

# TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION



## Youth Protection Standards Rules & Guidelines 2021-2022

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## Screening Overview

All Youth Protection Standards Information and Forms are available on the Texas 4-H website at <https://texas4-h.tamu.edu/volunteer/>.

### Who is screened through YPS?

1. All direct volunteers who work with youth and adults should be screened through the Youth Protection Standards (YPS) Program. Indirect and episodic volunteers are not required to be screened through YPS. See Attachment A.
2. Initial screening of a volunteer is conducted when he/she applies for a volunteer role with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Volunteers must be screened and approved by the county program prior to fulfilling any volunteer roles.
3. Re-screening of all Extension volunteers is conducted every three years from the volunteer's most recent screening.
4. Note: 4-H Volunteers – Screening is determined on a 4-H year basis. For example, a volunteer screened any time during the 2020-2021 4-H year (between September 1, 2020, and August 31, 2021, also considered "4-H Year 2021") needs to be re-screened at the beginning of 4-H Year 2024 (September 1, 2023 through August 31, 2024).

### Who is a direct volunteer?

1. A direct volunteer is any adult who meets all the following criteria:
  - a. Provides unpaid support for Extension through face-to-face contact.
  - b. Provides a learning experience for adults or youth within Extension.
  - c. Has an individual volunteer application on file with the appropriate program area.
  - d. Has a position description on file. General descriptions are acceptable.
  - e. Has passed a criminal background check within the past three years.
  - f. Note: 4-H volunteers must also pay the annual volunteer application fee (\$10) and complete required trainings on 4HOnline prior to being accepted.
2. Master volunteers are also considered to be direct volunteers.
3. Direct volunteers must pass their criminal background check, complete necessary trainings, and have their application approved before fulfilling any volunteer duties for AgriLife Extension.

### **NEW!** Who is an indirect volunteer?

1. An indirect volunteer is any adult who meets the following criteria:
  - a. Provides unpaid support for Extension programming without having direct contact with Extension clientele (youth or adults).
  - b. Does not have face-to-face contact with youth or adult clientele.
  - c. Does not provide learning experiences for youth or adult clientele.
  - d. Examples of indirect volunteers may include but are not limited to a board member or committee member, a livestock show board member, or a parent accompanying their own child(ren) to an event who does not serve in a volunteer capacity, or a donor/sponsor.
2. Indirect volunteers are not direct volunteers and are not required to pass a criminal background check to be an indirect volunteer.

### **NEW!** Who is an episodic volunteer?

1. An episodic volunteer is any adult who meets the following criteria:

- a. Provides unpaid support for Extension programming for a single event.
  - b. Does not have supervisory duties of youth at an Extension program.
  - c. Assists with an Extension program while direct volunteers and/or employees are present.
  - d. Has a specific task to perform for a specific event or program.
  - e. Examples of episodic volunteers may include but are not limited to an interview judge at a 4-H event, guest speaker at a meeting or event, or assistant at a 4-H contest.
2. Episodic volunteers are not direct volunteers and are not required to pass a criminal background check to be an episodic volunteer.

**Are overnight or driving chaperones screened?**

1. Yes. Individuals who are driving youth or chaperoning youth for overnight events (must be at least 21 years of age) are considered direct volunteers and must be screened and cleared through the Youth Protection Standards Program prior to serving as a volunteer.
2. Examples: Texas 4-H Roundup Chaperone, a driver to Texas 4-H Teen Retreat, helping lead a workshop at Texas 4-H camp, 4-H Club Manager, Livestock Mentor, 4-H project leader, Master Volunteer, or Shooting Sports Leader.

**What kind of criminal background check is conducted?**

1. A national criminal background check is conducted through veriFYI, the background check service of VolunteerNow. This is a nonprofit group that conducts background searches as designated through State of Texas legislation.
2. The criminal background check consists of a Texas DPS records search (including all prior arrests and convictions, adjudicated records, juvenile records, and outstanding warrants in Texas), a social security trace, a national search of multi-jurisdictions, and state and national sex offender registries.

