



# Mississippi 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, Mississippi State University Extension Service, the county governments of the State of Mississippi, or the Mississippi 4-H Youth Development Program (4-H Program). Mississippi State University Extension Service 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 Mississippi 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 Mississippi State University Extension Service directives. The descriptions of disciplinary procedures set forth in this document are guidelines. The failure of Mississippi State University Extension Service to strictly adhere to a particular process shall not be a basis for overturning the disciplinary action imposed.

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

## A. Role of 4-H Extension Agents/Program Associates

4-H Extension agents/program associates 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 (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 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 using 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 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.

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

4-H Extension agents/program associates have the responsibility for communicating 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.

## B. Role of 4-H Volunteers

4-H is a non-formal educational program delivered by volunteers who are supervised by 4-H Extension agents/program associates. 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.

- 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."
  - 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."

It is the responsibility of the 4-H volunteer to carry out the assigned position responsibilities that he or she has accepted. 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 society. It should be understood by the volunteers that they are expected to participate in learning, training, and teaching opportunities provided for them.

### 1. Volunteer Liability

In order for a volunteer to serve with the Mississippi State University Extension Service and the Mississippi 4-H Youth Development Program, all 4-H volunteers must be formally enrolled on the Mississippi 4-H Volunteer Enrollment Form. This is an annual process.

Mississippi 4-H volunteer leaders are provided the same liability benefits as those provided to regular employees of the state under the Mississippi Immunity Act (SS11-46-1, et, seq., Mississippi Code of 1972). (Reference: University Counsel letter dated November 10, 1998, to Dr. Ronald A. Brown, MCES.)

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 25 years of age or older.

### 2. 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 Service policies.

- To be a 4-H volunteer, you must—
  - Be at least 21 years of age as of January 1 of the current year.

- Complete a Mississippi 4-H Volunteer Leader Application Form annually.
- Be subject to a screening 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 Youth Development Program.
- Support the 4-H Youth Development Program and its Rules and Procedures.
- 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 Mississippi State University Extension Service.
- Make all 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.
- Obey Mississippi laws on the use of motor vehicles.
- Not consume alcohol and/or illegal drugs (or to 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 Mississippi State University Extension Service. All such agreements must be forwarded to the Mississippi State University Extension Service 4-H 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 youth member, or use corporal punishment to reprimand a 4-H member 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 Mississippi State University 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 approved and receipted expenses).

- Not use tobacco, alcohol, or illegal drugs while supervising youth.
- Reference F807 General Rules and Release, Code of Conduct for 4-H Events and IS1522 Guidelines for Supervising Youth.

### 3. Consequences for Infractions

Infractions of these requirements by volunteers must be reported to the 4-H Youth Development staff and/or Mississippi State University Extension Service 4-H office. 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.

### 4. Cause for Reassignment or Dismissal 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 boys and girls. 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 he or she has accepted. 4-H volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in both public and private life as good examples for youth. This includes appropriate dress, language, and moral conduct in accordance with the generally recognized standards of our society. 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 dismissed 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 youth, 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.



## 5. Procedure for Dismissal

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 his or her performance.

- Step 1: County staff representatives 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. The volunteer should be given a probationary period, during which performance must improve. If problems continue, the volunteer should be removed from service. Again, written records should be kept and copies provided as in Step 1. Prior to removing a volunteer from service, county Extension staff must contact their county Extension coordinator, Research and Extension Center Head, and State Program Leader-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 the 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 Research and Extension Center Head and State Program Leader-4-H Youth Development. The review will be completed by a committee designated by the Research and Extension Center Head and State Program Leader-4-H Youth Development. A written reply should be provided to the volunteer on the results of the review and the final decision on the appeal. Make copies as noted in Step 1.

## 7. 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 State Program Leader-4-H Youth Development.

## C. Role of Parents in 4-H

4-H is a youth development program that depends on and encourages the involvement of parents and other significant adults in supporting ongoing educational programs. Parents help members set and accomplish goals and serve as a communications link between their children and the Extension staff and 4-H volunteers.

## Procedure for Dismissal of Parents

Parents who, despite having been advised of the appropriate procedure for lodging and resolving their complaints, become disruptive of the 4-H program may be barred from all 4-H functions. While the following process should be used to begin dismissal proceedings, Extension reserves the right to immediately remove parents from the 4-H program under other provisions contained in these Rules and Procedures. (A child who has a parent dismissed as a 4-H volunteer is still eligible to participate in 4-H.)

