the charter, the process is:
  - a. Create a timeline with dates that meetings were held with club leadership to discuss concerns.
  - b. Assemble all written correspondence sent to club leadership regarding expectations and defined times to remedy the concerns.
  - c. Outline a plan to support the existing club members i.e.: Club and project opportunities to which the youth may transfer their membership.
  - d. Contact designated 4-H faculty member serving the District and District Extension Administrator or County Extension Director for counsel. Forward supporting documentation for their review.
  - e. Contact Texas 4-H and Youth Development Program Director at State 4-H Office for charter to be pulled.
  - f. Follow-up with letter to club leadership and membership indicating the club has been dissolved. Letters to youth should include a summary of other club opportunities in the county.

## SCHOOL ABSENCES AND PARTICIPATION IN 4-H COMPETITIVE ACTIVITIES

4-H has been recognized by the Texas Education Agency as a legitimate school-related extracurricular organization. 4-H members may apply for excused absences in order to participate in 4-H activities. It is the responsibility of the local school district to determine whether or not any student is eligible and may be excused from classes to participate in any extracurricular event or activity. 4-H members are not automatically excused upon request, but are subject to all regulations of the Texas Education Agency and their local school district as they may apply to extracurricular participation.

Additionally, specific events and activities may require that rules be established beyond being a 4-H member. When this is the case, the responsibility for establishing and monitoring such rules rests with the organizational group in charge of the event or activity. Such rules, once made, should be made known to all 4-H members and their families. The rules must not violate the rights, or discriminate against the rights, of any person and should be so stated as to be inclusive in nature.

At the beginning of each school year, Extension agents should meet with school officials to determine the preferred steps for securing excused absences and permission for 4-H members to participate in 4-H activities.

All 4-H youth, including youth in public, private, or home school must adhere to the following guidelines regarding competitive activities:

- A. Complete a “Declaration of Eligibility Form” available on the Texas 4-H Website (<http://texas4-h.tamu.edu>) with appropriate signatures as indicated on the form.

***OR***

- B. Name of 4-H member must appear on a list of eligible students to participate in a specific extracurricular activity signed by the school principal or designee. Recommended procedures to obtain this list are:
  - a. At least thirty (30) days in advance of each 4-H event, agents should submit a written request to the appropriate school administrator providing the following information:
    - i. Names of 4-H members involved
    - ii. School they attend
    - iii. Date(s) of extracurricular activity
    - iv. Name and time of event in which 4-H member will participate
    - v. The educational significance of the event
    - vi. Name of adult chaperone

Consistent with University Interscholastic League (U.I.L.) rules, the Texas 4-H Program has adopted a three (3) school-week waiting period upon change in status of school enrollment (i.e. from public to private or private to home or home to public or home to private, or public to public) before the 4-H member is eligible for extracurricular activity.

County Extension staff are encouraged to seek adjunct faculty status to strengthen collaborative partnerships with schools. Schools may require proof of a criminal background check for AgriLife employees. It is a reasonable request for them to accept the Agency’s screening results of each employee. County Extension Agents should make a request for a letter stating that they have passed a criminal background check to the Assistant Chief Human Resources Officer and Director of Special Projects.

## SUSPENSION OF PARTICIPATION/REMOVAL OF 4-H MEMBERS

4-H members are expected to maintain a high standard of socially appropriate behavior which corresponds to the expectations outlined in the Consequences of Misbehavior.

### Appropriate Behavior

Texas AgriLife Extension Service supports moral and ethical behavior on the part of its faculty and staff, and all 4-H program participants, parents, and youth/adult volunteers. Fairness, honesty and good sportsmanship are expected and encouraged. Fraudulent, illegal, or deceptive practices in exhibiting individual projects and in the demonstration of knowledge and skills will not be tolerated. The agency reserves the right to impose stricter behavior expectations on members participating in projects that inherently pose a greater threat to the individual safety of participants.

### Texas 4-H/FFA Livestock Exhibition and Show Ethics

In the event an individual loses his/her eligibility to participate in a competitive extracurricular event/activity due to an illegal, unethical and/or other rule violation, the individual will not be eligible to participate in the said competitive extracurricular event/activity by joining 4-H. This policy is posted on the Texas 4-H Management site: [http://texas4-h.tamu.edu/volunteers/management\\_guide/index\\_management\\_guide\\_vol.php](http://texas4-h.tamu.edu/volunteers/management_guide/index_management_guide_vol.php). Violation of this policy may result in a member being removed from the 4-H program or not being permitted to enter stock shows through their 4-H membership.

