



TEXAS 4-H AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT  
2008-2009  
**RULES and GUIDELINES**

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The provisions contained in these rules and regulations do not constitute a contract, express or implied, between volunteers and participants of this program and the United States Department of Agriculture, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, the county governments of the State of Texas, or the Texas 4-H and Youth Development Program (4-H Program.) Texas 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 and 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 Texas AgriLife Extension Service directives. The descriptions of disciplinary procedures set forth in this document are guidelines. The failure of Texas AgriLife Extension Service to strictly adhere to a particular process shall not be a basis for overturning the disciplinary action imposed.

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## **I. MEMBERSHIP AND ENROLLMENT**

### **A. Membership and Enrollment**

It is the policy of the Texas A&M University System to extend equal opportunities for membership and participation in 4-H activities to all Texas youth according to all applicable state and federal laws.

Discrimination in the 4-H and Youth Development Program because of socioeconomic level, race, color, religion, national origin, gender, age or disability is contrary to the purposes and policies of Texas AgriLife Extension Service.

#### **4-H Members**

##### **1. Age Requirements**

- Youth are eligible to participate in the 2008-2009 4-H year if they are 8 and in the third grade or 9 years of age by August 31, 2008 and have not reached their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday on or before August 31, 2008. (See 4-H Clover Kids section for guidelines involving younger youth).
- Special education youth who are older than 19 and have not graduated from high school may participate in 4-H and Youth Development programs as members, with approval by the county Extension agent. Participation is limited to the club or county level. County Extension faculty 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 Age Categories**

**Junior – 8 and in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, 9&10 as of August 31, 2008**

**Intermediate – 11, 12, 13 as of August 31, 2008**

**Senior – 14-18 as of August 31, 2008**

##### **3. Other Membership Requirements**

A youth becomes a 4-H member when he/she either completes an individual paper enrollment

enrollment form, an individual on-line registration via 4-H Connect or is included in a group enrollment form. 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 competes in a given project in only one county or state.

- 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 including:
  - \*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 - 60 minutes in length.
  - \*Regularly complete at least one project goal.
  - \*Attend workshops that are available in the community or county on a particular project.
  - \*Develop leadership by teaching others.
  - \*Conduct citizenship activities related to the selected project.
  - \*Find new and fun things to do in your project area.

Marriage and parenthood are not a barrier 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 the rights of any protected class of individuals and should be so stated as to be inclusive in nature.

\*Exception - If a 4-H member lives near a county line or if a specific project is not offered in his/her home county and it is more convenient, desirable, or logical to belong to 4-H in another county, he/she may request permission to join 4-H in that county if the county Extension faculty in both counties approve. Approval should be in writing. Request to change counties should be based on concerns that affect the youth member developmentally (ie: requesting to change counties because the adjoining county's livestock show sale is better will not be approved). If a specific project is not offered in the county of residence, and the 4-H member wants to participate in 4-H project work in an adjoining county, they may, however, they must enter competitive activities through the county in which they have their membership.

\*\* See Section III, "Eligibility", for participation in specific events and activities which have additional entry requirements beyond being a member.

#### **4. Clover Kids**

Texas 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 and have not entered (started classes) the third grade on September 1.

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.

4-H Clover Kids is an affiliated program, serving youth in grades K-2, while the 4-H and Youth Development Program serves youth 9 years of age (or 8 years of age and in the third grade) to 19. As an affiliated group, youth enrolled as 4-H Clover Kids have activities and programs suitable for their age group. 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. Youth development research indicates that competitive events and competitive judging are inappropriate for Clover Kids.

**a. 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 faculty 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 using individual or group enrollment forms.

**b. 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 approved by Texas AgriLife Extension Service for Clover Kids include:

- Food & Nutrition
  - Hatching In The Classroom
  - Healthy Lifestyle Education
  - Clothing & Textiles
  - Safety
  - Rabbits
  - Photography
  - Computer Science
  - Horticulture and Junior Master Gardener
  - It's Up To Me
  - Recreation
  - Bicycle
  - Companion Animals
  - Sport Fishing
  - Yea 4-H!
- 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 9 (or 8 and in the third grade) to 19 age group.
  - Projects may be exhibited at an appropriate Extension approved 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.

