



# Extension Center for 4-H Youth Development Rules and Procedures

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

Nothing in these Rules and Procedures should be interpreted as creating a constitutionally (state or federal) protected property or liberty interest to participate in the 4-H Program unless one already exists as 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 Mississippi State University Extension Service directives. The descriptions of disciplinary procedures set forth in this document are guidelines. The failure of the Mississippi State University Extension Service to strictly adhere to a particular process shall not be a basis for overturning the disciplinary action imposed.

## **Roles of the County Extension Staff, 4-H Volunteers, and Parents of Members in the 4-H Youth Development Program**

### ***Role of 4-H Extension Agents***

4-H Extension agents have the responsibility for oversight of the 4-H Program in their assigned counties. Every Extension agent has a 40 percent appointment with 4-H. This includes the following responsibilities:

- ▶ Adhere to minor protection policies.
- ▶ 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 (e.g., 4-H Council, volunteer/parent groups, committees, etc.) annually. Chartering includes use of the 4-H name and emblem.
- ▶ Provide opportunities for all young people who have reached the appropriate age to be participants and/or members in the 4-H Program.
- ▶ Plan and coordinate the county 4-H program.
- ▶ Ensure all volunteers have completed the registration application packet and that their status is current.

- ▶ Staff the 4-H clubs using registered volunteers with the assistance of the volunteer/parent leadership and youth leadership.
- ▶ Assist the volunteer/parent leadership and youth leadership by providing training and resources for all 4-H volunteers in the county.
- ▶ Explain and enforce 4-H Rules and Procedures.
- ▶ Train and supervise 4-H volunteers in conducting the county 4-H program.
- ▶ Ensure that a quality 4-H educational program is conducted in the county.
- ▶ Inform 4-H volunteers, members, and members' parents about opportunities at county, district, regional, state, national, and international levels.
- ▶ Support and promote statewide 4-H events.
- ▶ Appoint or release 4-H members, 4-H volunteers, and 4-H parents.

Extension agents are expected to conduct themselves as good role models for 4-H'ers both in public and private. This includes appropriate dress, language, and moral conduct in accordance with acceptable standards of our university.

Extension agents have the responsibility for communicating the Mississippi State University Extension Service's best financial management practice procedures to all clubs, groups, and programs operating under the name of 4-H. Clubs, groups, and programs are required annually to affirm committee review of accounts for best management practices.

### ***Role of 4-H Volunteers***

4-H is a nonformal educational program delivered by volunteers who are supervised by 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.

A registered 4-H volunteer is a volunteer who has completed the full volunteer application packet, including screening, application, and training, and has been approved by the county Extension agent and appointed by the head of the MSU Extension Center for 4-H Youth Development.

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

- ▶ **Direct Volunteer** — As defined in Extension Service and Land Grant University Cooperating Extension Service, United States Department of Agriculture ES Form 237

(7/93): “Unpaid support for 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, activity leader, organizational leader, and teen leader.” A direct volunteer must be 18 years or older. They must be 21 years or older to transport youth or serve as an overnight chaperone.

- ▶ **Indirect Volunteer**— As defined in Extension Service and Land Grant University Cooperating Extension Service, United States Department of Agriculture ES Form 237 (7/93): “Unpaid support for the 4-H program by a youth or adult which does not include face-to-face contact with youth, e.g.: boards, committees.” Indirect volunteers complete the 4-H Volunteer Application Packet (F1181) and watch the mandatory online training video, but they are not required to complete the background screening. An indirect volunteer must be at least 18 years old, but they may not serve as overnight chaperones or travel out-of-state alone with 4-H’ers. Indirect volunteers may not be responsible for the direct supervision of youth.

It is the responsibility of the 4-H volunteer to carry out the assigned position responsibilities that they have accepted. Additional training and/or certifications may be required to work with youth in specific project areas. 4-H volunteers are expected to conduct themselves 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 university. It should be understood by the volunteers that they are expected to participate in learning, training, and teaching opportunities provided for them.

## Volunteer Liability

In order for a volunteer to serve with the MSU Extension Center for 4-H Youth Development program, all 4-H volunteers must complete the 4-H Volunteer Application Packet (F1181). Registered volunteers should expect to update their information, go through a background screening, and complete the minor protection policy acknowledgement form every 3 years.

Adult volunteer leaders are expected to act in good faith and without negligence in the performance of their duties in order to minimize any chance of creating a Mississippi State University Extension Service liability.

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. In the case of out-of-state chaperoning, an adult must be at least 25 years of age.

## Volunteer Code of Conduct

The following guidelines assist volunteers in understanding personal conduct expectations during the course and scope of their duties. 4-H volunteer leaders must abide by all applicable Mississippi State University Extension policies.

To be a registered 4-H volunteer, you must—

- ▶ Be at least 18 years of age as of January 1 of the current year.
- ▶ Complete a 4-H Volunteer Application Packet (F1181).
- ▶ Be subject to a background check.