### All youth must abide by Texas Education Agency's Extra-Curricular Education Guidelines

In the event an individual loses his/her eligibility to participate in an extracurricular event/activity due to a school or community-based illegal or unethical violation, the individual will not be eligible to participate in extracurricular events/activities as a 4-H member, including, but not limited to: competitive activities, officer roles, and committee activities.

### Suspension of participation/removal of 4-H member from program

The Texas 4-H and Youth Development Program has the right to act in the best interest of all youth in the program by possibly removing a 4-H member from participation who has acted in a manner considered by 4-H leadership as being harmful or potentially harmful to the health or well being of themselves or others, whether such act occurred within, or outside of, the 4-H program.

1. Guidelines for Handling 4-H Member Behavior Problems Which Occurred Outside of the 4-H Program:
  - a. Obtain relevant facts.
  - b. Contact and brief the supervising District Extension Administrator, County Extension Director, and assigned 4-H Specialist.
  - c. Contact Texas 4-H Administration for counsel.
  - d. If necessary, Texas 4-H Administration will coordinate with Extension's Legal Counsel.
2. Handling 4-H Member Behavior Problems during 4-H Events & Activities.
 

Rules, policies, and behavior expectations of youth participating in programs, contests, events, and activities will be clearly stated, made available to all eligible youth, and reviewed as part of the event orientation and/or information conveyed via the Commitment to Excellence document. Consequences of rules violations will be clearly stated and will be enforced uniformly and fairly.

Behavior that is disruptive (minor or major) to the event must be reported immediately to the event manager. Violators may be required to explain actions to the professional Extension staff in charge. The incident must be documented and a letter describing such will be sent to the 4-H Leadership Team serving that county, county Extension agent(s), and parents/guardians of those involved.

3. Offenses and Consequences of Misbehavior
 

The three categories of offenses and examples of common conduct constituting an offense of that degree are listed below. Obviously, it is not practical to list every possible act which would constitute an offense of a certain degree; the items in a list are only intended to

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be examples of prohibited conduct. Extension staff members have discretion to assign offense degrees to particular conduct given the case-specific facts and circumstances related to a particular incident.

At a minimum, for any offense, the 4-H member will:

- Receive a verbal reprimand.
- Write letters of apology to the appropriate people.

Minor Offenses:

- Habitually late to program activities.
- Not in room at designated time for overnight events.
- Not possessing good manners and using language that is offensive to others.
- Not respecting the rights and privacy of those rooming with or attending an activity.
- Lying or untruthfulness to chaperones, leaders, event organizers or others in attendance.

Minor Offenses Consequences:

- Consistent discipline problems requiring more than two reprimands are grounds for sending a 4-H member home at the parent's/guardian's expense.
- Habitual discipline problems requiring more than four reprimands during one calendar year is grounds for the 4-H member to not be allowed in any county, district or state activities for a defined period of time. In addition, the 4-H member may be asked to resign from all 4-H offices or leadership roles held or to give up monetary awards or scholarships from the Texas 4-H Program.

Intermediate Offenses

- Inappropriate visitation.
- Leaving a 4-H activity without the permission of staff member(s) in charge.
- Intentional damage to meeting site, sleeping quarters, person, or other person's property.
- Bullying.

Intermediate Offenses Consequences

- One or two violations is grounds for removal from the event/activity and/or sending a participant home at the parent's/guardian's expense.
- Three violations during one calendar year is grounds for the 4-H member to not be allowed in any county, district or state activities for a defined period of time. In addition, 4-H member may be asked to resign from all 4-H offices or leadership roles held or to give up monetary awards or scholarships from the Texas 4-H Program.

Major Offenses

- Possession or use of tobacco products.
- Possession or use of alcohol or drugs.
- Possession or use of a weapon.
- Threatening another person with a weapon or bodily harm.
- Cheating.
- Theft of any kind.
- Acting in a manner considered by 4-H Administration to be harmful or potentially harmful to the health or well-being of themselves or others, whether such act occurred within or outside of the 4-H program.

Major Offenses Consequences

- Automatic removal from an event/activity and/or sending a participant home at the parent's/guardian's expense.
- One major offense during any 4-H year may lead to suspension of membership in all Texas 4-H and Youth Development programs for a defined period of time, along with the possibility of facing criminal charges, depending on offense. In addition, 4-H member may be asked to resign from all 4-H offices or leadership roles held or to give up monetary awards or scholarships from the Texas 4-H Program.
- May lead to termination of 4-H membership.
- May result in notification of incident to legal authorities.

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If the offense is severe enough to possibly send the member home, the event manager should follow these steps unless they are impractical given the particular circumstances of the incident:

- Obtain all the relevant facts.
- Brief the on-site adult responsible for the youth delegate (Extension staff member or 4-H volunteer).
- If not on-site, but available via phone, brief the county Extension staff member and District Extension Administrator responsible.