**What information is required for screening?**

1. Full, legal name (first, middle and last)
2. Address
3. Date of Birth (Be sure to put the correct year!)
4. Gender
5. Race/Ethnicity (Although optional, this helps affirm the volunteer's identity.)
6. First five digits of social security number
7. Driver's License number

**Note:**

- All information is a determining factor that helps confirm the volunteer's identity when a background check is completed.
- For all volunteer applications (whether a paper Volunteer Application Form or online form), it is imperative that all requested information is provided to avoid any delays in the screening process.

**When is screening conducted?**

1. Initial screening of a volunteer is conducted when he/she applies for a volunteer role with Extension. Volunteers must be screened prior to fulfilling any volunteer roles.
2. Re-screening through the YPS program is conducted every three years from the volunteer's most recent screening.

3. No grand fathering of volunteers is allowed in the YPS program.
4. Volunteer applications are processed for screening on a weekly basis in the Texas 4-H YPS Office.

**NEW! Is screening conducted by other entities accepted by Extension?**

1. No. Screening conducted by other entities will not be accepted by AgriLife Extension. All volunteers must be screened according to the Youth Protection Standards guidelines. Master Naturalists and EFNEP volunteers follow the procedure outlined by their respective program areas and our partner agencies.
2. Any volunteers who were approved by the YPS program with documentation from another entity within the last three years will be approved until the existing screening timeline has expired.

**How are volunteer applications processed?**

1. Volunteer applications and information are reviewed and processed by two employees who oversee the YPS program and complete the data entry.
2. These individuals have been screened for security sensitive purposes and to handle confidential information.
3. Only individuals who have been trained and certified through VolunteerNow may review the criminal history results. Copies of the results cannot be shared with anyone including the volunteer being screened.
4. County Extension Agents are not informed of the details of the criminal history record. Information obtained through the volunteer application and screening is held in the highest confidence.
5. All forms are kept under double lock and key. All electronic files are password protected at multiple levels.

**How are screening results viewed?**

1. Criminal records are reviewed for “red flags.” A red flag is a charge or conviction on a criminal history record.
2. All official criminal history records are shredded and not kept on file unless the volunteer is pending due to a request for more information.

**How is the status of the volunteers determined?**

1. A volunteer’s status is based on the charge or conviction, frequency of offense, and the amount of time passed since the occurrence of the offense.
2. All volunteer records are reviewed and handled on an individual basis.
3. Although criminal records are comprehensive over an individual’s lifetime, the YPS program focuses on the most recent ten (10) years of the summary. Convictions in the dismissed section below are the exception to the 10-year focus.
4. Volunteer applicants are identified with one of the following status categories:
  - a. Cleared: Approved to fulfill all duties of the volunteer role for which the volunteer is applying.
  - b. Restricted: Restrictions may be imposed based on the charges or conviction records. Example: A conviction of numerous hot checks would result in a restriction of not handling or managing any group funds. Example: A DWI conviction in the last ten years would result in a restriction of not driving youth other than the volunteer’s own legal children.

- c. Pending: This determination is based on an incomplete criminal history report, no disposition of a case or a question related to a charge. Additional information may be requested from a volunteer. Any follow-up information is sent by the volunteer to the Texas 4-H YPS Office. Details regarding records are not shared with county or other program faculty.
  - d. Dismissed/Denied: A volunteer is dismissed/denied based on certain convictions of the Texas Penal Code. Automatic dismissals result from indecency with a child, injury to a child, sexual assault, murder, or felony drug convictions. A volunteer may also be denied if he/she does not respond to requests for more information on a charge(s). Examples: A conviction of embezzlement or mishandling Extension group funds would result in dismissal. A registered sex offender would result in a denial.
5. No person may serve with youth or children who has ever been convicted of any disqualifying offense, been on probation or received deferred adjudication for any disqualifying offense or has presently pending any criminal charges of any disqualifying offense before a determination of guilt is made including any person who is presently on deferred adjudication. Disqualifying offenses include, but are not limited to, the following:
- A felony or misdemeanor classified as an offense against a person or family.
  - A felony or misdemeanor classified as an offense against public order or indecency.
  - A felony or misdemeanor violation of any law intended to control the possession or distribution of any substance included as a controlled substance in the Texas Controlled Substances Act.