A 4-H volunteer is expected to—

- ▶ Respect the individual rights, safety, and property of others.
- ▶ Participate in routine volunteer training opportunities and activities pertinent to their duties.
- ▶ Be committed to the core values, educational goals, and standards of the 4-H Program.
- ▶ Support the 4-H Program and its Rules and Procedures.
- ▶ Recognize and support the responsibilities of the 4-H Program staff in setting program standards, priorities, and direction.
- ▶ Support the nondiscrimination practices of the Mississippi State University Extension Service.
- ▶ Make all reasonable efforts to provide access to 4-H-related information and equal opportunities to young people in their community, helping them to participate in project activities, awards programs, and other events and activities.
- ▶ Obey Mississippi laws on the use of motor vehicles.
- ▶ Not consume alcohol and/or illegal drugs (or be under the influence thereof) while involved in or en route to any 4-H event, meeting, or activity.
- ▶ Maintain direct supervision of 4-H members. Volunteers should not leave their delegation unsupervised unless they have received approval 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 contract on behalf of the Mississippi State University Extension Service. All such agreements must be forwarded to the MSU Extension Center for 4-H Youth Development office for review.

- ▶ Recognize Mississippi law requiring all adults to report suspected child abuse to the police 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 4-H member, or use corporal punishment to reprimand a 4-H member for any reason.
- ▶ Understand that falsifying enrollment information, budgets, documents, or records is a breach of the Code of Ethics.
- ▶ Not engage in sexual activity with 4-H members.
- ▶ Adhere to fiscal responsibility and financial best management practices as outlined by the Mississippi State University Extension Service.
- ▶ Register as a volunteer in only one county.
- ▶ Not receive compensation for professional services provided in support of 4-H activities (excluding reimbursement for approved and receipted expenses).
- ▶ Not use tobacco, alcohol, or illegal drugs while supervising youth.
- ▶ Reference 4-H Parental Release and Code of Conduct Agreement (Form 807) and Guidelines for Supervising Youth (IS1522).

## Consequences for Infractions

Infractions of these requirements by volunteers must be reported to MSU Extension Center for 4-H Youth Development staff.

Consequences may include the following:

- ▶ Discussion of the inappropriate actions with the 4-H leader; clarification of the policy.
- ▶ Release of the adult to the appropriate law enforcement agency.
- ▶ Termination as a 4-H volunteer.
- ▶ Notification of incident to legal authorities.

## Cause for Reassignment or Release of Volunteers

The purpose of the 4-H Program is youth development, and agents and volunteers should spend the primary portion of their time in positive work that supports quality experiences for youth. Volunteers should be provided with a written position description that they agree to and are required to sign. One copy should be kept on file in the county Extension office and one returned to

the volunteer. Volunteers are expected to participate in training necessary to carry out their responsibilities. It is the responsibility of the adult 4-H volunteer to carry out the assigned responsibilities that they have accepted. 4-H volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in both public and private life as good examples for 4-H'ers. This includes appropriate dress, language, and moral conduct in accordance with the generally recognized standards of our university. It should be understood by the volunteer that he or she is expected to pursue avenues of learning, training, and teaching provided to them.

A volunteer may be reassigned or released at the sole discretion of the Mississippi State University Extension Service. Examples of conduct that could lead to disciplinary action include, but are not limited to, the following: illegal activity, behavior that compromises the health and safety of 4-H'ers, violating an Extension policy, violating 4-H Rules and Procedures, willfully violating or causing children to violate rules, being habitually disruptive to the overall program, being unwilling or unable to work amicably with agents and other leaders, engaging in conduct that is harmful to the 4-H program's reputation, or failing 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 Releasing Volunteers

Before any official action is taken, county professional staff and their immediate Extension supervisors should counsel volunteers about problems. Always keep written records of discussions concerning volunteer performance. Use the following steps for a volunteer's removal only after extensive efforts have been made to help the volunteer improve their performance.

- ▶ Step 1: County staff representatives and their regional Extension coordinator should meet with the volunteer to discuss problems with performance and/or any 4-H Rules and Procedures violations. Specific areas for improvement should be outlined and recorded. A written record of the meeting should be 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. If problems continue, the volunteer should be removed from service. Again, written records

should be kept and copies provided as in Step 1. Before removing a volunteer from service, county Extension staff must contact their county Extension coordinator, regional Extension coordinator, and the head of the Center for 4-H Youth Development.

- ▶ Step 3: If removed, the volunteer must be notified in writing of their removal from service to 4-H. Provide copies as noted in Steps 1 and 2.
- ▶ Step 4: If the volunteer wishes to appeal, a written request for review must be submitted within 30 days to 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 regional Extension coordinator and the head of the Center for 4-H Youth Development. The review will be completed by the regional Extension coordinator and the head of the Center for 4-H Youth Development.

## Immediate Removal

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. Conduct of this severity might include, but is not limited to, the following: 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 the head of the Center for 4-H Youth Development.

Note: 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.

## Membership and Enrollment

### *Membership and Enrollment*

It is the policy of the Mississippi State University Extension Service to extend equal opportunities for membership and participation in 4-H activities to all young Mississippians in accordance with all applicable state and federal laws. Discrimination in the 4-H Program because of socioeconomic level, race, color, religion, national origin, gender, or disability

is contrary to the purposes and policies of the Mississippi State University Extension Service.

To become a member of 4-H, the parent/guardian of the youth should contact the local county Extension office to discuss opportunities in 4-H and complete the 4-H Individual Enrollment Form (F135). Only the parent/guardian of the child can enroll them in 4-H.

