



WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION

## THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF 4-H POLICY

### 2016-2017 WA 4-H Policy Highlights

The Essential Elements is a Positive Youth Development framework used nationwide in the 4-H Program. The Essential Elements (belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity) represent the universal needs of all children and are vital to all 4-H Youth Development programs. This document highlights several Washington State University (WSU) 4-H Policies through the lens of the 4-H Essential Elements. **Although this document references several policies and rules found within the 4-H Policy, it is important that volunteers and staff always refer back to the original policy document.** This highlight sheet is a supplementary tool and does not replace the 4-H Policy. **Access the entire WSU 4-H Policy at <http://extension.wsu.edu/4h/>.**



HEART

### BELONGING

**An opportunity to establish trusting connections. Youth need to know they are cared about and feel a sense of connection to others (motivation to affiliate and form social bonds). Safe, inclusive environments and positive relationships with caring adults promote BELONGING.**

#### Inclusive Environments & Youth Membership

- 4-H operates under a strict nondiscrimination policy; open to all school-age youth (ages 5-19 as of October 1<sup>st</sup>; 3.1); no fee to join or local financial support for members in need is strongly encouraged to promote inclusion (4.8).
  - 4-H is open to all regardless of race; sex/gender; sexual orientation; gender identity/expression; religion; age; color; creed; national or ethnic origin; physical, mental or sensory disability, including disability requiring the use of a trained service animal; genetic information, and/or status as an honorably discharged veteran or member of the military (3.1, 6.3).
  - Youth that are married and/or youth that are parents can participate in all 4-H activities (3.1).
  - Activities and events are open to all youth who meet the eligibility requirement for a specific event or activity (8.1).
  - Reasonable accommodations for participation available to all members require special accommodations (4.10), including enrollment of special education youth between the ages of 19 and 21 (3.1).
- Members must be fully enrolled to participate in 4-H functions (4.3); enrollment includes a Code of Conduct (4.0), media/photo release (4.6), and research release (4.7).
  - Enrollment through 4HOnline helps 4-H maintain a safe environment (more accurate and up-to-date member/volunteer information, including contact and medical information; 4.1.1, 4.1.2).

#### Safe Environments

- To ensure a safe environment that communicates shared responsibility for youth in our program, specific policies and/or certification requirements exist within Food Preservation (7.9, 10.9), ATVs (10.6), Resident Camps (10.5), Adventure Education (10.4), Shooting Sports (7.9, 10.8), horned/large animal (9.7, 9.8, 9.9), equine (10.2) and bicycle projects (10.3).
- To maintain a safe environment, some projects are not appropriate for Cloverbud members (5-7 year olds; e.g., large animals, shooting sports; see 3.1 for full list).

- All enrolled leaders are trained as mandated reporters, and are required to report all suspected forms of child abuse or neglect. (13.1, 13.2, 7.4)
- In order to promote a sense of professionalism and safety among volunteers (and youth) clear guidelines are provided around identification and reporting of sexual harassment and misconduct. (13.7)
- If there is unlawful activity or an immediate or direct threat to the health or safety (both physical and psychological) to people, property, or animals; disruption of a program or activity, or it appears such behavior is likely to take place; staff or supervising volunteers **MUST** take immediate preventative actions which include intervention and reporting incidents to their Extension office. (10.1)
- If unacceptable behavior is observed/reported, WSU Extension 4-H Faculty and/or staff may conduct an investigation into the alleged incident, which may result in corrective or disciplinary action. (7.14.1, 7.14.2, 7.14.3)

