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Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service • Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources

Oklahoma State 4-H Club Program Policies

For 4-H Year

July 1, 2002 - June 30, 2003

A Message for 4-H Families

Welcome to the world of 4-H! The Oklahoma 4-H Program is full of opportunities for your family to work, play and learn together. This publication is designed to help you understand what general policies will be used to govern 4-H membership and participation. We encourage you to study this material so you will know what to expect as your son or daughter chooses to participate in 4-H events and activities throughout the year.

This publication covers guidelines for the 4-H Club portion of Oklahoma 4-H Youth Development Programs. Policies related to school enrichment and special interest programs are not included in this document. The stated policies for membership should be followed at all levels of the Oklahoma 4-H Club Program. Policies related to participation are specific to those events conducted on a district or state basis. Counties may adopt the participation guidelines for their county/unit activities or they may develop other regulations for activities limited to their county/unit. This should be done through involvement of the county/unit 4-H Volunteers' Council and advisory groups in conjunction with the Extension staff.

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide for maximum opportunities for youth to benefit from 4-H Club programs. Programs conducted by the Oklahoma Extension 4-H Program should be inclusive to the greatest extent possible. Changes in conditions affecting youth, families, and the 4-H Program make the formulation of workable policies increasingly difficult. Cooperation among Extension staff, volunteers, parents, and sponsors is essential to solving specific problems that may arise. Care should be taken to avoid rules, which exclude youth for reasons they cannot control.

If you find that some part of this publication is unclear, or if you have concerns about how the policies are being carried out, we invite you to call or write to us at: State 4-H Office, 205 4-H Youth Development Building, Stillwater, OK 74078-6063; 405-744-5390. Best wishes as your family participates in the Oklahoma 4-H Program.

4-H Club Membership

Any boy or girl residing in, or attending school in Oklahoma may enroll in Oklahoma 4-H at anytime after he or she has reached age nine or has begun the fall semester of the 4th grade, whichever comes first. Youth who will be 9 according to the "4-H Age Table" in this document will be allowed to join 4-H on October 1st of the current 4-H year even if they have not yet turned nine, but will be nine before January 1, and participate fully for the entire year. Boys and girls may remain

in 4-H as members provided they have not graduated from high school. Or, if they have graduated they may remain members if they have not reached their 19th birthday by January 1 of the 4-H year. Youth who have graduated or completed graduation equivalency may not be eligible to participate in some events – see rules for specific events.

Youth who reach or pass their 19th birthday during their senior year may remain in 4-H for the remainder of that program year. Youth who are over 19 but have not graduated from high school may enroll with the approval of the OSU Extension staff until they graduate or meet the 12 grade equivalency. Youth who are 19 on January 1 of the 4-H year may not be eligible to compete in some events – see rules for specific details.

Membership in 4-H is a privilege and membership may be denied to persons who have been banned from school, school related programs, or who have exhibited a behavior that may place other members or volunteers at undue risk. Membership shall not be denied based on race, color, national origin, gender, religion, disability, marital status, or membership in any other organization.

An individual who meets these requirements and has a completed 4-H enrollment card on file in the OSU Extension Office and whose name appears on a club enrollment or computer roster that is on file in the OSU Extension Office is considered to be a 4-H member. An individual who has completed these requirements is considered to be a member from the date the enrollment is returned to the county office through the remainder of the current 4-H Year (July 1-June 30). Four-H enrollments may be accepted throughout the 4-H Year.

Effective July 1, 2002 all members are required to enroll annually through their local club leader or the county Extension Office. For youth who show livestock, the completion of an animal nomination form does not constitute 4-H enrollment.

4-H Year

The "4-H Year" will be based on a fiscal and program year beginning July 1 and ending June 30. Ages for the 4-H year will be based on age on January 1 of that program year. Members may enroll at any time during the year provided they meet the age requirements as previously described.

Place of Membership

Youth must choose to enroll in either the county/unit where they reside or the county/unit where they attend school,

but not both. If a youth is part of a home school group or cooperative that serves several communities or counties you may utilize 4-H educational materials in a group setting; however, you should seek club membership in the county/unit where you reside. Exceptions to this policy **MUST** be mutually approved by the Extension staff in EACH of the counties involved. All exceptions to the policy must be established at the beginning of the 4-H Year or at the time members join during the year and must be communicated to the 4-H member's parent(s) in writing. It is recommended that copies of the agreement be sent to the District Extension Office and the county/unit 4-H Volunteer's Council in each county/unit involved.

If a county/unit does not offer a particular project, a youth may cross county/unit lines to participate in educational programs in a project area. As Oklahoma does not recognize "sweepstakes teams," youth may not compete on a team representing another county/unit other than the one where they reside or attend school. For example a youth can attend educational programs on judging or in some project with a competitive event in a county other than their home county/unit, but must represent their home county/unit in any contests. The instructor who has provided training should sign the certification form along with the Extension Educator of the home county/unit.

When members move or parental custody changes, youth may transfer their membership from another state or county/unit during the year by completing an enrollment card in the new county/unit where membership is sought. At the time a card is filed in the new county/unit, all membership rights in the former county/unit are surrendered. When length of membership is required for participation in a specific activity, membership time may be transferred, providing the member completes the new enrollment procedure in a timely fashion according to above policies.