Youth who are interested in joining 4-H should, at a minimum, receive the following when visiting the local county Extension office:

- ▶ 4-H brochure (P1011)
- ▶ 4-H Individual Enrollment Form (F135)

Additional resources, including those listed below, may be found online at <http://extension.msstate.edu/4-h> or requested from the local county Extension office.

- ▶ 4-H Member's Handbook (P1277)
- ▶ 4-H Project Enrollment Guide (P1447)

## Age Requirements

There are three levels of membership within the Mississippi 4-H Program:

- ▶ Cloverbud membership is a 4-H offering in some counties for children ages 5 through 7. These youth participate in special program offerings and non-competitive events.
- ▶ 4-H membership is open to children and youth ages 8 through 18. For specific rules on projects and competitive participation by each group, refer to the 4-H Project Enrollment Guide (P1447).
- ▶ The age for 4-H membership is determined by the age of the individual as of January 1 of the current year.
- ▶ Collegiate 4-H is open to all 4-H members as they enter institutes of higher education at a land grant institution (Collegiate 4-H Programs, 2017).

## Special Membership Offerings

4-H'ers with special needs who are older than 19 and have not graduated from high school may participate in 4-H programs as members, with approval by the 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 members older than 19 with special needs to participate in competitive events at the club or county level.

The MSU Extension Center for 4-H Youth Development uses experiential learning and takes a “learn by doing” approach to all learning experiences. As it pertains to youth with special needs, Extension agents and volunteers will assume that the youth is able to participate in the experience until the member or parent/guardian informs the agent/volunteer that the 4-H member cannot. If accommodations are needed, Extension agents and volunteers will work with the youth and their family to identify a reasonable accommodation. Extension agents should contact Center for 4-H Youth Development staff for assistance if needed. If necessary, the Extension Center for 4-H Youth Development will work with the MSU Disability Resource Center to offer advice and assistance in determining appropriate accommodations.

### **Other Membership Requirements**

A young person becomes a 4-H member when they complete an Individual Enrollment Form (F135) or are included in a Group Enrollment Form (F805). Membership cannot be held simultaneously in more than one county or state, but membership may change with residence, as long as the member competes in a given project in only one county or state.

A member of a 4-H club must participate in 4-H learning groups and other educational activities under the guidance of a 4-H volunteer who is a registered volunteer with the local county Extension office.

Marriage and parenthood are not barriers to 4-H membership, provided other requirements are met.

A person who is accepted as a 4-H member is entitled to all the rights and privileges of membership in connection with 4-H.

### ***Annual 4-H Enrollment***

The Mississippi 4-H year runs from October 1 to September 30. All 4-H members and volunteers must be enrolled annually. 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 their 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 for authorization to use the 4-H name and emblem. A copy of the charter must be retained on file

in the county Extension office. New clubs must be chartered as part of the organizational process.

When the charter is approved, it is presented to the club and allows the club the full benefits of the 4-H organization. This includes the use of the 4-H name and emblem, and the federal tax-exempt status of 4-H when all requirements are met.

A club must meet the following minimum requirements to receive a charter:

- ▶ One or more adult leaders
- ▶ Elected officers
- ▶ Each member enrolled in at least one 4-H project experience
- ▶ An approved club or group name
- ▶ Club by-laws

The county Extension office must maintain the following on file:

- ▶ Club charter
- ▶ Club by-laws
- ▶ If club has a bank account—IRS identification number for account, location (bank) of account, and names of individuals authorized to sign checks
- ▶ Member enrollment forms
- ▶ Volunteer leader enrollment packet
- ▶ Names of current club officers and club leaders

### ***Chartering County 4-H Groups and Organizations***

County 4-H groups or organizations (parent/leader association, 4-H council, county 4-H committee, etc.) and fund-raising groups must be chartered to use the 4-H name and emblem.

4-H groups and fund-raising groups wishing to use the 4-H name and emblem must provide the following:

- ▶ Membership/contact list
- ▶ Meeting locations
- ▶ Elected officers
- ▶ Group name and year group began
- ▶ By-laws
- ▶ Copy of most recent financial report

## Types of 4-H Membership

Members may participate in 4-H through several options, and flexibility is offered in each. Youth become 4-H members by enrolling and participating in any of the following membership units.

### 4-H Clubs

A 4-H club is an educational/learning unit consisting of youth members and managed by one or more volunteer leaders and elected youth officers. It meets regularly over a period of several months, with one or more regular club meetings.

Each member is enrolled in at least one 4-H project. Project groups are taught by project leaders, teen leaders, and/or junior leaders. Each 4-H member should meet the general requirements to complete a project. These include the following:

- ▶ Select a project area and record it on the 4-H enrollment form.
- ▶ Develop a set of project goals.
- ▶ Participate in at least six project-learning experiences, each 20 to 60 minutes in length.
- ▶ Regularly complete at least one project goal.
- ▶ Attend workshops that are available in your community or county on your particular project.
- ▶ Develop leadership by teaching others.
- ▶ Conduct citizenship activities related to your project.
- ▶ Find new and fun things to do in your project area.

There are seven basic types of 4-H clubs.

