

# INDIANA 4-H POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

## **The Indiana 4-H Program Philosophy and Expectations**

The Indiana 4-H Youth Development program serves the youth of Indiana by providing a strong educational youth development program. This program delivers educational experiences in a variety of settings. Caring, capable and contributing adults assist in the 4-H program as role models for youth. The rich heritage of the 4-H Program is one to be valued and passed along to future generations.

The Indiana 4-H Youth Policies and Procedures Handbook includes certain standards and guidelines to assure that 4-H is a positive youth development program. County 4-H policy is guided by the county 4-H policy making or governing board (i.e., 4-H Council) as provided by the County Extension Board. Legal authority for the 4-H Program rests with the Director of the Cooperative Extension Service at Purdue University. No county 4-H policy may conflict with state 4-H policy or with federal guidelines and requirements.

Deadlines for county and state participation should be carefully constructed so as to encourage rather than to discourage participation. Such deadlines should be well published. Members not complying with established and published dates and deadlines for exhibition may be denied the opportunity to exhibit.

It is the policy of 4-H to be an inclusive organization. No county policy or practice should be used to arbitrarily exclude youth from either membership or participation. Youth should participate in 4-H Youth Development opportunities at levels and times that best suit the youth's development and support family involvement.

## **4-H Mission and Vision**

*4-H Mission: The Indiana 4-H Youth Development mission is to provide real-life educational opportunities that develop young people who positively impact their community and world.*

*4-H Vision: Indiana 4-H Youth Development strives to be the premier, community-based program empowering young people to reach their full potential.*

## **4-H Club Membership**

Youth may become 4-H members when they enter the third grade and may continue their membership through the completion of grade 12. Each individual may continue membership for a maximum of ten (10) consecutive years.

Exceptions:

(1) Youth who enroll in grade three and are advanced academically (thus graduating early) may continue for a total of 10 years ONLY if the enrollment occurs in consecutive years.

(2) Those youth who are academically advanced and "skip" 3rd grade, may begin the program as a 4th grader and may continue for a total of 10 years ONLY if the enrollment occurs in consecutive years.

(3) Those youth who enroll in grade three and are retained a grade in school may continue to progress through the 4-H Program by adding subsequent years of participation, but MAY NOT exceed 10 years of participation. For example, if a member is retained one year in school (public, private, or home), their final year of 4-H membership would conclude the summer following their junior year of high school.

(4) Those youth who entered the program in 3rd grade and for one reason or another leave formal education prior to the completion of 12th grade may continue for a total of 10 years ONLY if the enrollment occurs in consecutive years.

NOTE: 10 years of membership in the 4-H Youth Development Program is an opportunity --- not an entitlement. Those youth who do not enroll as 3rd grade students or meet the exceptions above, conclude their involvement with the program during the summer immediately following the completion of their senior year in high school.

An individual's 4-H grade is determined by the school grade in which he or she is classified at the time of year he or she enrolls in 4-H. A member does not advance in 4-H grade until he or she enrolls in 4-H for the subsequent year. Each

member should enroll in the division of a project/subject that would best suit his/her interest and potential for personal growth and would enhance their family involvement.

Opportunities in the 4-H program are available to all Indiana youth as defined regardless of race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation or disability. Married young men and women of 4-H age may participate in any of the 4-H projects and activities. However, married persons must participate by the same terms and conditions and/or guidelines as unmarried participants. Membership in 4-H is gained by annually enrolling through a Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service Office located in each of Indiana's 92 counties.

The Indiana 4-H Youth Development program year is October 1 to September 30 annually. Enrollment is an annual process attained by completing individual 4-H enrollment via the 4HOnline enrollment process. Statewide 4HOnline enrollment occurs annually October 1 through January 15.

**Mini 4-H Non-Competitive Policy:**

Mini 4-H is a program designed to encourage positive development of children, Kindergarten through second grade. The goal of Mini 4-H is to help young children explore friendships outside the family; explore the way in which things work; practice both small and large muscle control; and think about the ways people work together on projects.

The NON-COMPETITIVE learning environment for Mini 4-H includes:

1. Planned learning activities in which children are invited to be active and explore materials and ideas without the pressure of completing a specific product or exhibit.
2. Low adult/leader to child ratio that allows time for adults/leaders to provide individual, positive encouragement and assistance.
3. Simple, interesting activities that are fun.
4. Encouragement of children to participate in a group activity by sharing and or displaying their activity projects.
5. Rewards that are identical and/or ribbons of the same color for everyone.

