

Ohio 4-H

Volunteer Handbook



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Table of Contents

Authors: Ohio 4-H Club Design Team	2
Who We Are	4
About OSU Extension	4
About Ohio 4-H.....	4
Learning the 4-H Way	9
Teaching the 4-H Way	9
Volunteerism	11
Volunteer Education and Development.....	11
Volunteer Opportunities	12
Teen Volunteer Opportunities	15
Volunteer Recognition.....	16
Club Management.....	17
4-H Club Structure	18
Chartering Your Club	19
Planning and Conducting Meetings.....	20
Determining Your Club's Success.....	21
When Should Your Club Raise Funds.....	22
Memberships in Clubs	23
Why Elect Officers for Your 4-H Club.....	23
What Can You Do To Promote Your 4-H Club	25
Reporting Your Club's Activities	25
Working with Youth	27
Who Is in Your 4-H Club	27
Why Do Members Join 4-H.....	27
How Do Members Benefit from The 4-H Club	27
How Can You Support Successful 4-H Members.....	27
Positive Youth Development (PYD)	28
How Can You Support Youth with Special Needs	29
Managing Risks	30

Who We Are

About OSU Extension

Our Mission

Engaging people to strengthen their lives and communities through research-based educational programming.

Our Vision

OSU Extension is a dynamic educational entity that partners with individuals, families, communities, organizations, businesses, industry, and organizations to strengthen the lives of Ohioans.

In Extension, we value:

- Excellence in educational programming.
- Grassroots programs that engage local people in solving problems and addressing challenges.
- Unbiased research-based information.
- Practical education that helps people help themselves.
- Timely responses to clientele concerns.
- Credibility with clientele and funders.
- Honesty and integrity in our work.
- Teamwork within offices, with clientele, and with our educational partners.
- Flexibility and adaptability in local programming.
- Programming without discrimination and employment of people representing the diverse population of Ohio.

[!\[\]\(05be7c7a8995decd503647c99211f7c2_img.jpg\) Watch the "What Is Extension?" Video](#)

About Ohio 4-H

The Ohio 4-H program is part of a greater Extension organization. Whether you are a first-year 4-H volunteer or returning for your 50+ year to lead your 4-H club, you will be asked questions that require you to look inside the 4-H organization.

Beyond the 4-H Pledge you recite at every club meeting, you will need to share how 4-H is a community of young people across America learning leadership, citizenship, and life skills through group experiences. 4-H is education beyond the classroom where every youth can discover their interest and talents while excelling to their highest potential.

The 4-H motto, "To Make the Best Better," is put into action by making a positive difference in 4-H members' lives through club meetings and numerous other youth opportunities.

Exploring the Four H's

Head, Heart, Hands, and Health serve as a friendly reminder of the 4-H mission to create positive environments in which diverse youth and adults can reach their fullest potential as capable, competent, caring, and contributing citizens.

The 4-H club serves as the primary outlet for developing the life skills and 4-H values centered within each "H." Knowledge of the entire 4-H organization structure will enable youth to access programs beyond the club and tap into more than a century of positive youth development experiences from OSU Extension's 4-H program.

Mission, Vision, and Values of Ohio 4-H

Dynamic 4-H clubs develop plans to incorporate positive youth development experiences that are in line with the Ohio 4-H mission and vision statements.

The goal of 4-H is to help young people develop to their fullest potential. 4-H believes that we can help our nation, state, and communities by giving the opportunity to youth for positive development. Following the 4-H motto, "To Make the Best Better," and staying true to our core values accomplish this goal.

Ohio 4-H Mission

4-H Youth Development education creates positive environments for diverse youth and adults to reach their fullest potential as capable, competent, caring, and contributing citizens.

Ohio 4-H Vision

Ohio 4-H is the state's premier leader in developing youth to become positive productive citizens and catalysts for effective change to improve our diverse society.

Ohio 4-H Values

1. Positive youth development is the focus of everything we do.
2. Partnerships with other organizations, schools, and businesses are essential to successful youth development.
3. Volunteerism is fundamental to our work.
4. Strength is attained through diversity across the entire range of 4-H experiences.



What Should I Know about the 4-H Organization?

1. A general knowledge of [4-H history](#)
 - 4-H was founded in Clark County, Ohio in 1902 by Mr. A.B. Graham when he organized young people in an “out-of-school education program.” His idea of youth agricultural clubs quickly expanded to multiple Ohio counties and set the foundation for what we recognize today as 4-H clubs and the overall 4-H organization.
 - While youth agricultural clubs were initially focused on agricultural projects and research, 4-H has expanded in content areas and continues to promote life skills through an array of project areas, community service, leadership, and citizenship.
 - 4-H can be found in all fifty U.S. states and internationally in more than eighty countries around the world.
2. The [4-H Fundamentals](#)
 - 4-H Emblem: four-leaf clover with an “H” in each of the four leaves
 - 4-H Colors:
 - green (nature’s most common color, represents youth, life, and growth)
 - white (symbolizes purity and high ideals)
 - 4-H Motto: “To Make the Best Better”
 - 4-H Pledge

The 4-H Pledge
I pledge my head to clearer thinking,
my heart to greater loyalty,
my hands to larger service, and
my health to better living,
for my club, my community, my country
and my world.



What You Should Know About the 4-H Emblem

The 4-H emblem . . . your club’s seal of excellence and a proud American mark recognized worldwide. The 4-H clover is a highly valued emblem within our country’s history. As such, it was granted a very unique status; it is in a category similar to the Presidential Seal and the Olympic emblem. It is protected by the federal government and is under the responsibility and stewardship of the Secretary of Agriculture. The “18 USC 707” marking that appears along the right lower leaf is coding that protects the use of the 4-H clover emblem.

Your club’s insignia should always include the official 4-H emblem. Never alter the shape of the 4-H clover or cover any portion with writing or images. The code, “18 USC 707,” must appear along the outside of the lower right leaf. There are federal guidelines that outline exceptions to this design. You may find the following resources helpful as you determine the best ways your club can use the emblem. Contact your county 4-H Extension professional when you have questions about the proper use of the 4-H name and emblem.

- [National Overview on the Use of 4-H Name and Emblem](#)
- [4-H Name and Emblem Fact Sheet](#)

3. The importance of Eight Essential Elements in all 4-H club experiences
 - The following characteristics are included in effective programs of positive youth development, including 4-H. Ohio 4-H Youth Development promotes this standard in what are known as “key elements.” The Essential Elements include:



OVERVIEW OF EIGHT ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Concept: Belonging

1. Essential Element: A Positive Relationship with a Caring Adult

A caring adult acts as an advisor, guide and mentor. The adult helps set boundaries and expectations for young people. The adult could be called supporter, friend, or advocate.

2. Essential Element: An Inclusive Environment

An inclusive environment is one that creates a sense of belonging, and encourages and supports its members with positive and specific feedback. Healthy groups celebrate the success of all members, taking pride in the collective efforts of all participants.

3. Essential Element: A Safe Emotional and Physical Environment

Youth should not fear physical or emotional harm while participating in a 4-H experience, whether from the learning environment itself or from adults, other participants or spectators.

Concept: Mastery

4. Essential Element: Opportunity for Mastery

Mastery is the building of knowledge, skills, and attitudes and the demonstration of the competent use of this knowledge and skill by a proficient practitioner. The level of mastery is dependent on the developmental ability of the individual or youth. The development of mastery is a process over time.

5. Essential Element: Engagement in Learning

An engaged youth is one who is mindful of the subject area, building relationships and connections in order to develop understanding. Through self-reflection, youth have the ability to self-correct and learn from experience. The engaged learner has a higher degree of self-motivation and an inexhaustible capacity for creativity.

Concept: Independence

6. Essential Element: Opportunity to See Oneself as an Active Participant in the Future

The ability to see oneself in the future is to have hope and optimism to shape life choices, which facilitates the transition into participating in the future.

