

Volunteering



For over 100 years, 4-H Extension staff have partnered with volunteers in delivering 4-H programs. We believe in and rely on volunteers from all areas of the state, from all walks of life and of all ages.

Today, our volunteer force is as strong as ever; helping both adults and youth to improve themselves, their quality of life and their communities through an enthusiastic sharing of information and ideas. You have joined the ranks of over 11,000 4-H volunteers who engage in the delivery, support, management and administration of 4-H programs throughout the State of Minnesota.

Without your time, talents and expertise we could not provide the high quality programs that touch approximately 150,000 youth each year. We welcome you and thank you.

In support of our volunteer partners, the Minnesota 4-H program believes that:

- Volunteers are critical to the fulfillment of the mission of Minnesota 4-H and are non-paid staff.
- Volunteers bring a richness in life experiences and skill that is beneficial to furthering positive youth development.
- Volunteers are stakeholders in the program in which they are a part.
- Volunteers deserve a clear expression of expectations (including the energy and commitment involved).
- Volunteers need to be matched with a role that is compatible with their skills and the mission of Minnesota 4-H.
- Volunteers need to clearly know who their supervisor is and how to be in contact with him/her for clarification, understanding and assistance.
- Volunteers require and deserve quality training that helps them to accomplish the role they have accepted.
- Volunteers are not to be exploited but held accountable for their commitments and for upholding the highest principles of positive youth development.
- The voluntary agreement between volunteers and the University of Minnesota Extension may be severed by either party at any time.
- The time of volunteers needs to be respected and valued.
- Volunteers need and deserve appropriate recognition for their work that advances the 4-H mission.

It is our vision (Toolkit 23) that Minnesota 4-H volunteers stand apart as being motivated by positive purposes in helping youth become competent, caring and connected citizens of character in their communities.

Beyond the basics that will prepare you for your volunteer role and the support as you carry it through, you should benefit personally from your relationship with the University of Minnesota Extension. You will have access to educational resources, build friendships with other volunteers, discover new interests, develop new skills and have an impact on your community. We hope you will take full advantage of these opportunities.

Responsibilities of 4-H Volunteers to the University of Minnesota Extension

Since Minnesota 4-H volunteers act as representatives of the University of Minnesota Extension when performing assigned duties, they have the responsibility to:

- Represent their county and University of Minnesota Extension programs with dignity and pride by being positive role models for youth.
- Conduct themselves in a courteous, respectful manner and exhibit good sportsmanship.
- Adhere to and enforce the rules, policies, and guidelines established by the University of Minnesota's Center for Youth Development and its staff.
- Refrain from the use of physical or verbal abuse.
- Refrain from inappropriate or unwanted touching of youth or adults.

- Refrain from destructive, offensive or sexually inappropriate behavior.
- Refrain from the possession or use of alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs.
- Avoid smoking and using tobacco products at 4-H events when youth are present.
- Respect the property of others, including clothing, personal items, equipment and facilities.
- Operate machinery, vehicles and other equipment in a responsible manner.
- Accept responsibility to promote and support the University of Minnesota Extension to develop an effective 4-H youth development program.

MN 4-H Volunteer Enrollment Form (1998)

And, additionally to:

- Obey the local, state, and national laws.
- Make all reasonable effort to assure that 4-H youth programs are accessible to youth without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status or sexual orientation.
- Recognize that verbal, sexual, physical abuse, and/or neglect of youth is unacceptable in 4-H youth programs. Report suspected abuse to supervising staff.
- Treat animals humanely and teach 4-H youth to provide appropriate animal care.

Professionals (or the professional's delegate) engaged in education are mandated reporters of abuse and neglect of children or vulnerable adults or a pregnant woman's use of a controlled substance for non-medical reasons during pregnancy. For 4-H, this means anyone who is employed by the University of Minnesota Extension and engaged in education. Extension volunteers are not mandated reporters, but a volunteer needs to immediately contact his/her supervisor to determine whether something needs to be reported by the supervisor.

4-H Volunteer Leadership Roles

Volunteers are adults or youth who have agreed to fill defined roles in planning, implementing and evaluating the 4-H club program. Basic club volunteer roles include, but are not limited to:

4-H Club Leader. Provides leadership to the overall organization and operation of a 4-H club (Toolkit 24).