## **B. Annual 4-H Enrollment**

The 4-H year runs from September 1 to August 31. Effective September 1 each year, all former and new 4-H members and Clover Kids must be re-enrolled for the next enrollment year. Volunteers must apply annually to be a volunteer in the 4-H program. County Extension faculty 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 faculty 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. Charter Application and information will be due to the County Extension Office by a date designated by the Texas 4-H and Youth Development State Office. This date is communicated through the county Extension agent. County Extension agents will request a charter or re-charter clubs via the 4-H Connect System coordinated through the Texas 4-H and Youth Development State Office in College Station. A copy of the charter should be retained on file in the County Extension Office. New clubs must be chartered as part of the organizational process. Chartering also includes submission of the club's Employee Identification Number (EIN), club contact person, and contact address. This must be done annually. This information is required and must be provide to the IRS through the State 4-H office. The information is sent by the state office to National 4-H headquarters where it is then provide to the IRS as required to be in compliance with the Pension Protection Act of 2006. The exception to this rule is Military 4-H Clubs. 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. County Extension Agents may request a charter to be pulled if clubs are not following TCE best practices. Pulling a charter is parallel to dissolving the club.

Reasons to pull a charter may include, but are not limited to:

- A. Discriminatory practices.
- B. Not submitting county required paperwork including club reports, member enrollment forms, and volunteer applications.
- C. Club leadership not attending scheduled club manager training and workshops.
- D. Practices that are not considered youth developmentally appropriate.

Steps should be taken to meet with the club manager and outline the concerns and follow up in writing. Give a defined period of time to remedy the situation.

If it becomes necessary to move forward with pulling the charter, the process is

- A. Gather facts including:
  1. Create a timeline with dates that meetings were held with club leadership to discuss concerns.
  2. Assembled all written correspondence sent to club leadership regarding expectations and defined times to remedy the concerns.
  3. Outline a plan to support the existing club members ie: Club and project opportunities that youth may transfer their membership to.
- B. Contact designated 4-H faculty member serving the District and District Extension

Administrator or County Extension Director for counsel. Forward supporting documentation for their review.

- C. Contact Associate State 4-H Program Leader at State 4-H Office for charter to be pulled.
- D. Follow up with letter to club leadership and membership indicating the club has been dissolved. Letters to youth should include a summary of other club opportunities in the county.

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.

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

- Five or more members from more than one family;
- One or more teen and/or adult leaders;
- Initial plan of operation (for at least 3 months in advance);
- Elected officers;
- Each member enrolled in at least one 4-H project experience;
- An approved club or group name; and
- Club by-laws, including an Extension approved dissolution clause

County Extension faculty's office must maintain on file:

- Club Charter;
- Club By-Laws, including an Extension approved dissolution clause;
- If Club has a bank account – IRS identification number for account, location (bank) of account, and names of persons authorized to sign checks;
- Current annual TCE support group fund form;
- Annual planning sheets;
- Fund raising request forms;
- Member enrollment proof; Options are (1) printed forms (2) print out of enrollment summary via 4-H Connect, (3) print on demand from 4-H Connect.
- Volunteer applications and acceptance letters;
- Monthly reports; and
- Names of current club officers and club manager(s).

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

County 4-H groups or organizations (parent/leader association, 4-H Council, county 4-H committee, 4-H Ambassadors, etc.) as well as fund raising groups, must be chartered to be authorized to use the 4-H name and emblem. Charter Application and information will be due to the County Extension Office by September 30. County Extension agents will request a charter or re-charter for groups via the 4-H Connect System coordinated through the Texas 4-H and Youth Development State Office in College Station. A copy of the charter should be retained on file in the County Extension Office. New groups must be chartered as part of the organizational process. Chartering also includes submission of the group's Employee Identification Number (EIN), group contact person, and contact address. This must be done annually. This information is required and must be provide to the IRS through the State 4-H office. The information is sent by the state office to National 4-H headquarters where it is then provide to the IRS as required to be in compliance with the Pension Protection Act of 2006. . A copy of the charter should be retained on file in the County Extension Office.

