

Benefits of Volunteer Certification



Oklahoma 4-H Volunteer Development Series

Purpose and Rational for Volunteer Certification

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- To ensure a safe environment for youth involved in Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development programs.
 - To provide documentation for volunteer activities in Oklahoma 4-H programs and to strengthen liability coverage for volunteers under the State of Oklahoma Governmental Tort Claims Act.
 - To assist in the selection, education, tracking and placement of volunteers for Oklahoma 4-H Youth Development programs.
 - To develop 4-H Volunteer competencies through continuing education activities.
- Historically, volunteers have been and will continue to be a valuable part of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (OCES) and Oklahoma 4-H Youth Development programs. These individuals dedicate many hours for the benefit of Oklahoma’s youth. OCES depends on volunteers to play a major role in the success of its programs.
- Traditionally, 4-H volunteers have been positive role models that have the best interest of the youth and the 4-H program as their primary focus. However, we must realize that people and society have changed. No longer can it be assumed that we know the personal background of each individual serving 4-H. Child safety, liability, accountability and credibility are concerns that confront every youth organization in our country.
- 4-H must take the appropriate steps to ensure a safe and positive environment for everyone involved in the Oklahoma 4-H Youth Development program.

Who is Certified and requires a Background Check?

- All volunteers regardless of tenure with 4-H, or association with a school, faith based group, another youth serving organization, employment or military service will receive an initial background check and be rescreened every four years with no exceptions.
- All adult volunteers (21 or older) who will be in contact with youth one-on-one without the immediate supervision of a certified 4-H volunteer(s) or Extension Employee. This includes but is not limited to: Club/Cloverbud/Project/Activity Leaders and/or General Club Volunteer, chaperones, and adults transporting youth.
- A New Volunteer, a Volunteer with break in service (inactive enrollment in 4HOnline), and a Veteran Volunteer up for re-certification must have a background check.
- Teen Leader—Youth under the age of 18. If interested in working with 4-H youth as a teen leader, a project or activity leader, a camp counselor, workshop instructor, district or state 4-H officer or in any situation that is unsupervised by staff or a certified volunteer, the teen must be certified. No background checks will be completed on a minor.

Certification Process



To become a certified 4-H volunteer visit with a county Extension educator, middle management volunteer or club leader regarding the expectations and responsibilities. They can provide written position descriptions for various volunteer roles.

Certification Steps:

1. Online enrollment and application at ok.4honline.com.
 2. Background check completed by Verified Volunteer.
 3. Complete New Volunteer Orientation
 4. Complete Working with Minors Training
 5. Complete Title VII & IX Training.
- Upon completion of these steps you are recognized as a “Certified 4-H Volunteer” with all the rights and responsibilities as explained verbally and in writing throughout the process.

Maintaining Certification

To maintain certification, annually volunteers must re-enroll, participate in a minimum of four (4) continuing education opportunities and renew the Working with Minors and Title VII & IX training annually.

Two of the continuing education opportunities must take place in county with your county Extension educator. Volunteers will be expected to exhibit their aptitude and understanding of the 4-H Volunteer Core Competencies (page 5) and behavioral indicators through their service to youth and the Oklahoma4-H program.

Annually Club leaders and Cloverbud leaders must sign a position description and a

complete a review process with the Extension educator.

Review Process: The Extension educators will annually conduct individual visits with club/Cloverbud leaders and any other volunteer(s) (as needed) to review successes, commitment, performance and responsibilities to the club/county 4-H program. The written appraisal will be signed by both parties and kept on file.

A volunteer who does not meet the minimum standards for maintaining certification will be placed on a one-year probation with a plan of improvement. At the end of the

probationary year they will either be returned to active status or their services will be concluded.

Volunteers who have a break in employment (an inactive enrollment) of one year will need an additional background check when they are rehired/reenrolled.

All volunteers regardless of tenure with 4-H, or association with a school, faith based group, another youth serving organization, employment or military service will be rescreened every four years with no exceptions.