**What warrants a volunteer to be rescreened or his/her status reviewed?**

1. The following conditions may warrant review of a volunteer’s status or re-screening:
  - Questionable situation
  - A written complaint against a volunteer
  - Knowledge of a volunteer being charged or arrested
  - Knowledge of a volunteer making an improper advancement toward a youth
2. County Extension Agents should communicate with their respective District Extension Administrator immediately upon learning of an incident or questionable situation.
3. Copies of correspondence sent to the volunteer (i.e., dismissal letter) should be sent to the Texas 4-H YPS Office and the Texas 4-H Program Director so it may be filed with the volunteer’s record.

**Grievance Procedure**

The following is the procedure if a volunteer chooses to dispute a decision made during the application process or at any time during the volunteer’s appointment with Extension.

1. Volunteer submits concern in writing to the Texas 4-H YPS Office, with a copy to the District Extension Administrator and County Extension Agent. Letters should be sent to the following address:
  - Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
  - Laura A. Huebinger
  - 2473 TAMU
  - College Station, TX 77843-2473
2. The appeal is reviewed, and the volunteer receives a written statement from the Texas 4-H YPS Office regarding the decision made within a reasonable amount of time.

3. This grievance procedure pertains only to decision(s) made by Extension personnel. If a concern is raised about the information obtained through a criminal background check, the volunteer should be given the following information.

The following is the procedure if a volunteer chooses to dispute the information contained on the criminal history record.

1. If an applicant disputes information that is on the criminal history record transcript, he/she must follow the procedure to review personal criminal history record, which includes getting fingerprints and sending the prints to DPS along with the appropriate form.
2. If it is determined that the record is indeed the applicant's own record and the applicant feels that there is a mistake in the criminal record, a letter should be written specifying the area of concern. An investigation will be conducted to determine whether or not an error has been made. Any costs associated with the process will be the responsibility of the volunteer.

The letter should be addressed to:

Texas Department of Public Safety  
Error Resolution Department  
P.O. Box 4143  
Austin, TX 78765-4143  
512/424-2151

## **4-H Volunteer Screening Procedures**

### **Volunteer Forms**

1. All 4-H volunteers must enroll online via 4HOnline. If a volunteer does not have access to the internet, he/she may complete and submit a Texas 4-H Adult Volunteer Application (downloaded from the Texas 4-H Website: [texas4-h.tamu.edu/](http://texas4-h.tamu.edu/)). The County Extension Office must then input the volunteer's information into 4HOnline.
2. Since 4-H volunteer screening is processed through 4HOnline, 4-H volunteer forms do NOT have to be mailed in to process for screening. However, payment must be received in order for the volunteer application process to be completed.
3. 4-H volunteer applicants must complete the required online training during the enrollment process. Trainings must be completed, screening must be approved, and payment received prior to serving in any volunteer roles.
4. It is recommended that all volunteers for the current year submit their profiles no later than August 1. There is no guarantee screening can be conducted and applications approved prior to the close of the 4-H year on 4HOnline as preparations begin for the new 4-H year.

### **Re-activating 4HOnline Profiles**

1. When volunteers enroll for the new 4-H year, it is important they re-activate their profile on 4HOnline and not create a new profile. If a new profile is created, the volunteer screening information will not transfer to the new profile. Therefore, the system will indicate the volunteer needs to be screened. There is not a way to undo the screening and associated fees.

### AgriLife Extension Employee Profiles

1. The following applies to Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service employees. This includes County Extension Agents, Specialists, Associates, Assistants, district/state administrative assistants, administration, or any other employee whose position is funded by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and who have been screened through AgriLife Extension Human Resources. It does not apply to county employees.
2. When AgriLife Extension employees create or re-activate a profile, there is an option on the Volunteer Types screen to indicate him/herself as an AgriLife Extension employee. Select the "Program Volunteer" Volunteer Type and then "Add" the "AgriLife Extension Employee" option. Selecting this option will bypass the screening requirement and volunteer application fee. Once an employee's screening is approved at the state level, it will then be ready for approval at the county level. For additional details, see the 4HOnline Resources page at <https://texas4-h.tamu.edu/4honline/>.

