



# WISCONSIN 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

Membership • Participation • Youth Protection • Safety • Financial

Revised September 2004

## ***Membership***

### **A. Enrollment Policies**

1. The Wisconsin 4-H year is defined as October 1 – September 30 for the purpose of definition in these policies.
2. The Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development program has a policy of open enrollment. Eligible youth may enroll in Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development programs at any time of the year. Counties may establish reasonable enrollment deadlines for participation in certain programs when those deadlines are needed to ensure educational integrity and/or safety.

New 4-H enrollments will be accepted at any time during the year. Counties can establish re-enrollment deadlines for continuing members. It is reasonable to establish enrollment deadlines for certain aspects of participation such as county fair or animal projects because of the need for education prior to participation, however, basic club membership must be accepted at any time.

3. Youth in first grade are eligible to enroll in the Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development program. First and second graders will participate in 4-H as Cloverbuds. Youth will continue to be eligible for membership through the next 4-H year following their graduation from high school.

Cloverbuds - Counties have the option to extend Cloverbud membership to youth in 5-year-old Kindergarten. This does not include pre-kindergarten or 4-year-old kindergarten youth. The state recognizes Cloverbuds as 4-H members. Developmentally appropriate programs should be designed to meet the unique needs of Cloverbuds.

Home Schooling - Children who are home schooled will participate in 4-H in their declared grade.

Graduation - Counties are encouraged to recognize full graduation for those who wish to cease 4-H membership upon graduation from high school. High School seniors, and those participating as members in the year following high school graduation, will be eligible to participate through the entire 4-H year.

District & State Events - Participation in District and State 4-H events and recognition programs will be based upon the 4-H member's grade.

National Events - Participation in national 4-H events will be based upon the age established for the event.

## **B. Membership and Participation**

1. Youth may not hold 4-H membership in more than one county or state at the same time.

This statement does not limit multiple county memberships in a given year, but it does require that those memberships be consecutive rather than concurrent. Youth moving from one county to another, for whatever reason, can belong to 4-H in the second county, but it requires transferring their membership from the first county. This also does not limit someone from belonging to 4-H in a county or state that is different from their county or state of residence, neither does it prohibit a 4-Her from participating in educational programs in other states or counties.

2. Youth must qualify for participation in district, state, or national 4-H competitions through their county of membership.

This statement does not prohibit a county from using an event in another county as the place where their members qualify for a district or state competition. It does mean that members must be selected as representatives of only their county of membership, regardless of the location of the qualifying experience.

## ***Participation***

### **A. Participation Options**

1. Youth may participate in the Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development program through:
  - Membership in a 4-H club
  - Participation in a special interest/activity/group/program sponsored by UW-Extension
2. Additional participation options may be offered at county discretion:
  - Affiliation with an organized 4-H project
  - School enrichment
  - There may be extenuating circumstances where independent and family memberships would be warranted. The circumstances should be carefully reviewed and granted sparingly as an exception. Independent and family memberships should not ordinarily be allowed when the potential exists for organizing or joining a multi-family, community-based 4-H club. If a county chooses to grant a family or independent membership status, there should be a clear statement of expectations for those members, including an educational plan and participation in community service.

### **B. Requirements for a 4-H Club**

1. The University of Wisconsin-Extension grants 4-H Club Charters, which formally recognize a club's affiliation with 4-H, and grant that club the permission to use the 4-H Club name and emblem. To be a Chartered 4-H Club in Wisconsin, the following requirements must be met and maintained:
  - Club name
  - Five or more youth
  - Adult leadership that has been approved through the Youth Protection process
  - Educational plan which meets the purposes of the 4-H program
  - Youth involvement in leadership and decision-making
  - Meet on a continuing basis

- Open to any youth eligible for 4-H membership, regardless of race, color, creed, religion, sex, national origin, disability, ancestry, sexual orientation, pregnancy, marital or parental status.
2. Failure of a 4-H Club to meet these requirements may result in the loss of the club charter and the use of the 4-H name and emblem.
  3. A 4-H Club may have either paid or volunteer leadership. Teen leadership does not meet the adult leadership requirement.
  4. 4-H clubs must have an educational mission. Evidence can be provided in different ways. The preferred method is for clubs to develop a program plan with their members, and provide a written copy of that plan to the members and the UW-Extension Office.

“Youth participation in leadership and decision making” emphasizes that 4-H clubs belong to the membership, and that the youth members should make the decisions. Adult leaders should not be making the decisions for the members. Many clubs operate with officers, however they are not required.

“Continuing basis” means that a club intends to carry on as a functioning unit indefinitely. The club may determine for itself the frequency and timing of its meetings. Clubs that don’t meet in the summer, or November – February are acceptable if they continue as a club the next year. They don’t completely disband at the beginning of the summer. Rather they continue to exist with leadership and an identity and program again in the fall. Likewise a school club that meets every school year as the 5<sup>th</sup> grade class club would also be acceptable, even though all of the members change each year.

