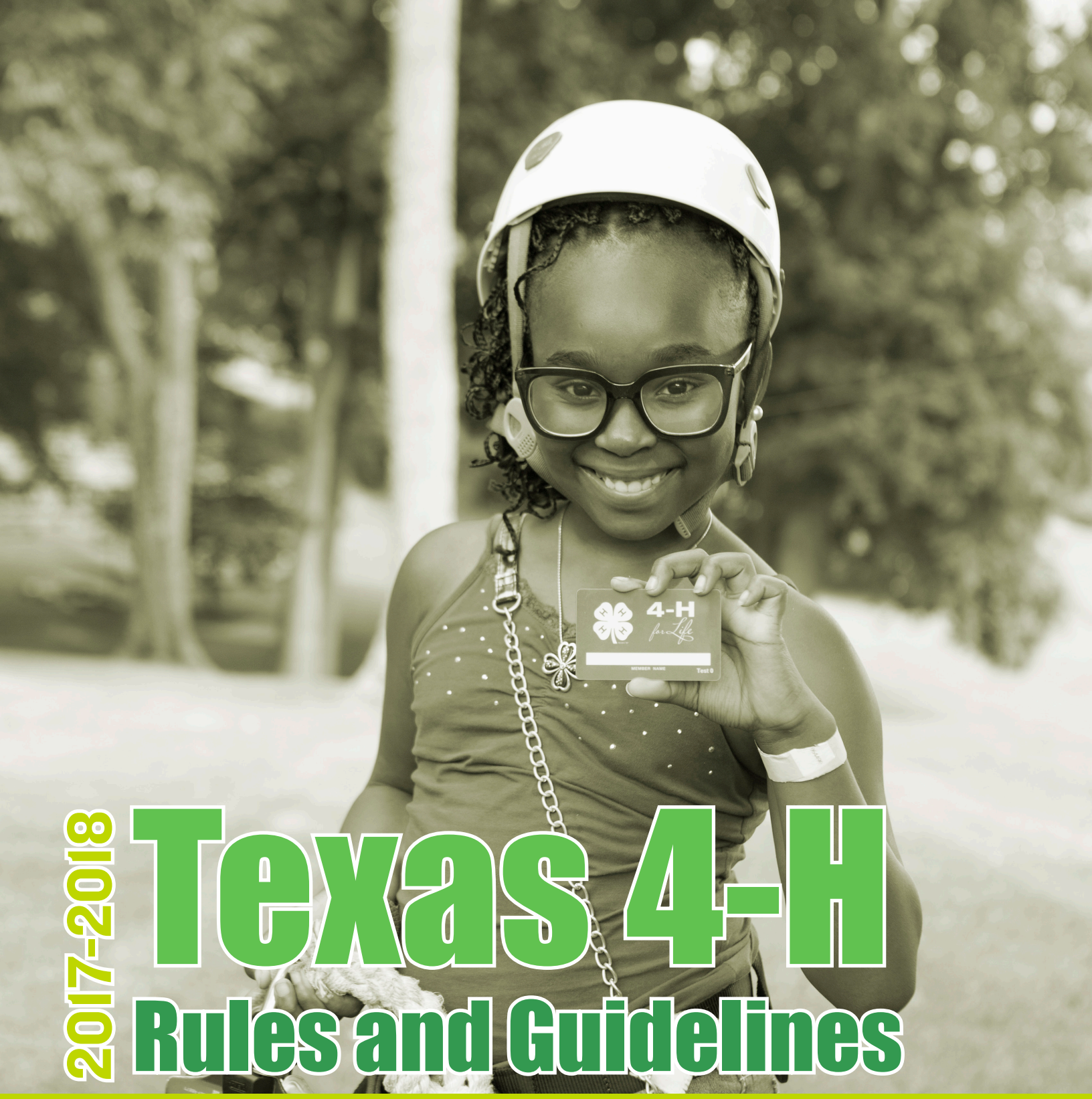

2017-2018

Texas 4-H

Rules and Guidelines

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife.

DISCLAIMER

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

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

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

This document reviewed by Texas A&M System – Office of General Counsel in July 2017.

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SECTION 1

MEMBERSHIP AND ENROLLMENT

The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife.

