



# A Message for 4-H Families

## 4-H Membership Policy for 2011

**Welcome to the world of 4-H!** The Oklahoma 4-H Program is full of opportunities for your family to work, play and learn together. This publication is designed to help you understand what general policies will be used to govern 4-H membership and participation. We encourage you to study this material so you will know what to expect as your son or daughter chooses to participate in 4-H events and activities throughout the year.

This publication covers guidelines for the 4-H Club portion of Oklahoma 4-H Youth Development Programs. Policies related to school enrichment and special interest programs are not included in this document. The stated policies for membership should be followed at all levels of the Oklahoma 4-H Club Program. Policies related to participation are specific to those events conducted on a district or state basis. Counties may adopt the participation guidelines for their county/unit activities or they may develop other regulations for activities limited to their county/unit. This should be done through involvement of the county/unit 4-H Parent/Volunteers' Council and advisory groups in conjunction with the Extension staff.

### Parental Involvement

Families are important and enhance the 4-H experience. Parents are encouraged to attend meetings with their children and support the volunteer organizational, project or activities leader and staff as requested. Parents who are disruptive to the meetings, verbally abusive to the members or other adults or who exhibit threatening behaviors will be subject to exclusion from the 4-H program. If a parent's negative behavior persists membership status may be withdrawn from their child.

Cooperation among Extension staff, volunteers, parents, and sponsors is essential to solving specific problems that may arise. Care should be taken to avoid rules which exclude youth for reasons they cannot control.

If you find that some part of this publication is unclear, or if you have concerns about how the policies are being carried out, we invite you to write or call at: State 4-H Office, 205 4-H Youth Development Building, Stillwater, OK 74078-6063; 405-744-5390. Best wishes as your family participates in the Oklahoma 4-H Program.

### 4-H Club Membership

**When can youth join 4-H?** Any boy or girl residing in or attending school in Oklahoma may enroll in Oklahoma 4-H after he or she has reached age nine.

**Participation and Competition:** For classification purposes, once enrolled at 9, age will be determined, by the youth's age on January 1. To compete in contests beyond the county, youth must have been enrolled for 30 days. Some events may have additional age classification requirements. See rules and regulations of the specific event for details.

**Exhibits:** Work exhibited by a member should represent work they did in a project during the previous 12 months from the date that the record or exhibit is submitted.

**To show livestock (beef, sheep, swine, goats, poultry), in the fall at the state fairs members must have a 4-H enrollment card on file in the county office and have reached the age of 9 by July 1. To show in the spring, youth must be 9 and enrolled by January 1.**

### Key points to remember:

- Membership starts upon enrolling on the youth's 9th birthday, or at any time thereafter.
- Youth can participate in contests beyond county level 30 days later.
- Beyond your first year of membership, when there are age divisions in an event, the age will be determined based upon the youth's age on January 1 of the current calendar year.

**When do youth leave 4-H?** Boys and girls may remain in 4-H as members provided they have not reached the age of 19 years on or before January 1, 2010 (born in 1990 or before). Youth who reach or pass their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday by **December 31** while still in high school may remain in 4-H for the remainder of that school year and may exhibit at 2010 State Fair. However, youth who have graduated or completed graduation equivalency may not be eligible to participate in some events – see rules for specific details.

Youth who are 19 or older but have not graduated from high school may enroll with the approval of the OSU Extension staff until they graduate or meet the 12-grade equivalency.

Some 4-H awards are available to high school graduates including youth who are 19 or older. See the “Awards Program Update” for the current year online or contact your county Extension Office staff for details.

**Annual Enrollment:** An individual who meets the age requirement and has a completed 4-H enrollment card on file in the OSU Extension Office is considered to be a 4-H member. An individual who has completed these requirements is considered to be a member from the date the enrollment is returned to the county office. 4-H enrollments will be accepted throughout the year.

Members are required to enroll annually through their local club leader or the county Extension Office. For youth who show livestock, the completion of an animal nomination form does not constitute 4-H enrollment. Members who do not complete an enrollment card annually are subject to removal from membership and mailing lists without notice.

Membership shall not be denied based on race, color, national origin, gender, religion, disability, marital status, or membership in any other organization.

**Loss of Membership:** Membership in 4-H is a privilege and membership may be denied to or withdrawn from persons who have been banned from school, school related programs, violated the 4-H Code of Conduct, been convicted of a crime, exhibited a behavior that may seriously discredit the image of the 4-H program, or who have placed other people at undue risk, or who have violated the published policies or rules governing 4-H affiliated events or activities.