The following steps should be taken when sending a 4-H member home:

1. Extension staff member contacts parents/guardians.
2. Parents are advised that child is being sent home by safest, most direct means, and that parents/guardians are responsible for cost.
3. Event manager decides if parents should be given the option of picking up the child.
4. Follow-up correspondence from event's manager to appropriate county Extension staff member, 4-H Leadership Team, child and parent for documentation.
5. For all reprimands, a Summary Letter and Accident/Incident Report Form will be completed and mailed to the 4-H member, parent/guardian, county Extension agent, District Extension Administrator, County Extension Directors (if applicable), District 4-H Specialist, Texas 4-H and Youth Development Program Director, and Associate Directors for 4-H, Youth, & Human Sciences and County Programs. Additionally, notification will be made to the District 4-H Leadership Team (District Extension Administrator and 4-H Specialist) prior to letter and form being mailed.

### **Disciplinary Action Disclosure**

Disciplinary action will be kept confidential among the youth's family and Extension faculty to the extent permitted by Texas law. Volunteers in a management role will be informed of action on a "need-to-know" basis to be determined by Extension on a case-by-case basis. Extension reserves the right to provide discipline-related information to volunteers, parents, and youth members in those rare cases where Extension believes, in its sole discretion, it is necessary to protect the health and well-being of 4-H Program participants or other living creatures.

### **Outstanding Debt to 4-H**

4-H members and adults that have registered in any 4-H event are responsible for making payment for any completed/accepted registration (this includes 4-H CONNECT on-line registration, paper registration and participation fees). Failure of a 4-H member or adult to make payment may result in the person not being allowed to participate in the event, any future events, and/or the ability to register for an event. Non-payment can also include insufficient fund checks, or other returned checks. Failure to make payment can also result in legal actions.

## **MEDICAL INFORMATION FOR 4-H ACTIVITIES**

### **Waiver, Indemnification, and Authorization for Medical Care**

The Waiver, Indemnification, and Authorization for Medical Care is required for each event. This form is date and event specific and can be found on the Texas 4-H and Youth Development website (<http://texas4-h.tamu.edu>).

### **Notifying Event Management Regarding Illness and Medications**

4-H members participating in a 4-H event or activity are expected to notify event management of any health issues or special needs that may prevent them from fully participating or pose a risk to themselves and/or other participants. Parents/guardians of the 4-H members that are taking medication should decide if event management should be notified of their child's need for assistance with taking the medications.

### **Confidentiality**

Medical information provided to event management should be kept confidential and held in a secure location that is not readily accessible to general observation. Disclosure of information can occur if necessary to safeguard the health and welfare of the youth involved.

## **ROLES OF THE COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT, 4-H VOLUNTEERS AND PARENTS OF MEMBERS IN THE 4-H AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

### **Role of a County Extension Agent**

County Extension agents have the responsibility for oversight of the 4-H and Youth Development Program in their assigned counties. This includes the following responsibilities:

- Coordinate the chartering of 4-H membership units (clubs, groups, programs). Chartering includes permission to use the 4-H name and emblem.
- Coordinate the chartering of county 4-H organizations (i.e. 4-H Council, volunteer/parent groups, committees, etc.). Chartering includes use of the 4-H name and emblem.
- Provide opportunities for all youth who have reached the appropriate age to be participants and/or members in the 4-H and Youth Development Program.
- Plan and coordinate the county 4-H program.
- Staff the 4-H clubs/units utilizing volunteers with the assistance of the volunteer/parent leadership and youth leadership.
- Assist the volunteer/parent leadership and youth leadership by providing in-service education and resources for all 4-H volunteers in the county.
- Explain and enforce 4-H policies and procedures.
- Train and supervise 4-H volunteers, as needed, in conducting the county 4-H and Youth Development Program.
- Ensure that a quality 4-H educational program is conducted in the county.
- Inform 4-H volunteers and members about opportunities at county, district, regional, state, national and international levels.
- Appoint or dismiss 4-H members, 4-H volunteers and 4-H parents.
- County Extension agents are expected to conduct themselves as good role models for youth both in public and private life. This includes appropriate dress, language and moral conduct in accordance with acceptable standards of our society.
- County Extension agents have the responsibility for communicating Texas AgriLife Extension Service's best financial management practice procedures to all groups and programs operating in the name of 4-H. Groups and programs are required annually to affirm committee review of accounts for best management practices. Website: <http://texas4-h.tamu.edu>.
- County Extension agents should not be involved in the selection process of any 4-H award recipient or other 4-H opportunity recipient, including both youth and adults, in the county in which they work. (This would include award programs, record book winners, Gold Star, camps, labs and state events with county quotas, calf scrambles, etc.) County Extension agents should make arrangements for the appointment of unbiased committees to select 4-H members and adults for awards and other 4-H opportunities. Criteria and guidelines should be made available to all families.