7. Essential Element: Opportunity for Self-Determination

Believing that you have impact on life's events rather than passively submitting to the will and whims of others is self-determination. Youth must develop a sense of influence over their lives, exercising their potential to become self-directing, autonomous adults.

Concept: Generosity

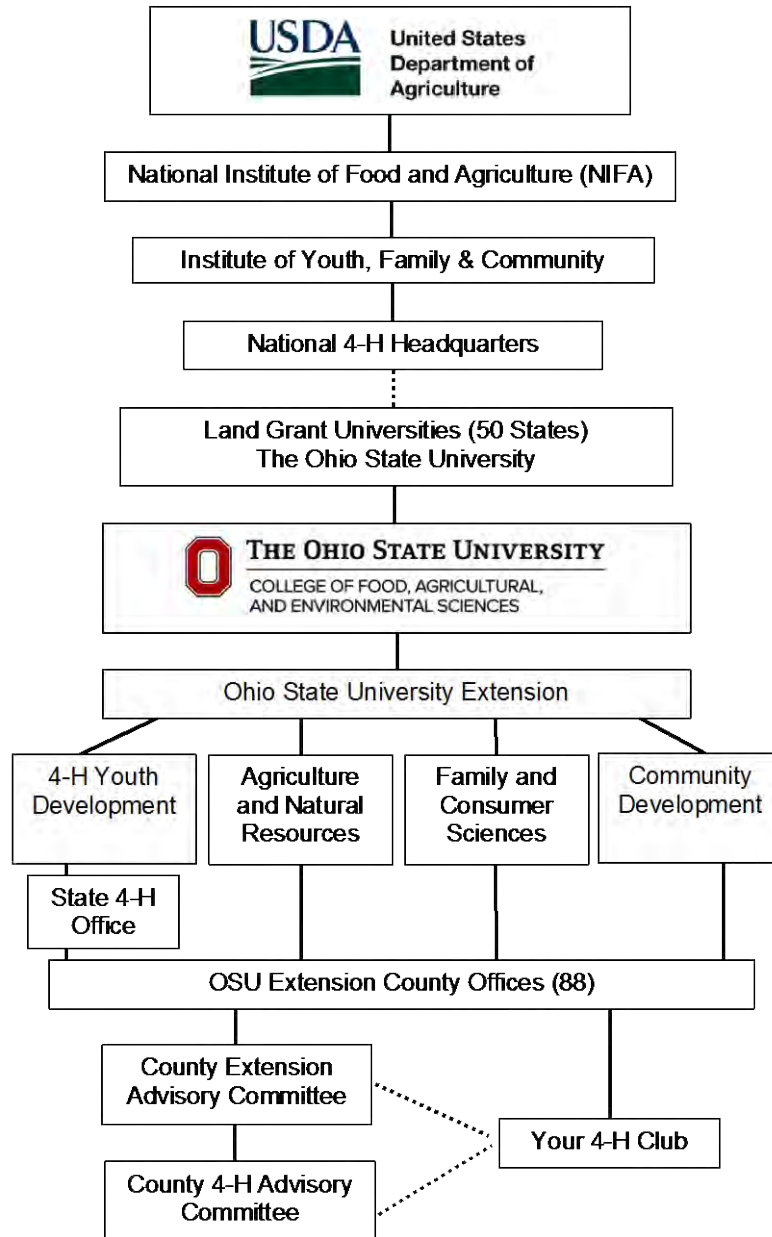
8. Essential Element: Opportunity to Value and Practice Service to Others

Finding yourself begins with losing yourself in the service of others. Service is a way for members to gain exposure to the larger community and, indeed the world itself.

From: Martz, Mincemoyer, McNeely (2009). *Essential Elements of 4-H Youth Development Programs*.

4. An understanding of Ohio 4-H structure

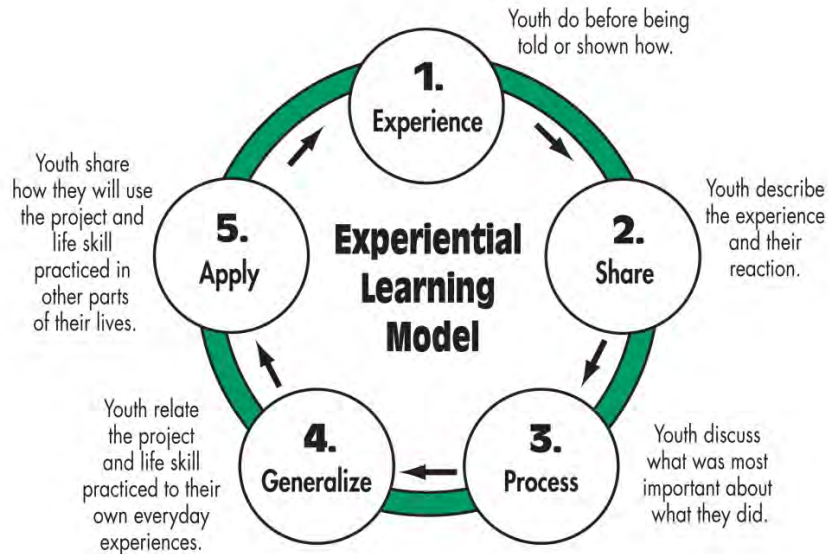
- Discover your 4-H club's connection to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, National 4-H Headquarters, OSU Extension, and your county commissioners



Learning the 4-H Way

Every minute of 4-H club time counts and each 4-H learning experience can lead to new knowledge and skills. You can help every member “learn the 4-H way” through projects, skillathon, judging, quality assurance, field trips, camp, fair, community service, and many other fun, hands-on experiences.

We believe the 4-H slogan, "Learn by Doing," is mastery of knowledge and skill in action: the 4-H way. Today, educators refer to this as the experiential learning process, which is represented in the model below.



Pfeiffer, J.W., & Jones, J.E., "Reference Guide to Handbooks and Annuals"
© 1983 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
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Teaching the 4-H Way

Your 4-H members' project success results from the skills and knowledge taught in your club and county programs. Are you providing hands-on project learning experiences for members on a regular basis and not just preparing them for judging or project completion? Mastery of knowledge and skills is important, but it is critical to strengthen life skills, including decision-making, communication, leadership, responsibility, time management, creativity, and initiative, just to name a few.

Teaching the 4-H way allows you to:

- Use multiple senses to increase members' learning and mastery;
- Focus on learning from the member's perspective—hands-on and minds-on;
- Engage members in scientific discovery, investigation, exploration, and research of the project and self;
- Reduce behavior problems by actively engaging members in learning; and
- Enjoy the fun of learning and teaching members!

How Can You Help Members Learn the 4-H Way?

- Assist members in selecting 4-H projects, participate in meaningful experiences, and set realistic goals. Visit [Project Central](#) to preview Ohio 4-H project books and resources.
- Use a variety of non-formal teaching methods to lead and train members in project and life skills.
- Encourage members to attend learning experiences that include camps, workshops, clinics, public speaking events, quality assurance, sportsmanship, and safety programs—as well as many others.
- Prepare members for positive 4-H project evaluation experiences including skillathon, project judging, contests, fair exhibitions, shows, sales, and more.
- Actively involve members in planning and conducting significant community service experiences and service learning projects to benefit their local communities.



Volunteerism

Volunteer Education and Development

For you to better serve your members you need to participate in annual volunteer development and educational opportunities. By participating, you will sharpen your skill set to effectively perform your duties. Volunteers are encouraged to:

- Seek volunteer roles that are mutually beneficial to you and the organization;
- Take on a new volunteer role to help fill a gap, offer a new program, or expand current programs;
- Participate in volunteer development educational opportunities to enhance your skills and knowledge and stay current with policies, procedures, and subject matter; and
- Encourage others to become more involved in 4-H as volunteers!