4-H Groups and Fund Raising Groups wishing to use the 4-H name and emblem must provide:

- Membership/Contact List attached
- Meeting Location
- List of Elected Officers (attach a list of officers)
- Group Name and Year Group Began
- By-laws. **By-laws must have a dissolution clause indicating the component of monies raised in the name of 4-H will be given to the county 4-H program. Example dissolution clauses can be found under the resource management section of the Texas 4-H Management site at: <http://texas4-h.tamu.edu/mgtguide/ResDev/>**
- Annual Financial Review was conducted by audit committee on \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) following Extension best management practice procedures.

E. 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 control of Texas 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 Management Website under Resource Development at: <http://texas4-h.tamu.edu/adults/mgtguide/resdevelopment.html>

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## II. CURRICULUM, PROJECTS, RECOGNITION AND AWARDS

Texas 4-H follows a recognition model outlined in the Texas 4-H Management System ( <http://texas4-h.tamu.edu/mgtguide> and ascribes to the "National 4-H Recognition Model."

### A. Competitive Awards Programs

County Extension agents shall 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 would include award programs, record book winners, Gold Star, camps, labs and state events with county quotas, calf scrambles, etc.) County Extension agents should make arrangements for the appointment of unbiased committees to select 4-H members and adults for awards and other 4-H opportunities. Criteria and guidelines should be made available to all families.

### B. 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 so stated as to be inclusive in nature.

### C. Cooperation between 4-H, FFA and other Organizations

A cooperative relationship is expected between the 4-H and 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 faculty responsible for the 4-H and 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.

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### **III. 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.

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.

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 Management site at (<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:

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:

- Names of 4-H members involved
- School they attend
- Date(s) of extracurricular activity
- Name and time of event in which 4-H member will participate
- The educational significance of the event
- Name of adult chaperone

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

In some cases, it will be advantageous, in obtaining excused absences for 4-H members, for the county Extension faculty to explore the option of requesting to be appointed as Adjunct Faculty to the local school districts. County Extension faculty are encouraged to explore this option and other means to strengthen collaborative linkages with schools. Schools may require proof of a criminal background check for AgriLife Employees. It is a reasonable request for them to accept the Agency’s screening results of each employee. CEAs should make this request on a case by case basis to the Assistant Director for Human Resources.

### **IV. 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.

**A. Appropriate Behavior**

Texas AgriLife Extension Service supports moral and ethical behavior on the part of its faculty and 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 demonstration of knowledge and skills will not be tolerated.

**B. 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 activity as a 4-H member. This policy is posted at the home page of the Texas 4-H Management site: <http://texas4-h.tamu.edu/mgtguide> . Violation of this policy may result in a member being removed from the 4-H program or not being permitted to enter stockshows through their 4-H membership.

**C. 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 activities as a 4-H member. ( Examples include: Competitive activities, officer roles, committee activities.)

**D. Suspension of participation/removal of 4-H member from program**

The Texas 4-H and Youth Development Program has the inherent 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:**

- Obtain relevant facts.
- Contact and brief the supervising District Extension Administrator and Assigned 4-H Specialist.
- Contact Texas 4-H Administration for counsel.
- If necessary, Texas 4-H Administration will coordinate with the Texas A&M Legal Counsel through appropriate channels. Texas AgriLife Extension Service has the inherent right to protect members of the 4-H Program by removing any 4-H member 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.

**2) Handling 4-H Member Behavior Problems During 4-H Events & Activities**

Rules and guidelines for participation of youth in programs, units, and activities will be clearly stated and will be made available to all eligible youth. Consequences of rules violations will be clearly stated and will be 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, via the Commitment to Excellence. 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 Leadership Team serving that county, county Extension agent(s) 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 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 have discretion to assign offense degrees to particular conduct given the case-specific facts and circumstances related to a particular incident.

#### E. Summary of offenses and consequences

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##### Minor Offenses

- Habitually late to program activities
- Not in room at designated time for overnight events
- Not possessing good manners and using language that is offensive to 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

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##### **Consequences**

- Consistent discipline problems requiring more than two reprimands is 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.

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##### Intermediate Offenses

- Inappropriate visitation
- 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

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##### **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.