### Community Club

A community 4-H club is identified by the following characteristics:

- ▶ Organization based upon proximity of the participants
- ▶ Enrollment of at least one adult club leader
- ▶ Enrollment of as many project and/or activity leaders as required
- ▶ Presence of elected youth officers such as president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary
- ▶ Holds regular meetings
- ▶ Conducts project meetings as needed

- ▶ Enrolls and involves parents in the club program
- ▶ Conducts a community service project

### Project Club

A 4-H project club has the same characteristics as a community club, but the original organization is based on a single project. Expansion after the original project organization into other project areas is accepted.

### School Club

A school club has the same characteristics as a community club, but it is organized and conducted in school, and membership may be divided into several clubs of different ages.

### 4-H After-School Club

An after-school club is the same as a school club, but it is organized in an after-school setting.

### Military 4-H Club

A military club has the same characteristics as a community club, but it is organized and conducted on a military installation.

### Collegiate 4-H Club

Collegiate clubs are composed of members who are enrolled in a post-secondary educational program at a land-grant college or university. These clubs are recognized as constructive segments of the 4-H Program. However, collegiate 4-H members are not considered 4-H members for the purpose of these guidelines. These clubs are service-focused.

### Virtual 4-H Club

Virtual 4-H Clubs have many of the same components of face-to-face meetings but occur virtually. Youth are guided through a sequence of learning experiences that can occur together with other members online and/or through individual experiences. Extension agents and 4-H volunteers should strive to have at least two adults on the virtual meeting with the members.

### *Special Interest/School Enrichment Groups*

Special interest/school enrichment groups are organized as educational groups for audiences with a specific interest or audiences that do not have the time for involvement in the regular 4-H Program. The special interest/school enrichment groups may attract those who would not otherwise participate in 4-H.

## Special Interest Groups

Special interest clubs include the following characteristics:

- ▶ Organized or coordinated by Extension professionals
- ▶ Directed and taught by volunteer adults or youth leaders
- ▶ No elected officers
- ▶ Consist of 6 or more hours of learning experience

## School Enrichment Groups

School enrichment clubs have the following characteristics:

- ▶ Involve learning activities that take place in a classroom setting
- ▶ Led by a school staff member or an Extension volunteer
- ▶ Consist of at least 6 or more hours of learning experiences (each in segments of 20 to 60 minutes)
- ▶ Use the 4-H clover and promote other ways members can participate

A curriculum enrichment unit is an individual classroom. Youth in 4-H school enrichment programs are counted only once per year as members, but they are reported individually for each school enrichment project.

## Other Membership Units

### Overnight Camps

4-H'ers take part in an Extension outdoor group-living experience, which includes being away from home at least 1 night. Overnight camps are not restricted to members of organized 4-H clubs.

### Day Camps

4-H'ers take part in an Extension outdoor experience during a specific time period ranging from 1 day to 1 week. Day camps are not restricted to members of organized 4-H clubs.

## Curriculum, Recognition, and Awards

### *Curriculum/Project Manuals/Leader Guides*

The individual project is the basis of many learning experiences in the 4-H Program. Each 4-H member is expected to participate in at least one 4-H project. The kind and number of 4-H projects available to 4-H members in a given community will be determined by the interests and needs of the members and by the availability of interested and qualified volunteer leaders. Extension agents, in cooperation with volunteers, have the

opportunity to develop new educational experiences to meet the localized needs of youth that are not met in the present program. New projects and activities are made available to the entire state when it becomes clear they will serve a worthwhile purpose and when curriculum support materials have been prepared.

### *Project Opportunities*

The 4-H Project Enrollment Guide (P1447) includes a summary of 4-H projects that are offered through the 4-H Program. These projects are endorsed at the state level and may include curricula support, achievement opportunities, and program learning strategies. Additionally, there is a list of self-determined projects that 4-H members may participate in and use locally.

### *Recognition*

Recognition in 4-H encourages and supports further learning. Recognition comes as a result of participation in educational experiences. 4-H uses recognition to acknowledge each person's effort and to provide positive reinforcement to continue participating in learning activities. Appropriate recognition takes many forms and respects individual differences. A balanced recognition program, incorporating the five-phase recognition model, is preferred and recommended. 4-H'ers may be recognized for 1) participation, 2) progress toward personal goals, 3) achievement of standards of excellence, 4) success in peer competition, and 5) cooperative learning.

The MSU Extension Center for 4-H Youth Development uses the Danish system of recognition, which rewards youth for the effort put forth in their projects. This system uses colors to signify award levels, and each award level may have more than one recipient.

- ▶ A blue ribbon indicates an excellent project that exceeds the average standard.
- ▶ A red ribbon indicates an average or slightly below-average project that meets expectations but has several mistakes or errors.
- ▶ A white ribbon indicates a below-average project that does not meet expectations or is less than expected.

There are other ribbons used in 4-H, such as the Cloverbud and Cloverleaf ribbons. Some specialists use certificates rather than ribbons because certificates are easier for a 4-H'er to include in their annual record book. It is important to check with your subject-matter specialist for an overall breakdown of the award structure in that programmatic area.



## ***Competitive Awards Programs***

Extension agents must not be involved in the selection process of any 4-H award recipient or other 4-H opportunity recipient, including both young people and adults, in the county in which they work. This includes award programs, record book winners, camps, labs, and state events with county quotas, and so on. 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.

## ***Eligibility for Participation in Specific Events and Activities***

Specific events and activities may require that rules be established beyond normal 4-H rules and guidelines. 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 stated so as to be inclusive in nature.