4-H Members

1. Age Requirements
    - Youth may participate in 4-H year from September 1st of grade three through August 31st following completion of grade twelve, with these age restrictions:
        - Minimum age - 8 (as of August 31, 2017 in addition to being in the 3rd grade)
        - Maximum age - 18 (as of August 31, 2017)
    - Special education youth who are older than 19 and have not graduated from high school may participate in 4-H Youth Development programs as members, with approval by the county Extension agent. Participation is limited to the club or county level. County Extension staff have the option, on a case-by-case basis, to allow Special Education youth older than 19 to participate in competitive events at the club or county level.
2. Texas 4-H Member Categories
    - Junior Grades 3, 4, and 5
    - Intermediate Grades 6, 7, and 8
    - Senior Grades 9, 10, 11, and 12
3. Membership Status. A youth applies for 4-H membership when he/she either completes and submits an individual paper enrollment form, or individual on-line registration via 4-H CONNECT and pays participation fee. Membership is not active until an applicant's registration is entered into 4-H CONNECT and approved by the County Office. A youth participates in 4-H by belonging to a chartered 4-H club or county program or any recognized unit of membership in the county where he/she resides. *Membership cannot be held simultaneously in more than one county or state, but membership may change with residence, as long as the member participates in a given project in only one county or state.
4. Cross County Participation. A youth is required to participate in the county 4-H Program of his/her residence or in the county where he/she attends school. If, for some circumstance, a youth needs to participate in an adjacent county, the family must submit a "Membership Transfer Form" to the County Extension Office where they wish to participate in 4-H. The form must be submitted a minimum of thirty (30) days prior to membership transfer. If approved, the transfer agreement is good only for the current 4-H year and must be submitted for approval annually.
5. Involvement in other County 4-H Programs. 4-H members must represent the county in which they are enrolled and approved for all 4-H competitions, events, and activities.
6. Active Membership. Once a membership is approved in a county it cannot be moved or transferred to another county until the following year unless approval is given by the State Leader of the Texas 4-H Youth Development Program and there is an agreement among both County Extension Agents. Refer to #4 - Cross County Participation for more information on this process.
7. Other Membership Requirements
    - Each young person wishing to be part of a 4-H club is required to pay a participation fee before being granted membership status. Participation fees will be assessed at $20.00 for those enrolling between September 1, 2017 (or when the new enrollment period begins) to October 31, 2017. Beginning on November 1, 2017 and for the continuation of the 4-H year, the participation fee will be $25.00.
    - Each member must be enrolled in at least one 4-H project.
    - Marriage and parenthood are not barriers to 4-H membership, provided other requirements are met.
    - A youth who is accepted as a 4-H member is entitled to all the rights and privileges of membership in connection with 4-H. Specific events and activities may require that rules be established beyond being a 4-H member. When this is the case, the responsibility for establishing and monitoring such rules rests with the organizational leadership in charge of the event or activity. Such rules, once made, should be made known to all 4-H members and their families. The rules must not violate the rights, or discriminate against any protected class of individuals and should be so stated as to be inclusive in nature.
    - If a 4-H member becomes an active member in the Texas 4-H Youth Development Program then they cannot hold and/or participate in another state's 4-H Program.

Clover Kids

In support of the youth development mission of 4-H, the purpose of the 4-H Clover Kids Program is to help youth learn social skills, reinforce formal school programs through informal, noncompetitive experiential educational projects and activities, develop self-esteem and build family strengths. The annual participation fee does not pertain to Clover Kids. The following rules and guidelines are based on youth development research indicating competitive events and competitive judging are inappropriate for Clover Kid aged youth.