Opportunities for Volunteer Education and Development

- **Use the *Ohio Volunteer Handbook*.** Mark this website: <http://www.ohio4h.org/volunteers/volunteers/club-leaders/ohio-4-h-volunteer-handbook> as a favorite for easy access to the most current information to help you be a successful volunteer. Share the link with other county volunteers.
- **Participate in county volunteer training programs.** County Extension educators and teams provide ongoing volunteer development opportunities through 4-H club advisor/county volunteer updates, workshops, clinics and meetings. Check with your county Extension professional for upcoming volunteer development opportunities and required volunteer training expectations.
- **Read the county newsletter(s), 4-H emails, and/or visit the county website.** Stay current and up-to-date with the latest rules, guidelines, and programs. Here, you will learn volunteer management tips, access experiences for club members and yourself, and discover new ways to "Make the Best Better!"
- **Join volunteers across Ohio at the [Ohio 4-H Conference](#).** Mark your calendars for the second Saturday in March. Choose from more than 100 educational, hands-on workshops presented in five concurrent sessions. Do not forget to check the [event website](#) for registration materials, fees, and details.
- **Learn about [North Central Region Volunteer Opportunities](#).** Join other volunteers in your community and across the 12-state North Central Region to learn cutting edge information that will help you work effectively in your volunteer roles. The NCR Volunteer webpage offers volunteer E-forums broadcasted from local county Extension offices and other virtual resources for volunteers.
- **Teach at a regional or state conference.** Submit a proposal to teach a session or workshop at the Ohio 4-H Conference, North Central Regional 4-H Volunteer Forum, or

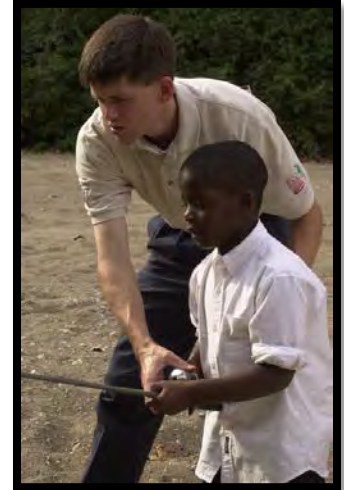
regional programs across Ohio. Contact your county Extension professional to express your interest.

- **Serve on a regional or state committee.** Share your expertise with others by serving on camp boards, state project committees, and Ohio advisory and support committees. Ask your county Extension professional for the application process for state committees.

Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers like you train, mentor, and teach individuals through consistent sequential learning experiences. There are many different volunteer opportunities within OSU Extension.

Note: Prior to assuming any of these volunteer roles you must complete the Ohio volunteer selection process outlined below. To continue serving as a 4-H volunteer, you must maintain good standing with both the county and state 4-H program.



Ohio Volunteer Selection Process

Adults serving members of a vulnerable population (minors, elderly, and/or disabled) in an unsupervised capacity with potential for ongoing/sustained contact with clientele and/or including opportunities for financial, overnight, and transportation responsibilities will:

1. Complete a volunteer application, in its entirety (including three non-family reference contacts of which a minimum of two must be completed and returned), and submit to the appropriate OSU Extension office.
2. Receive, at the time of application or change of position, a written volunteer position description outlining the responsibilities.
3. Read, agree to, and sign the OSU Extension Volunteer Standards of Behavior form annually.
4. Complete an interview with the appropriate OSU Extension representative.
5. Submit to a criminal history fingerprint background check at the time of application and every four years thereafter.
6. Participate in an annually required volunteer orientation/training program.

4-H Volunteer Opportunities

If you are currently volunteering in a 4-H club setting you are most likely serving in one or more of these roles:

- **Organizational/Community Club Advisor**—The lead volunteer of the club serves as the primary contact between the club and the county Extension office and gives leadership to managing and organizing club experiences.
- **Project/Activity Advisor**—This volunteer role is responsible for teaching knowledge and skills for project area(s). Share your skills, talents, and special interests in a single

project area. Examples include clothing, dogs, rabbits, horses, bicycling, computers, woodworking, photography, etc.

- **Activity Volunteer**—This volunteer coordinates club activities such as community service, fund raising, trips and tours, promotional activities, recognition programs, family nights, and more.
- **Cloverbud Advisor**—This role focuses on providing non-competitive experiences that meet the special needs and interests of youth 5 through 8 years old. Talk with your county Extension professional to find out more about the requirements to become a Cloverbud Advisor in your county.
- **School Enrichment Volunteer**—Enrichment volunteers teach a short-term 4-H curriculum to a class (or classes) of school children.

Other Ways to Volunteer with Ohio 4-H Outside the Club

You can volunteer to assist with the planning, implementation, and evaluation of various components of your county 4-H program. 4-H volunteering at the county level varies greatly between counties. Contact your county Extension professional to learn about the potential volunteer opportunities as a key leader, a committee member, or as a volunteer working with other aspects of the 4-H program.

- **Key Leaders**—Adult volunteers with extensive subject matter expertise and/or program design, delivery, and evaluation experience who provide leadership to 4-H programs and activities.
- **Committee Members**—Serve on one of the county committees (4-H, Endowment, Extension Advisory, Audit, Livestock, or Project Focus) to provide advice and support in conducting meaningful educational experiences. Committee structures vary from county to county.
- **Master/Certified Volunteers**—Some programs or 4-H project areas require specialized training and certification. After becoming a volunteer, you may choose to become a master/certified volunteer in one of these areas:
 - **PetPALS:** 4-H PetPALS volunteer leaders teach youth skills needed to interact with residents of healthcare facilities, specifically assisted living and skilled nursing environments. They educate members about the physical changes associated with aging, as well as medical conditions they may encounter while visiting a facility. PetPALS leaders also teach youth to assess their pet to determine its viability for serving as a PetPALS companion.
 - **Shooting Sports:** A shooting sports volunteer coordinator is a person who, under the guidance of an Extension professional, works primarily with other volunteers to deliver and be responsible for the overall coordination and management of the county shooting sports program. Talk with your county Extension professional to find out more about the required training to become a certified shooting sports volunteer.
 - **Master Clothing Educator:** A master clothing educator works with, and under the direction of, an Extension professional to plan and conduct classes related to clothing activities. Such activities include advisor and member training at the local level, assisting with other activities, and supporting the 4-H clothing program.

- **International Programs (ICC):** An “International County Coordinator” (ICC) is a middle-management volunteer who works with, and under the direction of, an Extension professional to coordinate host families and international visitors in each county. Activities include publicity, recruitment, home visits, orienting families about other cultures, event planning and cross-cultural counseling with youth and families. Talk with your county Extension professional to find out more becoming an ICC.
- **Other**—Learn about other 4-H volunteer opportunities for working with the Extension program areas including Master Gardening, Family and Consumer Sciences, camp, after school, and special emphasis program areas.

How Can You Volunteer Outside the County?

You can become involved with the Ohio 4-H program by serving on a variety of regional and state program committees. Some of the opportunities available include the following:

- Serve on [4-H Camp Boards](#)
- Serve on state 4-H project-related committees
 - [State Dog Committee](#)
 - [State Horse Committee](#)
 - [State Shooting Sports Committee](#)
- Serve on state 4-H event committees
 - [Ohio 4-H Conference](#) Planning Committee
 - [4-H Foundation Board](#)

Contact your county Extension professional to learn more about applying for these unique volunteer experiences.



Teen Volunteer Opportunities

If we are to successfully keep teens in 4-H, we must invite them to play an active role in the program. 4-H teens are leading their peers as teen/junior leaders in clubs, as youth representatives on committees, and in key leadership roles as camp counselors and CARTEENS facilitators.

Youth volunteer experiences teach teens valuable life skills:

- Decision-Making
- Leadership Capacity
- Teamwork
- Communication
- Creative Thinking
- Interpersonal Relationship Building

Encourage a teen in your club to apply for one of the following youth volunteer positions. Check with your [county Extension professional](#) on availability of teen volunteer opportunities and specific requirements (age, years in school, etc.).

Ohio 4-H Ambassadors

High school students may apply to become a county or state 4-H Ambassador. These teens promote 4-H through presentations to school classrooms, assemblies, parent groups, civic organizations, and community stakeholders. Teens assist with county 4-H promotional programs including festivals, featured news stories, public service announcements, and more.