### **Role of a 4-H Volunteer**

4-H is a non-formal educational program delivered by volunteers who are managed by county Extension agents. A 4-H volunteer leader is a person who is responsible for a group, activity or event, and the members and/or other volunteers involved.

Volunteerism is critical to the success of Texas AgriLife Extension Service's 4-H program. The criteria set forth for becoming a direct, indirect, or episodic volunteer to 4-H is designed to insure those volunteers that maintain a continuing relationship with 4-H are appropriately assigned duties in the best interest of program success. 4-H is very fortunate to have individuals across the state interested in volunteering to make the program more efficient and effective in accomplishing its goals.

From time-to-time individuals are unexpectedly placed into volunteer roles by emergency, necessity, or just plain good samaritanism. Due to the unexpected nature of their service to Extension it is impossible to complete the formal volunteer applicant process. Despite the absence of a formal designation as volunteers, Extension still considers these individuals an important part of the program and considers these individuals, while lending

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a hand to the program and performing duties to assist in delivery of program content, of the same status, pursuant to Texas law, as volunteers that have completed the application process.

There are three major roles adults may assume in 4-H:

- **Direct Volunteer:** Volunteers who support the 4-H program through face-to-face contact with youth, by a youth or adult, e.g.: project leader, club leader, camp counselor, teacher.
- **Indirect Volunteer:** Volunteers who work on behalf of the 4-H Program but do not have face-to-face contact with youth.
- **Episodic Volunteer:** An individual who volunteers for a single or limited activity, event or program. Examples include: fair judges, workshop presenters, special committee members, and assistants or helpers at events.

Texas AgriLife Extension Service considers all three of these classes of volunteers to be “direct service volunteers” as that term is used in section 51.937 of the Texas Education Code.

To be accepted as a Direct 4-H Volunteer, an adult must:

- Be at least 18 years of age. (Overnight chaperones must be at least 21 years of age.)
- Complete a Texas 4-H Adult Volunteer Application annually or on-line registration.
- Be subject to a criminal background check and screening process.

### **Youth Protection Standards**

The Texas AgriLife Extension Service Youth Protection Standards (YPS) program was implemented to assist in providing a safer and more positive environment for youth and adult volunteers. The YPS program involves criminal background checks of all direct adult volunteers 18 years of age or older who are involved in teaching these youth groups. Volunteers who have been screened by another entity, such as their employer or other youth organization, may indicate this on their enrollment form and provide proof of the screening. An approved list of prior screening entities is available at <http://texas4-h.tamu.edu>.

Volunteers must enroll annually using the 4-H CONNECT on-line management system, or complete the front and back side of the Texas 4-H Adult Volunteer Application.

Volunteers working directly with youth may be assigned, restricted, denied, or dismissed based on this information and information received from the criminal background check.

### **Volunteer Liability**

In order for a volunteer to serve with the Texas AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas 4-H and Youth Development Program, all 4-H volunteers should be formally enrolled on the 4-H Adult Volunteer Leader Application or on the 4-H CONNECT enrollment system on an annual basis. Criminal background checks will be conducted every three years for volunteers through the Youth Protection Standards System.

Texas AgriLife Extension Service volunteers do not have the same immunity from liability as governmental units and employees. However, volunteers may be immune from civil liability under Section 51.937 of the Education Code for discretionary acts within their scope of duties as volunteers for the Texas AgriLife Extension Service. This law does not apply to the operation of motor vehicles.

Adult volunteers are expected to act in good faith and without negligence in the performance of their duties in order to minimize any chance of injury to 4-H members, parents, volunteers, and members of the general public.

### **Chaperoning Youth**

A person must be at least 21 years of age at the time of a 4-H event to serve as an adult overnight chaperone.

### **Volunteer Code of Conduct**

The following guidelines assist volunteers in understanding personal conduct expectations during the course and scope of their duties. 4-H Volunteers must abide by all applicable Texas AgriLife Extension Service procedures.

A 4-H Volunteer is expected to:

- Respect the individual rights, safety, and property of others.
- Carry-out the assigned position responsibilities that he or she has accepted. Volunteers should be provided with a written position description to which they agree. One copy should be kept on file in the county Extension office and one given to the volunteer.