### Volunteers (Positive Relationships with Caring Adults)

- WSU 4-H Certified Volunteers are officially designated as representatives and leaders of the 4-H program. They supervise and direct county and club 4-H programs and projects. They work under the direction of WSU Extension personnel to ensure that the objectives and standards of the WSU Extension 4-H Youth Development Program are met (7.12, 7.13, see 7.3.1 for volunteer role descriptions).
  - Certified 4-H Volunteers must be at least 19 years of age and not enrolled as a 4-H member (7.2).
  - All Certified WSU 4-H Volunteers must complete the volunteer certification process which includes an application, references (7.4.1), background check (7.4.2), interview with WSU 4-H staff, in-person training and/or e-learning modules, 4HOnline enrollment (7.5), and receive a WSU Volunteer Hours Database login (see 7.4 for process details).
  - At any point in time, WSU Extension 4-H Faculty may terminate the certification process. Incomplete certifications will be terminated within 1 year (7.4).
- Resource Volunteers provide educational and resource services for 4-H under the guidance and direct supervision of a WSU 4-H Certified Volunteer or staff and are expected to adhere to the Washington 4-H Adult Code of Conduct. To ensure a safe environment, 4-H clubs are required to document the services provided by resource volunteers and WSU Extension has the right to require a resource volunteer to complete any part of the Volunteer Application process (7.3.2). If a person is volunteering time and expertise to 4-H and/or are in contact with youth in an ongoing basis, then this person needs to become a Certified 4-H Volunteer (7.3.1, 7.3.2).
- Any adult with independent supervision of a 4-H youth/member overnight (e.g. chaperone, host family) must be an enrolled, Certified 4-H Volunteer who has successfully completed the screening process (7.4, 8.2, 13.3.2).
- **Volunteers are REQUIRED to report their hours** through the WSU Extension Volunteer Hours Database for all time provided to the 4-H Program.
  - 4-H Certified Adult Volunteer Leaders and Resource Volunteers are protected under the state of Washington tort claims law for acts or omissions while performing, or in good faith purporting to perform, their official duties. Volunteers must be enrolled and reporting hours for WSU to assume responsibility for liability protection (7.12).

### Club Charter & Belonging

- All 4-H Clubs must be chartered through their local Extension Office by 4-H National Headquarters at the USDA and the WSU Extension 4-H Youth Development Program in order to be recognized as part of 4-H, and to be authorized to use the 4-H Name and Emblem (see 6.3 for charter requirements).
- Any person, company or entity desiring to use the 4-H Name and/or Emblem **MUST** receive approval from the county 4-H office before doing so. (12.1.1, 12.1.2)
  - Clubs need approval from county 4-H office for custom 4-H designs (11.4.2).



HEAD

## MASTERY

**An opportunity to solve problems and meet goals. Youth need to feel they are capable, and experience success at meeting challenges aligned with their own interests. Engagement in learning (motivation to work hard and attain excellence), and opportunities to learn promote MASTERY.**

- Membership age divisions allow authentic engagement in learning and opportunities for youth to experience success as they meet developmentally appropriate challenges (allows for physically and emotional safety; see 3.1 for 4-H age division breakdown).
  - Cross-age division competition is not allowed (3.1).
- While enrollment is open year-round, some opportunities have enrollment deadlines so that members have an adequate opportunity to practice important project safety guidelines and skills, and build responsibility before demonstrating their project knowledge at events like the fair (4.2).
  - In addition, to allow youth the necessary time to learn about, provide regular care for and manage their project animal/s species-specific care and/or ownership timeframes must be met before official exhibit activities (see 9.6 for species-specific regulations).
- Showmanship is a required educational activity for each species of animal shown in 4-H classes at community fairs, county fairs, State 4-H Fair qualifying events, youth shows, and the State 4-H Fair (9.4).
- 4-H members need not own their 4-H project animals and may lease a market animal if it is not to be sold at a junior livestock auction (9.3). Two 4-H members may jointly care for and show one animal as long as they do not compete against each other (9.5).
- A club should meet regularly, a minimum of 6 regular meetings supplemented by project activities and events, (6.3) and provide a progressive series of educational experiences (6.1) so youth have engaging opportunities to learn and work towards mastery.
- To encourage greater responsibility and project mastery, 4-H animal science volunteers may educate members and their families in the normal course of their 4-H activities in the areas of animal care, production, and management (10.7).
- Youth can participate in both 4-H and FFA, but cannot exhibit the same project/animal for each program during the same year (12.2.1).
- In order to create a greater breadth of experiences and learning opportunities, 4-H offers many different delivery modes including individual family units, after-school programming and camps and short term/special interest programs (5.2).