1. Age Requirements
    - The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service extends a limited version of the 4-H experience to youth in grades K-2 as "4-H Clover Kids." This age category is further defined as youth who are eligible to enroll in Kindergarten on September 1 of the current year and have not entered (started classes) the third grade on September 1.
    - Clover Kids are not eligible to serve as club officers, nor are they eligible to participate in activities, recognition programs, and competitive events reserved for older youth.
2. Enrollment
    - Any chartered 4-H club may organize a "4-H Clover Kids" group within the club.
    - A school, day care center, community center, neighborhood, or group may sponsor and organize a 4-H Clover Kids group, with the aid of volunteers trained by the county Extension staff or their designees.
    - Each 4-H Clover Kids member may participate only through organized learning groups under the guidance of qualified and trained volunteer 4-H leaders.
    - Members can be enrolled on 4-H CONNECT using individual or group enrollment forms.
3. Approved Projects and Recognition
    - Emphasis is on providing project-related learning experiences and forms of recognition which are age appropriate and based on current youth development research. The individual project is the basis for a significant part of the education in 4-H. Projects and curricula approved by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service for Clover Kids include:
        - Curricula
            - Hatching In The Classroom
            - Yea 4-H!
            - Junior Master Gardener
        - Projects
            - Rabbits
            - Food & Nutrition
            - Healthy Lifestyle Education
            - Safety
            - Photography
            - Computer Science
            - Horticulture
            - Recreation
            - Companion Animals
            - Sport Fishing
            - Clothing & Textiles
    - Projects are restricted to those mentioned above which the youth can, by themselves, understand, manage, and care for and for which the youth can master the associated subject matter knowledge.
    - Projects for Clover Kids ARE NOT to be entered into competition.
    - Projects are not eligible to be entered into competition in traditional 4-H program events and activities reserved for the 3rd grade to the 12th grade group.
    - Projects may be exhibited at an appropriate Extension approved non-competitive 4-H Clover Kids event.
    - In presentations and exhibits, Clover Kids will be presented participation awards only, with recognition based upon completing and exhibiting the product or skill. No judging or placing shall be permitted.

4-H Enrollment Year

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

SECTION 2

CHARTERING 4-H CLUBS

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

Current 4-H Clubs must to be chartered by July 15th (before the start of the 4-H year). If a club starts after July 15th, the club will need to contact the county Extension agent and work directly with the agent for chartering the club prior to enrolling any 4-H members in the newly formed club.

Below are the minimum requirements necessary for chartering a club or group under Texas 4-H, Inc. County Extension Offices may have additional requirements related to financial records, audits, membership, etc.

Charter Application

Charter application is completed and submitted annually using the current year's form. Application must be complete and have a signature (electronic or handwritten) at the end of second page. The charter application must include the club/group:

- Information - name, contact, address, city, website, and affiliation.
- Meeting information - day of month, location, time, etc.
- Officers and adult leadership (managers, etc.) which match those outlined in club/group bylaws. Club Managers must be selected and approved for manager leadership by the County Extension Agent(s).
- Financial information:
  - Clubs with any Money: If the club/group handles any monetary funds at any time during the year, they must maintain a bank account and provide the name of financial institution, city/state, phone number, type of account, and account number. This will need to be provided for each account held by the club/group. The Employer Identification Number (EIN) will need to be provided, as well as the date of the most recent financial review of accounts (a review needs to be completed annually for all accounts).
  - Clubs with NO Money: If a club/group does not have and will not accept or handle any monetary funds then they do not need to apply for a EIN or conduct a financial review of accounts. If, at any point the club/group accepts monetary funds in the name of their club, they are required to resubmit a charter application which includes bank account information, EIN documentation in the name of the club, and conduct a financial review of accounts.
- Five or more members from at least two different families.
- Two or more teen and/or adult leaders.
- Membership/contact list.

Bylaws

- A complete set of bylaws must be provided annually which includes a dissolution clause indicating residual dollars and resources (assets) purchased through the club will become property of the county 4-H program should the club/group dissolve.
- The list of officers and their duties should match the list of officers elected annually.
- Bylaws are not required to be uploaded annually, but only after the club/group is established, or has voted to amend the bylaws in any way.

Employer Identification Number or EIN (4-H Clubs/Groups with any bank account)

- Upon the 4-H club/group being established they must apply, and receive, a Employer Identification Number (EIN), from the Internal Revenue Service.
- No club/group will be chartered without an EIN. Military 4-H clubs that are hosted on federal military bases are not permitted to obtain an EIN and receive their certification for tax purposes through other entities.
- 4-H clubs/groups who are being chartered within, and as part of, school districts, children's homes, or other organizations, can use the parent organization's EIN, and will not be under Texas 4-H, Inc.
- For additional information on applying and managing a 4-H club/group EIN refer to the information provided in later section.

Bank Accounts/Information (4-H Clubs/Groups with any bank account)

- Annually, the 4-H club/group will provide a copy of the most current bank statement for each of the accounts the club/group manages.
- Bank account requirement: all bank accounts require two signatures, one youth (club treasurer) and one adult (club manager) and must be from different families. Verification of account activity and/or signature card may be requested at any time by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service or Texas 4-H, Inc. NOTE: if a bank will not allow a minor youth to be on a signature card as the club treasurer then another adult (club leader) can serve as the second signature as long as they are from a different family as the other person signing on the account.

