Introductory Guide to BECOMING A 4-H VOLUNTEER
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Welcome to 4-H!

Thank you for your interest in volunteering to share your valuable time as a 4-H leader. There are many reasons you may desire to volunteer. Some may want to become involved in children's activities; others are willing to help children in the community and have a special skill or knowledge to share. Others were 4-H'ers as children and want to share their experiences. Regardless of the reason, the 4-H program and our youth will benefit from your service.

4-H is a program where community volunteers and county Extension staff work together to provide youth with fun, hands-on, research-based educational opportunities as an outreach of the land-grant university system in Arkansas. The goal is to help youth become competent, caring, confident, connected and contributing citizens. Research consistently shows that young people who have a non-parent adult with whom they can relate will engage in fewer risky behaviors, stay in school longer and make more positive choices.

This **4-H Volunteer Introduction** will help answer many of your questions about your new role. You certainly do not have to be an expert or know all there is to know about 4-H to become a caring and competent mentor to youth as they complete their projects, competitions, community service and leadership activities. 4-H provides you an opportunity to learn and grow along with the 4-H'ers!
The Arkansas 4-H Mission

The mission of 4-H is to provide opportunities for youth to acquire knowledge, develop life skills, form positive attitudes and practice behavior that will enable them to become self-directing, productive and contributing members of society.

The goal of 4-H is to provide a positive youth development model with young people who are not “clients” but partners and where their families, neighbors and other community resources are engaged.

A successful youth development program prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a structured, progressive series of activities and experiences which help them obtain social, emotional, ethical, physical and cognitive competencies.

4-H creates opportunities for young people to:

- Form relationships with caring adults, and
- Positively impact their communities!

4-H Youth Membership

In Arkansas, youth ages 5-8 years old are known as **Cloverbuds**. Cloverbuds become official participants on their fifth birthday. The Cloverbud program is a noncompetitive, fun, informal educational program to acquaint youth with 4-H. There is no competitive evaluation of a child’s exhibit/project.

**Junior** members are youth who are at least age 9 as of January 1 of the current year. Juniors are eligible to participate in district and some state competitive activities.

**Senior** 4-H members are youth who are at least age 14 as of January 1 of the current year. Senior members may participate and/or compete in 4-H activities and events until December 31 of the year they celebrate their nineteenth birthday. Senior members enjoy leadership opportunities that allow them to exercise their developing skills in adult roles.

4-H youth membership is only offered through the Cooperative Extension Service’s 75 county 4-H programs in Arkansas. Youth 5-19 years of age as of January 1 of the current year are eligible to participate in 4-H programs.

Each year nearly 140,000 youth and 18,000 adult and older teen volunteers from major cities, suburbs, towns and rural communities participate in 4-H.
General Eligibility – The Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to all youth between the ages of 5 and 19 regardless of race, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, disability, marital or veteran status, genetic information or any other legally protected status.

Who is involved in Arkansas 4-H? 4-H Youth Development programs are located in all 75 counties in Arkansas. Each year, nearly 140,000 youth and 18,000 adult and older teen volunteers from major cities, suburbs, towns and rural communities participate in 4-H. Nationally, 4-H youth programs involve more than 5 million young people from all 50 states and many U.S. territories.

True leaders aren’t born. They’re grown.

What We Live By

4-H Pledge
I pledge:
My Head to clearer thinking,
My Heart to greater loyalty,
My Hands to larger service, and
My Health to better living,
For my club, my community,
My country and my world.

4-H Emblem
The 4-H emblem is a green four-leaf clover with a white “H” on each leaf standing for Head, Heart, Hands and Health and is protected under federal law. The stem of the clover is always to the right.

4-H Motto
To make the best better.

4-H Colors
White and green are the 4-H colors. White symbolizes purity and green represents growth.

4-H Year
The 4-H Year is from October 1 of the current calendar year to September 30 of the following calendar year.

4-H Educational Philosophy
The phrase “learn by doing” sums up the educational philosophy of the 4-H program. Young people learn best when they are involved in their own learning experiences.
Being a 4-H Volunteer

How can you benefit from volunteering?