- Step 1: Club leaders or project leaders should counsel with the individual regarding the disruption and discuss alternatives. Such parents need to be advised of ways to address their complaints using an appropriate complaint resolution process. Written records of this discussion should be kept, and the 4-H Extension agent/program associate should receive a copy of such records.
- Step 2: If the problem persists, the 4-H Extension agent/program associate should meet with the parent and review the expected behavior change and outline the specific behaviors that will not be accepted. The parent should sign a copy of the notes from the meeting as an acknowledgment of his/her attendance and participation in the conference. The parent should receive a written copy of the minutes with an outline of the specific behavior changes expected and a description of the behavior that will not be accepted. Copies of this letter should go to all people involved in the conference and to the Research and Extension Center Head and State Program Leader-4-H Youth Development. Parents who have concerns that cannot be resolved at the county level may contact the appropriate Research and Extension Center Head and State Program Leader-4-H Youth Development.

Step 3: If the problem persists, the 4-H Extension agent/program associate, in concurrence with the Research and Extension Center Head and State Program Leader-4-H Youth Development, should write a letter to the parent indicating that he or she will no longer be allowed to attend any 4-H function sponsored by Mississippi State University Extension Service. Such a letter should be sent in a manner that assures the individual received the letter.

Step 4: Should the individual try to attend any event, the person in charge of that event should ask him or her to leave. If the individual will not leave, the local law enforcement should be contacted and asked to remove the individual from the premises. Extension personnel or non-law enforcement volunteers should not attempt to physically remove the parent.

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.

## II. Membership and Enrollment

### A. 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 Mississippi youth according to all applicable state and federal laws.

Discrimination in the 4-H Youth Development 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.

#### 1. Age Requirements

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

- Clover Buds is a 4-H offering in some counties for all children ages 5 through 7. These youth participate in special program offerings and non-competitive events.
- Primary 4-H membership is open to all children and youth ages 8 through 18. For specific rules on projects and competitive participation by each group, refer to [http://msucares.com/4h\\_Youth/project\\_manual06/2006project\\_manual.pdf](http://msucares.com/4h_Youth/project_manual06/2006project_manual.pdf).
- The age for regular 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.

### 2. Special Membership Offerings

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 4-H Extension agent/program associate. 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.

### 3. Other Membership Requirements

A youth becomes a 4-H member when he/she either completes an individual enrollment form or is included in a group enrollment form. 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 enrolled in the county Extension office. A member of a 4-H club is expected to enroll in one or more 4-H projects and provide written evidence of project completion.

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.

### B. 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 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.

### C. 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.

The minimum requirements a club must meet to receive a charter follow:

- 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 staff's 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 persons authorized to sign checks
- Member enrollment forms
- Volunteer leader enrollment forms
- Names of current club officers and club leaders

#### **D. 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

### **III. Types of 4-H Membership**

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

#### **A. 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 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 of 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:

1. *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, secretary
- Holds regular meetings
- Conducts project meetings as needed
- Enrolls and involves parents in the club program
- Conducts a community service project

2. *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.

3. *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. *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.

5. *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.

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

7. *Virtual 4-H Club*

#### **B. Special Interest/School Enrichment Groups**

Special interest/school enrichment groups are organized as educational/learning 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 the 4-H program. There are two types of special interest groups:

1. *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

2. *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
- Consists of at least 6 or more hours of learning experiences of 20 to 60 minutes in length
- Uses the 4-H clover and promotes other delivery methods for which youth 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.

### **C. Other Membership Units**

*Overnight camps*—Youth 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*—Youth 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.

## **IV. Curriculum, Recognition, and Awards**

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

The individual project is the basis of many learning experiences in the 4-H Youth Development 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. 4-H Extension agents/program associates, in cooperation with volunteers, have the opportunity to develop new educational experiences to meet localized needs of youth where needs 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.

### **B. Project Opportunities**

The Mississippi 4-H Project Enrollment Guide (P1447) includes a summary of 4-H projects that are offered through the Mississippi 4-H Youth Development 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.

### **C. Recognition**

Recognition in 4-H is the encouragement and support for learning. It 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. (Reference: "National 4-H Recognition Model.")