## ***Eligibility for Participation in Competitive Events Beyond State Level***

The contestants or teams of contestants must be certified as the official state entry by the head of the Extension Center for 4-H Youth Development or by a person designated by them. In order to represent the state in a national 4-H competition, the 4-H member must have qualified at the state-level competitive event.

## ***Cooperation Between 4-H, FFA, and Other Organizations***

The MSU Extension Center for 4-H Youth Development and Future Farmers of America (FFA) work cooperatively. Exhibiting projects and participating 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 procedures of the specific events and contingent upon an agreement between the county Extension 4-H staff member and the FFA program staff member, participants are allowed to use the same projects and/or activities to participate in FFA and 4-H programs.

## ***Discipline, Suspension, and 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 4-H Parental Release and Code of Conduct Agreement (F807).

## ***Appropriate Behavior***

The Mississippi State University Extension Service supports moral and ethical behavior on the part of its staff and all 4-H program participants, parents, and adult volunteers. Fairness, honesty, and good sportsmanship are expected and encouraged. Fraudulent, illegal, or deceptive practices while exhibiting individual projects or demonstrating knowledge and skills will not be tolerated.

## ***Mississippi Junior Livestock Code of Conduct, Code of Ethics, and Rules***

All 4-H'ers must abide by the Mississippi Junior Livestock Code of Conduct, Code of Ethics, and Rules, as well as the Equine Code of Ethics.

## ***Other Statewide and National Event Rules***

All youth must abide by the rules and policies set forth in the handbooks for statewide events such as contests held at the Mississippi State Fair, Dixie National Junior Roundup, 4-H Shooting Sports events, and 4-H Club Congress. Youth must also abide by the rules and policies set forth in the handbooks for national events such as the National 4-H Forestry Invitational and National 4-H Congress, among others.

4-H youth who participate in visual contests must fill out the 4-H Creative Arts Entry and Release form (F1191) before sending their work to a statewide or national contest. When using the 4-H logo in their work, 4-H'ers should abide by the rules that govern the 4-H clover. No print or design can cover or obscure the 4-H clover. The clover stem must curve to the right. When using the 4-H clover, include "18 U.S.C.707" to the right of the clover stem. Items featuring the 4-H clover cannot be sold for personal profit.

## ***Handling 4-H Member Behavior Problems During 4-H Events and Activities***

Rules and guidelines for 4-H'ers participating in clubs, programs, and activities will be clearly stated and will be made available to all eligible young people. Consequences of violating rules will be clearly stated and enforced uniformly and fairly.

Before an event, managers responsible for 4-H activities and events must communicate expected standards of behavior. Standards of behavior and consequences should be reviewed with participants as part of the initial orientation. Violators may be required to explain actions to the professional Extension staff

in charge. Behavior that is disruptive to the event will be documented, and a letter describing this behavior will be sent to the 4-H Extension agent, other appropriate Extension personnel, and parents/guardians of those involved. 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 that would constitute an offense of a certain degree; the items in each list are intended only to be examples of prohibited conduct. Extension staff have discretion to assign offense degrees to particular conduct given the case-specific facts and circumstances related to an incident.

### Minor Offenses

- ▶ Habitually late to program activities
- ▶ Not in room at designated time for overnight events
- ▶ Not possessing good manners
- ▶ Using language that is offensive to others
- ▶ Not respecting the rights and privacy of roommates or others attending an activity

### Consequences

- ▶ A discipline problem that requires more than two reprimands is grounds for sending a 4-H member home at the parent's/guardian's expense.
- ▶ A discipline problem that requires more than four reprimands during one calendar year is grounds for the 4-H member not to be allowed in any county, district, or state activities for the remainder of the 4-H year.

### Intermediate Offenses

- ▶ Inappropriate visitation
- ▶ Leaving a 4-H activity without the permission of the staff member in charge
- ▶ Intentional damage to meeting site, sleeping quarters, person, or other person's property
- ▶ Bullying
- ▶ Possession or use of tobacco products
- ▶ Lying or untruthfulness to chaperones, leaders, event organizers, or others in attendance

### Consequences

- ▶ A discipline problem that requires one or two reprimands is grounds for removing a 4-H member from the event or activity and/or sending a participant home at the parent's/guardian's expense.

- ▶ A discipline problem that requires three reprimands during one calendar year is grounds for the 4-H member not to be allowed in any county, district, or state activities for the remainder of the 4-H year.

### Major Offenses

- ▶ Possession or use of alcohol or drugs
- ▶ Possession or use of a weapon
- ▶ Threatening another person with a weapon or bodily harm
- ▶ Cheating
- ▶ Sexual activities
- ▶ 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 the 4-H member or others, whether such act occurred within or outside of the 4-H program

### 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 4-H programs for the remainder of the 4-H year, along with the possibility of facing criminal charges.
- ▶ May lead to termination of 4-H membership.

At a minimum, for every offense, the 4-H member will receive a verbal reprimand and be required to write letters of apology to the appropriate people.

If the offense is severe enough to consider sending 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, regional Extension center head, and head of the Center for 4-H Youth Development.
- ▶ Review consequences of misbehavior.

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

- ▶ Extension staff member contacts parents.

- ▶ Parents are advised that their child is being sent home by the safest, most direct means, and that parents are responsible for the cost.
- ▶ Event manager decides if parents should be given the option of picking up the child.

