



Becoming a 4-H Volunteer Leader

4-H volunteers are the key to success of the 4-H Program. There are many roles for volunteers, and in order to make sure that individual volunteers are matched to appropriate volunteer positions, the county 4-H staff is responsible for appointing all volunteers to their positions in the 4-H program.

Appointing Volunteers

Anyone interested in becoming a 4-H volunteer should contact the county 4-H office to begin the volunteer appointment process. No one can assume the role of 4-H leader on their own, and current 4-H volunteers, such as club leaders, do not have the authority to appoint new leaders. Any volunteer 4-H leader who has recruited an individual to serve as a co-leader or assistant leader must refer that person to the county 4-H staff who will start the appointment process.

Volunteer Policies

The New Jersey 4-H Program has some policies and procedures for staffing with volunteers. The purpose of the following policies is to ensure a safe environment as well as a positive learning experience for both youth and adult participants.

Appointment Policy

Any 4-H volunteer, 18 years of age or older, working directly with youth without the presence or direct supervision of paid 4-H staff will be screened prior to official appointment. Working directly with youth includes the following: organized 4-H clubs, special interest or short-term programs, camp counseling, and youth programs conducted with collaborating agencies. Faculty and staff will work with collaborating agencies to be sure volunteers are screened.

Policy for Volunteers Supervising Youth

Club meetings/non-overnight events

It is required that at least one registered (screened and appointed) 4-H volunteer be present at any 4-H club meeting or non-overnight event or field trip. It is strongly recommended that at least two adults be present at such activities, with a ratio of one adult per every six to ten youth.

Overnight events

It is required that at least two adults be present at all overnight 4-H events, one of whom must be a registered 4-H volunteer. It is recommended that there be a ratio of one adult per every six to ten youth, with the ratio of male and female adults corresponding to the number of male and female youth participants.

Volunteer Appointment Process

All steps of the following volunteer appointment process must be completed before official appointment as a 4-H volunteer is made by the county 4-H staff. All forms will be sent to the applicant by the county 4-H office.



- Potential volunteer is recruited and/or expresses interest.
- Potential volunteer participates in an interview with 4-H staff or trained volunteer.
- Potential volunteer completes a 4-H Volunteer Application and returns it to the county 4-H office.
- References are checked.
- Potential volunteer participates in orientation and receives 4-H Volunteer Position Description.
- Potential volunteer completes 4-H Adult Volunteer Registration Form.
- Volunteer receives official letter of appointment and 4-H Volunteer Appointment Agreement to be signed and returned to the 4-H office.

It is important for the volunteer applicants to make sure that they complete and return their forms in a timely manner in order to make the process go quickly and efficiently.

References

Each volunteer applicant will be asked to submit the names of three references. The references will be contacted either through the mail or by telephone and will be asked questions pertaining to personal qualities related to working with youth and adults. The responses of the references are held confidential.

4-H Volunteer Appointment Agreement

An individual becomes a registered 4-H volunteer as soon as the 4-H Volunteer Appointment Agreement is signed and returned to the county 4-H office. This agreement is subject to review and/or renewal once a year or as deemed appropriate by the county 4-H staff. Once the agreement is received at the county office, the volunteer is added to the county 4-H mailing list.

Non-Registered Adult Helpers

Any adults, such as parents, who are not registered volunteers but wish to help with 4-H club or county activities may do so, provided that there is a paid 4-H staff member or registered 4-H volunteer present at all times. They will not be considered official 4-H volunteers, and depending upon the situation, may not be covered by county or university policies related to volunteer liability.

If a non-registered adult is going to attend an overnight 4-H event, prior to attending, he or she must complete and return to the 4-H club leader the *New Jersey 4-H Event Release Agreement Form for Adults*. This form is available from the county 4-H office. This agreement pertains only to the specific event involved and needs to be completed for each separate event. It is the responsibility of the registered 4-H volunteer to make sure that all non-registered adults attending an overnight event complete this form.



4-H Seeing Eye Puppy Program Adult Members

In order to meet the needs of an expanding program, in addition to 4-H youth, The Seeing Eye, Inc. utilizes adults to raise puppies through its Seeing Eye Puppy Program. "Adult members" of these 4-H clubs must complete a screening process parallel to screened adult 4-H volunteers. The county 4-H staff is responsible for implementing this process, which consists of an application, reference screening, approval, and registration. The main difference is that adult members of a 4-H Seeing Eye Puppy Club are not required to go through the orientation/training or complete a 4-H appointment agreement.

Volunteer Performance

To uphold the high quality of the 4-H Youth Development Program, the county 4-H staff are responsible for ensuring that volunteers are performing their duties in accordance with their position descriptions and the appointment agreement. To support 4-H volunteers in their various roles, New Jersey 4-H developed the 4-H Volunteer Review Process. It was developed to help assess the needs and accomplishments of 4-H volunteers at certain milestones of their 4-H volunteer career (at the end of the 1st year, at the 5th anniversary and thereafter at 5 year intervals).

The goal of this process is to promote communication, provide support, and create an opportunity for dialogue. The process includes an opportunity for the volunteer to review his/her role, give feedback, and address any current concerns and/or problems. It is an excellent opportunity for both 4-H staff and volunteers to share ideas, ask questions, and address concerns related not only to the individual volunteer themselves but to the entire 4-H program. This is also a chance for the volunteer to expand his or her experience in 4-H by learning about other opportunities available. Any volunteer who is not contacted for a review and wishes to have one should contact the county 4-H staff for an appointment.

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Did You Know...



4-H participation around the world greatly increased after World War II.

4-H is in 80 other countries around the world as well as US territories and US Army and Air Force installations worldwide.

For more information on New Jersey 4-H, please visit www.nj4h.rutgers.edu.

Cooperating Agencies: Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and County Boards of Chosen Freeholders. Rutgers Cooperative Extension, a unit of the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, is an equal opportunity program provider and employer.