## Chartered Clubs

In Oklahoma 4-H, clubs are the primary means to involve children with their peers while they learn. The club structure helps volunteers and youth build significant relationships. Individual and group project work attracts members and is the method by which knowledge and skills are achieved. A club’s structure should give members shared responsibility for making decisions and operating the club through elected officers, committee work and the practice of a democratic process. A community or project club meets six or more times during the year under the supervision of certified volunteers.

A community club is also known as a multi-project club. The club meets monthly for general club meetings (business, education and recreation). Meetings will be held at other times during the month for committee work and project meetings.

Project clubs are centered around one primary 4-H project. Club meetings are held weekly or monthly or on some other planned schedule and they focus on project work and business. 4-H members of “Project Clubs” should be fully encouraged to embrace all aspects of the 4-H program and experience.

A club’s charter must be reviewed and renewed annually by the county extension staff. If the minimal standards have not been met, the club will be counseled and a plan established for achieving and maintaining their charter status.

## Members-at-large in Oklahoma

The concept of members-at-large is strongly discouraged in Oklahoma 4-H. Members are expected to participate in local 4-H Clubs. If no club is available in your area or if the club’s meeting time creates an unusual hardship, a family should work with their county extension staff to establish a new chartered 4-H club in their area. Information about “Chartering” a club is available at the county extension office. A club consists of at least five youth from two or more families with a certified volunteer(s). Only members of chartered clubs are authorized to use the 4-H name and emblem.

## Place of Membership

Youth must choose to enroll in either the county/unit where they reside or the county/unit where they attend school but not both. If a youth is a student in a specialized program such as career technology

education or attends a special school such as the Oklahoma School of Science and Math, for at least one-half of the school day, they may elect to be in 4-H at their home school (diploma granting) or their secondary school, but not both. If a youth is part of a home school group or cooperative that serves several communities or counties they may utilize 4-H educational materials in a group setting; however, they should seek club membership in the county/unit where they reside. If a youth lives near a county or state line and wishes to be a member in a county other than the one in which they reside because they attend school in the adjoining county they may do so by notifying the Extension staff in EACH of the counties involved, who then MUST mutually approve exceptions to this policy. All exceptions to the policy must be established at the time members enroll/re-enroll and must be communicated by the 4-H member's parent(s) in writing. It is recommended that copies of the agreement be sent to the District Extension Office and the county/unit 4-H Parent/Volunteer Council in each county/unit involved.

If a county/unit does not offer a particular project, a youth may cross county/unit lines to participate in educational programs in a project area but may not join that county's competitive teams.

Oklahoma 4-H philosophy is that we support county-based competitive teams. At multi-county, district and/or state level competition, youth may not compete on a team representing another county other than the one where their 4-H enrollment is held. For example, two youth from county A cannot join two youth from county B to form an "All Star" team. The instructor who provides training should sign the certification form along with the Extension Educator of the home county/unit.

When members move or parental custody changes, youth may transfer their membership from another state or county/unit during the year by completing an enrollment card in the new county/unit where membership is sought. At the time a card is filed in the new county/unit, all membership rights in the former county/unit are surrendered. When length of membership is required for participation in a specific activity, membership time may be transferred, providing the member completes the new enrollment procedure in a timely fashion according to above policies.

When custody is jointly shared, youth may not exhibit or compete in 4-H activities in two counties; they must declare place of membership upon

enrollment and must notify the Extension office in the two counties where residence is shared. For some events that may be affiliated with 4-H, but not managed by 4-H, such as county fairs and livestock shows, exhibitors may be required to be residents and/or students in the county where competing. Check with the governing body about specific guidelines. Groups who conduct events that are affiliated with the 4-H program must follow the Name and Emblem criteria outlined later in this document in order to be approved to use the Name and Emblem of 4-H.

### **Participation of Pre-9 Year Olds in 4-H**

Cloverbud membership will be granted to children 5 years old up to their 9th birthday. The Cloverbud program is family-oriented and non-competitive. Due to the developmental skills of this age group, Cloverbud members will not be permitted to participate in events where they or their projects are compared or judged against their peers. Fund raising by Cloverbuds is inappropriate. Cloverbud members may participate in non-competitive activities on a local or county/unit basis as deemed appropriate by the OSU Extension Staff and Parent/Volunteer Council. District and State activities will not be provided for Cloverbuds. For some projects and all competitive events the 4-H activity insurance will not provide coverage for Cloverbud members.

Once Cloverbuds reach the age of 9, they can enroll in competitive 4-H programs. As previously stated, to show animals at the state fairs in the fall they must be 9 by July 1 and have an enrollment card on file in the county office. Look for current policies in fair books

### **4-H Age**

For the purpose of determining ages of members, the "4-H Year" will be based on the calendar year. Ages for the 4-H year will be based on the member's age on January 1 of the current year. For example if a youth turns 12 on January 10 he/she would still be considered to be 11 for the entire year.