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##### Major Offenses

- Possession or use of tobacco products
- 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 themselves 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 Texas 4-H and 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

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

- Receive a verbal reprimand.
- 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 faculty member or 4-H volunteer).
- If not on-site, but available via phone, brief the county Extension faculty member and District Extension Administrator responsible.
- Review consequences of misbehavior. The following steps should be taken when sending a 4-H member home:
  - Extension faculty member contacts parents/guardians.
  - Parents are advised that child is being sent home by safest, most direct means, and that parents/guardians are responsible for cost.
  - Event manager decides if parents should be given the option of picking up the child.
  - Follow-up correspondence from event's manager to appropriate county Extension faculty member, 4-H Leadership Team, child and parent for documentation.
  - 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), Regional 4-H Specialist and the Associate Directors for 4-H & Youth and County Programs. Additionally, notification will be made to the 4-H Leadership Team prior to letter and form being mailed.

### **F. 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.

## **G. Outstanding Debt to 4-H**

4-H members and adults that have registered in any 4-H event have the legal responsible to make payment for any completed/accepted registration (this includes both 4-H CONNECT on-line registration or paper registration). 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, or other returned checks. Failure to make payment can also result in criminal charges as well.

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## **V. PROVIDING MEDICAL INFORMATION FOR 4-H ACTIVITIES**

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

The Waiver, Indemnification, and Authorization for Medical Care is now required for each event. This form is date and event sensitive and can be found in the Risk Management Section of the County 4-H Management System website. <http://texas4-h.tamu.edu/mgtguide>.

### **B. Notifying Event Management Regarding Illness and Medications**

4-H members participating in a 4-H event or activity are expected to notify event management of any health issues or special needs that may prevent them from fully participating. 4-H members are expected to notify event management of any medications they may be taking and present the medications for safe keeping.

### **C. 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.

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## **VI. COUNTY 4-H ORGANIZATIONS**

### **A. County Youth Boards**

The organizational structure of Texas AgriLife Extension Service require every county to have an active county youth board as an integral part of the Program Development process. For an overview of County Youth Boards go to: <http://tx4-h.tamu.edu/volunteers/require/pac.pdf> Download Document: Program Area Committees and Youth Boards or visit the on-line Texas 4-H Management site - Program Development section at <http://texas4-h.tamu.edu/mgtguide>

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

### **A. Role of a County Extension Agent**

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

1. Coordinate the chartering of 4-H membership units (clubs, groups, programs). Chartering includes permission to use the 4-H name and emblem.
2. 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.
3. Provide opportunities for all youth who have reached the appropriate age to be participants and/or members in the 4-H and Youth Development Program.
4. Plan and coordinate the county 4-H program.
5. Staff the 4-H clubs/units utilizing volunteers with the assistance of the volunteer/parent leadership and youth leadership.
6. Assist the volunteer/parent leadership and youth leadership by providing in-service education and resources for all 4-H volunteers in the county.
7. Explain and enforce 4-H policies and procedures.
8. Train and supervise 4-H volunteers in conducting the county 4-H and Youth Development Program.
9. Ensure that a quality 4-H educational program is conducted in the county.
10. Inform 4-H volunteers and members about opportunities at county, district, regional, state, national and international levels.
11. Appoint or dismiss 4-H members, 4-H volunteers and 4-H parents.
12. County Extension agents 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.
13. County Extension agents have the responsibility for communicating Texas AgriLife Extension Service's best financial management practice procedures to all groups and programs operating in the name of 4-H. Groups and programs are required annually to affirm committee review of accounts for best management practices. Website: <http://texas4-h.tamu.edu/> - linked under 4-H Management.

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

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

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

1. 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."
2. Indirect Volunteer: Volunteers who support the 4-H program by a youth or adult which does not include face-to-face contact with youth. e.g: boards, committees."
3. Episodic Volunteer: An individual who volunteers for a single or limited activity, event or program conducted as part of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service program efforts. Examples include: fair judges, workshop members, presenters serving on special committees, and assistants or helpers at events.

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. Youth Protection Standards**

The Texas AgriLife Extension Service Youth Protection Standards program was implemented to assist in providing a safer and more positive environment for youth and adult volunteers. The program focuses on youth audiences who are a part of any Texas AgriLife Extension Service program. The YPS program involves criminal background checks of all direct adult volunteers 18 years of age or older who are involved in teaching these youth groups. Volunteers who have been screened by another entity, such as their employer or other youth organization, may indicate this on their enrollment form. An approved list of prior screening entities is available at [www.texasvolunteer.tamu.edu](http://www.texasvolunteer.tamu.edu).