There are so many youth who need the positive interaction with a caring adult that the Arkansas 4-H program provides. So, how can you benefit? You can:

• Enjoy sharing your knowledge of science, technology, health and citizenship with our future leaders.
• Develop and use your leadership and organizational skills.
• Watch the impact of your efforts on youth as they grow, adapt and learn.
• Feel the rewards of sharing your skills, knowledge and time.
• Develop lifelong friendships throughout the state.
• Enhance your career options.
• Learn with the 4-H’ers as they learn.
• Make positive contributions to the lives of children and to your community.

• Be recognized for your contributions.
• Have FUN!!

While volunteers are teaching and guiding youth, they also grow as productive citizens, develop leadership skills, make new friends and have GREAT ADVENTURES!

What is a volunteer?

Volunteers are those special persons who work on behalf of the 4-H program at the county level and who are not paid for their services. Direct volunteering involves adults working closely with youth. Indirect volunteering encompasses supporting the 4-H program through fund raising, judging, serving as a committee member, donating money and other support services.

As a 4-H Volunteer, you will work as a team with Extension staff, other volunteers, parents and youth to help 4-H members/parents gain knowledge, skills and positive attitudes. Leadership means guiding and influencing others to achieve goals and getting things done in a fun and positive atmosphere. Your key responsibilities are to encourage, stay positive while facing challenges, win trust, be authentic, be respectful, stay curious, commit to learning and look for new ideas, insights and knowledge.

Leadership means guiding and influencing others to achieve goals and getting things done in a fun and positive atmosphere.

Inspirational 4-H leaders have the ability to create enthusiasm, empower those around them, instill confidence and leave a positive legacy for generations to come.
How you can participate as a Volunteer:

1. **Club Leader** (Club Manager): Provides overall leadership for 4-H clubs or groups. Coordinates club programs and activities and gives general guidance and direction. Requires a time commitment of approximately eight to 12 meetings per year; four to six hours per month to plan/conduct meetings; two to four leader training meetings per year and participation in as many activities as you and your members can schedule.

2. **Project Leader**: Assists Club Leader and guides 4-H’ers in setting project goals. Organizes the 4-H project group as part of the 4-H club, assists in project selection and planning project goals and assists 4-H’ers in learning subject matter. Time commitment is generally four to six meetings with members but will vary depending upon project area.

3. **Activity Leader**: Assists Club Leader in organizing the club’s social, educational, community service and fundraising activities.

4. **Youth Project Leader**: Experienced 4-H member with knowledge and skills to share with other 4-H’ers.

5. **Resource Leader**: Assists Club Leader on a short-term basis with specific projects.

6. **Chaperone**: Monitors youth during group activities, trips or camps.

7. **Indirect Volunteer**: Assists with volunteer education, fundraising, council meetings, community advocacy for the 4-H program, etc.

4-H Clubs

4-H Clubs are organized groups of youth who select officers and are supported by trained adult volunteer leaders. The 4-H club conducts meetings and educational activities throughout the year. Club meetings typically include business conducted by the officers, an educational program, and a team-building or recreational activity. Clubs offer opportunities for leadership and community service activities.

Club types include:
- Community Clubs
- Project Clubs
- Teen Leader Clubs
- In-School Clubs
- Afterschool Clubs
- SPIN (special interest) Groups
Becoming a 4-H Volunteer Leader

Volunteering with 4-H is a privilege, not a right, and as such requires a commitment and responsibility to uphold 4-H values. To begin your involvement as a 4-H volunteer, you must:

1. Enroll in 4HOnline (https://Arkansas.4honline.com). A volunteer must set up a family profile in 4HOnline, then enroll him- or herself as a volunteer member. Re-enrollment at the beginning of every 4-H year (by October 1) is required to maintain volunteer status.

2. Clear through both components of the Youth Protection Program of the Cooperative Extension Service every five years.
   a. National Criminal Background Screening – initiated through a screening questionnaire in 4HOnline during first-time enrollment and again every five years.
   b. Arkansas Department of Human Services Child Maltreatment Central Registry Screening – initiated through completion of the Authorization for Release of Confidential Information Contained Within the Arkansas Child Maltreatment Central Registry (Extension Form EHIRE-164) during first-time enrollment and again every five years.

