CHARTERS: THE KEY TO OFFICIAL RECOGNITION

4-H Charters, either in certificate or letter form, issued by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and signed by the Secretary of Agriculture's designated representative are the only documents that officially recognize a 4-H Club and authorizes its use of the 4-H Name and Emblem for the conduct of 4-H Youth Development programs. The official 4-H Charter, issued by USDA, is obtained from the 4-H National Headquarters—USDA in two formats: certificate version (most widely used), and a letter version.

As formulated under Federal regulation Title 18 U.S.C. 707, "The Cooperative Extension Service, land-grant institutions, local 4-H Clubs and groups **recognized by the Secretary of Agriculture**…are authorized to use the 4-H Name and Emblem." 4-H Charters issued by USDA are the only documentation of that recognition. State and local charters that do not include a USDA signatory, are not considered official 4-H Charters.

State 4-H offices are expected to maintain documentation on the issuance of 4-H Charters to 4-H Clubs within their respective states. Charters should be issued when establishing a 4-H Club. For those 4-H Clubs that have been long established and verification of a valid Charter is not available, issuance of a new 4-H Charter is necessary.

Affiliated 4-H Organizations (such as Foundations, Councils, Camps, etc.) obtain their official recognition and authorization to use the 4-H Name and Emblem through a Memorandum of Understanding / Agreement between the organization and the Land Grant Institutions' State or Local 4-H Extension Office.

4-H Charters are agreements. It is an agreement by the club with 4-H National Headquarters-USDA on the proper use of the 4-H Name and Emblem. And it is an agreement by the club with the Land Grant Institutions' State or Local 4-H Extension Office to follow and abide by all state and local 4-H policies, procedures, and other requirements.

4-H Charters are agreements within the context of the overall 4-H Program. 4-H Charters do not qualify a 4-H Club as a legal entity according to state government and business policies and definitions. 4-H Charters do not allow a recognized 4-H Club to share their rights and privileges, like the use of the 4-H Name and Emblem, with any other person, group, or business. A 4-H Charter is required for any 4-H Club to use the 4-H Name and Emblem.

Examples of Frequently Asked Questions:

Q. How can I obtain copies of the USDA 4-H Charter?
A. State 4-H Offices may obtain copies of the USDA 4-H Charter, in the official formats, through the 4-H National Headquarters–USDA. Contact the Headquarters at 4HNE@nifa.usda.gov.

Q. Is there an expiration date on the Charters?
A. No. The USDA 4-H Charter, once issued, would be valid for as long as the 4-H entity receiving the 4-H Charter existed. If the 4-H entity disbanded, separated into multiple entities, or changed its name, a new charter would need to be issued. States may elect to use an expiration date on the USDA 4-H Charter prior to issuance, however, USDA does not mandate the use of an expiration date. Additionally, even with a change in the USDA designated representative, the USDA 4-H Charters remain valid until new ones are made available from the 4-H National Headquarters–USDA. However, 4-H Charters may be revoked at any time by the Land Grant Institutions' State or Local 4-H Extension Office for failure by the club to meet any aspect of the agreement.

4-H National Headquarters; 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.; MS 2225; Washington, D.C. 20250
www.national4-hheadquarters.gov

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