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 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.

4-H Volunteer Code of Conduct
Since Minnesota 4-H volunteers act as representatives of the University of Minnesota Extension when performing assigned duties, volunteers agree to abide by the Minnesota 4-H Code of Conduct for Volunteers.

1. I understand that the Minnesota 4-H Youth Development program is a non-formal education program in which I have an option to volunteer. I will complete the expectations of my volunteer assignment, working with staff and volunteers to create quality learning environments for youth. I accept my responsibility to engage in program activities and to excuse myself from this volunteer assignment if it does not meet my volunteer objectives. I recognize the organization has the responsibility and authority to remove individuals who are serving as volunteers that are disruptive to the 4-H Youth Development program or for any other reason the 4-H Youth Development program deems appropriate.

2. I accept my responsibility to represent the University of Minnesota Extension 4-H Youth Development program by holding myself to the standards of the 4-H pledge and motto. I will refrain from behavior that negatively represents myself, my family, my community, 4-H or the University of Minnesota.

3. I acknowledge that the 4-H program utilizes competition related to project work as a tool for learning. I will demonstrate good sportsmanship, encourage this behavior in program participants and other volunteers, and not allow this behavior to detract from the learning experience. I will not let my personal desire to win overshadow the needs of the group or violate positive youth development principles.

4. I accept my personal responsibility to be informed and follow the policies, rules and deadlines established by Minnesota 4-H. I will not cheat, lie, knowingly furnish false information, deceive, or otherwise engage in dishonest, unethical or illegal behaviors. I will not encourage others to disregard or intentionally violate conditions of Minnesota 4-H participation.

5. I will act in a respectful and responsible manner during all 4-H programs. I will comply with directions of 4-H officials acting in the performance of their duties. I will not obstruct or disrupt any 4-H program or encourage others to engage in such conduct. I understand that a judge’s decision is final.

6. I will promote a spirit of inclusion and welcome participation of individuals from all backgrounds. I will encourage youth involvement in decision making. I will practice fairness-mindedness by being open to ideas and opinions of others. I will comply with equal opportunity and anti-discrimination laws. I will not participate in behaviors that discriminate against other people.
7. I will communicate (oral, written and electronic) in an open, honest, respectful manner in all situations involving the 4-H program. I will refrain from communication that is negative, offensive, destructive or hurtful to others. I will refrain from sharing private matters in a public group setting. I will not engage in or tolerate slander, put-downs, insults, taunting, name-calling, yelling, profane language, sexual innuendos and other comments or hostile behaviors likely to offend, hurt or set a bad example. If I witness this type of behavior, I will contact the staff member. If the situation is escalating to where I feel unsafe, I will contact the authorities.

8. I will ensure a safe environment for myself and others involved in 4-H programs that I am leading. I will not act in an irresponsible or potentially hazardous manner. I will access and operate machinery, vehicles and other equipment in compliance with laws, rules of the 4-H program, and general safety practices.

9. I will model healthy choices. I will not offer alcohol, tobacco products or illegal substances to youth. I will not possess or use illegal substances. I will not use alcohol or tobacco products during a 4-H program. I will not attend 4-H programs under the influence of alcohol or any illegal substance.

10. I will be courteous and respectful of other individuals and their property. I will dress in a manner that is appropriate, tasteful and respectful for youth. I will not use, abuse or take another individual’s personal belongings. I will not damage facilities.

11. I will not have sexual contact or a sexual relationship with a member. I will not use physical punishment for discipline. If I have reason to believe that a member is being neglected or physically or sexually abused, I will make an immediate report of the neglect or abuse to a law enforcement or social service agency. I will abide by the University of Minnesota policy on the safety of minors.

12. I will use appropriate channels within the University of Minnesota Extension to address concerns and conflicts, working towards resolution. I will accept the decision of the individual and/or group that has the leadership and authority to make the decision, even if the decision is not the one I personally desire.

13. I will demonstrate behaviors appropriate as a positive role model. If I have a guest or guests in attendance at a 4-H program, I will encourage them to abide by the Minnesota 4-H Code of Conduct and ask them to leave if they are unable to abide by the code. I recognize that if the guest’s behavior interferes with the learning, my guests may be asked to leave the 4-H program.

14. I will expect youth and adults participating in the programs I lead as a 4-H volunteer to follow the Minnesota 4-H Code of Conduct. If behaviors contrary to the Minnesota 4-H Code of Conduct are demonstrated during a 4-H program, I will address the situation appropriately and consult with my staff supervisor when needed.

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

4-H Project Leader - Arranges learning experiences for 4-H.

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

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.

One-Time Volunteer - Assists with various tasks such as event registration, tracking results, taking pictures, or chaperoning. These are usually short-term volunteer roles.

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 minimizes 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 of unsupervised access to youth 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. Completion of the Volunteer Orientation.

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**
As a volunteer these things are needed to manage risk:

- **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.

**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.

- Contact Information - 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.