3. Complete the Arkansas Department of Human Services online Mandated Reporter Training for Child Maltreatment.

4. Complete a minimum of four credit hours of leader training per year (offered at the County, District or State level or online).

5. Complete the 4-H Overnight Chaperone Training if you will at any time be involved in overnight activities, trips or camps.

6. Physically or digitally sign the “Arkansas 4-H Volunteer Agreement and Expectations” (Extension Form MISC-120).

The University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service takes the treatment of our 4-H’ers very seriously. This is why a two-level Youth Protection Screening system was put into place and why all volunteers are required to go through the Mandated Reporter Training on child abuse presented by the Arkansas Department of Human Services.
HOW 4-H EDUCATES

The core of 4-H education is based on three educational models:
1. Essential Elements of Positive Youth Development
2. Experiential Learning Model: Learn by Doing
3. Targeting Life Skills: Desired Outcomes of 4-H Involvement

Essential Elements of 4-H

The Essential Elements, representing the four H’s – Head, Heart, Hands and Health, define the overall goals of the 4-H Youth Development Program.

All youth need:
Belonging – to know they are cared about by others
Mastery – to feel and believe they are capable and successful
Independence – to know they are able to influence people and events
Generosity – to practice helping others through their own generosity

What Is Experiential Learning?

The learn-by-doing approach is the foundation of 4-H and allows young people to be engaged in their own experiences. Through the experiential learning model, young people have an opportunity to discover their own learning through a guided process, rather than being told what they should be learning and how they should feel about the experience. The sequential steps of experiential learning allow them to apply their learning to other experiences or situations.

1. Youth experience the activity. (Do)
2. Youth share the experience by describing what happened. (Reflect)
3. Youth process the experience to determine what was most important and identify common themes. (Reflect)
4. Youth generalize from the experience and relate it to their life. (Apply)
5. Youth apply what they learned to a new situation. (Apply)

An easier way to remember the model: Do, Reflect and Apply.

Targeting Life Skills

Life skills are a basic foundation that prepares young people for success in life. The goal is for every young person to possess the necessary life skills to succeed and lead a productive life.

**HEART:** Personal/Social Competencies
- Relating: establishing a mutual or reciprocal connection between two people that is wholesome and meaningful to both.
- Caring: showing understanding, kindness, concern and affection for others.

**HANDS:** Vocational/Citizenship Competencies
- Giving: providing, supplying or causing to happen (social responsibility).
- Working: accomplishing something or earning pay to support oneself through physical or mental effort.
- Managing: using resources to accomplish a purpose.

**HEALTH:** Health/Physical Competencies
- Living: acting or behaving; the manner or style of daily life.
- Being: living one’s life; pursuing one’s basic nature; involved in personal development.

**HEAD:** Knowledge, Reasoning and Creativity Competencies
- Thinking: using one’s mind to form ideas and make decisions; to imagine, to examine carefully in the mind, to consider.

Source: Iowa State University, http://www.extension.iastate.edu/4h/volunteertraining

Craighed County 4-H Robotics Club
ARKANSAS 4-H VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT AND EXPECTATIONS FOR VOLUNTEERS AND VOLUNTEER GROUPS

Volunteers are persons who choose freely to do or offer to do something with no compensation. Volunteers are essential to the programs of the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service. Volunteers help extend the programs to audience members that could not be reached with only Cooperative Extension Service employees. When a person chooses to become a volunteer with the Cooperative Extension Service, that person will have the opportunity for a very rewarding experience. The Cooperative Extension Service and its employees recognize that volunteers have a more rewarding experience when expectations are defined. Expectations and responsibilities should be outlined and communicated to the volunteer at the beginning of their service.

Volunteer and Cooperative Extension Service Agreement and Expectations

Volunteer agrees to:
• Enroll as a volunteer for a defined time period.

• Actively seek volunteers from a variety of racial, gender, ethnic, religious and socioeconomic groups in your community.
• Recruit and involve other volunteers in programming efforts.
• Provide a positive educational environment which will enable other volunteers and program participants to grow, learn and develop friendships through Extension programs.
• Be supportive of all Extension programs.
• Participate in volunteer meetings and/or volunteer training sessions.
• Inform County Extension Agent of needs and changes necessary for the continued growth of the program.
• Maintain sound working relationships with County Extension Agent and fellow volunteers.
• Review and agree to abide by the Guidelines for County Financial Operations for 4-H (DIST-03).
• Abide by the UA Cooperative Extension Service Volunteer Code of Conduct.

