

# Optimizing Your Potential as a 4-H Volunteer



## Safety Issues and Expectations

### Introduction:

Volunteers are responsible for the welfare of the youth under their supervision. This means that we must be ever mindful of the risks involved in many of the activities that we offer.

This fact sheet will discuss ways to reduce the risk of harm to the young people with whom you work. It will cover some of the safety guidelines that you need to follow when planning and carrying out your club programs and activities. It will also cover the emergency procedures that you should follow if an emergency situation occurs.

Additionally, we will provide pointers designed to help protect you, the volunteer, from legal action if a situation arises.

### Volunteer Responsibilities:

As a Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service volunteer we have several expectations as you serve in this role.

We expect that you will read, sign and follow the information contained in the **Adult Behavioral Expectations Form**. A signed copy of this agreement will be on file in the county extension office. It is expected that you will work within these expectations.

We expect that all volunteers in good standing will **participate in appropriate trainings** offered for the kinds of programs in which they are involved.

It is our expectation, and your responsibility, to ensure that **all youth activities are carried out in compliance with the Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service guidelines**. If there is a question regarding proper procedures, we expect that you will contact the county extension educator in charge and make sure that you get approval for anything out of the ordinary.

It is your responsibility as a volunteer to **keep the county extension educators fully informed** of all your club projects and activities, including any field trips, fund raising events, and any other special activities.

It is also your responsibility to **maintain up-to-date enrollments** with the county extension office. Enrollments should not only include your youth members, but also all other volunteers working with you. As a volunteer it is your responsibility to **welcome all youth and their families to participate in our programs**. This also includes any other volunteers that may be

involved in your program efforts. As a volunteer of Purdue University you are not allowed to discriminate on any basis, including age, color, handicap, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status.

### **Safety:**

The role of safety in the Purdue Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Program cannot be underestimated. In all of our work with young people, we have a responsibility to them, and to their families, to provide a safe environment. By following a few simple guidelines, you can provide such an environment.

As a volunteer, you have the responsibility to **review your project and the planned program of activities to identify any areas of potential risk**. Once you identify a possible risk, you must put into place a plan to minimize these risks, and the plan must be practiced by all leaders and volunteers involved in the project.

**It is recommended that a first aid kit be available at your meeting sites.** When your activities take place outdoors, you will want to make sure that you carry a first aid kit in your vehicle, so supplies are available if needed.

At your initial meeting of the project or club, you will need to include time on your agenda to **discuss the safety procedures** associated with that project and the expectations concerning safety you have of the members and youth.

As the adult volunteer or leader, it is your responsibility to **see that each young person in your group fully understands and can follow the safety guidelines** established for your project and activities. You may wish to do this with some sort of

quiz, or by observing their actions. Either way, it is your responsibility to ensure there are no misunderstandings.

**Machines or equipment** that you use with your project and activities **need to be in good repair with all safety features**, including guards, safety switches and the like, in place and functional. It is your responsibility to check the equipment prior to use.

As the adult volunteer it is your responsibility to **ensure that our youth wear protective safety equipment**, when recommended or advised for the activity. State guidelines regarding safety equipment must be followed. Before any event, take a few minutes to think about what, if any, safety equipment would make the activity safer. Then take the time to ensure that it is available and is used.

**Protective flotation devices must be used** by all youth in our charge who are participating in any water activities for which Purdue University has prescribed their use.

**All 4-H members are required to wear a properly fitted ASTM or SEI standard F1163 (or above) certified equestrian helmet** whenever mounted, or driving, at a 4-H horse and pony event, show, or activity.

**Safety goggles should be used by all youth when using power tools.**

**All participants in the Shooting Sports and Sport Fishing program are required to follow safety standards** developed by Purdue University for these activities.

