

MA 4-H Cloverbud Guidelines

These guidelines, based on National 4-H Cloverbud Guidelines, have been created for the protection of our youth, our volunteers and our staff to ensure that programs for our youngest members are safe and developmentally appropriate.

What is a Cloverbud?

The term Cloverbud is used to identify 4-H members who are 5 to 7 years old. Children in this age group are a distinct audience for 4-H with developmental and learning characteristics that are different from older members. Refer to the “Working with Youth” factsheet (at www.mass4h.org; volunteer resources) for more information.

What kinds of programs are developmentally appropriate for Cloverbuds?

Cloverbuds should experience programs that are developmentally appropriate, activity-oriented, involve cooperative learning and are focused on learning activity skills and life skills through a wide variety of topic areas. The 5 to 7 year-old years are the time to build habits and skills to safely participate in 4-H projects independently as older 4-H members. A Cloverbud activity focuses on developing a skill or concept related to a short term experience; it emphasizes the process, not the product. 4-H projects, a long-term planned course of study in one subject area, are designed for 4-H members 8 and older. The skills Cloverbuds learn from their activities will prepare them for project work later. The focus of Cloverbud animal activities is on learning through activities such as clinics, skill-a-thons, and working with 4-H teen members and adults to learn about the care and training of the animals.

Guidelines for Cloverbuds (youth ages 5-7):

- Cloverbud members may participate in multi-age clubs or in clubs that are limited to Cloverbud members.
- No matter what the club format, programs for Cloverbuds must meet the requirements of the MA Cloverbud Guidelines.
- When Cloverbud members enroll, their project area should always be listed as “Cloverbud” (project code 910), not as a specific subject or topic (such as horse or foods).
- Programs for Cloverbuds should consist of introductory level (“sampler”) activities that build skills in a variety of 4-H project areas. Cloverbuds may not have one specific project.
- When Cloverbuds participate in multi-age club activities, activities should be modified or another activity substituted if the activity is inappropriate for Cloverbuds for safety, skill level, or attention span reasons.
- In a club involving other age youth (ages 8-18), a specific Cloverbud leader must be designated on the enrollment sheet (the main club leader is not allowed to also be the Cloverbud leader).
- While Cloverbuds may not hold elected club offices, they should have a chance to learn about club leadership roles. Assigning officer roles by random drawing or rotation or shadowing older officers are ways for Cloverbuds to learn about club officer jobs.

- Business meetings involving Cloverbuds should be brief and run by adults or teens with the focus on learning about planning, decision-making and leadership skills.
- Cloverbuds cannot handle money. They may be involved in club fundraising events with the direct supervision of an adult or teen. They cannot go door to door to raise funds.
- An adult or experienced teen should provide direct one-on-one supervision of Cloverbuds who are using potentially harmful tools such as scissors, knives, needles, hammers, etc. Cloverbuds may not independently operate power-driven equipment such as sewing machines, power drills, small engines, clippers, etc. By learning a progression of skills under careful supervision of an adult or experienced teen, Cloverbuds should begin to master the skills needed to use this equipment as an older 4-H member. Portions of activities requiring the use of items/tools with high potential for injury should be carried out when Cloverbud members are not nearby.
- Cloverbuds should have the opportunity to be introduced to simple record keeping skills using the MA 4-H Cloverbud record form (available at www.mass4h.org).
- Cloverbuds cannot be judged competitively or ranked in any way. Cloverbuds receive participation or special Cloverbud ribbons and constructive feedback on their exhibits/presentations/records.
- Cloverbuds cannot receive premiums. However, a small stipend or honorarium may be paid to the club or the member in an amount to be determined by each fair.

Cloverbuds and Animals:

- The national 4-H guidelines state that for safety and developmental reasons, 5 to 7 year olds may not have animal projects, but recognizes that engaging 5 to 7 year olds in activities with animals builds long-term interest in working with animals. Therefore, carefully structured, well supervised activities with animals are encouraged.
- Cloverbud animal activities are designed to introduce Cloverbuds to various kinds of animals and to develop safe basic care and handling skills.
- All Cloverbud animal interaction must be closely supervised by an adult or teen.
- Cloverbuds cannot show animals but may participate in clinics, classes and events where the animal is under the direct control of an adult or teen.

Adapted from Maine 4-H Cloverbud Policy
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