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- Participate in routine volunteer training opportunities and activities pertinent to their duties.
- Be committed to the core values, education goals, and standards of the 4-H and Youth Development Program.
- Support the 4-H and Youth Development Program and its rules and guidelines.
- Recognize and support the responsibilities of the 4-H and Youth Development Program staff in setting program standards, priorities, and direction.
- Support the non-discrimination practices of the 4-H and Youth Development Program, including: race, color, sex, religion, disability, or national origin.
- Make reasonable efforts to provide access to 4-H related information and equal opportunities to youth in their community to participate in project activities, awards programs and other events and activities.
- Adhere to Texas laws on the use of motor vehicles.
- Not consume alcohol and/or illegal drugs (or to be under the influence thereof) while involved or en route to any 4-H event, meeting or activity.
- Serve as good examples for youth in both public and private life. This includes appropriate dress, language and moral conduct in accordance with the generally recognized standards of our society.
- Maintain direct supervision of 4-H members and not leave their delegation unsupervised unless approval was received from the individual in charge of the overall event or delegation.
- Not sign a lease agreement, use permit with schools or other public or private facilities, or grant or order contracts on behalf of Texas AgriLife Extension Service. All such agreements shall be forwarded to the local office of Texas AgriLife Extension Service for review and forwarding to appropriate official for signature.
- Recognize Texas Law requiring all adults to report suspected child abuse to proper law enforcement or county child protective services.
- Safeguard and hold confidential any information gained through administrative duties involving supervision of personnel or other information identified by the program as being confidential.
- Not physically or verbally abuse a youth member or use corporal punishment to reprimand 4-H members for inappropriate behavior.
- Understand that falsifying enrollment information, budgets, documents or records is a breach of the Code of Ethics.
- Not engage in sexual activity with youth members.
- Adhere to fiscal responsibility and financial best management practices as outlined by Texas AgriLife Extension Service.
- Register as a volunteer in only one county.
- Not receive compensation for professional services provided in support of youth 4-H activities (excluding reimbursement for expenses).

### Consequences for Infractions

Volunteers' infractions of the Texas 4-H Volunteer Code of Conduct must be reported to the 4-H and Youth Development staff and/or Texas AgriLife Extension Service Office. Consequences may include:

- Discussion of the inappropriate actions with the 4-H leader, clarification of the policy.
- Cause for Reassignment or Dismissal of Volunteers.
- Termination as a 4-H volunteer.
- Notification of incident to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

### **A volunteer may be reassigned or dismissed at the sole discretion of Texas AgriLife Extension Service with or without cause.**

Examples of conduct which could lead to disciplinary action include, but are not limited to: illegal activity, behavior which compromises the health and safety of youth, violating an Extension policy, violation of 4-H Rules and Guidelines, willfully violating or causing children to violate rules, being habitually disruptive to the overall program, unwilling or unable to work amicably with agents and other volunteers, exhibit conduct which is harmful to the 4-H program's reputation, or failure to rotate the leadership role. The nature and seriousness of the infraction or violation will determine whether the option of reassignment or dismissal should be considered.

A volunteer who is unable to grasp the overall philosophy of youth development may be counseled toward other avenues of volunteering.

A child who has a parent dismissed as a 4-H volunteer is still eligible to participate in 4-H.

### Procedure for Dismissal of a Volunteer

Before any official action is taken, county professional staff and their immediate Extension supervisors should counsel volunteers about problems. Written records of discussion concerning volunteer performance should be maintained. The following steps should be utilized for a volunteer's removal only after efforts have been made to help the volunteer improve his or her performance.

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- Step 1: County Extension staff representative meets with the volunteer to discuss problems with performance and/or any 4-H Rules and Guidelines violations. Specific areas for improvement are outlined and recorded. A written record of the meeting is kept and copies provided to all participants, including immediate Extension supervisors.
- Step 2: If problems continue, a second meeting may be held with the volunteer and County Extension Staff. The volunteer is given a probationary period during which performance must improve. If problems continue, the volunteer should be removed from service. Again, written records should be kept and copies provided as in Step 1. Prior to removing a volunteer from service, County Extension staff should contact their immediate supervisor and the Texas 4-H and Youth Development Program Director, for counsel.
- Step 3: If removed, the volunteer must be notified in writing of their removal from service to 4-H. Copies provided as noted in Steps 1 & 2.
- Step 4: If the volunteer wishes to appeal, a written request for review must be submitted within 30 days to the County Extension staff. A written reply should be provided to the volunteer with copies as previously noted.
- Step 5: If the volunteer wishes to appeal the decision, a written request for review must be sent to the appropriate District Extension Administrator. The review is completed by a committee designated by the District Extension Administrator or County Extension Director with input from the Texas 4-H and Youth Development Program Director. A written reply is provided to the volunteer on the results of the review and the final decision on the appeal. Copies are made as noted in Step 1.