5. All 4-H clubs must comply with federal and state nondiscrimination laws, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

## ***Youth Protection***

1. The Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development Youth Protection process includes: a) a background records check for arrest and conviction records with the Wisconsin Department of Justice, b) participation in the volunteer orientation program, and c) signing the Volunteer Behavior Expectations form. All volunteers, age 18 and over, who work with youth in the 4-H youth program on an ongoing basis will participate in Youth Protection. The Volunteer Behavior Expectations form must be signed annually to continue as a volunteer. Arrest and conviction records will be rechecked every four years for continuing volunteers.

4-H members who serve as youth leaders do not need to go through the process. If they enroll as an adult volunteer, they need to complete the process.

2. Background checks and attendance at a volunteer orientation program are required for all host parent/guardians who aren’t currently certified 4-H Youth Development volunteers. Background checks are required for all other adults (18+) living with host families. It is up to county discretion on whether these adults should be required to attend a youth protection orientation session.
3. Returning volunteers who have been absent one to four years need the background records check, signed volunteer expectation form, but are not required to attend the orientation to be

reinstated as a volunteer. Returning volunteers who have been absent five or more years need to repeat the entire youth protection process.

4. 4H volunteers who have already had background checks and child abuse training as part of their employment or other volunteer experience will need to complete the 4H Youth Development process.
5. A resource person doesn't need to complete the process if working under the visual supervision/guidance of an enrolled volunteer or Extension staff member.
6. The criteria for whether a record causes concern is whether there is evidence of behavior related to child safety. If the background check causes question with an individual, that individual will be contacted for additional information before a decision on volunteer status is made. To enhance statewide uniformity of implementation, decisions on questionable backgrounds will involve additional information review involving both state and county staff.
7. The driving record for all applicants reporting a loss of driver's license will be checked using UW-Fleet policies. If person should be restricted in driving as a volunteer, the state 4H office will: 1. Write individual asking them not to drive or report that their record is in error. 2. Notify agent 3. Agent notifies club leader about individual's driving restriction.
8. If a volunteer has lived in Wisconsin for less than 3 years, references will be sought and checked. If a volunteer lives outside Wisconsin, references will be sought and checked.

## **Safety**

### **A. Program Safety Regulations**

1. Adults and youth participating in all high risk programs, including horses, ATV, bicycle, rock climbing/repelling, rollerblading, and ropes adventure courses must wear protective clothing, head and foot gear. Minimum requirements for these programs:
  - Protective head gear (SEI approved for the specific activity) which properly fits the participant.
  - Shoes or boots which provide protection from the hazards of said program.
  - Clothing appropriate for the activity which will protect the participants from the elements surrounding the event.

The policy means that all 4-H members and leaders (adult or youth) participating in the mentioned projects and/or activities need to use protective or safety equipment while participating. Approved safety helmets need to be worn while mounted or driving a horse, operating a bicycle or ATV, on roller blades, rock climbing or doing a challenge course.

2. If a 4-H club is listed as a sponsor or co-sponsor of an activity which includes the above listed projects, the helmet and safety equipment requirement applies for all participants. This includes adults as they need to be positive role models.

The goal of this policy is educational. We need to work for a safe environment for our youth. In the volunteer orientation program, the need for a safe environment is discussed. Therefore, if safety equipment which significantly reduces serious injuries is available, why would we not use it?

These standards apply to all 4-H activities, regardless of location. Meeting these standards may require the selection of an alternative site, or requiring the use of additional safety equipment, even though it is not standard practice for the facility where the 4-H activity is to occur. If these safety requirements are not followed, then the particular event is not eligible to use the 4-H name and emblem, nor will it be recognized as a part of the Extension program.

Should people decide not to comply, they need to be disqualified from the competition or asked to at least dismount, if during a non-competitive activity. When adults are serving in a leadership role, they are expected to meet the same safety requirements as the youth. If leaders fail to comply with the safety policy and individuals are participating without proper safety equipment and an injury occurs, the leader may be found negligent and application of liability insurance coverage would be questionable. This is a consequence which needs serious consideration.

Any classes which require 4-H membership to enter, or serves as a qualifying event for district or state competition must adhere to these safety policies.

It is strongly encouraged that 4-H groups set an example of using proper safety equipment and maintaining the highest standards of injury prevention.

3. To exhibit animals at any public event as a 4-H member, youth must be in at least 3<sup>rd</sup> grade during the current 4-H year.

This policy is for the safety of the 4-H member and the public at the public exhibition. The developmental ability and maturity level of the exhibitor and the unpredictable behavior of animals should be considered prior to involving a 4-H member in the exhibition of animals.