Volunteers must complete the front and back side of the Texas 4-H Adult Volunteer Application (4-H 2-1.056).

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

## **2. Volunteer Liability**

In order for a volunteer to serve with Texas AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas 4-H and Youth Development Program, all 4-H volunteers must be formally enrolled on the 4-H Adult Volunteer Leader Application (4-H 2-1.056). This is an annual process. Criminal background checks will be conducted every three years for volunteers being qualified through the Youth Protection Standards System.

Texas 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 Texas AgriLife Extension Service. This law does not apply to the operation of motor vehicles.

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 Texas A&M University System liability.

Age: It is understood that 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.

## **3. 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 Texas AgriLife Extension Service policies.

To be accepted as a 4-H Volunteer, you must:

1. Be at least 18 years of age. (Overnight chaperones must be at least 21 years of age.)
2. Complete a Texas 4-H Adult Volunteer Application annually.
3. Be subject to a criminal background check and screening process.

A 4-H Volunteer is expected to:

1. Respect the individual rights, safety, and property of others.
2. Participate in routine volunteer training opportunities and activities pertinent to their duties.

3. Be committed to the core values, education goals and standards of the 4-H and Youth Development Program.
4. Support the 4-H and Youth Development Program and its policies, procedures and rules and guidelines.
5. Recognize and support the responsibilities of the 4-H and Youth Development Program staff in setting program standards, priorities, and direction.
6. Support the non-discrimination practices of the 4-H and Youth Development Program, including: socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability, or national origin.
7. 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.
8. Adhere to Texas laws on the use of motor vehicles.
9. Not consume alcohol and/or illegal drugs (or to be under the influence thereof) while involved or en route to any 4-H event, meeting or activity.
10. 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.
11. Not sign a lease agreement, use permit with schools or other public or private facilities, or grant or order contracts on behalf of Texas AgriLife Extension Service. All such agreements shall be forwarded to the local office of Texas AgriLife Extension Service for review and approval.
12. Recognize Texas Law requiring all adults to report suspected child abuse to proper law enforcement or county child protective services.
13. Safeguard and hold confidential any information gained through administrative duties involving supervision of personnel or other information identified by the program as being confidential.
14. Not physically or verbally abuse a youth member or use corporal punishment to reprimand 4-H members for inappropriate behavior.
15. Understand that falsifying enrollment information, budgets, documents or records is a breach of the Code of Ethics.
16. Not engage in sexual activity with youth members.
17. Adhere to fiscal responsibility and financial best management practices as outlined by Texas AgriLife Extension Service.
18. Register as a volunteer in only one county.
19. Not receive compensation for professional services provided in support of youth 4-H activities (excluding reimbursement for expenses).

#### **4. Consequences for Infractions**

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

1. Discussion of the inappropriate actions with the 4-H leader, clarification of the policy.
2. Releasing the adult to the appropriate law enforcement agency.
3. Termination as a 4-H volunteer.
4. Notification of incident to the legal authorities.

#### **5. Cause for Reassignment or Dismissal of Volunteers**

The purpose of the 4-H Program is youth development and the primary portion of the agents' and volunteers' time should be spent in positive work supporting quality experiences for boys and girls. 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. Volunteers are expected to participate in training necessary to carry out their responsibility. 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 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 Texas AgriLife Extension Service.**

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 other leaders, 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.

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.

## **6. 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 discussion concerning volunteer performance. Utilize the following steps for a volunteers' removal only after extensive efforts have been made to help the volunteer improve his or her performance.

- Step 1:** County staff representative meet with the volunteer to discuss problems with performance and/or any 4-H Rules and Guidelines violations. Specific areas for improvement are outlined and recorded. A written record of the meeting is 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 is 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, Extension faculty must contact their immediate supervisor and the Associate Director, 4-H and Youth, for counsel.
- Step 3:** If removed, the volunteer must be notified in writing of their removal from service to 4-H. Copies provided as noted in Steps 1 & 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 District Extension Administrator. The review is completed by a committee designated by the District Extension Administrator or County Extension

Director. A written reply is provided to the volunteer on the results of the review and the final decision on the appeal. Copies are made 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. Some such conduct might include, but is not limited to: 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 Associate Director for 4-H and Youth.

## **C. Role of 4-H Parents**

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 faculty and 4-H volunteers.

