



Minnesota 4-H Event/Activity Policy and Guidelines

More detailed explanations are available from 4-H staff at Regional Offices

If you have any questions, please contact [Brad Rugg](#) or [Karen Nelson](#) at the Center for 4-H Youth Development (800.444.4238 or 612.624.2116).

MN 4-H Full Code of Conduct Policy

Policies assist in helping an organization accomplish its goals and mission. A policy is a method of regulating or governing. It is a procedure with given conditions to guide and determine present and future decisions. A MINNESOTA 4-H event policy should encourage public and social responsibility for both the individual and the group involved. The organization will be accountable to the policies set forth which strives to accomplish the following: 1) to maximize participant safety; 2) to maximize the educational experience and 3) to minimize liability. These areas are defined as follows.

- I. SAFETY - a policy should guide the event or activity so that adequate safety precautions are taken for both the individuals and the overall event.

This can include structure to curfews, freedom of movement while participating in activity, use of space and equipment, design of experience to ensure individual safety (physical safety), training of participants and leaders for event (personal safety), behavior of participants - could begin with journey to event, during event and returning from event (group/member behavior).

- II. EDUCATION - a policy should provide an opportunity for leaders and youth to learn how to participate in an event in a personally and socially responsible way. It should also support a positive learning environment.

This should include guidelines, which help the individuals learn how to interact with others in a cooperative and supportive manner, accomplishing the tasks of the event or group in a safe and appropriate way. Expectations for individual behavior should be incorporated into pre-trip instructions, pre-event planning time, debriefings, or reflection time. The opportunity to understand the needs of the organization and event in assuring a safe and successful experience should be provided to every participant. Appropriate behavior should include both how the individual treats him/herself, and others in the group, as it relates to the educational goals of the activity or event. Participation in an event should be preceded with a commitment from all individuals to use the physical space in a safe manner, interact with others in a respectful manner and participate in a responsible way in reflecting the overall goals of the event or activity.



- III. LIABILITY - a policy should assist in protecting the organization or event in assuring that the participants are engaging in activities, which have been designed to ensure adequate and safe use.

This is to include physical safety (appropriate training of leaders, safe use of physical space, appropriate use of equipment); personal safety (proper use of chaperones, structure of free time, accountability of group), behavior of group members (freedom from sexual, racial or cultural harassment, violence, and use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco).

A. GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. CODE OF BEHAVIOR

The general guideline for personal behavior at MINNESOTA 4-H sponsored events and activities should be as follows: It is the goal of MINNESOTA 4-H to provide a fun, healthy and safe learning environment for youth involved in activities and events sponsored by MINNESOTA 4-H. MINNESOTA 4-H strives to accomplish this goal by providing opportunities for young people to learn new skills and ways to work with others. Team building, creative thinking, service and sharing are important aspects of any 4-H activity. The personal behavior of each participant is important to the success of all MINNESOTA 4-H events. Individual behavior shall reflect a healthy respect for self and others in use of language and action. Group behavior shall include safe and appropriate use of public space in a manner respectful of all individuals, including participants and sponsoring organizations or entities. In order to provide an optimal learning environment, participants will commit to full participation in accomplishing the goals of the event. This includes being on time, participating in the planned activities and completing all tasks as necessary and appropriate for the completion of the activity. Inappropriate behavior shall include but not be limited to, abusive or profane language, clothing which is offensive to others (logos, artwork that degrades others) or is inappropriate for the occasion (clothes too tight, too open or not covering parts of the body adequately), rude or destructive actions (taunting others, lighting napkins on fire at a banquet, throwing food), littering or disobeying requests by adults in charge to stop a minor, by inappropriate, action. Depending on the nature of the behavior, the consequences shall range from a verbal or written warning, reprimand, apology to removal from activity or event.

