

Kansas State University Department of 4-H Youth Development

Volunteer Screening Policy and Procedures

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Kansas 4-H Volunteer Screening Policy and Procedures

A primary principle of positive youth development is based on the benefit of a positive, sustained relationship of the young person with a caring adult. Youth gain the confidence, connections, and caring they need to achieve their potential.

As the largest youth development organization in Kansas and across the nation, 4-H must lead by conducting the most effective strategies and practices in volunteer screening and selection. All youth deserve a safe and caring environment, and all parents and guardians should expect that when their children are entrusted to the 4-H program, each child will be in a safe setting with caring adults.

Kansas 4-H continues to grow and improve. Strengthening its policy for volunteer registration fulfills an obligation to children, parents, volunteers, and employees. Providing greater security for all people involved in Kansas 4-H is the right thing to do. It is also important that we protect the image and integrity of 4-H, K-State Research and Extension, and Kansas State University.

Being a 4-H Volunteer is a Privilege, Not a Right:

While volunteerism is crucial to the success of 4-H, it is a privilege, not a right to be a 4-H volunteer. Volunteers are expected to adhere to the Kansas 4-H Volunteer Code of Conduct. Volunteers may be dismissed from service at any time.

Initial Screening

All individuals who work directly with youth are required to complete the Kansas 4-H volunteer screening process. Volunteer screening is done in order to assure a safe, positive, and nurturing environment for all youth involved with the Kansas 4-H programs and provide protection for the child, the volunteer, the agent, the Extension Board, and the Kansas State Research and Extension.

Initial screening of volunteers and staff will occur when they sign up to volunteer or are employed as an Extension professional. Re-screening for volunteers will be done every three years from when the original screening was completed.

Application and Screening

Individuals wishing to be involved in the Kansas 4-H program must be screened at an appropriate level. The following guidelines should serve to ensure adequate screening of volunteers:

- **Kansas 4-H Volunteer:**

Adults providing direct supervision to youth at a 4-H program; make decisions on behalf of the 4-H program; have access to private data of 4-H members or volunteers; and/or handle funds as part of 4-H must complete the volunteer screening process, be accepted, and enrolled as a Kansas 4-H volunteer.

Process Steps include: 4-H Online profile, References, Criminal History, Interview, Orientation, and Approval

These roles will include, though may not be limited to:

Organizational (Project) Club Leaders

Chaperones for any overnight events

Camp Volunteers

Volunteers who will have access to funds raised on behalf of 4-H

Volunteers who will have access to confidential records or information

- **Adult Helper:**

An adult helper is someone who gives their time and/or expertise to 4-H education programs or activities and who will either not be in direct contact with children or youth or who will only be in situations directly supervised by paid and/or screened, experienced volunteer/staff.

Process Steps include: 4-H Program staff member keeps names on file for adult helpers (e.g., food stand sign-up or sign-in form kept in food stand file; project day presenters list kept in project day file; guest speaker listed on club meeting agenda). Kansas 4-H Volunteers serving as club leaders are asked to track club level adult helpers.

These positions will include, though may not be limited to:

Guest speaker/presenter

Concession stand workers for single events

Presentation Judges

Fashion Revue Judges

- **Youth Participants:**

Youth in the 4-H program often engage in leadership and volunteer experiences as part of their 4-H program participation. When participating in a defined role where additional vetting is needed, best practice for process steps include the creation of an application (4HOnline profile), reference checks, an interview, a defined position description, and orientation. The camp counselor role is one example of a defined leadership role where a defined vetting process has been established.

Note: A youth application cannot require the collection of social security numbers.

Adult Volunteer Applicant Steps

1. If your family uses the Kansas 4HOnline system at <https://ks.4honline.com/>, you already have a family account. Login to your family and [add yourself as a new family member](#) if you don't have an adult profile. If your family has never used 4HOnline, you will need to create a new family account before creating an adult profile for yourself.
2. Complete the Kansas [4-H Volunteer Orientation](#) available through Kansas 4HOnline or in person through your local office.
3. After completing the Kansas 4-H Volunteer Orientation, notify the local Extension Office about completing the Kansas 4-H Volunteer Orientation and schedule an interview appointment.
4. Upon completing the Interview, Extension Office will provide information for the required background checks.
5. Local extension office will compile information and submit applicant's packet for approval.
6. Extension office will send a letter concerning volunteer status and appointment for 4-H work and update status within the Kansas 4-H Online system.