Camp Counselor and/or CIT's (Counselors-In-Training)

Youth ages 14 through 19 years serve as part of the camp staff to assist in planning, coordinating, and conducting camp experiences. After 24 hours of annual training, counselors supervise campers, teach fun hands-on activities, and help campers make friends.

CARTEENS Facilitator

Youth with a driver's permit or license teach teen traffic offenders sentenced to CARTEENS by the juvenile court. Facilitators lead group discussions, role-play traffic situations, conduct interactive traffic-related games, and engage in informal conversation with a law enforcement officer.

Teen Advisory Council (TAC)

The TAC is Ohio 4-H's highest youth decision-making and advisement body in the state's 4-H program. In partnership with state 4-H leaders, select teens from across the state collaborate to improve Ohio 4-H programming, administration, and relevance to youth. Potential TAC members must be at least 15 years old or a sophomore in high school and will submit an application form to be considered.

Committee Member

4-H members 14 years and older can serve as youth representatives on 4-H committees. These teens are actively involved in planning, conducting, and evaluating 4-H programs organized by committees. Committees available for service may include 4-H Advisory Council, project-related committees, and 4-H Endowment Board. Contact your county Extension professional to learn more about your county's 4-H committee structure and responsibilities.

Food and/or Fashion Board

Teens with experience and interest in the food and clothing projects work with Extension staff and adult volunteers to develop programs for members in these areas. Activities may include workshops, clinics, camps, judging activities, and more.

Junior or Teen Club Leader

4-H members age 13 and older can assist 4-H club advisors, teach younger members project skills, and lead various club activities. Club advisors should meet annually with club teen leaders to plan their role(s) in the 4-H club.

Teen or Junior Leadership Program

Teens age 14 and older can assist with planning countywide 4-H events and community service as they explore and build their leadership skills. Contact your county Extension professional to learn about your county's teen or junior leadership program.

Volunteer Recognition

OSU Extension celebrates all volunteers for their service. Your sense of volunteer pride and appreciation may come from a tender note from a parent, a community member, a smile from a child after accomplishing a new task, or receiving your first volunteer certificate or pin. Many counties hold a volunteer recognition event honoring volunteers for years of service. Milestones for years of service (1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35) and those 40 years and over receive special recognition at the Ohio 4-H Conference. Other forms of volunteer recognition are county-specific. Check with your local Extension office for details.

You may nominate yourself or a fellow volunteer (teen or adult) for one of Ohio's 4-H Volunteer Awards. Recognition occurs at the Ohio 4-H Conference in March. Check with your county Extension professional about county nominations and deadlines. For more information including award applications and award descriptions, [visit the Ohio 4-H Conference website](#).

Additional volunteer recognition opportunities may be available at the county level. Some of the previous awards are also available on the county level. Examples of county recognition opportunities include scholarships to various volunteer training events, such as Ohio 4-H Conference, trip awards, committee service recognition, recognition events, promotion to new roles, and placement on special committees.



Club Management

What is a 4-H Club?

4-H clubs are a group of young people led by club advisors engaged in positive youth development experiences. The [Ohio 4-H Charter Checklist](#) includes the specific requirements to be a 4-H club. A well-rounded 4-H club focuses on goal-setting, community service, public speaking, leadership, decision-making, fundraising, teambuilding, social and recreational activities, and a variety of hands-on learning experiences. Successful 4-H clubs empower their members to be decision-makers who influence 4-H programming on the club, county, state, and national levels.

Other resources for volunteers may be found on the National 4-H website at 4-h.org.

How Do You Get Started?

Starting a new 4-H club, taking over the management of an existing club, or even joining the leadership of a current 4-H club means accepting the 4-H club advisor challenge to make a positive difference in young people's lives. You are not alone in meeting this challenge; 4-H Extension professionals and resources like the *Ohio 4-H Volunteer Handbook* will assist you in acquiring the tools to successful club management.

4-H COMMUNITY CLUB DEFINITION: A 4-H community club is an organized group of at least five youth from three different families who meet regularly with adult volunteers or staff for a long-term, progressive series of educational experiences.

How Can You Develop and Manage Your 4-H Club for Success?

1. Determine your club's structure, including type and scope of project(s), membership size, learning experiences, and number and location of meetings.
2. Complete the [Ohio 4-H Club Constitution](#) with your club members. You may also want to complete the optional [4-H club bylaws template](#) to establish the rules that your members will follow to govern club meetings and activities.
3. Secure an IRS "EIN" number: [IRS EIN How-to Instructions](#)
4. Promote, recruit, enroll, and re-enroll membership to start or expand your 4-H club. Visit [membership guidelines](#) on the Ohio 4-H website.
5. Elect officers, appoint committees and train the youth leadership to assist your club in planning and conducting the club's yearly program. Visit the [officer resource](#) page on the Ohio 4-H website.
6. Establish a club treasury and open a club checking account. Visit the [financial management](#) resource page on the Ohio 4-H website for more information.

7. Develop a yearly club program plan with your officers and club advisors and communicate to club membership.
 - [Club program](#) template
8. Conduct meetings that members want to attend by including a balance of business, education, and social activity.
9. Report club membership and activities to 4-H families, Extension office, and the local community.
10. Evaluate and celebrate your club's success.

4-H Club Structure

Clubs begin with a caring advisor who has an interest in helping youth and in teaching them specific skill sets. Skills taught may focus on a specific project or on a specific membership age, such as Cloverbuds or teens. For new 4-H clubs, this is the first factor in determining the structure. You must answer these questions to begin to frame your 4-H club:

What is your club membership makeup?

To have an Ohio 4-H club, you need to have at least five youth members from three different families. Your club will need to conduct a minimum of six regular club meetings per year.

What is your club focus?

4-H clubs offer a wide variety of opportunities for members to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and aspirations needed for adult success.

Clubs come in a variety of forms and there is not a one-size-fits-all option. Clubs can choose to focus on specific projects, age groups, or interest areas. Or, they can provide a wide array of options for members. Club advisors help determine the focus based on the perceived interest of members or on expertise club advisors can contribute to the learning experience for members.

Club meetings: when and where?

When?

- Clubs may choose to meet weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, or bi-monthly.
- Clubs may meet year-round or have a defined start and end date for regular meetings.
- Clubs must have a minimum of 6 meetings during the year according to the national minimum requirements.
- Check with your local OSU Extension for any specific county guidelines related to meetings.

Where? Some common locations include the following:

- Homes or farms
- City/town halls or community centers
- Fire departments
- Libraries
- Schools
- Businesses

Regardless of the meeting site, choose accessible locations that are 4-H friendly, and do not limit participation due to fear of physical or emotional harm or because the membership is not comfortable with the chosen site. Involve your membership in selecting meeting site(s) and review the Managing Risks section (page 30) of this handbook.

Chartering Your Club

1. Clubs are required to complete the [Ohio 4-H Charter Checklist](#) annually.
2. 4-H clubs are part of an IRS group tax exemption number in Ohio and adopt a constitution that follows the [Club Constitution Template](#). Each club is required to file a signed constitution with their county Extension office. The constitution remains in effect and does not have to be reapproved every year.
3. Each club may create its own set of operational bylaws, as long as the added rules do not conflict with the club's constitution. Club [bylaws](#) may include any additional club rules, guidelines, expectations, or policies not listed in the constitution: dues, committees, achievement requirements, record books, project books, evaluation, fund raising, club trip, etc. Creating bylaws is a great way to start developing leadership, decision-making, and communication skills among your members. Consider these documents your 4-H club's guide to successful operation. If your club develops and adopts bylaws, a copy must be filed with the county Extension office. Your club bylaws should be reviewed with the club annually. This enables your club's operation to change to reflect the members' needs. Club bylaws should be simple and easy to follow for members and advisors, and everyone in the club should be involved in developing them. If your club makes changes to its bylaws, a copy should be forwarded to the county Extension office to be placed in your club's file.
4. What are the important points to include in any 4-H club constitution and bylaws?
 - **Name of 4-H Club**—Select a club name with your membership. Be creative and use common sense. Avoid names that may connect the club to a business, reference race, gender, sexual preference, or religion and/or could be perceived as discriminatory. Your county 4-H Youth Development Extension professional must approve your club's name as part of the Ohio 4-H club charter.
 - **Membership**—You may not discriminate in your membership, but you may set guidelines and limits. Guidelines and limitations may include the ages of members accepted, maximum membership, enrollment process, and attendance requirements to stay an active member.
 - **Meetings**—You should include location of meetings, date (month and day), and time. Also, include reorganization meeting and/or achievement meeting dates.
 - **Officers**—List the officers and their duties. You should also include the election process (use of nominating committee, open floor, etc.).
 - **Committees**—Outline who makes up the executive committee and list standing committees. Examples of standing committees may include recognition, fundraising, community service, fair exhibit, policies, program planning, etc.

