

Florida 4-H Youth Development Misconduct Management Guidelines

Purpose

The purpose of the Event and Activity Misconduct Management Model is to provide Extension faculty, staff, and volunteers with assistance in dealing with misconduct or prohibited behavior within the UF/IFAS 4-H Youth Development Program at 4-H club meetings, activities, and events.

Code of Conduct

The following code of conduct is signed by youth and their parents annually when they enroll in the UF/IFAS Extension 4-H Youth Development Program:

As a participant in 4-H at the local, state, or national level, I have the responsibility of representing the UF/IFAS Extension 4-H Youth Development Program to the public. Therefore, I am expected to conduct myself in a manner that will bring honor to me, my family, my community, and 4-H. To do that, I must abide by the following rules:

1. Obey local, state, and federal laws. Follow county, district, state and/or national 4-H policies. Abide by any special rules for a 4-H event or activity.
2. Speak and act in a responsible, courteous, and respectful way. Harassment, threats or bullying of any type is prohibited.
3. Act responsibly to maintain a safe environment for all participants. Acting in a manner that could endanger the health, safety or welfare of yourself or others is prohibited. Report threats to the well-being of any participant immediately to the adult in charge.
4. Possession or use of tobacco, e-cigarettes, alcohol, or illegal drugs is prohibited. Possession or use of approved medications by youth during a 4-H function must be reported to the adult in charge and must not be accessible to other participants.
5. Possession or use of weapons or other dangerous objects is prohibited in accordance with Florida law, except when required as part of an approved educational program. Weapons are defined to include, but are not limited to, guns, knives and incendiary or explosive devices of any kind.
6. Respect all property, facilities, equipment, and vehicles. I will be responsible for any damage or other consequences resulting from my behavior.
7. Participate fully in 4-H functions. Be in the assigned program areas (example—dorms, cabins, programs, etc.) on time. If I am unable to attend or participate, I will tell the adult in charge. Help others have a pleasant experience by making every attempt to include all participants in activities.
8. Dress appropriately for each 4-H function.
9. Use of any mobile electronic device during a scheduled 4-H activity is prohibited unless activity-specific rules otherwise allow. When permitted, they should be used only in a manner that is consistent with the approved activity and not discourteous or disruptive.
10. The belongings of youth participants, including but not limited to bags, purses, computers, other electronic devices, lockers and vehicles, are subject to search and seizure by 4-H faculty/staff, and in some instances a volunteer designee, upon reasonable suspicion that a prohibited and/or illegally possessed substance or object is contained within that area. (If an adult is suspected, this will be handled by law enforcement.)

Failure to abide by the Florida 4-H Code of Conduct in its entirety could result in a loss of privileges during a 4-H event and in the future; including but not limited to suspension or termination of 4-H membership or volunteer service*. *Please note that volunteers serve at the pleasure of the University; accordingly, their services may cease at any time at the discretion of the University.

Notice of Prohibited Behavior

Adult volunteers in charge of 4-H meetings, events, and activities can issue appropriate discipline to participating youth who engage in prohibited behavior, which includes sending youth home at their parent/guardian's expense without refunding registration fees or travel costs. All that is required is to notify, either verbally, in writing, or through email, the youth and their parent/guardian that the youth's behavior violated the 4-H Code of Conduct.

A Guideline on Prohibited Behavior during 4-H Events and Activities

From time to time, some youth will choose to engage in prohibited behavior, or make bad decisions at 4-H meetings, events, and activities. Adults working with youth in the 4-H Youth Development Program should be prepared to deal with these youth in an appropriate way (considering positive youth development principles and best practices). On occasion a youth's misbehavior may result in the youth losing privileges or receiving consequences. Understanding the severity of various types of prohibited behavior can give adults in charge some guidelines as they decide on appropriate consequences.

