

# **Massachusetts 4-H Policy**

## **Volunteer Related Policy**

All 4-H volunteers (including Advisory and Program Board members) must be fully screened and have a Code of Conduct and volunteer service (or board service) description on file. There are consequences to breaking the Code of Conduct that include not being allowed to continue as a 4-H volunteer. If a club meets in a leader's home all family members (18 and older) must be CORI checked.

4-H club leaders must submit all required reports, including an annual club report and financial summary.

The 4-H Director may dismiss a volunteer for violation of the Volunteer Code of Conduct or any Massachusetts or national 4-H policy. Such a dismissal will only be made following investigation by the 4-H Director and cannot be appealed.

Youth age 19 and 20 may not lead clubs on their own; they may serve as assistant leaders, working under the direct supervision of a 4-H leader, age 21 or older.

Volunteers must structure programs to avoid situations where they are alone with an individual 4-H member.

The 4-H adult/child ratio is a minimum of 1 adult to 10 youth. In the case of cloverbuds (ages 5-7) there must be at least 2 adults for every 10 youth.

No adult chaperone may stay in a room with youth overnight (an exception is made when the facility has only a few large sleeping rooms such as the Eastern States dormitory).

If a volunteer transports others the volunteer must carry automobile insurance (recommend a minimum of \$300,000 liability coverage), have a valid drivers' license and adhere to all state laws related to driving/riding in a vehicle.

Volunteers must submit the 4-H Incident Report to the local Educator for any serious incidents/accidents that occur.

Volunteers are required to submit a written report to their local Educator documenting any serious incident/accident.

## **Youth Related Policy**

Age of 4-H membership is 5-18 and is determined on January 1 of the current 4-H year (4-H year is September 1 through August 31). Those ages 5-7 are cloverbud members, ages 8-13 are junior members and ages 14-18 are senior members.

Competition is not allowed under any circumstances for youth younger than age 8.

Youth under the age of 8 cannot work with or exhibit large animals.

There are consequences for youth who break the Code of Conduct, which include (but are not limited to) expulsion from 4-H.

All members enrolled in clubs in more than one county must designate one county (and state if enrolled in more than one state) as their primary county of enrollment and will compete only in that one county for events such as (but not limited to) Visual Presentations, Horse Round-Up events, Records, Fairs, State Horse Show and the Big E animal shows.

All 4-H members must belong to a 4-H club. Individual membership is only an option when a club disbands or with special permission from the Educator.

### **Club Related Policy**

All 4-H clubs must be chartered through their local 4-H office. A club charter is issued one time only to each individual club. If leadership of the club changes the charter should be given to the new leader of the group. If lost, a new copy of the charter can be provided upon request.

Each club must re-enroll annually and members must submit all required paperwork and fees. A 4-H club must have 5 members from at least 3 different families.

UMass Extension 4-H prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation or marital or family status. The name of a 4-H club cannot be specific to any religion or gender and must have a positive message.

4-H clubs cannot own animals or vehicles. 4-H volunteers may own animals and vehicles; they are the tax responsibility of the individual 4-H volunteer.

### **Program Related Policy**

4-H participation fees are non-refundable. If a club disbands during the program year and a suitable new club is not found the member remains enrolled for that year as an individual member.

If a club divides itself, creating more than one recognized and enrolled club the funds from the original club will be evenly disbursed based on membership (from the original club, not new members) in each club. If members of the disbanded club join an existing club, no monies from the disbanded club go to the existing club.

Any item postmarked by the deadline date is accepted.

No alcohol can be served at 4-H sponsored events that include any youth under the age of 18.

Only animals owned by enrolled 4-H members and volunteers for sale or donation for use as a 4-H project may be listed in the 4-H newsletter. The information must be brief and not include pricing information. Information about animals for sale/donation from the general public or breeders can't be shared in any form except when this information comes through a UMass 4-H Animal Science Specialist.

Horse verification forms must be on file in the 4-H member's local office by April 1<sup>st</sup> or 90 days prior to the first horse show the member plans to exhibit in (April 1 for the Big E Horse Show).

4-H Livestock Verification Forms (for leased animal projects including beef, dairy, sheep, goat, llama, alpaca, swine) should be filed in the local 4-H office with enrollment paperwork by November 15 but must be on file no later than May 1 for beef and dairy cattle and by June 1 for goats, sheep, swine and llamas.

Contact information for 4-H members is confidential and cannot be shared with others (this includes 4-H volunteers who do not work directly with that member).

For 4-H exchanges, home visits must be conducted for all host families by the local Educator or volunteer(s) under the Educator's supervision. All adult household members must be CORI cleared prior to that family hosting at both the host sites and the state where the visits will occur.

Shooting Sports is not offered as a 4-H project in Massachusetts.

Health forms are required for participants at all 4-H events when parent is not present.

Any complaint/issue/concern to be addressed must be put in writing and sent to the local Educator or 4-H Director. Documentation and support for the complaint should be first hand and not based on hearsay.

Funds raised in the name of 4-H must be used for 4-H purposes. The 4-H club must get permission from the local Educator to conduct a fundraiser. If funds are raised for a charitable cause this must be clear to the donors and the 4-H group must follow through on the commitment to donate to that charity.

### **Additional 4-H Policy and Guidelines**

**All volunteers, members and parents are expected to be familiar with all 4-H policy and guidelines and adhere to them.**

Additional 4-H guidelines and policy are found in the following resources (unless stated otherwise all resources are available on the 4-H website):

- The MA 4-H Treasurers' Guide

- Financial Management Guides

- MA Club Charter Guidelines: requirements for being chartered as a 4-H club

- Using the 4-H Name and Emblem: information on proper use of 4-H emblem (found at [www.national4-hheadquarters.gov](http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov))

- MA 4-H Horse Show Rulebook

- MA 4-H Fair and Animal Show Safety Guidelines

- MA 4-H Clothing & Textiles Program Guidelines

- MA 4-H Parent/Adult Behavior Guidelines

- MA Volunteer Code of Conduct

- MA Member Code of Conduct

Go to [www.national4-hheadquarters.gov](http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov) for national 4-H policy/guidelines

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