Under no circumstance should the 4-H member be sent home without supervision (alone), even if that member has provided their own transportation (driven themselves) to the event. The parent/guardian of the member must come pick up the member, or an Extension staff member or 4-H adult volunteer must accompany that member to their parent/guardian.

Follow-up correspondence from the event's manager should be sent to all appropriate Extension staff, regional Extension center head, Center for 4-H Youth Development head, the member, and the member's parent/guardian for documentation. For all reprimands, an Accident/Incident Report Form (F1104) must be completed and mailed to the 4-H member, parent, Extension agent, regional Extension center head, and Center for 4-H Youth Development head. Additionally, notification will be made to the Extension agent, regional Extension center head, and Center for 4-H Youth Development head before mailing the letter and form.

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

The 4-H Health and Medical Emergency Form (F696) is required for each event.

If a 4-H'er requires medication at an event, the parent/guardian must complete the 4-H Medication Administration Form (F1199) before the event. The parent/guardian must hand deliver any medicine to staff overseeing the event.

## **Financial Management**

The county Extension staff is responsible for communicating best management practices as outlined by the Mississippi State University Extension Service for all 4-H club 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 program account should be kept on file in the county 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. For more information about financial management, contact your Extension regional coordinator or the State 4-H Department.

### ***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 events in keeping with IRS Regulation 501c3. Any 4-H group raising funds should do so in the most professional manner. Funds should be raised only for projects that will enhance the development of members and volunteers.

All 4-H clubs or groups raising and/or holding funds collected under the name of 4-H (in any form) must retain all accounting records and have them ready for public review upon request, ensure frequent audits are held, and ensure all funds collected are used specifically as stated when collected. **All funds** held or collected under the name 4-H are **public funds**. Before a local club can conduct a fundraiser, the 4-H club leader should work with the 4-H club president to complete the 4-H Club Fundraising Approval form (F1193). Return the completed form to the local Extension agent.

Administrative approval must be obtained from the head of the MSU Extension Center for 4-H Youth Development for the following:

- ▶ Use of the 4-H name or emblem in connection with the sale of a commercial product or service
- ▶ Sale of any product that may be competitive with normal trade channels

### ***Membership Dues***

Charging membership dues is optional for each 4-H club. The Mississippi State University Extension Service charges no fees for 4-H club membership. A person cannot be denied membership to any 4-H club, nor participation in an event or activity, as a result of non-payment of dues alone.

### ***Exemption Certificates in Lieu of Sales Tax***

There is no state sales tax exempt number for 4-H clubs. 4-H clubs are not automatically state sales tax exempt. Individual activities may be declared exempt from sales tax. Items obtained or made for sale by 4-H clubs may be subject to sales tax collection.

4-H clubs, members, and/or volunteers are **not** state (Mississippi) sales tax exempt. Tax exemption of 4-H references **federal** income tax.

## ***Federal Income Tax Filing Requirements***

4-H clubs and affiliated 4-H organizations having gross receipts of more than \$25,000 annually are required to file IRS Form 990 each year. Form 990 is simply an information return and does not mean that taxes are to be paid since 4-H-affiliated groups have been classified as tax-exempt if they are authorized to use the 4-H emblem by the United States Department of Agriculture and the Mississippi State University Extension Service. The national 4-H tax identification number that may be used in completing IRS Form 990 is 2704. This number is not a state sales tax exempt number.

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

Local 4-H clubs and support groups that maintain separate bank accounts should obtain an IRS employer identification number. The EIN will be assigned by the IRS after completion of IRS Form SS-4. 4-H members, volunteers, or Extension staff members should never use their Social Security numbers for 4-H bank accounts. All checks should be signed by two individuals (for example, the club treasurer and an adult leader), but **not an MSU Extension employee**. Two people from the same family must not sign checks. For clubs that maintain a financial account at a bank, those bank statements should be reconciled every month.

Clubs and support groups authorized to use the 4-H name and emblem must follow Mississippi State University Extension Service 4-H best management practices concerning financial matters.

## ***4-H Club Finances***

*Reference: Mississippi 4-H Club Treasurer's Manual and Record Book (F1019)*

The treasurer of a 4-H club should receive all money secured by the club and deposit it into a bank account. Disbursements of club money should be made by check with the signature of the club treasurer, or of both the club treasurer and an adult volunteer upon approval by the club membership.

The club 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 disbands, all money and property become the property of the county 4-H program.

Every 4-H club must submit an annual financial statement to the county Extension staff. Failure to submit these reports can result in the 4-H club's charter not being renewed.

## **Additional Considerations**

### ***4-H Name and Emblem***

*Reference: 4-H Name and Emblem Use Handbook. (2019). USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.*

Use of the 4-H name and emblem 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 Mississippi State University Extension Service employees.

Mississippi 4-H clubs and affiliate groups are permitted to use the name and emblem once they are chartered through the MSU Extension Center for 4-H Youth Development. Use on a multi-county or state basis should be approved by the head of the MSU Extension Center for 4-H Youth Development. Any commercial vendor, private organization, or other entity must request permission and guidelines through the MSU Extension Center for 4-H Youth Development for using the 4-H name and emblem. Any request to use the 4-H name and emblem in a way that does not specify a local or state program must pass 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 benefit of private individuals, commercial vendors, donors, or others.