### **Immediate Removal of a Volunteer**

Some actions by volunteers may warrant immediate removal or suspension without benefit of the step-by-step process. Extension reserves the right to impose, on a case-by-case basis, immediate removal or suspension for any infraction deemed by Extension to warrant such severe action. Such conduct might include, but is not limited to: arrest or conviction for child abuse, negligence, violent crime, drug use, or other felony violations (including state jail felonies) of the law. In some cases a volunteer may be suspended until an investigation is completed. A decision for immediate removal must be made with input from the appropriate Extension supervisor and Texas 4-H and Youth Development Program Director.

Any adult may be required to immediately leave any 4-H function for using abusive language, threatening any individual, becoming violent, causing bodily harm to any minor (including their own child) or adult, or exhibiting signs of being under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

### **Role of 4-H Parent/Guardian**

4-H is a youth development program that depends on and encourages the involvement of parents and other significant adults in supporting ongoing educational programs. Parents/Guardians help members set and accomplish goals and serve as a communication link between their children, the Extension staff and 4-H volunteers.

### **Procedure for Dismissal of Parents/Guardians**

Parents/Guardians who become disruptive at a 4-H program may be barred from all 4-H functions. While the following process should be used to begin dismissal proceedings, Extension reserves the right to immediately remove parents from the 4-H program under other provisions contained in these rules and guidelines.

- Step 1: County Extension staff, club managers and/or project leaders should counsel with the individual regarding the disruption and discuss alternatives. Such parents need to be advised of ways to address their complaints through a written complaint letter submitted to the county Extension agent. Written records of this discussion should be kept and the county Extension staff should receive a copy of such records.
- Step 2: If the problem persists, county Extension staff should meet with the parent and review the expected behavior change and outline the specific behaviors which will not be accepted. The parent should sign a copy of the notes from the meeting as an acknowledgment of his/her attendance and participation in the conference. The parent should receive a written copy of the minutes with an outline of the specific behavior changes expected and a description of the behavior which will not be accepted. Copies of this letter should go to all persons involved in the conference and to the District Extension Administrator. Parents who have concerns which cannot be resolved at the county level may contact the appropriate District Extension Administrator or Texas 4-H and Youth Development Program Director.
- Step 3: If the problem persists, the county Extension staff, in concurrence with the District Extension Administrator, County Extension Director (if applicable) and Texas 4-H and Youth Development Program Director, may write a letter to the parent indicating that he or she will no longer be allowed to attend any 4-H function sponsored by Texas AgriLife Extension Service. Such a letter should be sent in a manner that the county Extension staff is assured the individual did receive the letter.
- Step 4: Should the individual try to attend any event, the person in charge of that event should ask them to leave. If they fail to do so, the local law enforcement should be contacted and asked to remove that individual from the premises. Extension personnel or non-law enforcement volunteer should not attempt to physically remove the parent.

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A child who has a parent who has been dismissed from any 4-H function is still eligible to participate in 4-H.

### **Immediate Removal of an Adult from an Event**

Any adult may be required to immediately leave any 4-H function for using abusive language, threatening any individual, becoming violent, causing bodily harm to any minor (including their own child) or adult, or exhibiting signs of being under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

County Extension Staff are responsible for communicating best management practices as outlined by Texas AgriLife Extension Service for all 4-H membership unit accounts and county 4-H program accounts. The county 4-H program must prepare an annual budget. A current county support fund report for each county 4-H and Youth Development Program account should be kept on file in the district Extension office. County Extension staff, 4-H volunteers, and 4-H members should never use their personal social security numbers for 4-H accounts. County Extension staff should never have their signatures on file on a 4-H account.

### Raising Funds For 4-H

- The 4-H Program is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a nonprofit educational organization and is eligible to receive charitable gifts and conduct fund raising in keeping with IRS Regulation 501(C).
- Any 4-H group raising funds should do so in a professional manner. Funds should be raised for projects, participant fees, and/or event registration fees that will enhance the development of youth and volunteers.
- Local 4-H Clubs and Groups should notify county Extension staff responsible for 4-H in their county and receive approval to conduct fund raisers on the programs behalf.
- Administrative approval should be obtained by initially contacting the Texas 4-H and Youth Development Program Director for use of the 4-H name or emblem in connection with the sale of a commercial product or service.

### Local Membership Dues

The charging of local membership dues is an option of each 4-H club/unit. Texas AgriLife Extension Service charges a participation fee of \$20.00 for each 4-H member registering from September 1<sup>st</sup> to October 31<sup>st</sup>, and \$25.00 for those registering on and after November 1<sup>st</sup>.

