



## **Positive Youth Development Guidelines Behavior & Rule Management for Fairs and Events**

When Iowa 4-H members participate in events, those events have rules and protocols to ensure safety and integrity for all participants. Sometimes our 4-H members and/or families fail to abide by the Iowa Exhibitor Youth Code of Ethics, the Iowa 4-H Code of Conduct for Youth/Families, and/or event rules, which may lead to disciplinary action. To ensure consistency and fairness, a written process is necessary to respond to and resolve 4-H issues and complaints in a manner that teaches good character, life skills, and positive youth development. A protest, complaint, or appeal of disciplinary action may typically be filed around a competitive event, but other issues may arise in which this policy could be used.

This document is to serve as a guide for county extension districts. Counties may have specific and multiple committees as part of their decision-making structure and may adopt the following verbiage or adapt to fit their specific needs.

### **Local (County) Programs/Events vs. State Programs/Events**

- County Extension Districts are strongly encouraged to develop a partnership agreement with their local fair boards, FFA and other entities as appropriate for the event.
- The partnership agreement should include how protests, complaints, and appeals are handled.
- Disciplinary action that is taken should involve individuals from multiple committees or boards (i.e. Youth Committee, Extension Council, 4-H Staff, Fair Board) in making these decisions.
- For state 4-H events, the respective State Event Coordinator/Specialist has the authority to make appropriate decisions based on the specific event guidelines. When needed, county extension staff may be involved in that process.

### **Disciplinary Action**

- Depending on the degree of infraction, whether it's a first offense versus repeated offense, or factors that involve the safety of youth/families or welfare of animals, could impact the severity and length of action. For example, a violation of a fitting rule could constitute a different action compared to a positive drug residue in an animal.
- Examples of actions taken at a fair could include but are not limited to: disqualifying the animal from the particular show, disqualifying the exhibitor from that year's fair participation (in all exhibits), withholding premiums and awards, or potential disqualification from future fair participation.
- It's important to keep in mind positive youth development practices when using disciplinary action – punishing the youth for a parent/guardian's wrongdoing is not best practice.

### **Evidence Collection and Submission**

- In cases of protests or complaints, the burden of proof lies with the individual(s) filing
- In cases of appeals to disciplinary action, the burden of proof lies with the individual(s) filing the appeal

- Documentation can vary – from written documents, photos, videos, etc.
- In certain circumstances, staff and/or event officials may have access to items or be presented with photos or videos taken or may witness something themselves – in these cases, an official protest may not necessary
- Depending on the partnership agreement, it may be beneficial to keep anonymity for individuals submitting photo and/or video evidence to staff and/or event officials

### **On-the-Spot Decisions**

At times, difficult decisions may need to be made quickly and seemingly on the spot. Staff and volunteers can prepare for these situations by becoming familiar with 4-H policies and procedures as well as fair premium book rules. There are times when a committee meeting is needed and times when it is appropriate for staff or volunteer(s) responsible for the event to make this decision quickly. Points for consideration when these quick decisions may be needed are listed below.

- Safety – A quick decision is needed when someone’s safety or well-being is involved.
- Positive Youth Development – Always keep the best interest of the youth and the integrity of the 4-H Youth Development Program in the forefront when making quick decisions.
- Confidentiality – Be respectful of situations that may need to remain confidential.
- Time Sensitive – Does this situation truly need an “on the spot” decision? Although it may appear that a decision must be made on the spot, many times a decision can wait until you have the time to gather the necessary information to make an informed decision. Take the time to make the best decision you can.
- Gather as much information as you are able. Read your fair book or contest rules carefully.
- Use your committees whenever possible. Designate event or fair committees and use their expertise when making decisions.
- Use the situation as a teaching opportunity for the youth or person(s) involved.
- Review the Decision — Take the time to review the situation and decision

### **Protests & Appeals**

It is important to note that some decisions cannot be protested/appealed. These include:

- Decisions made by judges, which are final
- Issues related to deadlines for 4-H enrollment, livestock identification, and/or county/state fair entry deadlines
- Code of Conduct-related violations which are addressed in a separate document

### **Who may submit?**

- Any Iowa 4-H member and his/her/their parent or guardian
- In the case of fairs, only participants entered in the same department can file a protest or appeal of disciplinary action

### **Who responds?**

- A committee established by the county extension district
- For county fairs, a committee established in accordance with a partnership agreement – this committee should include members from various groups such as Extension Council, Youth Committee, Fair Board, 4-H staff

### **Process for individuals filing a protest or complaint**

- During the county fair, protests/complaints must be filed within 24 hours of completion of the show (or competition)
- The written protest/complaint must include:
  - Names of persons involved AND cause of protest or complaint
  - Date of incident
  - Specific action, rule, etc., in question
  - Situation and documentation
  - Additional persons the committee may contact for further clarification
  - Signature of 4-H member and their parent/guardian filing the protest or complaint
- Counties may establish a required monetary deposit fee; and if the protest or complaint is upheld, the deposit is refunded
- The form is then submitted to designated county and/or official event staff

### **Process for staff or event officials dealing with protest or complaint**

- Once an official protest or complaint is filed, the designated committee shall meet to discuss the situation
- The parties for which the complaint or protest has been filed against, will be notified and given the opportunity to attend committee meetings
- It is the choice of the individual(s) filing the protest or complaint whether or not they are present at the meeting
- Participants in the meeting are expected to act in a civil manner
- All parties are expected to provide documentation/evidence at the hearing. If requested information is not provided, the committee may terminate the process
- After all relevant information is presented, the committee will meet to discuss the issue and come to a decision within 7 (seven) days
- Once a decision has been determined, the individual(s) filing the protest/complaint as well as those individuals impacted will be notified of the decision by committee representatives

### **Process for filing an appeal of disciplinary action**

- Once a decision has been made regarding disciplinary action, the individual(s) shall have fourteen (14) calendar days from receiving notification to appeal any disciplinary action
- The written appeal must include:
  - Names of persons involved AND cause for appeal
  - Date of incident
  - Specific action, rule, etc., in question
  - Situation and documentation
  - Additional persons the committee may contact for further clarification
  - Signature of 4-H member and their parent/guardian filing the appeal
- The form is then submitted to designated county and/or official event staff
- Counties may establish a required monetary deposit fee; and if the appeal is upheld, the deposit is refunded

**Process for staff or event officials dealing with appeals of disciplinary action**

- Once an appeal of disciplinary action has been filed, the initial decision-making committee shall respond to the individual within seven (7) calendar days
- Staff and/or event officials can consult with other local committees and/or other regional/state ISUEO staff for guidance on appropriate disciplinary action

This document serves as a guide for county extension staff to utilize as necessary. Certain local instances or circumstances may dictate a need to change or add verbiage listed above. Its important counties develop a partnership agreement with local fair boards to assist in these processes.