DO NOT JUDGE projects, but instead discuss them with the child.

NOTE: Purdue University and the Indiana 4-H Youth Development Program do not support, endorse, or encourage 4-H programming for children prior to Kindergarten. 4-H Youth Development Extension staff members and 4-H Volunteers may not offer, or encourage others to offer, programming for children prior to Kindergarten.

**Residence:**

Indiana youth typically enroll in 4-H Youth Development programs in the county or state in which they reside. However, individuals living in one county may join 4-H in another county. There may be educational or social reasons for an individual joining 4-H in a different county than that of their primary residence. During a single program year, a 4-H member enrolled in a given project is expected to enroll and exhibit that project only in one county of enrollment.

In the event that a project is not offered in the county of primary 4-H enrollment, a 4-H member may enroll in that specific project in a different county. Approval of this special exception rests with the 4-H Extension Educator. Participation in 4-H related activities and events (i.e., judging, share-the-fun, auction) must be in the county of primary 4-H enrollment.

The above policy is not intended to provide an escape mechanism for 4-H members and families who are unwilling to follow the terms and/or conditions in their current county of 4-H membership. Decisions regarding 4-H membership in a non-resident county (a county you do not live in), rest with the 4-H Extension Educator in the receiving county.

Note: In a statement from our federal partner in Washington, D.C., the following statement appears: "Anytime there are procedures for exclusion of individuals from events which use the 4-H name there are potential challenges to

enforcement of the exclusions. The challenges have a substantial potential to prevail and they frequently result in negative publicity for the organization. Therefore, before choosing a policy of exclusion it is wise to evaluate the exclusion being considered, to be sure there is an overwhelming educationally based need for the exclusion".

Extension employees and volunteers are obligated to eliminate (and should not create) any practices that limit, deprive, or tend to deprive any youth of opportunities for membership and/or participation in the Indiana 4-H program.

#### **Behavioral Criteria for 4-H Events and Activities**

To 4-H members, volunteers, parents and the public: When attending, participating or acting on behalf of the 4-H program, all persons are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with accepted standards of social behavior, to respect rights of others, and to refrain from any conduct which may be injurious to the 4-H program. The following actions constitute misconduct for which persons may be subject to disciplinary penalties and/or dismissal from the program:

- (a) Dishonesty in connection with any 4-H activity by cheating or knowingly furnishing false information.
- (b) Alteration or unauthorized use of 4-H records.
- (c) Obstruction or disruption of any 4-H activity or aiding and encouraging other persons to engage in such conduct.
- (d) Failure to comply or aiding or encouraging other persons not to comply with specific terms and conditions of a given project, contest, or activity.
- (e) Failure to comply with directions of 4-H officials acting in the proper performance of their duties.
- (f) Inhumane treatment of 4-H animal projects.

**There are many opportunities for 4-H members, volunteers, parents and the public to participate in 4-H events and activities. When involved in such experiences, members, volunteers, parents and the public are expected to follow all rules and regulations as outlined by those responsible for the specific program or activity. In all such 4-H activities, the following constitute a violation of behavioral expectations:**

1. Possession or use of fire crackers, gun powder, firearms, chemicals or other materials that can be used to create an explosive mixture.
2. Misuse of fire equipment or sounding a false fire alarm.
3. Having a guest of the opposite gender in your sleeping quarters.
4. Physical or verbal abuse of any person or conduct which threatens or endangers the health or safety of any person.
5. Theft of or malicious damage to property.
6. Possession, use, or distribution of alcohol, illegal drugs, tobacco and tobacco-like products, or other dangerous substances.
7. Inappropriate displays of affection towards another person(s).
8. Inappropriate clothing or lack of clothing during the event or activity.
9. Lewd, indecent, or obscene conduct.
10. Unauthorized entry, use or occupancy of any facility.
11. Any conduct which threatens or interferes with maintenance of appropriate order and discipline or invades the rights of others.

When violations occur at out-of-county, district, area, state and/or national 4-H events, the following procedures will be followed.

- (a) The parents/legal guardians will be contacted to arrange transportation home for the violator(s) and
- (b) The local extension educator will be notified.