### **Age Categories**

For the purpose of providing age-appropriate activities, programs will be provided for either two or three age categories. As a general rule, when

programs are divided into two age categories, they will be:

- Juniors:** ages 9\*, 10, 11, 12, and 13 (As of Jan. 1)
- Seniors:** ages 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18 (As of Jan. 1)

When programs are divided into three age categories, they will be:

- Beginners:** ages 9\* 10, and 11
- Intermediates:** ages 12, 13, and 14
- Advanced:** ages 15, 16, 17, and 18

\* if a child turns 9 between Jan 1 and the day the event they are considered to be 9 years of age.

### 4-H Age Table

These ages will be used to determine participation eligibility throughout the entire 4-H year.

*All ages based on age January 1 of current Year*

Year of Birth	4-H Age
2001	9
2000	10
1999	11
1998	12
1997	13
1996	14
1995	15
1994	16
1993	17
1992	18
1991	Alumnus

Youth elected to state 4-H leadership positions at 18 can complete their term of office through the following State 4-H Roundup or term of office in the fall.

### Oklahoma 4-H Open Membership Policy

Within the spirit of the Affirmative Action policy of the Cooperative Extension Service, 4-H Youth Programs are provided to youth regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, disability, marital status, or membership in any other organization. This policy should be carried out in the spirit of inclusion with an effort to insure that all youth are welcome to participate in 4-H programs and

other youth programs of their choosing. Dual membership policies or statements developed by other programs that deny or limit a youth's participation because of their membership in 4-H are not recognized by 4-H. Since October 1, 1993, there has been no official dual membership agreement between Oklahoma FFA Chapters and Oklahoma 4-H Programs. The following rationale and guidelines should be followed in advising 4-H members about membership in 4-H and all other youth organizations.

### Rationale for Open Membership

1. Young people and adults are unique, each with their own interests and talents. Different organizations have their own unique and varied strengths and program offerings. Because two organizations or two educators offer similar programs does not mean that they are equally or exclusively suited to serve the specific educational needs of each and every individual child.
2. Cooperation and collaboration between youth organizations should result in each child more nearly meeting their specific needs by utilizing the programs and the leadership provided by various youth organizations.
3. Young people who participate in more than one organization have opportunities to capitalize on the specific strengths of each organization to reach their own full potential as an individual.
4. As skills are learned through participation in various community organizations, those skills will be applied to the individual's work within each and every organization, thus improving the potential of all community youth organizations.
5. If organizations are not competing for the exclusive loyalty of an individual, all organizations can work together to provide better support for the youth of the community.
6. When local questions regarding dual membership arise, attempts should first be made to solve them locally through the educators and administrators involved.

## **Guidelines for Open Membership**

The following practices should guide implementation of the open membership policy by Extension staff and volunteers.

1. Any boy or girl who meets the age and residence requirements for membership should be allowed to be a 4-H member and participate without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, disability, marital status, or membership in any other organization.
2. Participation in 4-H events and activities should be determined in accordance with the enrollment and participation guidelines that are outlined in the appropriate sections of this publication.
3. Membership in other organizations should not determine how a 4-H member is allowed to participate in 4-H events and activities.
4. When specific activities for more than one organization are held at the same time (as in some judging contests) members will be expected to indicate their preference for organizational representation prior to the development of team roster so that other individuals may be included on the team.
5. When specific community activities create competition for an individual's time or loyalty, the organizations involved should endeavor to establish a spirit of mutual cooperation and fairness and work out a local agreement prior to the beginning of training or preparation for an event or contest.
6. Extension educators and members need to be aware that some regional and national competitive events prohibit youth from participating more than one time. When a member has participated in one of these events, he/she should advise their teacher and volunteer leader of that participation so they will not make a team ineligible to participate.
7. When 4-H members participate in events with representatives from other school organizations, they will be expected to conform uniformly to the regulations set forth for that event.
8. If a young person is declared ineligible to participate in other youth development organizations due to unethical behaviors, they will not be permitted to participate in similar projects in 4-H. Likewise, if their local chapter or organization is placed on probation by a fair or show, they will not be eligible to transfer membership to 4-H in order to avoid the probation.
9. Dual Projects in FFA and 4-H - Members should not use the same projects, records, leadership activities, etc., for similar awards and recognition in both organizations. For example, members may not show the same steer this week in 4-H and in FFA the next, even if they are in 4-H in one county and in FFA in the neighboring county. If a project is nominated at the beginning of the year in one project it should stay in the project unless the member physically relocates to a new school where FFA or 4-H is not available. However, a member could show a steer in FFA and hog in 4-H if they so choose. 4-H memberships is open to all youth and members of FFA are welcome to be actively involved in 4-H.