4-H Club Co-Leader. Assists the Club Leader in providing leadership to the overall organization and operation of a 4-H club (Toolkit 25).

4-H Project Leader. Arranges learning experiences for 4-H (Toolkit 26).

4-H Activity Leader. Arranges learning experiences through group activities and events such as Share-the-Fun, camping, softball, club outing, etc. (Toolkit 27).

4-H Youth Leader. Assumes responsibilities for working with the local 4-H club or group in a specific leadership capacity under the supervision of an adult leader.

Volunteers fill significant teaching and management roles to assist salaried staff members in fulfilling the 4-H mission. Volunteer 4-H leaders are the **key** to successful 4-H programs. They enable more youth to be involved in 4-H through quality local 4-H club and 4-H Adventure experiences.

Volunteer Screening

The University of Minnesota Extension takes pride in the quality of adult leadership in the 4-H Youth Development Program. Indeed, we believe that 4-H youth development volunteers have the best interests of youth and 4-H youth development programs at heart when they choose to become volunteers. Yet, child abuse is a fact in our society. Unfortunately, there is no sure way to detect a child molester or perpetrator, of any kind of child abuse, in advance of attempted or actual abuse.

University of Minnesota Extension staff minimize these risks by learning all they can about applicants for volunteer positions: their experience with children; what motivates them to want to be volunteers with youth; and how they would handle discipline.

All 4-H adult volunteer applicants must be screened before being placed into their roles and identified as 4-H volunteers (this includes chaperones). This process also conveys the message that 4-H youth development programs are hostile environments for child abusers. By getting this message across, would-be abusers will be discouraged from trying to participate in Extension youth programs. Contact the local Extension Office for volunteer screening packets.

The utilization of this volunteer application process in the University of Minnesota Extension 4-H Youth Development Program is one risk management strategy to reduce liability and child abuse risks. This application process also strengthens the recruitment and placement of volunteers within the 4-H youth development program and increases the credibility of 4-H. The screening process includes four equally important parts:

1. Completion of the *Volunteer Application*.
2. Completion of the *Background Check Authorization*.
3. Receipt of three personal references.
4. Completion of an interview by 4-H staff.

The application process is confidential. Information provided is only available to those persons with a clear need to know.

Remember this procedure works to reduce risks and provide a safer environment for all those involved with the 4-H program. We desire to have quality staff and volunteers working with the youth of the community. Youth remain our top priority, and the University of Minnesota Extension desires to promote an environment which encourages positive growth.



Insurance Coverage

Volunteer Liability

Registered 4-H youth development volunteers are covered under the University of Minnesota policy of Indemnification and Defense of Employees approved by the Board of Regents, March 8, 1985 when their work is accepted, contracted for, or consented to by the University and is under the direction and control of the University.

The University of Minnesota Extension volunteer application process provides tangible documentation of the volunteer's role and responsibilities, as well as, those agreed to by the University in return. Adult volunteers are expected to act in good faith and without negligence in the performance of their duties in order to minimize any chance of creating a University liability. Adherence to MN 4-H Volunteer Screening Policy is one way to reduce liability risks and to afford reassurance of University support to the volunteer.

Accident Insurance

Accident insurance is a form of health insurance that provides limited medical coverage in the event of injury. Most people are likely to have their own form of health or accident insurance; however, to be certain that everyone is covered, some type of accident insurance should be provided to all members and adult volunteers enrolled in a 4-H program.

Two types of coverage are available:

1. **Annual accident insurance:** covers enrolled youth and adults (optional but recommended) while participating in or attending a regularly approved and adult-supervised 4-H group activity during the entire program year.
2. **Special activity insurance:** covers all youth and adults participating in a specific, adult-supervised 4-H activity.

Consult your 4-H staff for specific details in your county.

Automobile Coverage

Personal transportation to and from 4-H program activities is the responsibility of the 4-H member, youth participant, parent, volunteer or other driver. If you use your personal vehicle for 4-H business, your vehicle must be insured in accordance with the Minnesota State Motor Vehicle Law. No liability, collision, comprehensive or no-fault insurance coverage is provided by University of Minnesota nor are you covered for side trips.