2. PARTICIPANT USE OF VEHICLES IN A 4-H EVENT

While use of a vehicle to attend an event, or during participation in an event, may be necessary, use of any vehicle for personal reasons while participating in a 4-H event or activity is inappropriate unless arrangements and agreements have been made between the (individual(s) and the adult(s) in charge prior to use of the vehicle. Verbal or written



permission from parents or guardians will be required before an agreement can be made between the youth and adult(s) in charge of the event. Duration of trip, reason for trip and estimated time of return should be documented after agreement has been reached. Consequences for leaving an event in a vehicle without permission shall range from verbal and/or written warning, reprimand, apology to removal from event, depending on the severity of the situation.

3. CONTACTING PARENTS AND/OR GUARDIANS

All reasonable attempts will be made to contact parents or guardians of individuals involved in disciplinary action while attending a 4-H event or activity. A reasonable attempt is defined as the attempt by the adults(s) in charge to contact the individuals(s) listed on the health card as the emergency contact in a timely manner depending on the severity of the incident. Prior to participation at a 4-H event or activity, the person(s) to be contacted in an emergency, and where they can be reached, shall be submitted to the adults in charge of the event. If there will be times during the young person's participation when the parent or guardian will be difficult or impossible to reach, additional contacts shall be listed so that any contact needed can be made in a safe and expedient way. This is particularly important when the situation involves the personal safety of the individual or when law authorities will be contacted.

B. SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

There are specific situations, which infringe on the safety and well being of the individual participants, the group interaction and the success of the event. These shall be defined, and consequences outlined, with the intent of maintaining the integrity and safety of the event and the participants involved. The decision and consequence of inappropriate or illegal behavior shall include the involvement of all interested or involved parties before action is taken. Involved parties are defined as the violator, the victim, the adult(s) in charge, parents or guardian, and/or law authorities. A reasonable attempt will be made to include all persons relevant to the situation, the individuals involved and the appropriate authorities.

1. MOOD ALTERING SUBSTANCES

The legal age for the consumption, purchase and possession of alcohol is 21 in the State of Minnesota. Controlled substances such as cocaine, marijuana, heroin, LSD, etc., are illegal to consume, purchase or possess in Minnesota, regardless of age. Minnesota 4-H will abide by these laws. Participation in a MINNESOTA 4-H event or activity will include agreement by all participants to abide by these laws and the guidelines set forth by MINNESOTA 4-H. This includes to and from an event.

A. Use and/or possession of alcohol and/or illegal controlled substances.



If a participant is found to be using or in possession of either alcohol or illegal substances, the law enforcement authorities will be contacted. This activity is illegal and punishable under criminal sanctions. The parents or guardians will also be contacted and arrangements will be made to send the participant home. The individual will not be eligible to continue participation in the activity or event.

There may be situations where it is legal for a participant to consume, use or possess alcohol or other controlled substances. (being in a state with a lower drinking age or an international situation). It is the policy of MINNESOTA 4-H that there will be no use of alcohol or controlled substances in any 4-H sponsored event, regardless of local laws or customs. If a participant is found to violate the agreement, parents or guardians will be contacted and the participant will be removed from the event. Travel expenses and arrangements will be incurred by participant and family.

B. Use of tobacco and mood altering substances.

Purchase, possession or consumption of tobacco, which includes cigarettes, cigars and chewing or smokeless tobacco, will not be permitted at a MINNESOTA 4-H event or activity. Mood altering substances, defined as any substance, which is used to create an altered state of consciousness by the user, will not be permitted. Examples of these substances include, but are not limited to, glue, paint, nail polish, prescription drugs. Any participant found to be using any of these substances will be subject to one of the following disciplinary actions:

A verbal or written warning or reprimand, with an agreement between all parties that the activity will cease.

Depending on the nature and frequency of the incident, parents and guardians will be contacted and arrangements for removal from event will be made. The individual will become ineligible to continue participation in the event.

2. DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

This behavior is defined as verbal or physical actions by an individual or individuals which causes intentional and forcible disruption in the activity or involvement of the group. Behavior which singles out an individual or individuals for unwanted and inappropriate teasing, name calling, shoving, and taunting shall be defined as disruptive. Behavior which intentionally prevents others from participation in the group activity shall be defined as disruptive. Consequences are as follows:

An apology or restitution shall be agreed upon by all parties involved for minor disruptive behavior, such as teasing.