### **1. 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 guidelines. (A child who has a parent dismissed as a 4-H volunteer is still eligible to participate in 4-H.)

**Step 1:** Club managers 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 county Extension agent should receive a copy of such records.

**Step 2:** If the problem persists, county Extension agents should meet with the parent and review the expected behavior change and outline the specific behaviors which 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 which will not be accepted. Copies of this letter shall go to all persons involved in the conference and to the District Extension Administrator. Parents who have concerns which cannot be resolved at the county level may contact the appropriate District Extension Administrator or Associate Director for 4-H and Youth.

**Step 3:** If the problem persists the County Extension agent, in concurrence with the District Extension Administrator and Associate Director for 4-H and Youth, may write a letter to the parent indicating that he or she will no longer be allowed to attend any 4-H

function sponsored by Texas AgriLife Extension Service. Such a letter should be sent in a manner that the County Extension Agent is assured the individual did receive the letter.

**Step 4:** Should the individual try to attend any event, the person in charge of that event should ask them to leave. If they fail to do so, the local law enforcement will be contacted and asked to remove that individual from the premises. Extension personnel or non-law enforcement volunteer 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.

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## VIII. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

County Extension faculty are responsible **for communicating best management practices** as outlined by Texas AgriLife Extension Service for all 4-H membership unit 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 and Youth Development Program account should be kept on file in the district Extension office. County Extension faculty, 4-H volunteers, and 4-H members should never use their personal social security numbers for 4-H accounts. County Extension faculty 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 in keeping with IRS Regulation 501(C)3. 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.

Local 4-H Clubs and Groups must notify county Extension agents responsible for 4-H in their county and receive approval to conduct fund raisers on the programs behalf.

Administrative approval should be obtained by initially contacting the Texas AgriLife Extension Service Associate Director for 4-H and Youth for:

- Use of the 4-H name or emblem in connection with the sale of a commercial product or service.
- Sale of any product, without official approval, which may be competitive with normal trade channels.

### B. Membership Dues

The charging of membership dues is an option of each 4-H club/unit. Texas AgriLife Extension Service charges no fee for 4-H club membership. A youth cannot be denied membership to any 4-H club/unit as a result of non-payment of dues alone.

### C. United Way Funds

Counties or 4-H clubs accepting United Way type funds should only accept these funds if an agreement is reached with the agency that specifically allows for the raising of money in addition to that received from United Way type funds.

#### **D. Exemption Certificates In Lieu of State Sales Tax**

**4-H clubs, members, and/or volunteers are NOT state(Texas) sales tax exempt. Tax exemption of 4-H references FEDERAL income tax. There is no state sales tax exempt number for 4-H.**

4-H Clubs are not automatically state sales tax exempt. Individual activities may be declared exempt from sales tax. These exemption certificates may be obtained from the Office of the Comptroller of Public Accounts in Austin. Communications should be directed to the Comptroller of Public Accounts Exempt Organizations Division, 1-800-252-5555. Copies of the exemption certificates are available from 4-H Management website at: <http://texas4-h.tamu.edu/mgtguide>. The most common request for state sales tax exemption is associated with concession sales.

#### **E. Federal Income Tax Filing Requirements**

4-H clubs and affiliated 4-H organizations are required to file the annual information return, IRS Form 990e. Filing Form 990e 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 Texas AgriLife Extension Service. The national 4-H tax identification number that may be used in completing the IRS 990 Form is 2704. This number is not a state sales tax exempt number but is the Group Exemption Number that the IRS has assigned to 4-H for FEDERAL INCOME TAX.

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

Local 4-H clubs and support groups which 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 faculty members should never use their social security numbers for a 4-H bank account. All checks should be signed by two individuals (treasurer/adult advisor). Two persons from the same family must not sign checks.

Clubs and support groups authorized to use the 4-H name and emblem must follow Texas AgriLife Extension Service's best management practices concerning financial accountability.

#### **G. 4-H Club/Unit Finances**

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

The club/unit 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/unit disbands, all monies and property become the property of the County 4-H and Youth Development Program. The by-laws of each 4-H club/unit **MUST** have a dissolution clause, which directs money and property to become the property of the County 4-H and Youth Development Program.

