Iowa 4-H Youth Development

Participation Policy

Mission
The mission of the Iowa 4-H Youth Development Program is to empower youth to reach their full potential through youth-adult partnerships and research-based experiences. 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, mastery, independence, and generosity are met.

Who Is a 4-H’er?
“4H’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 4-12th 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 that enable them to be productive citizens, outstanding communicators, effective leaders, and successful learners. Youth will:
  - 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 ISU Extension & Outreach 4-H programs.
- Program Fee has been paid.
- 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, mastery, independence, and generosity) and the outcomes of the 4-H experience (productive citizens, outstanding
communicators, effective leaders, successful learners).

- The 4-H Independent Membership Experience and Member expectations are the same as the Club Member Expectations. See Independent Membership Guidelines 4H 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 experiences 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.

**Camp Experience**

Having a 4-H camp experience is an integral part of the 4-H program. It is recommended that all 4-H members participate in a camping experience locally and at the Iowa 4-H Center.

- 4-H camp offers the opportunity for supervised independence to gain self-confidence and leadership skills.

- Campers gain a sense of belonging with a caring group while making lifelong friends.

- Campers gain a spirit of generosity toward others.

- Campers gain a wide variety of opportunities to master new skills and discover nature.

*The 4-12th 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: productive citizen, outstanding communicator, effective leader, successful learner.

*The K-3rd 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 4-12th grade 4-H club members. (Reference Clover Kids Toolbox.)

**4-H Clover Kids Groups** 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 who are caring adults to organize or assist with:

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

Our general/organizational volunteers provide overall leadership to club or group organization, overseeing the structure and operation and serving as the club’s/group’s contact with Extension employees and county volunteers. They involve and coordinate activities of other volunteer roles that support the club/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 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 experience 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, gain knowledge and skills, develop independence, and demonstrate generosity through service to others.

4-H adult volunteers will:
- Complete a volunteer application and background screening as needed for his or her role. See 4H 2A located at https://www.extension.iastate.edu/4h/restrict/cpsp.htm.
- Foster and promote the needs of youth and the outcomes of the 4-H experience as identified in Iowa’s 4-H Equation.
- Promote positive youth development environments for youth that emphasize youth strengths.
- Complete orientation, new volunteer training, and risk management training as needed for his or her role.
- Complete the designated campus generated 4-H volunteer training each year for general/organizational and project, and Clover Kids leaders.
- Provide appropriate supervision of activities/meetings/field trips, etc.
- Develop working relationships with parents, Extension staff, and community partners.

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

4-H and County Extension Council Partnership
County Extension Councils, in partnership with Iowa State University Extension & Outreach 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. Enrollment and re-enrollment of youth in Iowa State University Extension & Outreach 4-H Youth programs may occur at any time during the year.
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 registration 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 memberships.

Reference Pieces for Events and Activities
- Project requirements or guidelines in the 4-H Project Hot Sheets, http://www.extension.iastate.edu/4h/projects.
- 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 Standard, Federal Definition
** Continuing = will meet year to year

Revised March 2013 by Chris Gleason, 4-H program specialist

Iowa State University Extension programs are available to all without regard to race, color, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, sex, marital status, disability, or status as a U.S. veteran. Inquiries can be directed to the Director of Equal Opportunity and Compliance, 3280 Beardshear Hall, (515) 294-7612.