A youth who violates the 4-H Code of Conduct should have the opportunity to explain their actions to the professional Extension faculty, staff or volunteer in charge. Behavior that is disruptive to the club, event, or activity will be documented and parents/guardians notified. When appropriate the Extension faculty and/or staff and state 4-H office will be notified.

Examples of Minor Offenses:

- Disrespectful conduct (in any medium, including social media, email, text messages, etc. during official 4-H sponsored events)
- Untruthfulness to chaperones, leaders, event organizers or others in attendance
- Public displays of affection
- Using profane, vulgar or lewd language
- Horseplay
- Dressing inappropriately for the event or activity if there is a designated dress code for that event
- Habitually late to program activities, especially during designated event or activity times at overnight events
- Not in room at designated time for overnight events (breaking curfew)
- Not respecting the rights and privacy of roommates or others attending an activity at overnight events

Examples of Intermediate Offenses:

- Non-participation in a 4-H activity without the permission of staff member(s) in charge
- For overnight events, being in an unassigned room after curfew
- Damage to meeting site, sleeping quarters, person(s) or other person's property without malicious intent during overnight events

Examples of Major Offenses:

- Smoking or using tobacco products
- Use of unauthorized substances (alcohol, drugs, e-cigarettes, unauthorized medication etc.)
- Carrying an unauthorized weapon
- Threatening another person with a weapon or bodily harm
- Bullying of any kind
- Cheating during competitive events
- Theft of any kind
- Sexual misconduct

- Intentional damage to meeting site, sleeping quarters, person(s) or other person's property

Consequences of Prohibited Behavior

If any laws are broken, local authorities may be contacted. The decision to contact law enforcement will be made in consultation with and at the discretion of the Associate State Program Leader or designee. After law enforcement or 4-H leadership has addressed the situation, and depending on the severity of the offense, the youth may be removed from the activity or event and sent home. A follow-up letter documenting the situation will be sent to the youth and his/her parents/guardians after the event, and this letter will include a reminder of the 4-H Code of Conduct. If a youth violates the 4-H Code of Conduct and is sent home from an event, they may face suspension from future 4-H events, activities or even the 4-H program.

For every offense, whether minor, intermediate or major, the 4-H member will receive a verbal reprimand. If appropriate, the Extension professional may request letters of apology to be written to the appropriate people by the violator.

Adults in charge of 4-H meetings, events, and activities have some discretion in handling youth who engage in prohibited behaviors. In these situations it is imperative for the adult in charge to weigh considerations such as the age/developmental level of the youth, the severity of the prohibited behavior, and how many (if any) verbal warnings a youth has received. The following are some examples of how an adult might handle disciplinary actions when a youth violates the 4-H Code of Conduct. Disciplinary issues should be documented by the Extension professional or volunteer in charge of the meeting, event or activity and submitted to the youth's 4-H faculty member.

Minor Offenses

- Verbal reprimand to the youth.
- Habitual discipline problems could result in sitting out of certain activities.

Intermediate Offenses

- Verbal reprimand to the youth.
- An adult can decide that the youth might lose some privileges or sit out of certain activities during the meeting, event or activity.
- One or two intermediate violations is grounds for removal from a club meeting, event, activity and/or sending a participant home at the parents'/guardians' expense when applicable.
- Three intermediate violations during 4-H one calendar year is grounds for the 4-H member to not be allowed in any county, region or state activities for a minimum of six months' time or the remainder of the 4-H year. In addition, a 4-H member may be asked to resign from all 4-H offices or leadership roles held and/or to give up monetary awards or scholarships from the Florida 4-H Youth Development program. This decision will be made at a later date by a collaboration of the local 4-H faculty, County Extension Director (or designee), and Regional Specialized 4-H Agent.