In addition to the items required for annual chartering, the county Extension office may also request the following reporting processes/documents:

- Annual planning sheet for club (club programs/community service, etc.)
- Fund raising request forms (applications for club fund raisers)
- Monthly reporting of attendance, program presented, community service, fund raising, etc. through the Volunteer Reporting system (texas4-h.tamu.edu/volunteers).

4-H Support Groups with Their Own Board of Directors

Groups that wish to use the 4-H name and emblem as part of their marketing and structure, but are not under the supervision of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, and have their own board of directors should be issued a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) concerning the use of the 4-H name and emblem. Examples would be youth livestock shows, fairs, independent fund raising groups or booster clubs. A sample MOU is posted on the Texas 4-H Website under Annual Membership at: http://texas4-h.tamu.edu.

Terminating or Disbanding a 4-H Club/Group Charter

County Extension Agents may request a 4-H Charter be revoked if clubs are not following Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Texas 4-H, Inc., and/or National 4-H Headquarters procedures. Examples include, but are not limited to, clubs that do not meet the minimum number of members requirement, no enrolled adult volunteers, not submitting requested paperwork in a timely fashion, members not enrolled on 4-H CONNECT, lack of financial accountability, etc.

County Extension Agents have specific procedures for terminating or disbanding a 4-H club.

SECTION 3

SCHOOL ABSENCES AND PARTICIPATION IN 4-H COMPETITIVE ACTIVITIES

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

Specifics related to eligibility during Fall/Spring breaks, summer vacation, and holidays can be found on the University Interscholastic League (UIL) website at: https://www.uiltexas.org/policy/tea-uil-side-by-side.

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

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

OR

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

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

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

SECTION 4

SUSPENSION OF PARTICIPATION/REMOVAL OF 4-H MEMBERS

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

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

Texas 4-H/FFA Livestock Exhibition and Show Ethics
In the event an individual loses his/her eligibility to participate in a competitive extracurricular event/activity due to an illegal, unethical and/or other rule violation, the individual will not be eligible to participate in the said competitive extracurricular event/activity by joining 4-H. This ethics policy is posted on the Texas 4-H Website at: http://texas4-h.tamu.edu. Violation of this policy may result in a member being removed from the 4-H program or not being permitted to enter stock shows through their 4-H membership.

All youth must abide by Texas Education Agency's Extra-Curricular Education Guidelines
In the event an individual loses his/her eligibility to participate in an extracurricular event/activity due to a school or community-based illegal or unethical violation, the individual will not be eligible to participate in extracurricular events/activities as a 4-H member, including, but not limited to: competitive activities, officer roles, and committee activities.

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

1. Guidelines for Handling 4-H Member Behavior Problems Which Occurred Outside of the 4-H Program:
   a. Obtain relevant facts.
   b. Contact and brief the supervising District Extension Administrator, County Extension Director, and assigned 4-H Specialist.
   c. Contact Texas 4-H Administration for counsel.
   d. If necessary, Texas 4-H Administration will coordinate with Extension's Legal Counsel.
2. Handling 4-H Member Behavior Problems during 4-H Events & Activities.
   Rules, policies, and behavior expectations of youth participating in programs, contests, events, and activities will be clearly stated, made available to all eligible youth, and reviewed as part of the event orientation and/or information conveyed via the code of conduct document. Consequences of rules violations will be clearly stated and will be enforced uniformly and fairly. Behavior that is disruptive (minor or major) to the event must be reported immediately to the event manager. Violators may be required to explain actions to the professional Extension staff in charge. The incident must be documented and a letter describing such will be sent to the 4-H Leadership Team serving that county, County Extension Agent(s), and parents/guardians of those involved.
3. Offenses and Consequences of Misbehavior
   The three categories of offenses and examples of common conduct constituting an offense of that degree are listed below. Obviously, it is not practical to list every possible act which would constitute an offense of a certain degree; the items in a list are only intended to be examples of prohibited conduct. Extension staff members have discretion to assign offense degrees to particular conduct given the case-specific facts and circumstances related to a particular incident.