### United Way Funds

Counties or 4-H clubs accepting United Way type funds should only accept these funds if an agreement is reached between the county 4-H program or 4-H Club and United Way that specifically allows for the raising of money in addition to that received from United Way.

### State Sales Tax Exemption

4-H clubs, members, and/or volunteers are NOT state (Texas) sales tax exempt. Tax exemption of 4-H references FEDERAL income tax. There is no state sales tax exempt number for 4-H.

4-H Clubs are not automatically state sales tax exempt. Individual activities may be declared exempt from sales tax. These exemption certificates may be obtained from the Office of the Comptroller of Public Accounts in Austin. Communications should be directed to the Comptroller of Public Accounts Exempt Organizations Division, 1-800-252-5555. Copies of the exemption certificates are available from 4-H Management website at: [http://texas4-h.tamu.edu/volunteers/management\\_guide/index\\_management\\_guide\\_vol.php](http://texas4-h.tamu.edu/volunteers/management_guide/index_management_guide_vol.php).

### Federal Income Tax Filing Requirements

The Pension Protection Act (PPA) of 2006 requires any federal tax exempt organization to file a federal income tax Form 990 or 990-N (electronic postcard) annually. Any group that does not file during a 3-year period will lose their federal tax exemption status. Groups raising less than \$25,000 will file an electronic Form 990-N, also known as the e-Postcard. If a group generates over \$25,000, they will file a Form 990.

The Internal Revenue Service has assigned a federal income tax group exemption number to 4-H organizations and affiliated groups to use when filing. This number is 2704. This number is not a state sales tax exempt number but is the Group Exemption Number that the IRS has assigned to 4-H for FEDERAL INCOME TAX purposes.

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### **4-H Club/Unit Bank Accounts**

Local 4-H clubs and support groups which maintain separate bank accounts should obtain an IRS Tax Employee Identification Number. The EIN will be assigned by the IRS after completion of IRS Form SS-4. 4-H members, volunteers or Extension faculty members should never use their social security numbers for a 4-H bank account. All checks should be signed by two individuals (treasurer/adult advisor). Two persons from the same family must not sign checks.

Clubs and support groups authorized to use the 4-H name and emblem must follow Texas AgriLife Extension Service's best management practices concerning financial accountability.

### **4-H Club/Unit Finances**

- The treasurer of a 4-H club/unit should receive all monies secured by the club/unit and deposit them in a bank account. Disbursements of club/unit money should be made by check with a signature of the club treasurer, or of both the club/unit treasurer and an adult volunteer upon approval by the club/unit membership.
- The club/unit should develop a budget at the beginning of the year, secure resources to meet the budget requirements and prepare a financial statement at the end of the year. In case the club/unit disbands, all monies and property become the property of the County 4-H and Youth Development Program. The by-laws of each 4-H club/unit MUST have a dissolution clause, which directs money and property to become the property of the County 4-H and Youth Development Program.
- Every 4-H club/unit must submit a county support fund report annually on August 31st to the county Extension staff. Each 4-H club/unit must also submit an inventory of equipment and each asset valued over \$250 (listing the description and location) to the county Extension staff. Failure to submit these reports can result in the 4-H club/unit not being re-chartered.

### **Booster Clubs and Fund Raising Groups Working in the Name of 4-H**

Affiliated groups must have permission to use the name and emblem. This permission needs to be granted from the county Extension Agent for county level groups (state office for beyond county lines). In working with these groups it is important that their values are consistent with those of the Texas 4-H and Youth Development Program.

## OTHER RULES AND GUIDELINES

### Dress Code

It is important that 4-H youth and adults participating in county, district and state events are appropriately dressed for the occasion. Youth and adults giving leadership to the event should be notified by Extension personnel of appropriate dress for the occasion.

### 4-H Name and Emblem

Use of the 4-H clover and name is protected under 18 U.S.C.707. The 4-H Name and Emblem is a highly valued mark within our country's history. As such, it was granted a very unique and special status; it is in a category similar to the Presidential Seal and the Olympic Emblem. The care of this name and emblem is the responsibility of all Texas AgriLife Extension Service employees.

Texas 4-H clubs and affiliate groups are permitted to use the name and emblem once their charter is approved through the Texas 4-H Office. Use on a multi-county or state basis shall be approved by the Texas 4-H and Youth Development Program Director. Any commercial vendor, private organization or other entity, must request permission through the Texas 4-H and Youth Development State Office, who in turn will advise in regard to steps to take for use of the 4-H name & emblem. Any request to use the 4-H name & emblem in a way that does not specify a local or state program, must route through National 4-H Headquarters at USDA in Washington D.C. In all instances, such use shall conform to state and national policy and be for the furtherance of the 4-H educational program rather than for the benefits of private individuals, commercial vendors, donors, or others.