### ***Dress***

It is important that 4-H members and adults participating in county, district, regional, and state events are appropriately dressed for the occasion. Members and adults leading the event should be notified by Extension personnel of appropriate dress for the occasion.

### ***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 cannot include actual or implied testimonials or endorsements of business firms or their products or services.

### ***Insurance***

Participants in 4-H events should be insured for illness and accident under a policy taken out by the sponsoring group.

Participants should be advised that the insurance used by 4-H will not cover preexisting conditions and may not pay all medical costs. The insurance that is obtained is a secondary coverage unless the individual does not have any coverage at all. There are two ways to have your participants covered. One is to secure a policy that would cover the members the entire year for all activities/events; the other way is to obtain coverage per event/activity the member participates in. Contact your local county Extension office to receive more information about coverage.

### ***Legislative Contacts***

All contacts initiated by Extension staff with members of the Senate and House of Representatives in Mississippi and in Washington, D.C., on behalf of the Center for 4-H Youth Development, must be approved by Mississippi State University Extension, with approval requested through the staff member's immediate supervisor.

### ***Social Security Numbers***

As identity theft has increased over the past several years and the publicity related to such theft has become more visible, many county Extension offices are being asked to respond to questions related to our request for both youth and adult Social Security numbers. These questions are typically related to items such as enrollment forms (youth and adult), livestock validation forms, applications, and entry forms. To help provide guidance in addressing questions related to Social Security numbers, the following summary of topics and recommendations are made:

- ▶ It is not illegal to request this information.
- ▶ If the Social Security number is not necessary for completing the daily operations (central function) of the county Extension office, staff should make the Social Security section on 4-H forms optional.
- ▶ The Social Security number (or first digits) is required to run the national database criminal background check, which is used to protect youth.
- ▶ Requesting the exhibitor's Social Security number on the validation form is typically done as a convenience that can help exhibitors complete livestock show entries. If they do not complete the Social Security number on the validation form, they will be responsible for providing the Social Security number at the time of entering each major livestock show. If the Social Security number is not listed on the validation form, the animal is still eligible to be validated.
- ▶ Applicants cannot become scholarship recipients without the Social Security number. The scholarship application may

not require the Social Security number, but, if awarded, the scholarship contract will.

- ▶ 4-H members who submit record books for senior judging competition or entry forms to a 4-H event that has monetary awards associated with it 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 member to provide the Social Security number before monetary awards are distributed.

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

### ***Unescorted Minors and Travel***

The following policy has been developed to govern transporting minors to, from, or during a statewide covered 4-H event or program. For non-covered programs parents/guardians are expected to transport the youth to and from the event and remain with them during the event. The purpose of this policy is to protect the occupants of these vehicles against injuries and reduce the risk of financial losses.

### ***Travel for Covered Events***

Extension agents should not travel alone with a 4-H member unless the 4-H'er is their own child. At least two youth must be in the car if the driver is not related to the youth. Extension agents and volunteers must be able to provide proof of insurance before driving for a 4-H related event. The driver's personal insurance will be the primary coverage. Minors traveling to and from an event outside of their county with another 4-H'er or by themselves are required to complete the 4-H Alternative Transportation form (F1200) before the event.

This policy applies to all MSU Extension Center for 4-H Youth Development personnel, MSU Extension agents with 4-H responsibilities, and 4-H volunteers and their use of personal vehicles, university-owned vehicles, rented vehicles, and 12- and 15-passenger vans and mini-buses to transport youth during a statewide covered 4-H program or event.

### ***Driver Requirements***

When transporting youth at statewide covered 4-H events sponsored by the MSU Extension Center for 4-H Youth Development, the following requirements must be met:

- ▶ Driving privileges will be determined by the head of the MSU Extension Center for 4-H Youth Development.
- ▶ Driver must be a current MSU Extension employee or a registered 4-H volunteer.
- ▶ Drivers must be age 21 or older. If driving is restricted to on-campus only, drivers must be age 19 or older as of January 1 of the current year.
- ▶ Drivers must possess a valid United States driver's license.
- ▶ Drivers must not use a cellular phone in any capacity when operating the vehicle.
- ▶ Seatbelts must be worn by all occupants at all times.
- ▶ Drivers must obey all traffic laws, ordinances, and regulations.
- ▶ Drivers may drive no longer than 2 hours without a break. Drivers may drive no longer than 8 hours in a given 24-hour period.
- ▶ Drivers must collect 4-H Alternative Transportation forms (F1200) for all youth not traveling with the group before departing.
- ▶ For out-of-state trips using a 12- or 15-passenger van and/or mini-bus, a current motor vehicle record (MVR) within the past 2 years must be on file with the MSU Extension Center for 4-H Youth Development.
- ▶ Occupancy of 15-passenger vans must be limited to 10 people including the driver. If driving a 15-passenger van with dual rear wheels, then it is acceptable to carry 15 passengers.
- ▶ The number of passengers in the van cannot exceed the number of seatbelts available.
- ▶ 15-passenger vans must not be driven over 65 miles per hour.
- ▶ Roof-type luggage carriers are not to be added to a 15-passenger van.
- ▶ 15-passenger vans may not be used to tow any type of trailer while transporting minors in the vehicle.
- ▶ All drivers of 12- and 15-passenger vans and mini-buses are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner and comply with the 15-Passenger Van Safety Frequently Asked Questions & Recommendations for Safe Operation by the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning Safety and Loss Control.