HEALTH

## INDEPENDENCE

**An opportunity to build self-control and responsibility. Youth need to know that they are able to influence people and events through decision-making and action. Opportunities for self-determination and to see oneself as an active participant in the future promote INDEPENDENCE.**

- A club must enroll at least 5 members (from 3 different families); ensuring that all youth officer roles are filled so that youth are involved in decision making and leadership of the club (6.3).
- 4-H clubs may meet in any location and will have elected youth officers or youth leaders and follow a set of bylaws approved by the membership to govern the club. (5.2.1)
- All club members have opportunities to share input and vote on club business; including setting yearly club goals and/or a written program of work (submitted to Extension Office), developing a budget (11.3), and

approving the group's guidelines, bylaws or governing constitution (up-to-date copy must on file with Extension Office; 6.3).

- 4-H evaluates programming and learning outcomes in order to improve and learn more about Positive Youth Development principles and related strategies. Program participants have opportunities to participate, have their input valued and experience being able to influence programming (4.7).

### **Club Financial Independence**

- Responsible fiscal management helps clubs develop as independent partners of 4-H in their communities. Thus 4-H clubs/groups must follow financial management practices including: properly documenting all receipts and expenditures (11.4), not maintaining a high balance year to year (11.3.1), receiving prior approval from 4-H County Extension for fundraising activities (11.4.1), and annually completing year-end financial reports (e.g. conducting a peer review of club finances after September 30<sup>th</sup> and submitting an Audit Report, Annual Financial Summary, and Property Inventory List to county 4-H office by December 1<sup>st</sup>; 11.5.2, 11.5.3, 11.5.3.1).
  - The WSU 4-H Program nor its volunteers can endorse a commercial activity or service (7.8) and donations accepted cannot have restrictive criteria (i.e. use of mandatory products, trade names, breed association requirements, etc.; 11.1).
  - An individual may not serve in two or more different roles if those roles may create a conflict of interest in the checks and balances of fund management (e.g. secretary and treasurer; 11.2).
  - At every business meeting the youth treasurer presents a treasurer's report to the membership (includes a list of expenses that need to be paid along with itemized receipts and current bank statement) to be approved for payment by the club/group (11.4.2, 11.5.1). For all fundraising and events that include fees, the treasurer provides a written receipt to document funds received (11.4.1).
- In order to accept donations and handle funds, each 4-H club/group must apply for an EIN and is required to open a bank account. Each bank account must be named "WSU 4-H, (name of your club/program/group) 4-H Club/Group, (leader's address)" (11).



**HANDS**

## **GENEROSITY**

**An opportunity to show respect and concern (motivation to help and be of service to others). Youth need to feel their lives have meaning and purpose. Opportunities to value and practice service for others promote GENEROSITY.**

- A club must have youth officers (President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Reporter) who experience authentic opportunities to practice service leadership for their club; respectfully supported by caring adults, as needed (6.3).
- A volunteer is someone who demonstrates generosity by devoting his or her time to the 4-H program without pay or benefits (7.1, 7.7). Volunteers are considered "at will" individuals and may be dismissed at any time (7.1, 7.14). Volunteers are positive role models and mentors (7.1) who value youth, and show respect and concern for the positive youth development needs of the members they serve.
- Enrolled 4-H youth members may assist [as volunteers] by enrolling as a Youth Leader in the Leadership Project and under the direction of a Certified 4-H Volunteer (7.2).
- All 4-H participants must show respect and concern to animals by providing humane treatment and care. Cruel or negligent treatment and handling will not be tolerated, and must be reported to appropriate staff. (9.1).
- Service learning (meaningful community service and reflection as a learning experience to teach life skills, civic responsibility and strengthen communities) is an important and valued part of the 4-H Club experience. While not a state requirement, many counties require or strongly encourage clubs to do service learning.