### **D. Competitive Awards Programs**

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

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

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 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.

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

The contestant(s) or team(s) of contestants must be certified as the official state entry by the State 4-H Leader or by a person designated by the State 4-H Leader. In order to represent the state in a national 4-H competition, the 4-H member(s) must have qualified at the state level competitive event.

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

The 4-H Youth Development Program and Future Farmers of America 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 Youth Development Program staff member and the FFA program staff member, youth are allowed to use the same projects and/or activities to participate in FFA and 4-H programs.

## **V. 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 Code of Conduct.

### **A. 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 in exhibiting individual projects and in the demonstrating of knowledge and skills will not be tolerated.

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

All youth must abide by the Mississippi Junior Livestock Code of Conduct, Code of Ethics, and Rules.

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

Rules and guidelines for participation of youth in clubs, programs, and activities will be clearly stated and will be made available to all eligible youth. Consequences of violating rules will be clearly stated and enforced uniformly and fairly.

Event managers responsible for 4-H events and activities are required to communicate to 4-H participants and adult chaperones prior to the event a standard of acceptable 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 such will be sent to the 4-H Extension agent/program associate, 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 Mississippi 4-H Youth Development 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 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 Research and Extension Center Head and State Program Leader-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 advised that child is being sent home by safest, most direct means, and that parents are responsible for 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 his or her own transportation (driven him/herself) 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 his or her parent/guardian.

Follow-up correspondence from the event's manager should be sent to all appropriate Extension staff, Research and Extension Center Head, the State Program Leader-4-H Youth Development, the member, and the member's parent/guardian for documentation. For all reprimands, a Summary Letter and Accident/Incident Report Form will be completed and mailed to the 4-H member, parent, 4-H Extension agent/program associate and/or program assistant, Research and Extension Center Head, and State 4-H Leader. Additionally, notification will be made to the 4-H Extension agent/program associate and/or program assistant, Research and Extension Center Head, and State 4-H Leader prior to mailing the letter and form.

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

A Mississippi 4-H Events Health History Form (F696) is now required for each event.

## **VI. 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 Youth Development 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.

### ***A. 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 youth 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.

Visit [http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/library/fs\\_tax\\_4-05-06.pdf](http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/library/fs_tax_4-05-06.pdf) for 501c3 information.

Administrative approval must be obtained from the Mississippi State University Extension Service State Program Leader-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

### ***B. 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.

### ***C. 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.

#### ***D. 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 the annual information return, IRS Form 990. 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.

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

Local 4-H clubs and support groups that maintain separate bank accounts should obtain an IRS Tax Employee 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 SERVICE EMPLOYEE). Two people from the same family must not sign checks.

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.

#### ***F. 4-H Club Finances***

(Reference: F1019 Mississippi 4-H Club Treasurer's Record Book.)

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 Youth Development 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 not being re-chartered.

### **VII. Additional Considerations**

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

(Reference: Using the 4-H Name and Emblem, <http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov>.)

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 val-

ued 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 Mississippi 4-H department. Use on a multi-county or state basis should be approved by the Mississippi State University Extension Service State Program Leader-4-H Youth Development. Any commercial vendor, private organization, or other entity must request permission and guidelines through the Mississippi 4-H Youth Development state department 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 route through national 4-H headquarters at USDA in Washington, DC. 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.

#### ***B. Dress***

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.

#### ***C. 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.

#### ***D. Insurance***

Participants in any 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.

### ***E. Legislative Contacts***

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

### ***F. 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:

1. It is not illegal to request this information.
2. 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.
3. The Social Security number (or first five digits) is required to run the national database criminal background check, which is used to protect youth.
4. Requesting the exhibitor's Social Security number on the validation form is typically done as a convenience to assist our clientele in later completing livestock show entries. By not completing the Social Security number on the validation form, each youth 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.
5. 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.
6. 4-H members who submit recordbooks 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 prior to monetary awards being 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 clientele and their rights of privacy and security.

### ***G. Unescorted Minors and Travel***

If a minor 4-H member travels unescorted in a personal vehicle to a 4-H event beyond the county level and lodging is required on-site, the member will be 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.

### ***H. 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, team(s) 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 by the State Program Leader for 4-H programs.
- For competitive events, the agent in charge of 4-H in the county must send an official delegate list to the State 4-H Office at least 5 business days before departure.

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