Violators of this policy are subject to revocation of driving privileges and other disciplinary measures imposed in accordance with university policies.

## ***General Emergency Response Guidelines***

When hosting a regional or multi-county event, Extension agents and volunteers should identify the closest hospital to the event and inform participants of the location. Note that individual counties or programs may have specific emergency response guidelines. Contact your local county Extension office for more information about events in your county.

In the event that an accident/incident occurs, agents and volunteers should focus on the safety and comfort of the youth involved. General guidance for emergency procedures include:

- ▶ Provide appropriate medical attention and call 911, police, or ambulance, as appropriate. Always leave a responsible person with the youth if you have to leave the accident scene to secure help.
- ▶ Notify the Extension personnel in charge of the event.
- ▶ Have the Extension personnel in charge of the event contact the parent/guardian of the youth.
- ▶ Notify the regional Coordinator and the head of the Center for 4-H Youth Development.
- ▶ All media response is handled through the Office of Agricultural Communications.
- ▶ After the situation is stabilized, complete a 4-H Accident/ Incident Report form (F1104).

## ***On-Campus (MSU) Emergency Response Guidelines***

Extension agents, volunteers, and senior 4-H'ers should familiarize themselves with the following communication methods used during an emergency on the MSU campus.

While on campus for statewide events, Extension agents, volunteers, and youth should sign up for Maroon Alerts, which is the university's emergency notification system that uses texts, emails, and phone calls to inform the university community of imminent or existing dangers.

To sign up for Maroon Alerts, text MAROONALERT to 888777. Text STOP to 888777 to be removed from the system.

During an on-campus emergency, an emergency hotline will be activated. Call (662) 325-5555 to connect with university professionals who can speak with you regarding the emergency.

Participants and their families can also use the MSU Emergency website (<https://www.emergency.msstate.edu/>) to receive updates.

MSU has designated Areas of Refuge for use during severe weather:

- ▶ Colvard Student Union, the Dawg House, Room 123, first floor
- ▶ Lee Hall, Rooms 0010, 0011, and 0014 in the basement hallway

The following telephone numbers can also be used while on campus:

- ▶ Immediate or life-threatening emergency: 911
- ▶ MSU Campus Police: (662) 325-2121
- ▶ Extension Center for 4-H Youth Development: (662) 325-3350
- ▶ Longest Student Health Center: (662) 325-2431

The closest hospital is OCH Regional Medical Center located at 400 Hospital Road in Starkville. The general telephone number is (662) 323-4320.

### ***Severe Weather, Lightning, and Swimming Guidelines***

Before an event, Extension agents and volunteers should identify a safe place participants can go to in the event of severe weather. This would typically include a space that is in the interior of the building, on the lowest level, and with no windows or doors.

Listen to local weather stations. If a severe weather warning is issued, stay in your safe place until the warning has expired.

When thunder is heard or lightning is seen, everyone must stop what they are doing and go inside. Wait at least 30 minutes before resuming outdoor activities. Any subsequent lightning or thunder resets the clock, and another 30-minute count should begin. If in doubt, use common sense. Remember, the safety of all participants is paramount.

In order for youth to swim at 4-H events, they must have a signed Parental Authorization to Swim and Release of Liability form (F1192) on file before the swim event. A form must be completed for each swim event and location.

### ***Other 4-H Guidelines***

- ▶ 4-H members can be members of only one county 4-H program in one state.
- ▶ All 4-H members must participate in a county qualifying 4-H competition to be eligible for district, state, regional, and/or national 4-H competitions. In the event there is no team participation, teams to represent the county will be decided

based on the highest-scoring individuals competing in the qualifying event.

- ▶ 4-H Shooting Sports members wishing to participate in one of the four district events must participate in the district event in which their 4-H membership resides.
- ▶ Any individual or team qualifying for regional and/or national 4-H competitions must receive final approval from the head of the Extension Center for 4-H Youth Development.
- ▶ For competitive events, the agent in charge of 4-H in the county must send an official delegate list to the Extension Center for 4-H Youth Development at least 5 business days before departure.

## **Forms Referenced in this Publication**

- ▶ 4-H Individual Enrollment (F135)
- ▶ 4-H Group Enrollment (F805)
- ▶ 4-H Volunteer Application Packet (F1181)
- ▶ 4-H Project Enrollment Guide (P1447)
- ▶ 4-H Health and Medical Emergency (F696)
- ▶ 4-H Club Treasurer's Record Book (F1019)
- ▶ Mississippi Junior Livestock Code of Conduct, Code of Ethics, and Rules, as well as the Equine Code of Ethics
- ▶ 4-H Parental Release and Code of Conduct Agreement (F807)
- ▶ Guidelines for Supervising Youth (IS1522)
- ▶ Parental Authorization to Swim and Release of Liability (F1192)
- ▶ 4-H Accident/Incident Report (F1104)
- ▶ 4-H Creative Arts Entry and Release (F1191)

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**Note:** These Rules and Procedures will be reviewed on an as-needed basis by the head of the Mississippi State University Extension Center for 4-H Youth Development.

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