If there is a second incident with the same individual(s), parents or guardians shall be contacted. If, after a reasonable attempt to confer with of all involved parties, assurance cannot be reached that the behavior will cease, arrangements will be made to remove the individual(s) from the event or activity.

If the disruptive behavior involves the use or threat of violence, law enforcement authorities will be contacted.

3. PERSONAL SAFETY

Personal safety is defined as the ability of an individual to feel safe from verbal or physical abuse, from the threat of physical injury, or from unwelcome actions, remarks or interactions from others. Some of these actions occur without violence or physical injury, but can leave the individual targeted feeling unwelcome, unsafe or unprotected. If the impact of the incident makes the individual feel his/her personal safety is in jeopardy, then action shall be taken to rectify the situation. There are three areas of concern which will be defined as follows:

A. Verbal Abuse

Verbal abuse shall be defined as any spoken or written use of language in an abusive, threatening, profane or obscene manner which degrades an individual or individuals because of their race, religion, ethnic background, gender, sexual orientation, or physical or mental handicaps. Consequences for inappropriate actions which infringe upon or violate an individual's personal safety are as follows:

An apology, verbal or written warning or act of restitution can be sought, if agreed upon by all involved parties.

If there cannot be agreement with the individuals involved, parents and guardians will be contacted. Further action shall include making arrangements for removal of individual(s) in order to restore an appropriate level of safety and cohesiveness.

B. Violence

Violence is the use of physical force against another with the intent to injure, abuse, destroy or intimidate. Acts of violence can include, but not limited to, pushing or shoving someone with the intent of causing physical injury, forcing someone to do something against their will, creating an environment in which another person feels for their safety. If the intent, impact or result of action taken by one or more participants(s) against another is established as an act of violence, parents and guardians will be contacted, removal from event will be arranged and law



enforcement authorities will be called, if necessary. Individuals involved will be ineligible to participate in the event.

C. Use or possession of weapons

Weapons are defined as instruments or items, used for offensive or defensive action, which are capable of causing bodily harm or death. Examples of weapons include, but are not limited to guns, knives, clubs, metal knuckles, throwing stars, explosives, stun guns, ammunition, mace. Use or possession of a weapon(s) at a MINNESOTA 4-H sponsored event is inappropriate. There are, however, situations where an items, which could potentially be used as a weapon, such as a knife or firearm, may be used in an legitimate way for an activity or at an event. Unless such items are identified with the appropriate adults in charge prior to the event or activity, as part of the equipment for use at an event or activity, it will be considered a weapon. If a participant is found to be in possession or uses a weapon, this will be considered a serious incident and law enforcement authorities will be contacted. Parents or guardians will also be contacted and arrangements of removal from the event will be made. The individual(s) will be ineligible to continue participation in the event.

4. SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

Guidelines for appropriate sexual behavior of all individuals, youth and adults, at a MINNESOTA 4-H sponsored event or activity will be based on self-control, healthy responsibility and respect for self and others, and conduct which maintains the integrity and safety of oneself and others. Inappropriate sexual behavior shall include, but not be limited to, three major areas of concern and consequences.

- A. Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome verbal or physical advance, unwelcome and/or coerced requests for sexual favors, unwanted and/or unwelcome sexual physical contact.
- B. Sexual contact which occurs between a minor and adult is illegal and will be dealt under the laws which protect minors.
- C. Public display of sexual affection/contact between individuals participating in a MINNESOTA 4-H sponsored event is inappropriate. The degree of consequence for inappropriate sexual behavior will depend on the seriousness of the behavior. Sexual contact between a minor and an adult must be reported to law authorities. Sexual harassment concerns should be reported to the adults in charge, with parents, guardians and law authorities contacted as necessary. Inappropriate public displays of sexual affection/contact can involve a verbal and/or written warning, reprimand, or request for behavior to cease in minor cases. If such behavior



continues, individuals involved shall be removed from the event. All responsible attempts to contact and involve parents and guardians shall be made to deal with these concerns in an expedient and safe manner for all individuals involved.