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

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

Minor Offenses:

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

Minor Offenses Consequences:

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

Intermediate Offenses:

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

Intermediate Offenses Consequences:

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

Major Offenses:

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

Major Offenses Consequences:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SECTION 5

MEDICAL INFORMATION FOR 4-H ACTIVITIES

Waiver, Indemnification, and Authorization for Medical Care
The Waiver, Indemnification, and Authorization for Medical Care form is required for each event. Youth and volunteers can choose to complete this form at the time of enrollment and this form can be used throughout the year for all events and activities. This form is available for completion through the enrollment process in 4-H CONNECT or can be downloaded from the Texas 4-H website

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

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

SECTION 6

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

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

- Coordinate the chartering of 4-H membership units (clubs, groups, programs). Chartering includes permission to use the 4-H name and emblem.
- Coordinate the chartering of county 4-H organizations (i.e. 4-H Council, volunteer/parent groups, committees, etc.). Chartering includes use of the 4-H name and emblem.
- Provide opportunities for all youth who have reached the appropriate age to be participants and/or members in the 4-H Youth Development Program.
- Plan and coordinate the county 4-H program.
- Staff the 4-H clubs/units utilizing volunteers with the assistance of the volunteer/parent leadership and youth leadership.
- Assist the volunteer/parent leadership and youth leadership by providing in-service education and resources for all 4-H volunteers in the county.
- Explain and enforce 4-H policies and procedures.
- Train and supervise 4-H volunteers, as needed, in conducting the county 4-H Youth Development Program.
- Ensure that a quality 4-H educational program is conducted in the county.
- Inform 4-H volunteers and members about opportunities at county, district, regional, state, national and international levels.
- Appoint or dismiss 4-H members, 4-H volunteers and 4-H parents.
- Ensure all volunteers who are fully supervising chapersones have completed Child Protection Management training and certification.
- Provide volunteers with necessary training and resources to promote inclusion of all youth and adults in the 4-H Youth Development Program.

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

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

From time-to-time individuals are unexpectedly placed into volunteer roles by emergency, necessity, or just plain good samaritanship. Due to the unexpected nature of their service to Extension it is impossible to complete the formal volunteer applicant process. Despite the absence of a formal designation as volunteers, Extension still considers these individuals an important part of the program and considers these individuals, while lending a hand to the program and performing duties to assist in delivery of program content, of the same status, pursuant to Texas law, as volunteers that have completed the application process.

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

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

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service considers all three of these classes of volunteers to be "direct service volunteers" as that term is used in section 51.937 of the Texas Education Code.

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

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

- Complete the 4-H Adult Orientation and Ensuring a Safe Environment trainings (on 4-H CONNECT) and any other trainings based upon volunteer role.

Youth Protection Standards
The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Youth Protection Standards (YPS) program was implemented to assist in providing a safer and more positive environment for youth and adult volunteers. The YPS program requires criminal background checks of all direct adult volunteers 18 years of age or older. Volunteers who have been screened by another entity, such as their employer or other youth organization, may indicate this on their enrollment form and provide proof of the screening. An approved list of prior screening entities is available on the Texas 4-H Website at texas4-h.tamu.edu

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

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

Volunteer Liability
In order for a volunteer to serve with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas 4-H Youth Development Program, all 4-H volunteers should be formally enrolled on the 4-H Adult Volunteer Leader Application or on the 4-H CONNECT enrollment system on an annual basis. Criminal background and sex offender database checks will be conducted every three (3) years for volunteers through the Youth Protection Standards System.

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

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

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

A 4-H Volunteer is expected to:

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

- Register as a volunteer in only one county.
- Not receive compensation for professional services provided in support of youth 4-H activities (excluding reimbursement for expenses).

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

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

A volunteer may be reassigned or dismissed at the sole discretion of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service with or without cause. Examples of conduct which could lead to disciplinary action include, but are not limited to: illegal activity, behavior which compromises the health and safety of youth, violating an Extension policy, violation of 4-H Rules and Guidelines, willfully violating or causing children to violate rules, being habitually disruptive to the overall program, unwilling or unable to work amicably with agents and/or other volunteers, exhibit conduct which is harmful to the 4-H program's reputation, or failure to rotate the leadership role. The nature and seriousness of the infraction or violation will determine whether the option of reassignment or dismissal should be considered.

An adult volunteer who is unable to grasp the overall philosophy of youth development may be asked to leave and/or 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.