Extension Office Steps for Adult Kansas 4-H Volunteer Service Application

1. The volunteer applicant must enroll in the Kansas 4HOnline Enrollment System.
 - a. Give the volunteer applicant the link for the 4HOnline Enrollment System.
 - i. If extenuating circumstances require the use of a paper enrollment form, the local extension unit may provide this option, but must then manually create the 4-H Online account and retain the paper profile.
2. The volunteer must complete the Kansas 4-H Volunteer Orientation Training either through the 4-H Online system or through in person training.
3. Schedule an interview with the volunteer applicant.
 - a. [Confirm the Kansas 4-H Volunteer Orientation Training has been completed.](#)
 - b. Establishing an agreed upon volunteer position description is advised and can be accomplished during this interaction.
 - c. File notes from the face-to-face interview in volunteer 4-HOnline profile or keep a paper copy.
4. Perform reference checks for applicant (best practice not required). References may be contacted through written or verbal methods.
5. Provide the volunteer applicant with the link for the National Criminal Background Check.
6. The State 4-H Office will post [volunteer screening results directly on Kansas 4HOnline System.](#)
7. Prepare volunteer applicant's information for volunteer review committee (or local Extension board if a review committee is not appointed).
 - a. Note any suspicious information for review committee.
 - b. Supervise the review committee process.
8. Review committee reviews volunteer applicant's information.

- a. Review committee gives recommendations to the Extension Board: approves, approves with restrictions or rejects.
 - b. Review committee initials and date the Review Committee Recommendation Form.
9. Extension Board takes action on volunteer applicant's information.
 - a. Extension Board approves, approves with restrictions or rejects volunteer applicant.
 - b. If further discussion is warranted, board must go into Executive Session.
 - c. If volunteer applicant is rejected, Board Chair signs letter to be sent to volunteer applicant.
 - d. Board action is listed in the board meeting minutes.
 - e. Information in a volunteer applicant's folder is confidential.
 - f. Board action is final, no appeals to the State 4-H Office or any other body.
10. Up-date volunteer applicant's information on 4-H Online and either approve or reject applicant.
11. Send a status letter to the volunteer applicant and club leader regarding the extension board recommendation.

Costs and Payment

CBC Initial screen: \$22.50

CBC Rescreen: \$16.50

Payment Process

The provider will invoice the state 4-H office. The state 4-H office will invoice local units quarterly.

Annual Renewal for Continuing Volunteers

All 4-H Volunteers renew their volunteer commitments annually through the 4HOnline system in a similar process to annual youth enrollment. Volunteers are asked confirm contact information, specify their volunteer role(s) for the year, and update their information.

Transferring Registered Volunteer Files between Counties/Districts

A registered 4-H volunteer who moves to a new location and wishes to volunteer for the new unit, or who wants to extend volunteering to an additional county/district, needs to resubmit the volunteer application with the new county/district. If the volunteer screening has been completed within the past three years:

The 4HOnline Volunteer Orientation can transfer; and

The Criminal Background Information may be passed between counties/districts.

Steps for New or Additional County/District

1. Contact the previous or current extension office concerning information needed from the volunteer applicant.

2. Request volunteer application (add additional County in 4HOnline) .
3. Review information received from the transferring extension office.
4. Approve and appoint through the extension board.
5. If necessary, rescreen based on date of the original screening and background checks.

‘Red Flags’ or Special Considerations

Information gathered during the screening process may warrant increased scrutiny.

Red Flags which indicate an automatic disqualification are:

- Use of an illegal substance or controlled drug not used as prescribed by a doctor
- Conviction of any crime against another person — adult or child: murder, possession of illegal substance with intent to sell, manslaughter or bodily injury while driving intoxicated, sex offenses
- Conviction of child abuse or neglect
- Information on the National Criminal Background Check may result in an automatic disqualification. The state 4-H office will notify the local office if such information surfaces in the background check.

The screening process may bring forward information that does not appear to be at the “red flag” level but might indicate additional scrutiny is advisable. Further investigation is warranted. Examples of “flags” warranting further investigation could include a long-ago DUI, minor property crime, financial impropriety, or a misdemeanor. Stipulations may be placed on the role a volunteer can fulfill in the organization to mitigate potential risk.

Confidentiality

Maintaining the confidentiality of all profiles and supporting documents is the cornerstone of keeping trust with the volunteer applicants. Each volunteer applicant is entitled to privacy and fair treatment under the law. It is the intent of Kansas 4-H to treat all volunteer applicants fairly and respectfully.

1. Anyone (paid or nonpaid) involved in the volunteer screening process and with access to personnel files needs to understand the importance of confidentiality. Each person must read and sign the Confidentiality Statement, agreeing to protect the privacy of individuals involved.

Nonpaid Staff/Volunteer:

http://www.kansas4-h.org/resources/volunteers/volunteer-screening-resources/docs/Non-Paid_Staff_Confidentiality_Statement.pdf);

Paid Staff: https://www.kansas4-h.org/resources/volunteers/volunteer-screening-resources/docs/Paid_Staff_Confidentiality_Statement.pdf

2. Information that must be kept confidential: 4HOnline profile information, references, and interview notes. These documents can only be accessed by those who have completed the confidential statements and are responsible for the 4-H program — extension agents, office professionals, the local volunteer review committee, and the extension board.