Planning and Conducting Meetings

Follow these steps to fun, hands-on, active and “I want to be there” 4-H club meetings:

1. Involve your club officers, teen leaders and club advisors in [planning club meetings](#). Dynamic 4-H clubs have a great yearly plan filled with fun and activities.
 - Brainstorm ideas for club activities, events, and programs. Use the [Design Your Own Clover](#) at a club meeting to get all members' input. Committee members can use these ideas to develop the club's yearly plan. Choose activities that reflect the interest, needs, and ages of all members.
 - Plan the club's yearly program and create a club yearly calendar. Make sure that your club meetings are a balance of business, education, and recreation. Use the [club meeting wheel](#) to help you plan well-balanced meetings that include:
 - 15-20 minutes of business
 - 30-45 minutes of hands-on learning
 - 15-25 minutes of recreation and social activities
 - Provide a copy of the club program to all families in your club and to the Extension Office.
 - Informed 4-H members and families will be more likely to participate, be less likely to miss meetings, deadlines and programs, and generally be happier 4-H participants. Avoid club advisor headaches and heartaches by writing and distributing a 4-H club calendar/program to all families.
 - Well-planned club programs reduce misunderstandings, lack of follow through, and disappointment of members and families. Club ownership begins with members involved in making, not just participating in, club plans.
2. Allow members to lead the club. Encourage them to assist with fundraisers, serve as officers or committee members, plan community service, make decisions, or teach skills. Let the officers run the meetings. Be sure to prepare meeting agendas, schedules, and programs with officers. Help guide and train officers so they can successfully carry out their duties. It is often helpful to meet with your officers to review the agenda and any special items before the meeting.
3. Build 4-H club spirit by including get-acquainted and team-building activities, committee work, and/or group projects in your meetings. Display the flags and recite the Pledge of Allegiance and 4-H Pledge at every meeting.
4. Use parliamentary procedure to conduct effective, efficient, and democratic meetings. Don't forget to start and end on time!
 - [Tools for Parliamentary Procedure](#)
 - [Using Parliamentary Procedure](#)
5. Set member behavior expectations. Use your club meetings to teach respect, sportsmanship, and good citizenship. Use effective discipline strategies to promote positive outcomes and use the problem-solving model to deal with challenging member behaviors.

6. Share important information with the membership. Highlight upcoming event dates, deadlines, and opportunities in the club, county, and state. Use your county 4-H newsletter, and county and Ohio 4-H websites to stay current. Create your own club newsletter or website to communicate with club families and members. Contact your county 4-H professional for help in planning and conducting effective club meetings. A variety of “learning the 4-H way” experiences should be included in your 4-H Club’s program plan for the year. Here are some activities you and your 4-H club may choose to include.

- Community service (Service projects are oftentimes a requirement. Check your county’s guidelines.)
- Field trips, tours, guest speakers
- Public speaking
- Social and/or recreational activities
- Health and/or safety activities
- Promotion and/or recruitment initiatives
- Project learning
- Team building and/or leadership exercises
- Skillathons and project judging
- Quality Assurance
- Fair exhibition
- 4-H camp



Determining Your Club’s Success

Your club can have a successful 4-H year by putting into action the Eight Essential Elements of positive youth development (see page 7). These elements will help you to unlock the door to a 4-H club that is a place for positive experiences through fun learning and growing together. Putting the Essential Elements into action for your 4-H club begins with understanding the importance of each one and the possible actions that will bring the elements to life in your club.

Consider the following; how many of these characteristics are present in your club?

- Club focuses on kids learning and having fun, not winning. The club is a place for helping kids become independent and competent citizens through planning, learning, teaching, and evaluating many different club experiences.
- Structure is consistent, but flexible. The club tries new activities while meeting regularly and providing a consistent structure to meet members’ changing needs.
- Members are driving the club. Members carry out officer roles, serve on committees, teach skills, and make important decisions.
- Communication is free flowing. Advisors and members listen to each other, show respect, and value each other’s opinions.

- Club celebrates all members' achievements. Club's Success = Collective Efforts (doing our best), not single achievements (being the best).
- Experienced members teach new members the "4-H lingo" and make them feel welcomed. Returning members and families help new members and families understand the 4-H guidelines and how 4-H works.
- Community service is a valued and fun part of the club experience. Members enjoy helping others and the community without expecting anything in return.

When Should Your Club Raise Funds?

You and your 4-H club may need to raise funds to conduct educational programs and activities. Do not let fundraising get in the way of positive youth development through fun learning experiences.

Use these guidelines and [Ohio 4-H Finances Webpage](#) before starting your club fundraisers:

- Have a specific educational purpose for raising and using the funds.
- If charging club dues and/or activity fees, list the exact amount in your 4-H club bylaws and include how dues/fees will benefit the membership.
- Contact the county Extension office and discuss your fundraising plans with the county 4-H Extension professional. There may be a specific process for club fundraising approval in your county.

Managing Your Club's Funds

Accurate financial management is critical for 4-H clubs regardless of the amount of money your club raises or spends. Establish a checking account for your 4-H club if you plan to collect money or pay bills.

Follow these simple steps to open your club's checking account and manage club funds:

- Open the account in the club's name, not an individual's name. You will need to obtain an EIN (employer identification number) by completing the [SS-4 form](#). Do not use a personal social security number instead of obtaining an EIN.
 - [Example of completed SS-4 Form](#)
- Require two signatures of unrelated individuals on all checks written. The treasurer, another club officer, or a club advisor could serve in this role.
- Send bank statements to a non-check signer. After review, give statements to the treasurer to include with financial records.
- Approve all expenditures at a club meeting before paying the bill. Keep accurate records and give a treasurer's report at each meeting and record in the meeting minutes.
- Keep receipts and invoices with financial records.
- Document all income. File a copy of the receipt of cash and list all checks and cash in the [Treasurer's Handbook](#), available on the Ohio 4-H website [Officer Resources](#) page.
- Audit treasury records and club's account annually, and fill in the yearly audit certificate in the back of the *Treasurer's Handbook*. The audit findings should be reported at a club

meeting and recorded in the minutes. Use recommended audit procedures provided by OSU Extension.

- Spend money raised for intended educational purposes to limit carryover funds. Consult your county Extension professional about appropriate usage of club funds.
- File IRS Form 990N ePostcard each year by May 15.
 - [990N ePostcard help](#)
- File an Ohio 4-H [Annual Financial Summary](#) form and a club inventory list form at the end of each year with your county Extension office.
- The club checkbook should be retained by a club advisor outside of the meeting.

Contact your county Extension professional or refer to the [Club Disbanding or Splitting](#) document to answer questions regarding dispersal of club funds under situations such as disbanding or splitting.

Memberships in Clubs

How Do You Enroll Your 4-H Club Membership?

Members must enroll annually. Members may join a 4-H club anytime, but every county has an enrollment deadline for 4-H participation in Junior Fair. Obtain enrollment information and materials from your county Extension office. The 4-H enrollment process may ask the member and his/her parent/guardian to provide the following information:

- Personal and demographic
- Projects enrolled
- Offices and/or committees
- Parent/guardian contact
- Photo release
- Code of Conduct

Members who live outside of your 4-H club's home county must request and complete an [Across County Lines 4-H Membership Form](#). Members only need to complete this form once, unless special circumstances warrant a future request. Talk with Extension professionals in the county of residence and county of request to confirm procedure.

