

New
Jersey **4-H**

Leader Training Series



Becoming a 4-H Volunteer Leader

Appointing Volunteers

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.

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.

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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 10 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 10 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 (see samples in Appendix as noted).

- 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 (*see Appendix I*) and returns it to the county 4-H office.
- References are checked.
- Potential volunteer participates in orientation and receives 4-H Volunteer Position Description (*see Appendix K*).
- Potential volunteer completes 4-H Adult Volunteer Registration Form (*see Appendix B*).
- Volunteer receives official letter of appointment and 4-H Volunteer Appointment Agreement (*see Appendix J*) 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 volunteer liability laws, or 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 Adult Overnight Agreement/Release Form (see Appendix A-1)*. 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. Periodically, volunteers may be asked to meet with staff for a session to

discuss their roles and performance as 4-H volunteers. This is an excellent opportunity for both parties to share ideas, ask questions and address concerns related not only to the volunteers themselves, but also 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 to set up an appointment.

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