When custody is jointly shared, youth may not exhibit or compete in 4-H activities in two counties; they must declare place of membership upon enrollment and should notify the Extension office in the two counties where membership and residence are shared, indicating the place of membership.

For some events, such as county fairs and livestock shows, exhibitors may be required to be residents and/or students in the county where competing. Check with the county fairboard or other governing body about specific guidelines.

Members-at-large in Oklahoma

The concept of members-at-large is discouraged in Oklahoma 4-H. Members are expected to participate in local 4-H Clubs. If no club is available in your area or if the club's meeting time creates an unusual hardship, a family should work with their county extension staff to establish an additional or new chartered 4-H club in their area.

Participation of Pre-9 Year Olds in 4-H

Cloverbud membership will be granted to children 5 years old through 3rd grade. The Cloverbud program is family-oriented and is non-competitive. Due to the developmental skills of this age group, Cloverbud members **will not** be permitted to participate in events where they or their projects are compared or judged against their peers. Fund raising by Cloverbuds is inappropriate. Cloverbud members may participate in non-competitive activities on a local or county/unit

basis as deemed appropriate by the OSU Extension Staff and Volunteer Leaders Council. District and State activities will not be provided for Cloverbuds. For some projects, including all competitive events, the 4-H activity insurance will not provide coverage for Cloverbud members.

Age Categories

For the purpose of providing age-appropriate activities, programs will be provided for either two or three age categories. When programs are divided into two age categories, they will be:

Juniors: ages 9 (or 4th grade), 10, 11, 12, and 13 (As of Jan. 1)

Seniors: ages 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18 (As of Jan. 1)

When programs are divided into three age categories, they will be:

Beginners: ages 9 (or in 4th grade), 10, and 11

Intermediates: ages 12, 13, and 14

Advanced: ages 15, 16, 17, and 18

4-H Age Table for 4-H Year

July 1, 2002 – June 30, 2003

All ages based on age January 1 of current 4-H Year

Year of Birth	4-H Age
1993	9
1992	10
1991	11
1990	12
1989	13
1988	14
1987	15
1986	16
1985	17
1984	18
1983	19

These ages will be used to determine participation eligibility throughout the entire 4-H year.

General Participation Rules

- Members of 4-H will be allowed to participate in District, and State events provided they have completed the enrollment procedures as outlined in the club membership section at least 30 days prior to the event, except where prohibited by regulations of a specific event or activity such as some livestock shows.
- All events and activities planned, conducted or sponsored by the Cooperative Extension Service are open all youth who meet 4-H membership criteria. Some events that are not planned, conducted or sponsored by 4-H may limit participation to youth who meet additional criteria. If that criteria is discriminating in nature, that group may be denied the use of the 4-H Name and Emblem in conjunction with the event, even if the event is open to 4-H members.

3. Youth who are participating as 4-H members in approved activities or events sponsored by organizations other than the Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension Service should abide by the regulations as designated by the sponsoring organization in addition to those regulations established by Oklahoma 4-H and Cooperative Extension. This includes judging events, livestock shows, and other events, which often have specific regulations for participation.
4. The Oklahoma 4-H Youth Development Program encourages members to maintain good academic standing at school. When 4-H events and activities are held during regular school hours, members are expected to abide by their school's academic eligibility rules.
5. Member eligibility to participate in 4-H events and activities held at times other than regular school hours should not be determined by school policy unless such authority is clearly established by the policies for that club, county/unit, or event.
6. When 4-H members participate in events with representatives from other school organizations, they will be expected to conform uniformly to the regulations set forth for that event, such as district and state livestock shows. See the "academic eligibility" rules that are in effect for most livestock shows.
7. Delegates for district, state, and out-of-state events must have a signed code of conduct agreement and medical release form on file as requested by the event coordinator before they will be permitted to participate in the event.
8. Guidelines for specific events and activities will be published prior to the events and will be distributed to county/unit Extension offices throughout the state. Event handbooks may be outdated. Volunteers and parents should check with their Extension office for up-to-date information about individual events.
9. Membership in 4-H is a privilege and membership may be denied to persons who have been banned from school, school related programs, from participating in educational or extracurricular events and activities, or who have exhibited a behavior that may place other members or volunteers at undue risk. Similarly, youth who have been banned from participating in events as a FFA member will not be permitted to enroll in 4-H projects in order to avoid the barring action.

Oklahoma 4-H Open Membership Policy

Within the spirit of the Affirmative Action policy of the Cooperative Extension Service, 4-H Youth Programs are provided to youth regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, disability, marital status, or membership in any other organization. This policy should be carried out in the spirit of inclusion with an effort to insure that all youth are welcome to participate in 4-H programs and other programs of their choosing. Dual membership policies or statements developed by other programs that deny or limit a youth's participation because of their membership in 4-H are not recognized by 4-H. Since **October 1, 1993**, there has been no official dual membership agreement between Oklahoma FFA Chapters and Oklahoma 4-H Programs. The following rationale and guidelines should be followed in advising 4-H members about membership in 4-H and all other youth organizations.