Returning volunteers must also re-enroll each year with the county 4-H program. New 4-H volunteers must complete the multi-step 4-H volunteer selection, screening and orientation process and be accepted as a 4-H volunteer, before you may include them as part of your 4-H club leadership. All 4-H volunteers must be rescreened (BCI fingerprint background check) every four years and must attend an annual training to maintain their volunteer status with OSU Extension.

Why Elect Officers for Your 4-H Club?

4-H clubs led by membership provide essential leadership, communication, and decision-making skill development for its members. Members who hold 4-H offices are more likely to choose to participate in other leadership roles at school and later in the community as adults.

Today's club officers may be tomorrow's township trustees, local mayors, city council members, school board members, fair board members, and other elected or appointed community leaders.

Holding a 4-H club office enables members to:

- Enhance leadership skills by learning and performing officer duties.
- Learn and use basic parliamentary procedure to conduct effective meetings.
- Learn how to manage a group's finances and document club's business activities.
- Develop teamwork skills to accomplish common club goals and expand problem-solving and decision-making skills through planning and conducting club meetings and activities.
- Improve communication skills—written and oral—by leading, speaking, sharing, and giving direction to the club.

What Officers Can Your 4-H Membership Elect?

Small clubs may want to elect only the primary officers: president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. Clubs with a large 4-H membership may choose to elect a full slate of officers (including sergeant at arms, health and safety officer, etc.) and even elect assistants for some of the officers. Review [4-H officer duties](#) and responsibilities with the club membership before holding your club's election. Install officers after the election using one of the 4-H officer installation ceremonies.



How Can Committees Help Lead?

Committees provide every 4-H club member the opportunity to help lead and direct club activities. Not everyone can be elected to hold an office or be a committee chairperson, but all members should serve on a committee. Each club will need to determine the committees necessary to carry out their club's goals. Create committees to carry out big club tasks like managing a community service project or club fundraiser, developing the club's recognition program, designing the club's fair booth, or planning an overnight field trip.

Don't Forget to Train Your Officers and Committees

- Check with your county Extension office about 4-H officer training opportunities.
- Meet with your club officers and committee chairpersons to review duties and expectations of holding a 4-H office.
- Actively involve these individuals in developing your club's yearly program plan.
- Visit the [officer resources](#) page on the Ohio 4-H website.

What Can You Do To Promote Your 4-H Club?

Regardless of the 4-H promotion and recruitment methods you choose, please review the section, “What You Should Know About the 4-H Emblem” (and refer to the included links on page 6), to understand proper use in your promotional efforts. Clubs completing the Ohio 4-H club charter are authorized to use the 4-H name and emblem within the guidelines.

- **Design a 4-H club flyer or use your county’s 4-H club recruitment flyer.** You and/or your members may distribute the flyer(s) in target community locations.
- **Make 4-H club posters.** Have members make posters at a club meeting to promote your 4-H club. Display posters in businesses and community centers after seeking approval from owners and managers.
- **Write 4-H news releases.** You or the club reporter can write news releases for the local newspaper to share information about your club, upcoming meeting times, and more.
- **Develop a 4-H club website.** Many clubs enjoy sharing their 4-H events and activities via a 4-H club website. Is there someone in your club who would enjoy developing a website for your 4-H club? Be sure to follow the [social media guidelines](#).
- **Create 4-H club spirit items.** You and your members may enjoy creating a club logo to use on club shirts, hats, tote bags, banners, and more. Wearing your club’s spirit wear at community festivals, at the fair, and at other public places is a great way to get the 4-H image out and into the community.
- **Participate in a county 4-H promotional effort.** Contact your county 4-H Extension professional and ask about potential county 4-H recruitment and promotional programs. Opportunities may include presentations in schools with classrooms and parent groups, feature 4-H news inserts, promotional events at local malls or businesses, talks with civic organizations, PSAs on radio stations, and many others.

Reporting Your Club’s Activities

Sharing with Your 4-H Families

Do not assume that your 4-H club members are going to take home information to their parent/guardian and family members. Use one or more of these tips to communicate with your 4-H families:

- Hold parent information meetings to cover essential 4-H information. Be sure to distribute the club’s constitution, bylaws, and member expectations/code of conduct to all families at the beginning of the year.
- Encourage adult family members to attend meetings and club activities.
- Send home important dates and information in writing.
- Check with your county 4-H professional about county-specific guides for parents.
- Create a club calendar/schedule and distribute to families.
- Write a club newsletter or information letter and send to families.
- Create a club list to send e-mails or texts to keep families up-to-date.
- Use a secure social media platform to communicate with families.

Sharing Information with Your County Extension Office

Part of your club's success depends upon your ability to get information to and from your county Extension office: club's enrollment, event registrations, fundraising forms, volunteer hours, and other club activities. You have a responsibility to get required information to your county Extension office by the established deadlines. Here are some of the items you should expect to report on:

- Enrollment and re-enrollment forms for members/volunteers
- 4-H event registrations (county, regional, and state events)
- Fair entry forms (local, county and state)
- Volunteer hours
- Club learning experiences (community service, fundraising, quality assurance, health and safety programs, etc.)
- [4-H Club Chartering Checklist](#)
- [Ohio 4-H Annual Financial Summary](#)
- Proof of filing your IRS 990 tax return
- Reports on special club activities (Your county may have additional guidelines for reporting club activities.)

Records Retention

Ohio 4-H collects a great deal of information and data about those involved in the youth program. Some records must be maintained by the county office, while others, such as club financials, can be held only by the volunteer leaders of that entity. Per OSU Extension Business Office policy, county offices are not to handle 4-H club or committee funds. The following retention record timeframe is recommended for committees and clubs as they keep their own records as it will enable them to comply with university policy. In addition, it is good financial practice to keep accurate fiscal records of 4-H club payments and deposits.

Records of Committees & 4-H Clubs

Document	IUC Code	Retention timeframe	Disposition
Banking Records (deposits, statements, canceled checks, checkbook reconciliation)	FIN1000	7 years	Destroy-Secure
Budget planning	FIN2000	Active year + 1 year	Destroy
Receipts	ACC1000	7 years	Destroy
EIN		3 years after group disbands	Destroy-Secure
Financial Reports, annual	FIN7000	7 years	Destroy-Secure
Financial Audits, external	FIN7010	7 years	Consider County Archival Review or Destroy-Secure
IRS filings, annual & Ohio Sales Tax, semi-annual	LEG5010	7 years	Consider Permanent within Committee or Office

Working with Youth

Who Is in Your 4-H Club?

Each member in your 4-H club is unique and special, coming to your club with characteristics, needs, and interests reflective of their age, project knowledge, skill level, and support network. Your 4-H club may include Cloverbuds and teens, first-timers and veteran members, leaders and followers. Your challenge is to create a club environment where all members are “green and growing.” Whether you have just five or more than thirty members, you are helping each of them to become competent, caring, contributing, and capable citizens.

Why Do Members Join 4-H?

Whether you were a 4-H member or are brand new to the 4-H program, you will need to be able to answer this question to be a successful 4-H advisor or leader. Fun, friends, camp, fair, projects, and new experiences are some of the common reasons youth give to join 4-H. If you probe a little deeper, members may share answers such as, “to develop leadership skills, to be part of a team, or to make a difference in my community.” However, what these reasons have in common is the opportunity for members to grow individually and as part of a group—the 4-H club.

How Do Members Benefit from The 4-H Club?

Your club’s ability to meet members’ individual and group needs and interests can be the catalyst for member self-motivation, initiative, and creative expression. Research has shown that self-motivation, when coupled with challenge, is an effective way to encourage youth initiative. Many believe developing initiative helps youth solve problems, achieve goals, and overcome life’s challenges. Some even consider initiative to be the foundation for leadership, creativity, altruism, and civic engagement. How are your 4-H club experiences helping to shape member’s lifestyles, daily decisions, and career choices?

