



WISCONSIN 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

Membership • Participation • Youth Protection • Safety • Financial

Revised August 2009

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. Individual and family memberships are not eligible for recognition as a tax exempt entity.

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. 4-H Charters must be renewed annually. To be a chartered 4-H Club in Wisconsin, the following requirements must be met and maintained:
 - Club name
 - Five or more youth from at least 3 families
 - 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
 - Have written operating guidelines, bylaws or constitution approved by the members to govern the club
 - 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. Annual charter renewal packets are due to the local UW-Extension Office no later than December 1.
 3. Leadership for 4-H Clubs is primarily provided by volunteers. A 4-H club may have paid leadership when the individual provides leadership for the club as a function of their employment for another organization. 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 through the annual charter renewal process.

“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 5th grade class club would also be acceptable, even though all of the members change each year.

5. 4-H Club written operating guidelines or by-laws need to include at minimum the following: the group’s purpose/mission; a statement of compliance with state and national 4-H policies and laws; the approved civil rights statements; information on how the group is organized and makes decisions; the required dissolution clause; and procedures of how finances are handled and audited.
6. All 4-H clubs/units/groups 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.

C. Requirements for a 4-H Unit/Group/Committee Charter

1. The University of Wisconsin-Extension grants 4-H Charters to units/groups/committees, 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. All units/groups/committees that handle finances and have a checkbook must be chartered. To be a chartered 4-H Unit/Group/Committee in Wisconsin, the unit/group/committee must complete the Charter Application. 4-H Charters must be renewed annually. The following requirements must be met and maintained:

- Unit/Group/Committee name
 - 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
 - Have written operating guidelines, bylaws or constitution approved by the members to govern the unit/group/committee
 - 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 Unit/group/committee to meet these requirements may result in the loss of the club charter and the use of the 4-H name and emblem. Annual charter renewal packets are due to the local UW-Extension Office no later than December 1.
 3. 4-H Unit/group/committee written operating guidelines or by-laws need to include at minimum the following: the group's purpose/mission; a statement of compliance with state and national 4-H policies and laws; the approved civil rights statements; information on how the group is organized and makes decisions; the required dissolution clause; and procedures of how finances are handled and audited.

Youth Protection

1. 4-H Youth Development programs and activities must be supervised by an adult, 18 years of age or older, who has completed the Youth Protection program and is currently an enrolled 4-H volunteer leader.
2. In order to initially be recognized as a 4-H volunteer leader in the Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development program, all adults age 18 years and over must participate in the Youth Protection Program. The Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development Youth Protection program process includes:
 - a. Completion of the Volunteer Application Form
 - b. Background records check for arrest and conviction records through the approved channel.
 - c. Participation in volunteer orientation
 - d. Completion of the Volunteer Behavior Expectations Form
 - e. Completion of the 4-H Enrollment Form.

4-H members who serve as youth leaders do not need to complete the Youth Protection program process. If they enroll as an adult volunteer leader instead of serving as a youth leader, they need to complete the Youth Protection program process.

3. To continue to be recognized as a 4-H volunteer leader in the Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development program beyond the first year, all adults 18 years of age and over must annually complete the following:
 - a. Volunteer Behavior Expectations Form
 - b. 4-H Enrollment Form

Note: A background records check for arrest and conviction records will be completed every four years for continuing 4-H volunteer leaders. Youth that are over 18 years of age and are still active 4-H members do not require background checks. These youth are expected to participate as members and not in a chaperone or adult volunteer leader role.

4. Background checks and attendance at volunteer orientation are required for all host parents/guardian who aren't currently recognized 4-H Youth development volunteers. Background checks are required for all other adults 18 years of age and older, living in host families who are not currently enrolled as 4-H members. It is up to county discretion whether or not these adults should be required to attend volunteer orientation.
5. Returning volunteers who have been absent one to four years need the background records check, signed Volunteer Behavior Expectations 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.
6. 4-H 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 4-H Youth Development process.
7. A guest speaker or guest presenter doesn't need to complete the process if working under the visual supervision of an enrolled volunteer or Extension staff member.
8. A record causes concern when there is evidence of a conviction 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 may involve additional information review involving both state and county staff.
9. The driving record for applicants reporting loss or suspension of a driver's license will be checked using UW-Fleet policies. In the event driving restrictions are placed on the volunteer regarding transportation of youth or their animals, the individual will be contacted regarding the driving record to verify the accuracy of the record. Restriction of volunteer driving privileges will be communicated in writing by either state or county staff.
10. If a volunteer applicant has lived in Wisconsin for less than three 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/rappelling, 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, grade exhibit policies (youth must be in 3rd grade) and the helmet and safety equipment requirements apply 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 3rd 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 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 must be 12 years of age to 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 volunteer leader is present and providing supervision. The 4-H Shooting Sports certified volunteer leader must have certification in the shooting discipline in which the youth is participating.
3. 4-H Shooting Sports certified volunteer leaders must be at least 18 years old, and must have successfully completed 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 volunteer leader is not certified, he/she cannot provide hands-on or safety instruction without a certified volunteer leader being present. A volunteer 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. 4-H volunteer leaders are encouraged to upgrade skills via training with such organizations as the NRA, NAA, and DNR.

4. 4-H adult assistant volunteer leaders do not need to be 4-H Shooting Sports certified, but they must be in the presence of a 4-H Shooting Sports certified volunteer leader who has certification in the shooting discipline in which the youth is participating.
5. Youth assistants do not need to be 4-H Shooting Sports certified, but must be in the presence of and under the supervision of a 4-H Shooting Sports certified volunteer leader who has certification in the shooting discipline in which the youth is participating.
6. 4-H volunteer leaders must be currently enrolled as a 4-H volunteer in a county. Completion of the Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development Youth Protection program required for all 4-H Shooting Sports volunteer leaders. 4-H volunteer leader and member participation will be consistent with state and county guidelines
7. If a 4-H volunteer leader is acting in an unsafe manner or is in noncompliance with 4-H volunteer leader standards, he or she is subject to removal.

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 the 4-H Club/unit/group charter.

B. 4-H Clubs/Unit/Groups

1. Reporting Requirement: All 4-H Clubs/units/groups are required to submit a financial record and audit report to the County UW-Extension Office once each year. This report is included in the annual charter renewal documents. Additional reports required by law must also be submitted to the respective agencies with a copy or verification of submission filed with the 4-H Youth Development staff.
2. Dissolution Clause: 4-H Clubs/units/groups must include a statement of dissolution in their written operating guidelines or by-laws similar to the following: Upon dissolution of the 4-H Club any assets must be turned over to a recognized 4-H club/unit/group, with the approval of the 4-H Leaders Association and the county 4-H Youth Development staff.

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/units/groups must be chartered and 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 or verification of submission filed with the 4-H Youth Development staff.
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 Units/Groups or Committees that have a check book or assets must be chartered and must include a statement of dissolution in their written operating guidelines and 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 Wisconsin 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 be chartered and 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 staff or State UW-Extension Specialist.
2. Dissolution Clause: Multi-county, district and state committees, councils, and unit/groups must include a statement of dissolution in their written operating guidelines or 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.



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