By law, you are financially responsible for any auto accidents when you are at fault. If a volunteer is driving a University of Minnesota vehicle, they are covered by University vehicle insurance.

Preventing Accidents and Preparing for Emergencies

In the 4-H Youth Development Program, our most basic responsibility is to provide a safe, wholesome and healthy environment for young people and the adults who work with them. This responsibility of positive youth development is important and requires our attention.

Overall, 4-H has a very good history of providing safe environments for children and protecting them from potential risks.

The reduction of exposure to risk is called “risk management.” To maintain this record of safety, programs and activities need to be systematically reviewed to be sure that provisions are provided for dealing with health, safety, legal and liability issues.

As a volunteer for the University of Minnesota Extension 4-H Youth Development Program, you are expected to be a proactive leader in the development of risk management plans for all 4-H events and activities.

There are different levels of risk for the assorted 4-H programs and activities. Do not assume that young people, their parents or other adult volunteers are always aware of and understand the possible risks and unsafe conditions associated with an activity. Consequently, it is extremely important to inform youth and their parents beforehand, so that they can understand the level of risk associated with the events and activities in which they wish to participate.



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Assumption of risk is a term that is considered when determining liabilities that may arise in certain situations.

'Assumption of risk' means that whenever someone chooses to do something, he or she (or their parent/guardian) assumes a level of risk. Responsibility for action is passed along and shifts from Extension staff/volunteers to parents/children. Rules need to be enforced and dangerous/unsafe activities must be stopped. It is often difficult to discipline others' children or to even cancel an activity/event, but remember that providing a safe, wholesome environment must be the primary consideration.

As a University of Minnesota Extension Volunteer, you share the responsibility for the health and safety of those who participate in the activities you lead. Basic guidelines for protecting yourself and program participants are listed below.

Basic Guidelines

- Do not deviate from the instructions given during training classes or from the procedures detailed in printed program materials.
- Before using any tool, piece of equipment or hazardous material for the first time, request safety instructions and follow them.
- Explain and demonstrate safety procedures and the proper use of tools and equipment to those you teach or lead. Before beginning an assignment or starting a program, find out where the first aid kit, list of emergency procedures and emergency phone numbers are located. If none are available, take these items with you.

In case of an accident, medical emergency, natural disaster or other major incident put a responsible individual in charge of your group before starting to follow the emergency procedures. Contact the supervising staff member or other designated emergency contact as soon as possible and refer all inquiries to that person.

Do not make any statement or give any information to media people or anyone other than University of Minnesota Extension staff and emergency personnel.

If an incident of any kind results in personal injury or property damage, the following information should be gathered immediately or as soon as possible:

- Name, address, phone number of injured person(s).
- Complete description of events causing injury or property damage.
- Name, address, phone number of witness(es) (VERY IMPORTANT).

This information should be immediately reported to the Regional Extension Office.



Miscellaneous Risk Management Issues

Securing Facilities for 4-H Programs

When you are seeking to conduct your 4-H events/activities in a facility outside of your home, you may be asked for a Certificate of Insurance or a hold harmless form.

A Certificate of Liability Insurance can be requested from your Regional Extension Office. Or, a property owner may ask you to provide a “hold harmless” form which will cover their facility. Or, a facility may request of you an “additional insured” form in which we would add the volunteer to insurance for actions caused by our 4-H activities.

Volunteers **are not** authorized to sign or complete these kinds of forms/contracts on behalf of the University of Minnesota Extension. Contact your Regional 4-H Extension staff for assistance.

Mailing Lists

To protect the privacy of 4-H members and volunteers, the names of 4-H leaders and members are not to be furnished to any individual or group entity outside of the University of Minnesota Extension, unless authorized by the State 4-H Leader. With permission, the name and contact information of adult volunteers may be shared with people who inquire about joining a 4-H club or becoming involved in a 4-H activity/event.

In the Toolkit

- *Vision for MN 4-H Volunteers* (Toolkit 23)
- Position Descriptions:
 - *4-H Club Leader* (Toolkit 24)
 - *4-H Club Co-Leader* (Toolkit 25)
 - *4-H Project Leader* (Toolkit 26)
 - *4-H Activity Leader* (Toolkit 27)