Episodic volunteers do not require a background check. *Excerpt 2017 VMS manual.*

Defined: Episodic service that is short in duration
Volunteers who provide service that is short in duration can include the:

- One-day volunteer/judge who assists with Share the Fun
- Person who transports fair exhibits to the state fair
- Guest speaker or instructor for a special program

These volunteers assist the 4-H program for a pre-established time and are truly finished when the job is done in the prearranged time frame. These individuals are under the supervision of certified volunteers and/or Extension educators.



Learn more about the 4-H Eight Essential Elements. Help sheet **4H.VOL.114 Youth Development**

Q & A about a Background Check

QUESTION: Does a candidate have to give permission or consent for a check to be conducted?

ANSWER: Yes. If a candidate does not give permission or neglects to give all of the information required to process a background investigation, the background check will not be conducted. However, a person who does not give permission or does not provide all of the information needed cannot become a certified volunteer.

QUESTION: How does the University and OCES protect an individual's right to privacy?

ANSWER: OSU follows state and federal laws that ensure a candidate's right to privacy, which prohibits employees and others from using or disclosing personal information except within the scope of their assigned duties.

An Adverse Action Policy will be in place as required by the Federal Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA). Adverse Action is a two-step process that organizations are required to follow when a volunteer position is denied as a result of a background check. It starts prior to making a final decision and is a way to protect the volunteer. The two steps consist of a pre-adverse notice, sent prior to making a final decision, followed by a

notification of adverse action, sent after a decision is made not to accept application. The volunteer candidate receives a copy of their background check report so that they are able to address inaccuracies. (Source: 2018 Verified Volunteers)

QUESTION: What does the background check include?

ANSWER: The background check includes: Social Security Number Trace; Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) Sanctions List; nationwide Criminal History Search with validation; National Sex Offender Public Registry (NSOPR) Real-time Sex Offender Registry; County/state criminal history based on the jurisdiction revealed in the SSN Trace (past 7 years); Alias/maiden names run at jurisdiction revealed in the SSN Trace (past 7 years); Locator Select; and Monthly updates using the National Criminal Database Search for the first year.

QUESTION: Does the background check include a Motor Vehicle Report (MVR)?

ANSWER: No, not at this time.

QUESTION: Does the background check include a credit history check?

ANSWER: No

Screening Fee

The back ground check fee will be paid from state 4-H Program Fees.

The volunteer will have the opportunity to offset the cost of their screening by paying through Verified Volunteers should they want to contribute in that way.

Benefits of Volunteer Continuing Education

Continuing Education is a time for rejuvenation, personal development and social contact with other volunteers. It provides a conduit for discussion, sharing, and fellowship. Over a period of time both the 4-H

member and the volunteer benefit from the educational opportunity.

Benefits:

- 1) The program meets the 4-H Eight Essential Elements of a quality positive youth development

experience.

- 2) Enthusiastic and creative volunteers provide positive experiences.
- 3) Club meetings, project groups, and activities provide an organized quality education experience.

Behavioral Guidelines for Educators and Volunteers

These guidelines are not “all inclusive”, the Extension Service reserves the right to make adjustments to the Code of Conduct.

Breaching the behavioral guidelines can be grounds for severing one’s relationship as a volunteer with the Oklahoma 4-H Youth Development Program.

Oklahoma families and other youth service programs trust in the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service to provide educational programs in a safe environment for participating youth. Adults who assume educator and volunteer roles within Extension have the opportunity for a rewarding experience. The opportunity to work with youth is a privileged position of trust that should be held only by those who are willing to demonstrate behaviors that fulfill this trust. The following behavioral expectations have been established for persons serving in educator and volunteer roles within Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service programs.

1. Work cooperatively with youth, families, volunteers, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service faculty and staff, and others in a courteous, respectful manner demonstrating behaviors appropriate for a positive role model for youth.
A Parent or Volunteer’s negative behavior, can

jeopardize the membership status of a 4-H member. Persistent negative behavior can be grounds for withdrawing membership status from their child(ren).