### Screening Cost and Payment Options

1. 4-H volunteers are assessed a volunteer application fee in the amount of \$10. This fee is assessed annually when a 4-H volunteer creates or re-activates his/her profile in 4HOnline. The application fee will cover the cost of volunteer screening as well as insurance coverage.
2. Payment of the 4-H volunteer application fee can be made by club/county check or credit card.
  - a. **Check Payments:** The County Extension Office will create an invoice, secure a check, and mail both invoice and check to the Texas 4-H Office. Once received, the invoice and check will be processed and credited against the 4- H volunteer's profile. Once this entire process is completed, the county may then give final approval of the volunteer's profile, which will then become "Approved." Please note that the check payment process is much slower than payment made by credit card since profiles cannot be approved at the county level until payment is received and processed.
  - b. Checks should be made payable to Extension #255003 and mailed to the following address:

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service  
Texas 4HOnline Payments  
2473 TAMU  
College Station, TX 77843-2473
  - c. Check payments for volunteer application fees must be paid separately and not combined with youth enrollment or event registration fees.
  - d. Each county, club and/or association is responsible for determining how to cover the cost of volunteer application fees.

### Creating an Invoice for Payments by Check

1. When paying the volunteer application fees by club/county check, a volunteer screening invoice
2. generated from 4HOnline must accompany the payment. For additional details, see the 4HOnline Resources page at <https://texas4-h.tamu.edu/4honline/>.)
3. See the 4HOnline County Office Manager Guides for instructions on how to send payments by check.
4. Mail the invoice, along with the check payment, to the Texas 4-H Office.

5. Note: volunteer application fees paid by check will not become eligible for approval at the county level until the payment has been received and processed by the Texas 4-H Office.

#### **Final Approval of 4-H Volunteer Applications**

1. Please note that screening of volunteers is conducted after the volunteer has submitted his/her application. The County Extension Office gives final approval on volunteer applications. If paying by credit card, the card will be charged when the volunteer profile is approved at the county level. When paying by check, the profile cannot be activated until the check payment has been received by the Texas 4-H Office and payment has been indicated in 4HOnline.

#### **Follow Up to Screening**

1. Volunteer Status. Upon completion of screening, a 4-H volunteer's status will be updated in 4HOnline. The status will be designated as one of the following: Approved, Restricted from handling funds, Restricted from driving youth other than own children, Restricted with other specifications, or Denied.
2. Correspondence.
  - a. An automatic email is sent by 4HOnline to the volunteer stating their volunteer profile has been approved.
  - b. If a volunteer is restricted or denied, a letter will be sent directly to the volunteer from the Texas 4-H YPS office, with a copy of the letter emailed to the County Extension Agent, District 4-H Specialist, and District Extension Administrator. Details regarding criminal background records are not shared with county or other program faculty.

#### **Screening Summary Reports**

1. County Extension Agents may generate a volunteer screening report from 4HOnline. See the Programs for Minors page (<https://texas4-h.tamu.edu/minors/>) under the Background Screenings section for instructions on how to generate a volunteer screening report through 4HOnline.
2. This report will provide you with a list of all 4-H volunteers in your county that have a 4HOnline profile and their screening status and last year approved through YPS.

#### **Non-4-H Volunteer Screening Procedures**

##### **NEW! Volunteer Forms**

1. **NEW!** All Master Volunteers, direct volunteers, and volunteers who handle Extension support group finances (such as BLT, LAB, PAC, etc.) must complete and submit a Volunteer Application Form. It is imperative all information requested is provided to avoid any delays in the screening process.
  - a. **NEW!** A new Volunteer Application will be used beginning September 1, 2021. Be sure to use the most recent version of the form. Older versions of the form will not be accepted after October 1, 2021.
2. **NEW!** Texas Master Naturalists may submit a Volunteer Application Form or may follow the procedures as outlined by Master Naturalists for screening with our partner agency of Texas Parks & Wildlife.
3. EFNEP Volunteers should use the EFNEP Volunteer Registration Form (EFNEP-2816).



