



Participation Policy

Mission

The mission of the Iowa 4-H Youth Development Program is to empower youth to reach their full potential working and learning in partnership with caring adults. This mission is the basis from which program policy and practices must stem. The following are the Iowa expectations for 4-H participation and are based on National 4-H guidelines. It is expected that all 4-H programs will incorporate the guiding principles as described in The Iowa 4-H Youth Development Experience (4H 3020A and B) and the Iowa 4-H Youth Development Plan: How We Achieve Our Mission (4H 3036B). Our guiding principles are achieved through the design and delivery of intentional activities and events where all young peoples' needs of belonging, independence, generosity and mastery are met.

Who Is a 4-H'er?

"4-H'er" is an all-inclusive term which refers to kindergarten through 12th grade youth who participate in a 4-H program/activity designed to include a minimum of 6 hours* of intentional, youth development learning experiences with a caring adult.

Participant Requirements

Club Membership

- A 4-H club is a continuing group** of enrolled youth, adult volunteers, and staff chartered*** by the state 4-H office, with youth and adult leadership and a planned youth development learning experience throughout all or several months of the year.
- The target audience for club membership is grades 4-12. The club learning experience can be general/and or a specific topic of interest.
- Program Fee has been paid.

- Clubs meet any time (before, during and after school, evenings or weekends).
- Club types include, but are not limited to, project/special interest clubs, community clubs, afterschool clubs, and site-based clubs.
- Clubs must have a minimum of 5 members from 2 or more families.
- The 4-12 grade members involved in clubs are eligible, but not required, to participate in competitive events.

A 4-H Club and its members will:

- Build youth and adult partnerships.
- Set goals and evaluate progress toward those goals.
- Plan a fun experiential-based program where youth learn skills in leadership, citizenship, and communications, personal life management and project work where all youth
 - Attend meetings/workshops/camps, etc.
 - Complete a service project.
 - Demonstrate learning by giving a presentation or demonstration before a group.
 - Keep records of activities and evaluate experiences.

Independent Membership

- Independent membership is an opportunity for youth from 4th through 12th grade where an adult mentor guides a 4-H'er in the planning of their 4-H experience.
- Independent membership provides individual youth, access to Iowa State University Extension 4-H programs.

- Mentors are selected by the member, parents/guardian and ISU Extension staff and have successfully completed the required screening and training process.
- The mentor provides the member experientially designed learning opportunities that support the basic needs of youth (belonging, independence, generosity and mastery) and the 5 outcomes of the 4-H experience (leadership, citizenship, communications, personal life management and knowledge).
- The 4-H Independent Membership Experience and Member expectations are the same as the Club Member Expectations. See Independent Membership Guidelines 4-H 15b and c.
- Independent members are eligible but not required to participate in competitive events, fairs, and camps.

Group Participants

- A 4-H group is a group of enrolled/registered young people K-12 and adult volunteers/staff who participate in non-continuous and short term planned educational programs.
- The group meets for a minimum of 6 hours.*
- The experience/s are generally designed by adults and can help to reach new and underserved audiences, address priority topics, and build collaborations.
- An example of experiences might include camps, day camps, before, during, or after school groups, no-school day groups, summer groups and special interest groups.

The 4-12 grade groups will cultivate youth and adult partnerships and provide fun experiential-based learning experiences that foster the development of one or more of the following outcomes: leadership, citizenship, communications, personal life management, and knowledge.

The K-3 grade groups (Clover Kids) will offer participation for children in grades K-3 where adult leaders plan the experiential learning experience for them. The uniqueness of children in this stage of development requires a cooperative program. Children enrolled in this program, because of developmental appropriateness, will not be involved in competitions and may not be eligible for activities or projects designed for 4-12 grade 4-H club members. (Reference Clover Kids Toolbox)

4-H Clover Kid Group will:

- Offer hands-on activities uniquely suited for the K-3 developmental age.
- Create settings where children experience the joy of learning in a supportive, creative, challenging and fun environment.
- Provide cooperative opportunities to foster self-understanding and self-confidence.
- Help youth build friendships and skills.
- Integrate active, hands-on learning opportunities designed to develop children's physical, mental, and social skills.
- Provide opportunities for positive social interaction with other children and caring adults.

Volunteer Leadership

4-H relies on its volunteers. At every level 4-H programs are successful to the extent they tap the creativity, nurturing, wisdom and skills of volunteers. The program needs volunteers to organize or assist with:

- Clubs, groups, independent members and Clover Kids groups
- Afterschool programs
- Camps, day and overnight
- Youth Committees
- Field Trips
- County Fairs

Our **general/organizational volunteers** provide overall leadership to club or group organization, overseeing the structure and operation and serving as the club's contact with Extension employees and county volunteers. They involve and coordinate activities of other volunteer roles that support the group. **Project volunteers** meet with youth on a regular basis in a club, special interest, after school, or camping program to assist youth in achieving success in one of the 4-H outcomes. An **activity volunteer** helps conduct club, county, area or state events involving 4-H members and/or adult 4-H volunteers. A **resource volunteer** helps assist or conduct a short term, single event or learning experiences under the administration of a trained volunteer or staff. All 4-H volunteers support youth by providing an environment for them to feel they belong, develop independence, gain knowledge and skills and demonstrate generosity through service to others.

4-H adult volunteers will:

- Complete a volunteer application and background screening if needed. See 4H 2A located at <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/4H/restrict/cpsp.htm>.
- Foster and promote the four needs of youth and the five outcomes of the 4-H experience.
- Promote positive youth development environments for youth that emphasize youth strengths.
- Complete a minimum of two 4-H volunteer trainings each year for general/organizational and project leaders.
- Provide appropriate supervision of activities/meetings/field trips, etc.
- Develop working relationships with a variety of community partners.

Please refer to additional roles and expectations as outlined in the specific Iowa 4-H programs or your county volunteer job descriptions.

4-H and County Extension Council Partnership

County Extension Councils in partnership with Iowa State University Extension 4-H Youth Development are responsible for the planning and implementation of the 4-H program in their county. Please refer to the 4-H Governance document (4H 11).

General Enrollment Policy

1. Initial enrollment of youth in Iowa State University Extension 4-H Youth programs can occur at any time.
2. 4-H participants are eligible to take part in 4-H Youth events and activities if specific eligibility guidelines are met. There may be enrollment deadlines and grade limitations for participation in some activities and events.
3. 4-H participants hold membership in only one county or state at a time. There may be special circumstances beyond a youth's control that necessitate multiple county or state membership.

Reference Pieces for Events and Activities

- Project requirements or guidelines in the 4-H Pick-A-Project paper (4H 200)
- Iowa 4-H Animal and Poultry Identification, Weighing and Exhibiting Requirements for County, State, and Interstate Shows (4H 202)
- Rules and regulations listed for specific 4-H programs and events
- State and national 4-H recognition handbooks
- Rules and regulations in 4-H premium lists for fairs and shows
- Clover Kids Toolbox
- Federal Report Document ES237

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- * Federal Standard, Federal Definition
 - ** Continuing = will meet year to year
 - *** Charters: The Key to Official Recognition. A National 4-H Headquarters Fact Sheet
(http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/library/fs_charter_1-25-06.pdf)

Revised by Judy Levings, youth development specialist

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