How Can You Support Successful 4-H Members?

- Sharpen your volunteer skills in the [developmental needs of youth](#) and learn how age influences your club experiences and members’ outcomes.
- Increase [4-H teen participation](#) by creating experiences that meet their specific developmental needs.
- Tap your members’ potential by encouraging their participation in 4-H’s world of [awards and opportunities](#).
- Support special-needs members by understanding and meeting their specific programming issues (see page 30).
- Understand the differences in member requirements for Cloverbud and project members to plan meaningful club experiences for both.

PROGRAM CRITERIA	CLOVERBUDS	PROJECT MEMBERS
What is the age eligibility? (Age determined as of January 1st of the current year.)	Age 5 AND in Kindergarten through 2nd grade	Age 8 AND in 3rd grade through age 19
What is the learning focus?	Activity-centered, short 5 to 15 minute activities on varied topics	Project-centered, time commitment dependent on project selected, club activities challenge and support member project-learning
Who directs the learning process?	Leader-directed	Member self-study, member- and leader-directed
What is the basis for the learning experiences?	Activity manual taught by leaders	Project manual used by members, supplemental resource handbooks, and teaching aids
What animal experiences are possible?	Small animals in a group setting handled by a leader, no large animal experiences allowed	Small and large animals as selected by the member and parent/guardian
What are the evaluation criteria?	Non-competitive, equal recognition, participation	Competitive, achievement, participation
What camping experiences are available?	Day camp and one night overnight camping experiences with Cloverbud-age members only.	Day camp and multi-night camping experiences, county, regional, and state opportunities.

Positive Youth Development (PYD)

Many people used to believe that children and adolescents were problems that had to be fixed. Positive youth development, at that time, was seen as the absence of risky behavior. Today we know all youth need support, structure, and opportunities to learn. Positive youth development learning experiences will help them to realize their full potential. PYD builds on young people's strengths and recognizes their unique contributions. The focus is on promoting the social, emotional, spiritual, and mental well-being of young people. PYD approaches help young people maintain safe and healthy behaviors and redirect others to engage in healthier, more positive actions.

All 4-H programs are developed within a framework of positive youth development. When adult volunteers in the 4-H organization strive to include activities and opportunities based on the Eight Essential Elements, positive youth development occurs.

The diagram contained in Tufts University Professor Richard Lerner's *The Positive Development of Youth: Comprehensive Findings from the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development*, shows how 4-H can impact youth through positive development outcomes which result in becoming contributing adults. See the full report of the study at <http://www.4-h.org/about/youth-development-research/positive-youth-development-study/>

How Can You Support Youth with Special Needs?

You may have a member(s) in your 4-H club who is differently abled. Regardless of the disability (physical, mental, developmental, etc.), it is imperative to work with the child and his or her parents/guardians to set goals and modify experiences to meet the child's needs. Being sensitive to the concerns of the parent and child is important to help them feel included.

Types of Special Needs

- Physical—Visual or hearing impaired, spinal cord injuries, trauma injuries related to an accident, certain medical conditions or illnesses.
- Mental—Conditions associated with below or above average intellectual functioning.
- Developmental—Learning disabilities and emotional disorders.

Use the Winning 4-H Plan to Ensure a Positive Experience for Youth with Disabilities

- Learn about the child and the special need. Talk to the parents or guardians and research the special need on the Internet, at the library, or through a local support group.
- Treat each child as a special child, regardless of special need. Recognize each child's skills, abilities, talents, and needs.
- Recognize positive behaviors and give lots of positive reinforcement. Make expectations realistic.
- Help the total club membership appreciate and understand the disability of its members.
- Have parents or guardians share information with your county Extension professional to help the 4-H organization better prepare for the special needs member's participation in project judging, skillathons, camp, and other 4-H opportunities.
- Winning 4-H Plan resources and forms can be accessed by contacting your county Extension professional.

Your goal is to provide a positive enriching experience for every 4-H member. Encourage all parents to explain disabilities on the 4-H enrollment form. Even though this is optional, the information can assist your county Extension professional in planning a positive 4-H experience for all youth.

Managing Risks

4-H clubs are about fun, friendship, and learning. They can also be high risk if you are not following standard practices or taking precautions to protect yourselves as a club. Here is a list to help your club determine what risks you may be taking.

Clubs need to consider the following:

- Club insurance
- Planning a 4-H meeting
- Finance and fundraising
- Healthcare in the 4-H club
- Transportation
- Volunteer expectations
- Behavior management for youth
- Food handling
- Social media
- Protecting 4-H privacy
- Specific risk management

Club Insurance

- Does your club purchase the supplemental insurance offered to clubs for minimal cost per member? (Typically the cost is \$1 per member, \$2 per horse project member.)
- Does your club purchase special activity insurance to cover special club events? (Typically the cost is 15 to 23 cents per participant per day.)
- Do club parents and volunteers understand that these policies are secondary to their personal policies?
- What is the difference between accident and liability insurance?
 - Accident Insurance may cover injuries or illness incurred while participating in a 4-H event or activity. To receive coverage, accident insurance must be purchased.
 - Liability Insurance is coverage protecting approved volunteers in good standing from loss due to litigation. The insurance is provided through OSU Extension and is secondary to the individual's personal insurance. Coverage applies to approved and appropriate actions during a 4-H event or activity.

Planning a 4-H Meeting

- Does your meeting site offer adequate and appropriate access to all members and other family members of all abilities?
- Does your meeting site have proper safety precautions, such as smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, and posted escape routes in place?

- Is your meeting site safe and 4-H appropriate? Consider how you will manage potential risks.
- If in a private home, does your club urge meeting hosts to check their home-owner policy for proper protection in case of injury?
- Does your club provide adequate supervision of members before, during, and after meetings?
 - See [Early Release Form](#)
- Does your club have appropriate adult to youth ratios?
 - Ages 6-8: 1 adult for 8 youth
 - Ages 9-14: 1 adult for 10 youth
 - Ages 15-18: 1 adult for 12 youth
- Does your club [properly use the 4-H emblem](#) on materials and products?

Finance and Fundraising

[Visit Ohio 4-H Financial Management Resources Website](#)

- Does your club follow the finance and fundraising guidelines as outlined by Ohio 4-H?
- Does your club have an active treasurer who is responsible for the accounts?
- Does your club require two signatures on the checking account—the treasurer and a volunteer not related to the treasurer?
- Does your club audit the books and file yearly financial reports with the Extension office by January 31 annually?
 - See the [Ohio 4-H Annual Financial Summary](#)
- Do your members vote on expenditures?
- Do club members have control of the treasury (including checking accounts) rather than the adult volunteers?
- Does your club follow proper fundraising practices?
- Does your club have an Employer Identification Number (EIN)? (see page 22)
- Does your club file their 990-N ePostcard annually? (see page 23)
- Does your club write receipts for all expenditures?
- Does your club [properly use the 4-H emblem](#) when fundraising?
- Have you reviewed OSU Extension's [policy on fundraising \(raffles, bingo, games of chance\)](#) applying to Ohio 4-H clubs and affiliates?
 - [Private Support for the 4-H Program](#)
 - [Sponsorships and Promotions](#)

Healthcare in the 4-H Club

As a volunteer leader, it is beneficial for you to have some basic medical and emergency contact information for your club members whose parents might not be present. You should review these forms and flag any relevant information before a club outing or trip. Any information collected for health care reasons within a 4-H setting shall be protected and not shared. In case of an emergency, always call 911 first!

- Does your club have each member complete a health form? Do volunteers review these annually and have them accessible at club events?
- Do your club volunteers have emergency information, including contact numbers, for each member?
- Does your club have basic health information for each member—including allergies, special dietary needs, and/or medications?
- Does your club have access to basic first aid supplies?
- Does your club follow-up with parents on all injury/health concerns, even the little bumps and scrapes? Do you complete incident reports?
- Do club volunteers know how to protect themselves when dealing with injuries/illnesses involving bodily fluids?

