

Addressing Problems and Concerns in the 4-H Program

(Approved 11/83; 10/95; revised 01/04)

Addressing Issues & Concerns with 4-H Volunteers

Effective involvement of volunteers is essential to the success of the 4-H program. It is a primary method for multiplying Extension efforts and is highly beneficial to the growth of the program in both quantity and quality. Extension's goal is to maintain a strong 4-H volunteer leader program which will effectively serve and meet the needs of 4-H throughout the state.

County Extension agents have the responsibility for orientation and education of the 4-H volunteer. This is accomplished through:

- Initial orientation to the position;
- Ongoing volunteer education opportunities (county, district, state, national)
- Communicating information relating to all 4-H program activities and events
- Taking an active role in countywide programs and activities; being seen, supportive, and engaged.

It also includes volunteers having a copy of their position description describing their duties and/or responsibilities. It is required, by organizational policy, that the position description be provided when an individual receives an application packet. The outline or position description should be used with new volunteer recruiting and education and is also a tool to assist in addressing problems, including disciplinary action that may be necessary.

Suggested Procedures

The following sequence should be followed when addressing issues involving 4-H volunteers. This procedure is in line with 4-H philosophy which is: "to the extent possible, problems and concerns should be resolved at the level of the problem."

1. For new Extension agents the problem should be discussed with their County Chair and/or the district director, 4-H district specialist, and/or Associate State 4-H Leader. For experienced Extension agents who are familiar with people and situations, the County Chair, District Director, and/or 4-H District Specialist, may not need to be involved, however keeping them informed of the situation is helpful.
2. Please reference "Dealing with Inappropriate Behaviors of Volunteers: A Guide to Decision-Making"

Resolving Problems and Concerns in the 4-H Program

(Other Than Volunteers)

In dealing with problems and concerns which involve people other than the volunteer, the same principle stated in *Resolving Problems with 4-H Volunteers* apply (keeping the chair, district director, district specialist, and/or Associate State 4-H Leader informed, private discussions, keeping records, and having it in writing, etc.). The sequence and procedure may be a bit different – for example: 4-H activities and events (i.e., fair, judging, etc.) generally have specific written procedures and requirements for participation. These are to be followed and where questions arise, the entity establishing the rules should be involved (and taking the lead) in interpreting them and resolving the problem.

Suggested Procedures

(Sequence in Handling 4-H Problems Other Than the Volunteer)

The following sequence should be followed in handling 4-H problems other than volunteers:

1. When problems can not be resolved by discussion with the people involved and the county Extension agent responsible for 4-H, the issue should be referred to the appropriate 4-H subcommittee (horse, dairy, nutrition, etc.). People involved should have opportunity to present the problem. Problems that deal with the fair should be discussed with junior and/or senior fair boards.
2. If the problem can not be resolved by the 4-H subcommittee or there is not an appropriate committee, the concern should be taken to the county 4-H committee.
3. The respective 4-H committee should make recommendations to the county Extension agents. The final decision is the responsibility of county Extension agents, district director, and/or district specialist, 4-H, with the agent responsible for the 4-H program assuming leadership.