### Screening Cost and Payment Information

1. The cost of screening is \$10 per volunteer.
2. One check per county submission is required from the appropriate volunteer group or association. No personal checks will be accepted.
3. Checks should be made payable to Extension Account #255003 and sent to the following address:  
Texas 4-H Office  
Youth Protection Standards  
2473 TAMU  
College Station, TX 77843-2473
4. Each county, club and/or association is responsible for determining how to cover the cost associated with screening volunteers.
5. Screening of volunteers is not conducted until payment is received in the Texas 4-H YPS Office. Therefore, counties should plan to submit volunteers for screening at least one month prior to fulfilling any volunteer duties.

### **NEW!** Process for Submitting Applications

1. Volunteer applications are completed and submitted to the County Extension Office in which the volunteer resides.
2. **NEW!** The volunteer applications are then forwarded to the Texas 4-H YPS Office with a transmittal form and a check for \$10 per volunteer being screened. The Transmittal Form is included in Attachment B. A new Transmittal Form is to be used beginning September 1, 2021.
3. Counties need to send volunteer applications monthly and not hold volunteer applications for extended periods of time. Volunteer applications are processed for screening approximately on a weekly basis.
4. Please note that screening will not be processed until payment is received.
5. **NEW!** If there is missing information on the application form, the county contact person will be contacted to get the required information. If there is no response after 60 days, the application will be shredded, and the application fee will be forfeited. A new application and application fee will be required.

### Follow Up to Screening

1. Volunteer Status & Screening Summary Spreadsheets
  - a. A screening summary spreadsheet is maintained for each county volunteer group.
  - b. Upon completion of screening, counties will receive an updated screening summary spreadsheet via email, with the names of volunteers screened and the volunteers' status (cleared, restricted, pending, denied).
    - Cleared (C)
    - Restricted Money (R-M)
    - Restricted Driving (R-D)
    - Pending (P)
    - Denied (D)
  - c. Counties should use the screening summary spreadsheet to determine volunteers that are due for another screening. Re-screening of all Extension volunteers is conducted every three years from the volunteer's most recent screening.

- d. Any time county faculty needs an updated copy of the screening summary spreadsheet, a request can be made with the Texas 4-H YPS Office (yps@ag.tamu.edu), and the spreadsheet will be sent to the County Extension Agent via email.
2. Correspondence
- a. An email is sent to the county stating volunteers have been processed, with the screening summary spreadsheet attached.
  - b. If a volunteer is pending, restricted or dismissed, a letter will be sent directly to the volunteer from the Texas 4-H YPS Office, with a copy of the letter emailed to the County Extension Agent, District 4-H Specialist, and District Extension Administrator. Details regarding criminal background records are not shared with county or other program faculty.
  - c. A letter may be sent from the County Extension Office to the volunteer notifying them of their “approved” screening status. See Attachment D for example.

### Attachments

- A. Who should be screened?
- B. **NEW!** Transmittal Form
- C. Sample Letter: Volunteer Acceptance Screened through YPS
- D. Sample Letter: Time for Rescreening

**ATTACHMENT A****WHO SHOULD BE SCREENED***NEW! See pages 2-3 for definitions of Roles of Volunteers.*

<b>Volunteer Type</b>	<b>Role of Volunteer</b>	<b>Screened?</b>
Achievement Event Judge	Episodic	No
Activity Leader	Direct	Yes
Volunteer/Parent providing transportation to a 4-H event, coordinated by the County Extension Agent or club/group	Direct	Yes
Parent providing transportation for youth to a local 4-H event, NOT coordinated by the County Extension Agent or club/group	Not a volunteer role	No
Speaker, presenter at an Extension event; no one-to-one contact	Episodic	No
Livestock Board Member/Committee Chair	Indirect	No
Validation Committee Member	Indirect	No
4-H Enrichment Curriculum Leader (teacher or volunteer)	Direct	Yes
Overnight chaperone	Direct	Yes
Master Volunteer or Livestock Mentor	Direct	Yes
4-H Club Manager/Assistant Club Manager	Direct	Yes
Volunteer/Parent who fills in for club manager on short notice	Direct	Yes
4-H Clover Kids Project Leader	Direct	Yes
Day Camp Volunteer	Direct	Yes
Treasurer/Signer on a 4-H affiliated account	Direct	Yes
Shooting Sports Coach	Direct	Yes
Project Leader	Direct	Yes
4-H Team Coach	Direct	Yes
Ag Day/Farm Safety Day Event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event Coordinator(s)</li> <li>• Group Leader</li> <li>• Resource Person/Speaker</li> </ul>	Direct Direct Episodic	Yes Yes No
Assistant at 4-H contest	Episodic	No
Donor	Indirect	No
LAB/Program Area Committee Member	Indirect/Direct	No/Yes
Parent accompanying own child to event, but not serving in volunteer role (observer)	Indirect	No
Teen or Junior Leader	Youth	No
Public Event sponsored by another organization and an Extension volunteer is a Resource person/speaker	Episodic	No
Youth event sponsored by another organization, but Extension is responsible for portion of the day	Direct	Yes