Major Offenses

- Verbal reprimand to the youth
- Automatic removal from a club, event, activity and/or sending a participant home at the parents'/guardians' expense.
- Two major offenses during any 4-H year may result in suspension of membership in all Florida 4-H Youth Development programs for a minimum of six months' time or the remainder of the 4-H year, depending on offense. In addition, a 4-H member may be asked to resign from all 4-H offices or

leadership roles held or give up monetary awards or scholarships from the Florida 4-H program. These decisions will be made at a later date by a collaboration of the local 4-H faculty, County Extension Director (or designee), and Regional Specialized 4-H Agent.

Course of Action

Extension professionals or volunteers responsible for 4-H events and activities (including club meetings) are encouraged to communicate to 4-H participants and adult chaperones prior to the event a standard of acceptable behavior. The Florida 4-H Code of Conduct should be reviewed with participants as part of the initial orientation to the club, event or activity. Extension professionals or volunteers should fill out a discipline report form for intermediate and major offenses. The original copy of this report should be uploaded to the member's profile in 4Honline.

For each reprimand given for an intermediate and/or a major incident, a summary letter will be provided to the 4-H member, parent/guardian, county Extension professional(s), state office staff member responsible for the event or activity (if applicable), county Extension director (if applicable), and 4-H specialist responsible for the event or activity (if applicable), and the Associate State 4-H Program Leader. A copy of the letter should be uploaded to the member's profile in 4Honline.

In the event that a 4-H member must be sent home from an event or activity, or a 4-H member must resign from a 4-H office or leadership role held or give up monetary awards or scholarships from the Florida 4-H program, the Extension Professional shall:

1. Obtain all the relevant facts and document using the Incident Report Form (located in TEAMS).
2. Brief the on-site adult responsible for the youth delegate (Extension professional or 4-H volunteer).
3. If not on-site, but available via phone, brief the county Extension professional and state office professional responsible.
4. Review consequences of misbehavior. The following steps should be taken when sending a 4-H member home:
 - a. Extension professional contacts parents.
 - b. Parents advised that child is being sent home by safest, most direct means, and that parents are responsible for the cost.
 - c. Extension professional decides if parents should be given the option of picking up the child.
 - d. Extension professional collects money from parent to pay transportation charges.
 - e. Extension professional ends follow-up correspondence to appropriate county Extension professional, state office staff professional, member, youth and parent/guardian for documentation.

Suspension and Revocation of 4-H Membership

When a youth joins a 4-H club, they agreed to follow the rules as laid out in the 4-H Code of Conduct. Intermediate or major offenses at a 4-H club meeting, event, or activity might result in a meeting with the local 4-H agent, a 4-H RSA (or designee), and the County Extension Director (or designee) to determine if a 4-H member shall be suspended or have their membership revoked. At this meeting, the 4-H member will have an opportunity to address the matter. A minimum of two weeks prior to the meeting, the youth and his/her parent/guardian will be given written notice of their alleged violation of the code of conduct via certified mail. This letter will explain that they need to contact the local Extension Office within two weeks of the date of the letter to schedule a meeting during which the youth will have an opportunity to be heard and explain their actions. Whether or not a 4-H member is suspended from 4-H for a period of time, or if the youth has their membership in 4-H revoked permanently will be determined at this meeting. The 4-H youth/parents should contact the local Extension professional to schedule the meeting within two weeks of the date of the letter. Failure to participate in this process may result in the youth's

membership being revoked.

If the 4-H youth has their membership suspended or revoked, and would like to appeal this decision, they must send a written appeal, to the Associate State 4-H Program Leader, through email within two weeks of the local county meeting.

This meeting should be educational in nature for the youth. As a positive youth development organization, even matters related to discipline can serve as a positive educational tool. As such, if any meeting related to possible suspension or revoking membership occurs, youth should be encouraged to speak on their own behalf, with only minimal input from parents or other adults.

**Adapted from: Tennessee 4-H Youth Development
Event and Activity Misconduct Management Guidelines**

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Programs in agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, family and consumer sciences, and resource development.
University of Florida Institute of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture and county governments cooperating.
UT Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.