**Guidelines for Exhibition and Completion:**

Following are policies that govern exhibition and completion of 4-H Projects:

**Exhibition:** Exhibition of 4-H projects/subjects in local, county, or state exhibits/fairs is voluntary on the part of the exhibitor. The exhibition of 4-H projects/subjects provides 4-H members an opportunity to display their 4-H projects/subjects, enter into competition, and participate in an educational/social environment with peers. With exhibition also comes the responsibility for abiding by all the terms and conditions pertaining to the respective 4-H project.

**Completion:** The completion of a 4-H experience may include a variety of options and must not be misinterpreted solely as exhibition of a project at a local, county, or state fair. There are a number of ways that a young person may participate in the 4-H Youth Development Program in addition to the club-based option. Participating in these 4-H opportunities enable the youth to build skills that will serve them well throughout their adult lives.

Some of these participation options do not include the preparation of a specific exhibit by an individual that would be on display at a fair or similar event. In some cases, the youths' actual participation may be the final product that results in their completion of a year of 4-H. Some examples of this participation include working as a team to develop a robot for a workshop or challenge; completing a Spark Club experience; participating in State 4-H Band or Chorus; taking part in a science training or experiment; participating in an after school 4-H experience; etc.

4-H members are considered complete in their 4-H educational experience for the year when they have (1) completed the 4-H member enrollment process prior to the established and published date for enrolling; and (2) had an officially recognized 4-H volunteer/Extension Educator verify the existence of the completed project/subject or the member's participation in a 4-H educational experience. Additionally, 4-H members who participate in a club- or fair-based 4-H project/subject will submit a completed 4-H record sheet based on printed or web-based educational materials (used by Indiana 4-H Youth Development) prior to the established and published date.

Though exhibiting in local, county, and state exhibits/fairs is not required for project completion, as it does not necessarily relate directly to content and skills learned in the development of the 4-H project, project exhibition is encouraged as a continuation of the educational experience.

Extension employees and volunteers are obligated to eliminate (and should not create) any practices that limit, deprive, or tend to deprive any youth of opportunities for membership and/or participation in the Indiana 4-H program.

**Grievance/Appeal Guidelines for County 4-H Program Issues: (Activities, Programs, Projects)**

1. A grievance may be lodged with the president of the 4-H policy-making body (e.g., 4-H Council or 4-H Fair Board), the superintendent of the Project, or the 4-H Extension Educator. The burden of proof shall reside with the party filing the grievance. (NOTE: concerns regarding staff or volunteers are not issues for which a grievance may be filed. 4-H Volunteers are assigned by the 4-H Extension Educator. Concerns regarding volunteers should be addressed directly with the 4-H Extension Educator.)
2. The person filing a grievance must complete the Grievance/Appeal Form.
3. A grievance shall be filed within 24 hours of the incident. The 24-hour guideline pertains to fair related issues where timing is an issue. In all other grievances, there will be a 14-day limit in which the grievance must be filed.
4. A grievance regarding a project/subject or activity during the county 4-H Fair will first be reviewed by a small, unbiased subcommittee appointed by the chair of the local 4-H policy-making body in consultation with the 4-H Extension Educator. This subcommittee will review the grievance, conduct the initial investigation, and render a decision.

5. The grievance sub-committee will be called together to act within 24 hours of a filed grievance, or in a more timely manner, if the situation warrants. (See note below for programmatic grievances.)

6. The person filing the grievance may appeal the decision to the 4-H policy-making body, which will then review the facts in evidence and render a decision.

7. The person filing a grievance may appeal a decision to the County Extension Board. The Extension Board will review the facts in evidence and render a decision. **This is the final level in the appeal process.**

**Note:** The above procedure will also be followed for program issues. Time constraints of the above procedure are not as crucial in most instances for programmatic concerns. However, there will be a 14- day limit on the part of the person filing a grievance. The Extension Educator does have the obligation to inform all parties that there is a grievance procedure if there are disagreements with policies.

**Note:** The above should be followed while keeping in mind these points:

1. Establish a three level grievance procedure--from a small sub-committee to overall 4-H policy-making body to County Extension Board. While there is no doubt some overlap in who serves on these committees, the intent of three levels is to assure different individuals have the opportunity to hear and act on the grievance.
2. Maintain an appropriate timeline being cognizant of issues that happen during the county fair that may pertain to exhibition.
3. Grievance procedure requires a completed grievance form.
4. Anyone involved at any level of the grievance procedure is reminded of the importance of keeping discussions regarding grievances confidential.