2. Represent the Cooperative Extension Service and the 4-H program with pride and dignity, behave appropriately, exhibit good sportsmanship, and demonstrate reasonable conflict management skills.
3. Respect, adhere to, and enforce the rules, policies, and guidelines established by the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service and any other established rules or guidelines for sanctioned 4-H activities, this includes all state laws related to child abuse and substance abuse.
4. Recognize that verbal, mental or physical abuse, hazing or committing criminal acts, being aware of without reporting the same are grounds for termination as a volunteer or 4-H educator.
5. Comply with equal opportunity and anti-discrimination laws. Make all reasonable efforts to assure that 4-H youth programs are accessible to youth without regard to race, color, national origin, genetic information, sex, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion,

disability, or status as a veteran.

6. Treat animals humanely and encourage 4-H youth and adults to provide appropriate and ethical animal care.
7. Under no circumstances, allow or consume alcohol or illegal drugs at 4-H events or activities. Understand that the use of or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while in the presence of 4-H members and/or at 4-H programs or activities are grounds for termination as a volunteer or 4-H educator.
8. The use of tobacco and vapor products in the presence of 4-H members and/or during 4-H events and activities is strongly discouraged, as the use of these products by minors is illegal.
9. Operate machinery, vehicles, and other equipment in a safe and responsible manner when working with youth and adults participating in 4-H programs.
10. Accept responsibility to promote, conduct, and support 4-H programs in order to develop an effective county, district, state, and national 4-H program.

Volunteer Continuing Education

Check out opportunities at the district and state levels. Go to <http://4h.okstate.edu>, click on Parents and Volunteers to learn more.

Oklahoma State University, as an equal opportunity employer, complies with all applicable federal and state laws regarding non-discrimination and affirmative action. Oklahoma State University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all individuals and does not discriminate based on race, religion, age, sex, color, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, disability, or veteran status with regard to employment, educational programs and activities, and/or admissions. For more information, visit <https://eeo.okstate.edu>

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Oklahoma 4-H Volunteer Core Competencies

Competency	Behavioral Indicators
Communication Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effectively expresses ideas and facts concisely and in an organized manner through oral and written communication. Works well with 4-H members, parents, volunteers and extension staff. Practices active listening skills. Shares information in timely and diplomatic ways. Uses a variety of positive methods to promote 4-H and Cooperative Extension.
Interpersonal Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considers and responds appropriately to the needs, feelings and capabilities of others. Demonstrates good citizenship and treats others with respect and fairness. Exhibits patience in appropriate situations.
Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapts behavior and methods in response to new information, changing conditions and priorities, demands, unexpected obstacles, or situations. Is open-minded to new ideas, change, and new information. Demonstrates ability to compromise. Demonstrates flexibility due to change in conditions, priorities, demands or situations. Adapts leadership style to variety of situations. Adapts educational strategy for situation and audience. Encourages the development and use of imagination in the decision-making process.
Decisiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exercises good judgment based on situation and surroundings. Makes sound, well-informed decisions. Perceives the impact of decisions. Commits to action to accomplish organizational goals.
Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivated, self-starter. Committed to positive ethics in youth development – trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. Follows through with projects and commitment. Works to develop an area of expertise. Recognizes own strengths and weaknesses and committed to personal improvement. Demonstrates belief in own abilities and ideas.
Organizational Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effectively manages time, resources and people. Is prompt. Successfully manages multiple tasks. Uses conceptual and creative thinking in decision-making. Uses a proactive approach to problem solving. Uses a variety of educational tools (newsletters, presentations, tours, judging, news releases, displays, etc.). Evaluates strength, benefits and quality of educational programs.
Service Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effectively manages, develops and delivers educational programming. Is concerned with public perception and satisfaction. Is honest, trustworthy, fair, and dependable. Appearance and behavior is appropriate and professional. Works effectively with diverse audiences.
Teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offers assistance and is supportive of others. Gains satisfaction from group achievement. Demonstrates ability to work with diverse personalities. Maintains credibility with others. Coaches, mentors, and challenges peers and youth. Inspires, motivates and guides others toward goal(s) accomplishment. Actively involved and supportive of small group, club and county efforts.
Institutional Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands and appropriately applies procedures, requirements, regulations and policies as related to 4-H and Oklahoma Cooperative Extension. Supports and works effectively within the organizational and management systems of the local, county, and state 4-H programs. Supports the non-discrimination statement of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service. Demonstrates commitment to positive youth development and education.