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

SECTION 7

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

As a youth development organization that receives financial support from various entities in our communities, it is our responsibility as a 4-H Program, County Extension Offices & Agents, Volunteers, and 4-H Club officers/members to ensure that the management of financial funds is handled in the most transparent manner. The Texas 4-H Youth Development Club Financial Management Rules & Guidelines provide rules, guidance, and best practices for Extension Offices, volunteers, and club officers to follow when it comes to the management, accountability, and reporting of 4-H funds.

The management of 4-H club/group funds should be of the utmost priority for the leadership of the 4-H club/group. To help Texas 4-H Clubs/Groups manage their funds please refer to the document called "4-H Club Financial Management Rules & Guidelines." This publication is the official rules and guidelines for managing 4-H funds within the Texas 4-H Youth Development Program and can be downloaded from the Texas 4-H website.

SECTION 8

OTHER RULES AND GUIDELINES

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

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

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

Reference: "Using the 4-H Name and Emblem": https://nifa.usda.gov/program/4-h-positive-youth-development.

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

Insurance - General Liability
The Texas 4-H Youth Development Program holds a general liability policy through Texas 4-H Inc. This policy provides liability coverage and defense for the Texas 4-H Inc. entity, officers and directors, employees, chartered 4-H clubs and groups, and registered volunteers performing duties within the scope of their responsibilities. Local and county chartered 4-H clubs/groups are not required to purchase general liability insurance (in most situations). The general liability policy does not extend to accident/medical coverage for 4-H youth or volunteers. An additional insurance policy is held by Texas 4-H Inc. for accidents or medical situations.

Insurance - Accident and Medical
All ACTIVE Texas 4-H youth and volunteers are covered by a limited accident/medical insurance policy through American Income Life Insurance. The policy covers only enrolled and active 4-H members in activities and events associated and sponsored by a chartered 4-H club/group. If any accident/medical situation occurs at or during a 4-H event, the incident must be reported to the County Extension Agent and/or volunteer in charge. All claims must be filed with the Texas 4-H Youth Development State Office within ten (10) days of the occurrence.

If a 4-H club/group is hosting or sponsoring an event or activity where non-4-H members and/or adults are present, it is recommended the 4-H club/group purchase a separate accident/medical policy to cover those participants. This insurance can be purchased from a variety of insurance providers such as American Income Life (http://www.americanincomelife.com/who-we-serve/4-h-insurance) or other local vendors.

It is suggested that each volunteer consult with their insurance provider/carrier to evaluate personal insurance needs based on their roles and responsibilities associated with the Texas 4-H Youth Development Program.

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

Unescorted Minors Traveling
Unescorted minors who travel to 4-H events beyond the county level in their own vehicle where lodging is required on site are expected to turn in the vehicle ignition and door lock keys to the adult in charge upon arrival. Minors traveling to and from 4-H events beyond the county level are expected to have written permission from a custodial parent/guardian to travel alone or leave the group outside the posted schedule.

Americans with Disabilities Act
The Texas 4-H Youth Development Program acknowledges its responsibility to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Individuals with disability who require an accommodation in order to fully participate in or access a Texas 4-H Youth Development Program activity, meeting and/or program, are asked to submit their request for accommodation as early as possible. Ten (10) working days ahead of the scheduled activity, meeting and/or program is desirable. To request an accommodation, please contact Dr. Jill Martz at 979.845.1211.

Title IX
Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs and activities at institutions that receive federal financial assistance. Sexual harassment, including sexual violence, is a form of sex discrimination and is therefore prohibited under Title IX. The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Title IX Coordinator is Beverley Rose. If you have questions or concerns, or want to file a complaint, contact her at 979.458.3279 or barose@ag.tamu.edu.

Conflict of Interest Statement
No 4-H youth, volunteer, or adult serving in a leadership role for a 4-H club/group, or any of its committees, shall derive any personal profit or gain, directly or indirectly, by reason of his or her participation with the Texas 4-H Program or any of its clubs/groups. Each individual shall disclose to the County Extension Agent any personal interest which he or she may have in any matter pending before the Texas 4-H Program or any of its clubs/groups and shall refrain from participation in any decision on such matter.

Reviewed by TAMUS-OGC-JMB in July 2017.
Affirmed through Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Administrative channels – July 2017.