## **General Participation Rules**

1. Members of 4-H will be allowed to participate in District, and State events provided they have completed the enrollment procedures as outlined in the club membership section at least 30 days prior to the event, except where otherwise specified by regulations of an event or activity..
2. All events and activities planned, conducted or sponsored by the Cooperative Extension Service are open to all youth who meet 4-H membership criteria. Events not planned, conducted or sponsored by 4-H may limit participation to youth who meet additional criteria. If those criteria are discriminating in nature, that group may be denied the use of the 4-H Name and Emblem in conjunction with the event even if the event is open to 4-H members.
3. Youth who are participating as 4-H members in approved activities or events sponsored by organizations other than the Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension Service should abide by the regulations as designated by the

sponsoring organization in addition to those regulations established by Oklahoma 4-H and Cooperative Extension. This includes judging events, livestock shows, and other events, which often have specific regulations for participation.

4. The Oklahoma 4-H Youth Development Program encourages members to maintain good academic standing at school. Local districts are expected to inform students and families of the student's eligibility status. If families knowingly violate the schools policy regarding eligibility, 4-H will support the school in any actions taken. When 4-H events and activities are held during regular school term, members are expected to abide by their school's academic eligibility rules.
5. Member eligibility to participate in 4-H events and activities held at times other than the regular school term should not be determined by school policy unless such authority is clearly established by the policies for that school district, club, county/unit, or event.
6. When 4-H members participate in events with representatives from other school organizations they will be expected to conform uniformly to the regulations set forth for that event, (such as district and state livestock shows). See the "academic eligibility" rules that are in effect for most livestock shows.
7. Delegates for district, state, and out-of-state events must have a signed code of conduct agreement and medical release form on file as requested by the event coordinator before they will be permitted to participate in the event.
8. Guidelines for specific events and activities will be available prior to the event. Volunteers and parents should check with their Extension office for up-to-date information about individual events or visit the Oklahoma 4-H Web site.
9. Membership in 4-H is a privilege and membership may be denied to or withdrawn from persons who have been banned from school, school related programs, violated the 4-H Code of Conduct, been convicted of a crime, exhibited a behavior that may discredit the image of the 4-H program or individuals, or who have placed other people at undue risk. Membership shall not be denied based

on race, color, national origin, gender, religion, disability, marital status, or membership in any other organization. Similarly, youth who have been banned from participating in events as a FFA member will not be permitted to enroll in 4-H projects in order to avoid the barring action.

### **Special Note**

The following academic eligibility guidelines have been developed to provide for appropriate participation in both educational and extra curricular activities by students. While these polices and principles were not developed as Oklahoma 4-H policies, 4-H supports these standards. When it may be necessary for a member to miss school to attend a 4-H event, the member and his/her family should work with local school officials regarding their absenteeism. Local schools do have guidelines regarding attendance polices and events that are eligible for excused absences for all students. The rules of the OSSAA apply to senior high school students but serve as a guide for most other grade levels as well. Individual districts established policies related to attendance. Families are encouraged to talk to teachers and school administrators about these issues in advance of event and activities.

### **Academic Eligibility Guidelines Related to Shows**

#### **OSSAA Handbook Rules**

[http://www.ossaa.com/handbook/handbook\\_rules.pdf](http://www.ossaa.com/handbook/handbook_rules.pdf)

- When events are held during school sessions (school year), youth who have been declared ineligible to participate in extra-curricular activities by their local school administration will be declared ineligible to participate in 4-H activities.
- Youth who are eligible on the first day of a show, conference, or other event, will be considered eligible through the duration. Similarly, youth who are ineligible on the first day of the show, conference, or other event, will be considered ineligible through the duration.
- If an exhibitor is ineligible to participate in a livestock show for any reason, including rules

of the Oklahoma Secondary Schools Activity Association, (OSSAA), the animals owned by the exhibitor are also ineligible for the show.

- Ineligible youth who participate in contests will forfeit all show and/or sale premiums and awards; and will be subject to disciplinary action as provided by the local school policies.
- It will be the responsibility of the local school administration to notify the student's family regarding ineligibility and show management or OSSAA if a particular student is ineligible to participate. Extension Educators will support school administrators but are not responsible for determining eligibility.