Transportation

- Does your club require informed consent forms for all members participating?
 - [Waiver and Permission to Transport Child](#)
- Does your club travel with your members' health and emergency information?
- Does your club share important information with families such as schedule for the day, behavioral expectations, appropriate attire, money needed, or other items to bring along?
- Does your club require that all drivers be adults?
- Does your club require that all drivers show a valid driver's license and proof of insurance if requested?
 - See [transportation policy](#)
- Does your club require that a seat belt be available to each person in the vehicle and worn by all?
- Does your club provide an emergency contact number for parents to reach you while on the trip?
- Does your club provide adequate adult supervision/chaperones?

Volunteer Expectations

- Do your club volunteers follow 4-H guidelines, policies, and suggested practices?
 - [Activities and Programs with Minor Participants Policy 1.50](#)
- Do your club volunteers understand their job description as well as the [Standards of Behavior](#) policies of OSU Extension?
- Do your club volunteers model OSU Extension's Volunteer Standards of Behavior when interacting with members; such as using appropriate language, safe driving, avoiding use of alcohol and tobacco, and not using drugs?
- Do your club volunteers understand how to recognize signs of child abuse or neglect and how to report it?
 - [Child Abuse/Neglect Reporting Facts \(PowerPoint\)](#)
 - [Reporting Document](#)
- Do your club volunteers have strategies in place that do not put them in one-on-one situations where they would be alone with a single child?
- Do your club volunteers understand what is appropriate physical contact with your members?

Behavior Management for Youth

- Does your club outline member behavior expectations to all members and parents?
 - 4-H Youth Member Code of Conduct is included in member enrollment materials
- Does your club respond appropriately to discipline concerns?
 - [Sample of Effective Behavior Management link](#)
- Does your club provide a well-organized and planned program so that members are always moving in a positive direction?
- Does your club provide a positive, "no put-downs" atmosphere for club members?

Food Handling

- Have you reviewed the [Ohio State University Extension Food Preparation/Service Policy and Procedures](#)?
- Does your club conduct a food service that requires certified volunteers?
- If required, are your volunteers certified through the Safe Handling for the Occasional Quantity Cooks training module? If so, contact your local Extension professional for more information and the link to the online training module.
- When selling food items, does your club follow proper health regulations, safe food handling practices, and obtain required permits?

- When food is involved, either selling or eating, are proper hand washing facilities available?
- Does your club follow safe food handling practices at club social events, including transportation of food?

Social Media

- Does your club follow all [OSU Extension social media policies](#)?
- Does your club regularly monitor your online presence for appropriate content?
- Does your club properly use the 4-H emblem on social media materials?
- Does your club have photo releases for all members and adults? Or have you confirmed this with your local extension office to ensure they are on file?
 - [Photo Release Form - For Youth and Adults](#)

Protecting 4-H Privacy

- Does your club have photo releases for all members and adults? Have you confirmed this with your local Extension office to ensure they are on file?
- Does your club restrict access to health records, release forms, personnel information, and passwords?

Specific Risk Management

The following 4-H activities require special attention when managing risk...please see your county Extension office or follow links for more details.

Overnight Events

Before any young person attends an overnight 4-H event, his/her parent/legal guardian must sign and return the [4-H Overnight Housing Parent/Guardian Permission Form](#).

Trips and Tours

Consider conducting a pre-trip visit to assess risk and appropriateness of your trip/tour. Refer to the transportation section of this handbook (page 32).

Equine Projects, Events, and Activities

- [Ohio 4-H Horse Project Website](#)
- [Permission to Participate Form](#)
- [Protective Headgear Policy](#)

Shooting Sports

These projects must be offered by specifically trained and certified volunteers through Ohio 4-H Shooting Sports. (4-H project exceptions include *Basic Archery* and *Safe Use of Guns*.)

- [Ohio 4-H Shooting Sports](#)

PetPALS and Animals

Please review the project requirements and guidelines for these specific areas:

- [Companion Animals](#)
- [PetPALS](#)

Animals at the 4-H Club Meeting

For some clubs, animals are a regular part of meetings, such as horse-riding workouts or dog obedience training sessions. For other clubs, there may be occasions when you invite animals into your 4-H club for special demonstrations and/or educational purposes. Here are some questions to determine if you are ensuring the safety of all humans and animals:

- Is the facility size adequate for the maximum number of members and animals participating in a meeting?
- Is there adequate adult supervision to ensure that all members and animals are acting in a safe and appropriate manner?
- What types of preparations need to be made prior to the meeting to ensure the safety of all humans and animals?
- Does your club or your facility have accident insurance for your members?
- Do you have written guidelines regarding proper behavior of members and animals at a meeting? Have you reviewed these expectations with members and parents?
- Do you have a safety plan to isolate animals that may act in an unsafe manner?
- Do you have access to hand washing facilities?
- Have you reviewed all members' health information for any potential allergies or other concerns?
- Have you selected an animal that has an appropriate temperament and level of training to behave in an acceptable manner?
- Do animals have appropriate vaccinations if applicable (i.e., rabies vaccination)?
- Do you have the knowledge to make a visual inspection of the animals for any potential health concerns?
- Cloverbuds and Animals: please refer to the [Cloverbud Policy](#)
- Have you taught your members how to act around this type of animal? What are the dos and don'ts of animal safety?



Factors to Consider for Members:

- Not all children have pets or livestock at home. It is important to know your group and understand what experience they have with animals. Some children are frightened of certain animals. It is important to respect and accommodate that fear at your meetings.
- Prior to the meeting, inform parents that the animal will be visiting and that they should make you aware of any issues their child may have being around this animal. Let the parents know the species, breed, size, etc. of the visiting animal.
- Prior to your meeting, prepare members for the animal's visit. Explain how actions like loud noises, sudden movements, and darting hands can confuse and frighten animals. Set ground rules for how members will interact with the animals before the meeting.
- Teach members the proper way to approach an animal, considering dangers such as kicking or biting. Some animals become frightened if they smell another animal. Do not assume members know the dangerous zones when up close to the animal.
- Correct unacceptable behavior. Members should understand that behaviors like poking the animal or trying to purposefully scare it causes unnecessary stress on the animal and may cause the animal to react in a harmful way.
- Make sure members understand the importance of hand washing before and after petting/touching the animal or equipment. Certain scents (like food) on a member's hand may cause an animal, such as a rabbit, guinea pig, dog, etc., to nip or bite, thinking it is getting some food. Be sure that your meeting location has adequate hand washing facilities. Telling members, "be sure to wash your hands when you get home," is not acceptable.
 - [The ABCs of Proper Hand Washing](#)



Factors to Consider for Animals:

- Select an animal that is calm in temperament and has been handled and exposed to a variety of people and surroundings.
- Do not select an animal where biosecurity issues affect the animal returning to its home location.
- Animals often react differently in unfamiliar settings. Even the calmest animal can become frightened and perhaps dangerous if not given a chance to become acclimated to its surroundings. Give your animal time to adjust to its surroundings before your meeting begins.
- Use humane and proper restraint for the animal. Proper restraint is critical for animal and member safety, especially when you are demonstrating something on the animal (i.e., trimming a hoof or giving an injection).
- Have a safety plan. Know how you could isolate the animal quickly from the members or members from the animal if something goes wrong.

Meeting Plan:

- Be sure to plan for adequate adult supervision. You may need additional volunteers to help supervise members. It takes more than one person to hold the animal, demonstrate key concepts, and make sure members are behaving in a safe manner.
- Your meeting site should have adequate space to allow the animal to be removed or isolated in case it becomes stressed or unmanageable.
- Your meeting site should have hand washing facilities.
- Allow time for questions. Children are very curious and will have questions not only about the topic being covered but also about the animal's name, what they like to eat, etc. Members will want to "get acquainted" with their visitor.

Animals can teach children many valuable lessons. With proper planning and preparation they can be a great addition to your club's learning experiences. Visit the [Ohio Livestock Care Standards](#) website for more information.