## **B. Wisconsin 4-H Shooting Sports Policy**

1. 4-H Shooting Sports programs are available to youth from third grade (and at least 8 years of age at the time of participation) through the year following high school. Shooting Sports disciplines include archery, air pistol, hunting/wildlife ecology, muzzle loading, rifle (.177 pellet, .177 BB, and .22), and shotgun. 4-H youth, 8-11 years of age, cannot operate any powder-burning firearm. This includes, but is not limited to, .22 handgun or rifle, muzzle loading handgun or rifle, or shotgun.
2. Youth may participate in an organized 4-H Shooting Sports activity only if a certified 4-H Shooting Sports leader is present and providing supervision. The 4-H certified leader must have certification in the shooting discipline in which the youth is participating.
3. 4-H certified leaders must be at least 18 years old, and must have participated in at least one state-level 4-H leader training Shooting Sports certification workshop in the discipline in which they are providing supervision. If an adult leader is not certified, he/she cannot provide hands-on or safety instruction without a certified leader being present. A leader may obtain certification in an additional discipline (archery, air pistol, coordinator, hunting/wildlife ecology, muzzle loading, rifle [.177 pellet, .177 BB, and .22], and shotgun) by completing a certification workshop provided by 4-H certified state training team members. Leaders are encouraged to upgrade skills via training with such organizations as the NRA, NAA, and DNR.

4. Adult assistant leaders do not need to be certified, but they must be in the presence of a 4-H certified leader who has certification in the shooting discipline in which the youth is participating.
5. Youth assistants do not need to be certified, but must be in the presence of and under the supervision of a certified leader who has certification in the shooting discipline in which the youth is participating.
6. All leaders should incorporate wildlife ecology/conservation into their program via 4-H hunting discipline or other suggested activities.
7. Leaders must be currently enrolled as a 4-H volunteer in a county. Certification in the County 4-H Youth Protection training is required for all 4-H Shooting Sports leaders. Leader and member participation will be consistent with state and county guidelines
8. If a leader is acting in an unsafe manner or is in noncompliance with 4-H leader standards, he or she is subject to removal.

Adequate insurance is important in 4-H Shooting Sports. Accident insurance is presently available through county 4-H Youth Development Agents for \$1 per person per year. Every leader and member should be covered. Also, leaders should check with their county 4-H Youth Development Agent and/or facility about liability insurance.

## ***Financial***

### **A. Financial**

1. Federal regulations governing the use of the 4-H name and emblem require annual financial reporting/accountability of all organized 4-H units. Funds raised in the name of 4-H must be publicly accountable, and must be used for 4-H purposes. Failure to annually submit the financial report could result in loss of approval to use the 4-H name and emblem.

### **B. 4-H Clubs/Units**

1. Reporting Requirement: All 4-H Clubs/units are required to submit a financial record and audit report to the County UW-Extension Office once each year.
2. Dissolution Clause: 4-H clubs must include a statement of dissolution in their by-laws or club guidelines similar to the following: Upon dissolution of the 4-H Club any assets must be turned over to a recognized 4-H club or group, with the approval of the 4-H Leaders Association and the county 4-H Youth Development Agent.

### **C. County 4-H Leaders Associations and County 4-H Committees**

1. Reporting Requirement: The county 4-H Leaders Association and county 4-H committees are required to submit a financial record and an audit of this record to the County UW-Extension Office once each year. Additional reports required by law must also be submitted to the respective agencies with a copy filed with the 4-H Youth Development Agent.
2. Dissolution Clause: The county 4-H Leaders Association must include a statement of dissolution in its bylaws similar to the following: Upon dissolution of the association, any assets

remaining shall be conveyed to a 4-H Youth Development program or 4-H Youth Development Foundation as selected by the affirmative vote of the majority of association members entitled to vote.

3. County 4-H Committees must include a statement of dissolution in their bylaws similar to the following: Upon dissolution of the committee, any assets remaining shall be conveyed to the county 4-H Leaders Association if one exists. If one does not exist, any remaining assets shall be conveyed to a 4-H Youth Development program or 4-H Youth Development Foundation as selected by the affirmative vote of the majority of committee members entitled to vote.

#### **D. Multi-county, District and State Committees and Councils**

1. Reporting Requirement: All multi-county, district and state committees and councils are required to submit a financial record and an audit of the record to the advising 4-H Youth Development Agent or State UW-Extension Specialist once each year. Additional reports required by law must be submitted to the respective agencies and a copy filed with the advising 4-H Youth Development Agent or State UW-Extension Specialist.
2. Dissolution Clause: Multi-county, district and state committees and councils must include a statement of dissolution in their bylaws similar to the following: Upon dissolution of the committee or council, any assets remaining shall be conveyed to a 4-H Youth Development program or 4-H Youth Development Foundation as selected by the affirmative vote of the majority of committee or council members entitled to vote.



An EEO/AA employer, University of Wisconsin-Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX and American with Disabilities (ADA) requirements. © 2004 by the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System. Developed by the Wisconsin 4-H Office, 431 Lowell Hall, 610 Langdon St., Madison, WI 53703. The 4-H name and emblem are federally protected under Title 18 US Code 707.