Every 4-H club/unit must submit a county support fund report annually on August 31<sup>st</sup> to the county Extension faculty. Each 4-H club/unit must submit an inventory of equipment and each asset valued over \$250 listing the description and location to the county Extension faculty. Failure to submit these reports can result in the 4-H club/unit not being re-chartered.

## **H. Booster Clubs and Fund Raising Groups**

Booster clubs and fund raising groups wishing to raise money in the name of 4-H must be chartered. Among the chartering elements is the requirement that the group's by-laws **MUST** have a dissolution clause, which directs money and property to become the property of the County 4-H and Youth Development Program. Booster clubs and fund raising groups not willing to include this should not be given authorization to use the 4-H name and emblem in fund raising efforts.

*( This measure protects the 4-H program from groups who wish to use the good name of 4-H within the community to generate dollars, but then give the money to another entity).*

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## **IX. ADDITIONAL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

### **A. 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.

### **B. 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 AgriLife Extension Service employees.

Texas 4-H clubs and affiliate groups are permitted to use the name and emblem once they are chartered through the Texas 4-H Office. Use on a multi-county or state basis shall be approved by Texas AgriLife Extension Service's Associate Director for 4-H and Youth. Any commercial vendor, private organization or other entity, must request permission through the Texas 4-H and 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: <http://www.national4hheadquarters.gov>

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

### **D. Insurance**

Participants in any 4-H event should be insured for event illness and accident under a policy taken out by the sponsoring group. The most common contact for this type of insurance is American Income Life. The

contact information for this type of policy is posted on the Texas 4-H Management Website at: <http://texas4-h.tamu.edu/mgtguide> under the risk management link. Participants should be advised that the insurance used by Extension will not cover pre-existing conditions and may not cover all medical expenses.

As a program of Texas AgriLife Extension Service, 4-H has base liability coverage for activities held in the name of 4-H. Activities must be scheduled under the direct control of a professional faculty member to have this liability coverage extended. If a facility requires more liability insurance that is granted as a state of Texas agency, then the event must take out an additional liability insurance policy for the event. A form letter is available for professional faculty to use when communicating the inferred liability coverage that Texas AgriLife Extension Service has. Professional faculty may contact the Associate State 4-H Program Leader at the state 4-H office to obtain a copy of the letter.

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

All contacts initiated by Extension faculty with members of the Senate and House of Representatives in Texas and in Washington, D.C., on behalf of the 4-H and Youth Development Program, must be approved by The Texas A&M University System, with approval requested through the faculty 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 the 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.

Due to the nature of these questions and the privacy laws that have taken effect in recent years, advice was sought from the A&M Systems Office of General Counsel to address the disclosure issues. To help provide guidance in addressing questions related to social security numbers, the following summary of topics and recommendations are made:

1. LEGALLY ASKING FOR IT: It is not illegal to request this information.
2. DAILY OPERATIONS (CENTRAL FUNCTION) OF THE EXTENSION OFFICE: If the social security number is not necessary to completing the daily operations (central function) of the County Extension Office, the social security section on the form should be optional.
3. YOUTH PROTECTION STANDARDS: The social security number or first five digits, are required to run the national database criminal background check.
4. ANIMAL VALIDATION: Requesting the exhibitor's social security number on the validation form is typically done as a convenience to assist our clientele in later completing stock 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 making entry to 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. SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS. Applicants cannot become a scholarship recipient without the social security number. So, the scholarship application may not require the social security number, but if awarded, the scholarship contract will.

6. RECORDBOOK AND ENTRY FORMS. 4-H members that submit recordbooks for Senior Judging competition or entry forms to a 4-H event that has monetary awards associated with the event 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 youth to provide the social security number prior to monetary awards being distributed.

As with youth and volunteer enrollment forms, all other paper work containing personal and sensitive materials should be kept in a safe and secure location (locked filing 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. Food Safety**

### **Tasting at 4-H Food Shows**

Texas 4-H Food Show Rules include guidelines that food products presented during 4-H Food Shows are not tasted or consumed by judges.

### **Concession Stands**

Concession stands organized by 4-H affiliated groups should only be hosted in facilities approved by the County or City Health Department.

## **H. 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.

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Reviewed by TAMUS-OGC-JMB in August 2007.

Affirmed through Texas AgriLife Extension Service Administrative channels - August 2008.