When planning activities for youth it is your responsibility to make sure that **all equipment you might use is appropriate**

**for the ages, sizes, and the abilities of the youth** who will be involved.

**Children in grades K-2 who participate in any of our livestock programs are restricted to animals of 300 pounds or less if they will be showing independently.** If they are assisted by an adult (WITH THE CHILD AT ALL TIMES) they may select a larger animal.

**If these guidelines are not followed, the Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service will not sanction the event.**

### **Health /Permission Forms:**

When planning special events or outings, remember to **use permission forms**. These forms are an indication that proper planning went into the event, and it is an excellent way to communicate with parents that these events are taking place.

Copies of approved health and permission forms are available from your local county extension office.

### **Insurance:**

**Health and accident insurance should be obtained for special events, activities, and trips.** You can get more information about low-cost insurance that can be purchased on an annual or per event basis from the county extension office.

Counties should purchase limited medical and accidental coverage for: 4-H youth and volunteers in approved activities.

This additional insurance coverage is provided through either the: American Income Life Insurance Co. or Brotherhood Mutual. Coverage through these companies is in effect from the time the participants leave home to the time they return.

Coverage may be purchased for each activity or on a blanket policy.

Blanket Policies are:  
\$1 a year per member  
\$2 a year for Horse and Pony

The State 4-H Department provides insurance coverage for statewide events such as 4-H Roundup, 4-H Science Workshops, State Jr. Leader Conference, and state judging events.

### **Transportation:**

**Automobiles used for transporting youth should have adequate auto insurance coverage.** The recommended MINIMUM level of liability insurance is \$500,000 per accident for bodily injury and property damage. In addition an umbrella liability policy is suggested.

Your own **personal coverage is always primary** in these cases. Purdue University insurance coverage may act as a secondary policy if the limits of your policy are exhausted. Purdue coverage may take effect as long as the adult volunteer is:

#### **Acting in good faith Acting within scope of his/her duties**

If your activity requires that you will transport young people in a bus owned by or driven for an Indiana school corporation, you may need to contact your local county extension office for special insurance considerations.

When the transportation of young people is required for your activities, this transportation presents special challenges. If you assume responsibility for establishing car pools, **make sure that all drivers are at least 21 years old with a valid drivers license.**

You should not permit anyone to drive whose driving you know to be dangerous. Whenever possible, **have parents arrange the car pool assignments for their own children.** This will make it easier for everyone concerned.

Be sure to remind parents of teen drivers that they are fully responsible for the teen driver and any passengers in the teen's vehicle.

**Be sure that everyone uses a seat belt.** Do not overload the cars, and do not allow members to ride in the back of pickup trucks.

Additionally, if you know that a particular child often causes trouble for drivers, ask the parents of these children to transport them, or leave them at home.

## Summary:

Being a part of CES youth programs gives you and the young people you serve the chance to:

### References

- Barney, Sally W. and Lonegan, Judith, E. *Reducing Risks for 4-H Volunteer Leaders*. University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension Service.
- McKee, R. 2000. *Indiana 4-H Youth Program: Liability and Insurance for Volunteers*. Purdue Cooperative Extension Service, West Lafayette, IN.
- *Volunteer Management*. Indiana 4-H Youth Program Policies and Procedures. Purdue Cooperative Extension Service. West Lafayette, IN. 2000.
- Wilson, Carolyn. *Effective 4-H Club Meetings*. Ohio 4-H Volunteer Fact Sheet #9. The Ohio State University. Cooperative Extension Service. Columbus, Ohio.

Acquire new knowledge and share ideas.  
Develop self-confidence and leadership.  
Participate in decision-making.  
Develop responsibility and commitment.  
Make new friends.  
Enjoy recreational activities.

As a volunteer, you will find that your job is challenging. There will be times when you find it very time consuming, and it is a task that requires thought and effort to do well.

What do you gain from all that time and effort? Well, that's easy. You will receive immense satisfaction from working with youth as you take part in their growth and development.

Don't let an accident that could be prevented spoil all the enjoyment and rewards of youth work. Reduce any risks to those in your charge by always putting safety first!