## Transmittal Form For Volunteer Applications and Background Check Forms

**District** \_\_\_\_\_ **County** \_\_\_\_\_

**Program Area** \_\_\_\_\_

*(Master Gardener, Master Naturalist, Master Wellness, TEEA, EFNEP, BLT, etc.)*  
 \*\*4-H Volunteers – The Volunteer Screening Invoice (from 4HOnline) should  
 accompany payment for volunteer screening. Do not use this form for 4-H Volunteers.

Attached is:

# \_\_\_\_\_ Volunteer Applications or Volunteer Background Check Forms  
*(in alphabetical order by last name).*

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ One check (\$10.00 per volunteer screening) made payable to  
**Extension Account #255003**. No personal checks will be accepted.

List below the name and email address of County Extension Agent and/or county support staff who should be sent the confirmation of screening results. Note: If a name/email address is not listed, results will be sent to the county Extension office email.

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

Mail one (1) copy of this form, along with applications and check to:  
 Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service  
 Texas 4-H Program/YPS  
 2473 TAMU  
 College Station, TX 77843-2473

Keep one copy of this form in county files.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature (County Extension Agent)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

**Sample Letter**  
**Volunteer Acceptance Screened Through YPS**

We are pleased to welcome you as a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service \_\_\_\_\_  
(*program area*) program volunteer in \_\_\_\_\_ County. We believe that you will be a  
valuable addition to the \_\_\_\_\_ (*county or Extension*) program.

This letter is to notify you that you have been screened through the Youth Protection Standards  
Program with veriFYI, the background check service of VolunteerNow, and passed. You are fully qualified  
to serve in the volunteer position for which you applied, including working with and supervising youth.

As a new Extension program volunteer, you will have the opportunity to participate in many training  
programs on the county, district, regional, and state levels that are designed to strengthen your subject  
matter skills, provide organizational and management ideas, and support you in your volunteer role.  
These trainings are scheduled throughout the year, and you will be notified by (*the county newsletter, a  
personal letter, a phone call, at leaders' meetings, etc.*).

Enclosed is a volunteer certificate for your files. Once again, welcome to the Extension Program. Please  
do not hesitate to call me if you have any questions. Thank you for your interest in AgriLife Extension.

Sincerely,

(Name)

(Title)

(Program Area)

## Sample Letter Time for Re-Screening

Thank you for your interest in serving as a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service \_\_\_\_\_  
(*program area*) program volunteer in \_\_\_\_\_ County. We believe that you have been a  
valuable addition to the \_\_\_\_\_ (*county or Extension*) program.

This letter is to notify you that you need to be screened through the Youth Protection Standards  
Program. Your current screening expires on \_\_\_\_\_ (*date*). Re-screening of all Extension volunteers  
is conducted every three years from the volunteer's most recent screening. The volunteer background  
checks are conducted through veriFYI, the background check service of VolunteerNow.

In order to begin the screening process, please complete the enclosed Volunteer Application Form and  
return to the county Extension office by \_\_\_\_\_ (*date*). Please note that volunteers may  
not fulfill their duties until the criminal background check has been conducted and you have been  
approved as an Extension volunteer.

Please do not hesitate to call me if you have any questions. Thank you for your interest in AgriLife  
Extension.

Sincerely,

(*Name*)

(*Title*)

(*Program Area*)