U of A Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service agrees to:
• Actively seek volunteers from a variety of racial, gender, ethnic, religious and socioeconomic groups.
• Educate volunteers on the program’s mission, purpose, and goals.
• Set educational tone and direction for Extension programs.
• Provide instructional materials and resources to be used for educational programs.
• Provide educational programs and materials to develop an individual’s understanding and management of volunteer assignments.
• Provide role descriptions for county volunteer leadership roles and committees.
• Provide assistance, support, and encouragement to all volunteers.
• Give recognition for time and energy devoted by volunteers at all levels of the program.
• Inform volunteers of events and activities via Extension newsletters and general correspondence.
• Maintain sound working relationships with volunteers involved in the program.

Volunteerism is crucial to many Cooperative Extension Service programs. While volunteerism is crucial, volunteerism is a privilege and not a right. Volunteers are expected to be positive role models for the youth and adults they contact. Volunteers serve at the pleasure of the Cooperative Extension Service. Volunteers may be dismissed from serving in any program at any time.

**Volunteer Expectations**

1. Work cooperatively with youth, adults, families, volunteers, Cooperative Extension Service faculty and staff and others in a courteous, respectful manner, demonstrating behaviors appropriate for a positive role model.

2. Represent the Cooperative Extension Service and its programs with pride and dignity, behave appropriately, exhibit good sportsmanship and demonstrate reasonable conflict management skills.

3. Respect, adhere to and enforce the rules, policies and guidelines established by the Cooperative Extension Service including all state laws related to child abuse and substance abuse.

4. Refrain from and do not tolerate verbal or physical abuse.

5. Avoid any criminal activities.

6. Comply with equal opportunity and anti-discrimination laws.

7. Under no circumstances, allow or consume alcohol or be under the influence of alcohol when youth are present at an Extension program or activity. Under no circumstances, possess, use or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any Extension program, event or activity.

8. The use of tobacco products in the presence of 4-H members and/or during 4-H events and activities is strongly discouraged.

9. Operate machinery, vehicles and other equipment in a safe and responsible manner when working with participants in Cooperative Extension programs, events or activities.

10. Accept responsibility to promote, conduct and support Cooperative Extension programs in order to develop an effective county, district, state and national program.

It is important that all volunteers comply with the Code of Conduct. Failure to comply with any component of this code or participation in other inappropriate conduct as determined by the U of A Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service may lead to dismissal as a Volunteer.

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Where Do You Go For Help?

**County Cooperative Extension Service Office**
County 4-H staff are available and willing to help you better understand your role as a 4-H leader and give you support.

**County 4-H Newsletter**
Make it a habit to read the 4-H newsletter announcing county events and project-related activities. Refer to its calendar and share information of interest to your project members.

**4-H Websites**
State 4-H website for Arkansas: https://www.uaex.edu/4h-youth/default.aspx
4HOnline Enrollment: http://arkansas.4 honline.com/
Volunteering with 4-H: https://www.uaex.edu/4h-youth/get-involved/volunteer/adult.aspx
Arkansas 4-H Projects: http://uaex.edu/4h-youth/resource-library/project-books.aspx
National 4-H Council: http://www.4-h.org/
National 4-H Catalog (for materials): www.4hmall.org
National 4-H Curriculum Catalog: http://www.4-h.org/resource-library/curriculum
National 4-H History Preservation Program: http://4-hhistorypreservation.com/Index_Data.asp
Volunteerism for the Next Generation: http://nextgeneration.4-h.org/volunteerism/

**REFERENCES**
UACES 4-H Policy Guide: https://www.uaex.edu/4h-youth/about/policies-procedures.aspx
Targeting Life Skills – Iowa State University: http://www.extension.iastate.edu/4h/explore/lifeskills
Arkansas 4-H Resource Library: http://www.uaex.edu/4-hyouth/resource-library/default.aspx