3. Local unit office professionals who have been assigned the responsibility of maintaining checklists and handling correspondence are also required to read the confidentiality section and sign the Confidentiality Statement agreeing to protect the privacy of individual applicants.
4. Information about volunteer applicants and reasons for acceptance, acceptance with restrictions, or rejection as 4-H volunteers must be kept confidential. Only the volunteer review committee and local board can be involved in discussing applicants. Discretion and privacy must be used in the review and discussion, preferably in executive session.
5. The volunteer applicant files are to be kept for two years: 1) from received date of application without renewal or 2) ending date of individual's involvement with the 4-H program, whichever is longest. If a volunteer is disciplined or terminated due to allegations of any type of abuse upon a child, records must be retained indefinitely.
6. Treat the volunteer application information as confidential personnel files. The volunteer applicant may have access to review the contents of his or her own personnel file; however, reference information and interview notes are confidential and must be removed before the volunteer applicant can review the file. The volunteer applicant may **only** view the file in the extension office or obtain copies of the file contents by written request in accordance with the *Kansas Open Records Act*. Volunteer applicants cannot remove contents or the file from the extension office. The volunteer applicant files are considered personnel files, so only review committee members, local extension board members, and local extension agents or staff may examine the contents. The files must remain confidential, and no member of the public may review volunteer application files.
7. Kansas law includes an Open Records Act: *It is the public policy of Kansas that public records shall be open for inspection by any person.*
Subject to certain exceptions, the act requires that records kept by public agencies be open for public inspection. This applies to records kept by the local offices of K-State Research and Extension, as well as any state or area extension office.
Questions about the Kansas Open Records Act and requests for public records should be directed to the Kansas State University Designated Records Custodian, as outlined in the K-State Policies and Procedures Manual: https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/employee_resources/policies/docs/index.html The area director should receive a copy of any such correspondence.

Volunteer Review Committee (recommended best practice)

1. The volunteer review committee is to identify a volunteer work force that will provide a safe, caring, and positive environment for youth.
2. This committee shall consist of three to five individuals who represent a broad knowledge base of human resources, law enforcement, and child protection, as well as an understanding of the nature of local extension programs. In addition to these three to five individuals, staff members who have responsibility for youth programs shall serve on this committee.
3. Suggested resource people to consider include, but are not limited to:

• law enforcement officials • social services professionals • attorneys • medical professionals • human resources professionals • 4-H volunteers • school/education professionals • business and/or corporate personnel • local extension board members • faith community representatives

4. The board chair (or a representative) and extension agent(s) review suggestions and select potential review committee members.

5. Names of candidates selected for the review committee will be submitted to the local board for appointment. Those appointed will be required to sign the confidentiality statement.

6. It is recommended that an agent provide orientation for new review committee members in a face-to-face meeting. After that, members may meet as needed to review volunteer files as a group or individually, and to vote on a recommendation: approval, approval with restrictions, or rejection. In orientation, the agent outlines the purpose of the review committee, confidentiality, the Kansas 4-H Volunteer Screening Policy, review procedures, criteria, decision options, and the operating process for the committee.

7. If a review committee is not appointed, these duties shall become the responsibility of the local extension board or a subcommittee of the board.

Conduct of 4-H Volunteers

When there is suspected evidence of volunteer conduct violations, Extension offices are to document issues and retain within a volunteer file. The Kansas 4-H Code of Conduct is the standard for adult volunteers who represent Kansas 4-H within local extension units.

Dismissal of a Volunteer

One of the principles of positive youth development is that a young person has the benefit of a positive, sustained relationship with a caring adult. In Kansas 4-H, we depend on a team of volunteers to help fulfill the role of a caring adult.

The Kansas 4-H Volunteer Code of Ethics specifies the appropriate behavior, attitudes and actions of the volunteer. Unfortunately, situations occur in which a volunteer may act inappropriately or display behavior that undermines the goal of positive youth development. These actions may even be disruptive to the youth, volunteers and staff around them.

If there is immediate concern over the safety of youth or others associated with the program, if the volunteer has been charged with a crime, or if a situation arises regarding inappropriate behavior by a volunteer, the local agent and/or local extension director should consult with the State and Area 4-H Youth Development Specialists and Area Extension Director for the appropriate next steps.

Any volunteer who does not abide by the Volunteer Code of Ethics will be subject to review and appropriate consequences.

Note: Prior to the point of dismissal, KSRE professionals are to work with state and regional professionals to explore alternatives to dismissal.