Reference: "Using the 4-H Name and Emblem": <http://www.national4hheadquarters.gov>.

### 4-H and Advertising

In any advertisement, display, exhibit, film, news release, publication, web page, radio program or television representation, the 4-H message must be distinctly set apart from commercial reference. Advertisements, public releases or displays done by 4-H clubs or groups, 4-H members, volunteer leaders, Extension or its employees can not include actual or implied testimonials or endorsements of business firms or their products or services.

### Insurance

Parents/Guardians, Members, Volunteers, and County Extension Staff should understand that neither Texas AgriLife Extension Service nor the 4-H Youth and Development Program maintains a comprehensive general liability insurance policy that would pay the medical bills and expenses of injured 4-H members or volunteers, or pay the legal fees of 4-H members or volunteers sued as a result of their participation in 4-H activities. As such, parents/guardians of 4-H members and volunteers should review their personal insurance coverage.

4-H Clubs and 4-H support groups/organizations that are interested in securing insurance for their activities can contact a local insurance agent for advice or they may contact American Income Life (AIL), a company that offers two insurance options for 4-H: (a) an accident medical policy for a particular scheduled activity (referred to by AIL as *Special Activities Coverage for Accident or Illness*); or (b) a general accident policy that covers all activities for a one-year period (referred to by AIL as *Annual Accident Coverage*). Information on American Income Life insurance policies can be found on their website at: <http://www.americanincomelife.com/FourHCoop.aspx>.

### Legislative Contacts

All contacts initiated by Extension staff with members of the Senate and House of Representatives in Texas and in Washington, D.C., on behalf of the 4-H and Youth Development Program, must be approved by The Texas A&M System, with approval requested through the faculty member's immediate supervisor.

### Social Security Numbers

As identity theft is prevalent in our society, it is important for all 4-H members, parents, volunteers, and County Extension Agents to understand the need to ask for/require social security numbers.

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To help provide guidance in addressing questions related to social security numbers, the following summary of topics and recommendations are made:

- Legally Asking For It: It is not illegal to request this information.
- Daily Operations (Central Function) of the Extension Office: If the social security number is not necessary to completing the daily operations (central function) of the County Extension Office, the social security section on the form should be optional.
- Youth Protection Standards: The social security number or first five digits, are required to run the national database criminal background check.
- Animal Validation: Requesting the exhibitor's social security number on the validation form is typically done as a convenience to assist our clientele in later completing stock show entries. By not completing the social security number on the validation form, each youth will be responsible for providing the social security number at the time of making entry to each major livestock show. If the social security number is not listed on the validation form, the animal is still eligible to be validated.
- Scholarship Applications. Applicants cannot become a scholarship recipient without the social security number. So, the scholarship application may not require the social security number, but if awarded, the scholarship contract will.
- Record book and Entry Forms. 4-H members that submit record books for Senior Judging competition or entry forms to a 4-H event that has monetary awards associated with the event will have the option of including their social security number on the information form and/or entry forms; however, if the 4-H member receives a monetary award it will be the responsibility of the 4-H youth to provide the social security number prior to monetary awards being distributed.

As with youth and volunteer enrollment forms, all other paper work containing personal and sensitive materials should be kept in a safe and secure location (locked filing cabinet). When, and if, any of this paperwork is in public it should be managed with care and consideration to the clientele and their rights of privacy and security.

### **Food Safety**

Food products that are prepared and /or presented in conjunction with a 4-H contest are not to be tasted or consumed by the judges and/or audience.

Concession stands organized by 4-H affiliated groups should only be hosted in facilities approved by the County or City Health Department.

### **Cooperation between 4-H, FFA and other Organizations**

A cooperative relationship is expected between the 4-H and Youth Development Program and FFA. The exhibiting of projects and participation in similar educational and competitive events offered by the two organizations, should always emphasize maximizing educational opportunities for young people. Consistent with the rules and guidelines of the specific events and contingent upon an agreement between the county Extension staff responsible for the 4-H and Youth Development Program and the faculty member responsible for the FFA program, youth are allowed to use the same projects and/or activity to participate in FFA and 4-H programs.

### **Unescorted minors traveling**

Unescorted minors who travel to 4-H events beyond the county level in their own vehicle where lodging is required on site are expected to turn in the vehicle ignition and door lock keys to the adult in charge upon arrival.

Minors traveling to and from 4-H events beyond the county level are expected to have written permission from a custodial parent/guardian to travel alone or leave the group outside the posted schedule.

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*Reviewed by TAMUS-OGC-JMB in July 2011.*

*Affirmed through Texas AgriLife Extension Service Administrative channels – July 2011.*