### **Enrollment Deadline for State Livestock Shows**

Livestock shows at local, county/unit, district, state, and regional levels all establish their own rules. To participate, you must meet the requirements and follow the show rules. All 4-H does is verify your date of enrollment or enrollment status. The show's governing board determines eligibility. For state level shows in Oklahoma, generally, members must have enrollment cards on file in the County/Unit Extension Office by July 1 to show in the fall and by January 1 to show in the spring. If you are interested in showing livestock, you are responsible for checking the rules for the shows in which you might participate. Youth who are members of families where custody is shared by parents in two different counties should check with show officials well in advance of the show to determine if the show's rules will permit you to participate. Many shows have specific rules about residence and continuous care of an exhibit. Youth may only show in one county.

### **Suggested General Participation Guidelines for Fairs and Show**

The following statement is a suggested statement for use by show managers in dealing with participation and eligibility issues. Governing bodies are not obligated to use this statement; however, if their rules limit participation of youth who meet membership requirements, they are subject to not being permitted to use the 4-H Name and Emblem in association with their event.

“This show is open to all 4-H and FFA members of \_\_\_\_\_ County who meet age and membership guidelines established by the 4-H clubs and FFA chapters in \_\_\_\_\_ County. Youth must reside in or attend school in \_\_\_\_\_ County to be eligible to participate. By entering in the show, participants are verifying that they are in good academic standing at the time of the show and understand that if they are found to not be eligible as a result of the school contacting the show management; the management will support the local school district in any disciplinary actions taken. Likewise, home-schooled families verify that they are meeting the mandates of the State regarding curriculum standards. If the exhibitor is found to be ineligible, they agree that they will forfeit all prizes and premiums that may have been paid by the show.”

### **Use of the 4-H Name and Emblem**

The 4-H Name and Emblem are protected under federal statute (Title 18, U.S.C. 707) which states:

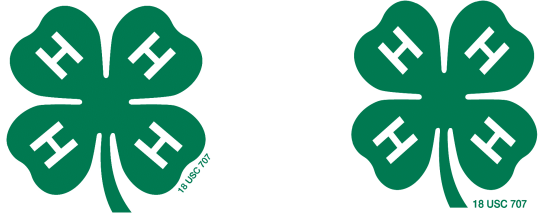
*Whoever, with intent to defraud, wears or displays the sign or emblem of the 4-H clubs, consisting of a green four-leaf clover with stem, and the letter H in white or gold on each leaflet, or any insignia in colorable imitation thereof, for the purpose of inducing the belief that he is a member of, associated with, or an agent or representative for the 4-H clubs; or*

*Whoever, whether an individual, partnership, corporation or association, other than the 4-H clubs and those duly authorized by them (members of Chartered Clubs and certified volunteers), the representatives of the United States Department of Agriculture, the land-grant colleges, and persons authorized by the Secretary of Agriculture, uses, within the United States, such emblem or any sign, insignia, or symbol in colorable imitation thereof, or the words "4-H Club" or "4-H Clubs" or any combination of these or other words or characters in colorable imitation thereof -- shall be fined not more than \$5,000 for individuals and \$10,000 for groups, or imprisoned not more than six months, or both.*

The federal guidelines require all non-4-H groups and individuals who wish to use the Name and Emblem of 4-H to make application to the USDA to do so. Groups who discriminate against any persons who meet 4-H membership eligibility will be denied use of the 4-H Name and Emblem or will be subject to

having that privilege revoked. For additional guidelines see:

<http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/>



**Official Clovers**

### **How to Learn More**

These are some sources of additional information:

- Your County/Unit Extension Office
- *4-H Awards and Recognition Handbook*
- *4-H Events and Activities Handbook*
- Rules for various fairs, festivals, and shows
- Visit the Oklahoma 4-H WebPage:

<http://www.clover.okstate.edu/fourh/>

#### **The Vision**

Oklahoma 4-H will be recognized as a national leader in developing youths' abilities to become productive citizens and catalysts for positive change to meet the needs of a diverse and changing society.

#### **The Mission**

4-H, the youth development program of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, provides opportunities for all youth to reach their fullest potential by developing and enhancing skills for living.

#### **The 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."

#### **The 4-H motto**

"To make the best better."

#### **The 4-H colors**

Green and white.

Oklahoma State University, in compliance with Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 11246 as amended, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and other federal laws and regulations, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, disability, or status as a veteran in any of its policies, practices or procedures. This includes but is not limited to admissions, employment, financial aid, and educational service. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Robert Whitson, Vice President, Dean and Director of the Cooperative Extension Service, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. This publication is issued by Oklahoma State University as authorized by the Dean of the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources and has been prepared for both internal and external distribution through electronic transmission. Revised 11/10.CC