Rationale for Open Membership

1. Young people and adults are unique, each with their own interests and talents. Different organizations have their own unique and varied strengths and program offerings. Because two organizations or two educators offer similar programs does not mean that they are equally or exclusively suited to serve the specific educational needs of each and every individual child.
2. Cooperation and collaboration between youth organizations should result in each child more nearly meeting their specific needs by utilizing the programs and the leadership provided by various youth organizations.
3. Young people who participate in more than one organization have opportunities to capitalize on the specific strengths of each organization to reach their own full potential as an individual.
4. As skills are learned through participation in various community organizations, those skills will be applied to the individual's work within each and every organization, thus improving the potential of all community youth organizations.
5. If organizations are not competing for the exclusive loyalty of an individual, all organizations can work together to provide better support for the youth of the community.
6. When local questions regarding dual membership arise, attempts should first be made to solve them locally through the educators and administrators involved.

Guidelines for Open Membership

The following practices should guide implementation of the open membership policy by Extension staff and volunteers.

1. Any boy or girl who meets the age and residence requirements for membership should be allowed to be a 4-H member and participate without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, disability, marital status, or membership in any other organization.
2. Participation in 4-H events and activities should be determined in accordance with the enrollment and participation guidelines that are outlined in the appropriate sections of this publication.
3. Membership in other organizations should not determine how a 4-H member is allowed to participate in 4-H events and activities.
4. When specific activities for more than one organization are held at the same time (as in some judging contests) members will be expected to indicate their preference for organizational representation prior to the development of team rosters so that other individuals may be included on the team.
5. When specific community activities create competition for an individual's time or loyalty, the organizations involved should endeavor to establish a spirit of mutual cooperation and fairness and work out a local agreement prior to the beginning of training or preparation for an event or contest.
6. Extension educators and members need to be aware that some regional and national competitive events prohibit youth from participating more than one time. When a member has participated in one of these events, he/she

should advise their teachers and leaders of that participation so they will not make a team ineligible to participate.

- When 4-H members participate in events with representatives from other school organizations, they will be expected to conform uniformly to the regulations set forth for that event.
- If a young person is declared ineligible to participate in other youth development organizations due to unethical behaviors, they will not be permitted to participate in similar projects in 4-H. Likewise, if their local chapter or organization is placed on probation by a fair or show, they will not be eligible to transfer membership to 4-H in order to avoid the probation.

Special Note

The following academic eligibility guidelines have been developed to provide for appropriate participation in both educational and extra curricular activities by students. While these policies and principles were not developed as Oklahoma 4-H policies, 4-H supports these standards. When it may be necessary for a member to miss school to attend a 4-H event, the member and his/her family should work with local school officials regarding their absenteeism. Local schools do have guidelines regarding attendance policies and events that are eligible for excused absences for all students.

Academic Eligibility Related to Shows OSSAA Handbook Rule 4 Sec 5.

- When events are held during school sessions, youth who have been declared ineligible to participate in extra-curricular activities by their local school administration will be declared ineligible to participate in 4-H activities.
- Youth, who are eligible on the first day of a show, conference, or other event, will be considered eligible through the duration. Similarly, youth who are ineligible on the first day of the show, conference, or other event, will be considered ineligible through the duration.
- If an exhibitor is ineligible to participate in a livestock show for any reason, including rules of the Oklahoma Secondary Schools Activity Association, (OSSAA), the animals owned by the exhibitor are also ineligible for the show.
- Ineligible youth who participate in contests will forfeit all show and/or sale premiums and awards; and will be subject to disciplinary action as provided by the local school policies.
- It will be the responsibility of the local school administration to notify the student's family regarding ineligibility and show management or OSSAA if a particular student is ineligible to participate. Extension Educators will support school administrators but are not responsible for determining eligibility.

Enrollment Deadline for State Livestock Shows

Livestock shows at local, county/unit, district, state, and regional levels all establish their own rules. To participate, you must meet the requirements and follow the show rules. All 4-H does is verify your date of enrollment or enrollment status. Eligibility is determined by the show's governing board. For state level shows in Oklahoma, generally, members must have enrollment cards on file in the County/unit Extension Office by July 1 to show in the fall and by January 1 to show in the spring. If you are interested in showing livestock, you should check the rules for the shows in which you might participate. Youth who are members of families where custody is shared by parents in two different counties should check with show officials well in advance of the show to determine if the show's rules will permit you to participate. Many shows have specific rules about residence and continuous care of an exhibit. Youth may only show in one county.

How to Learn More

These are some sources of additional information:

- Your County/Unit Extension Office
- 4-H Awards and Recognition Handbook
- 4-H Events and Activities Handbook
- Rules for various fairs, festivals, and shows
- Visit the Oklahoma 4-H WebPage:

<http://www.clover.okstate.edu/fourh/>

The Vision

Oklahoma 4-H will be recognized as a national leader in developing youths' abilities to become productive citizens and catalysts for positive change to meet the needs of a diverse and changing society.

The Mission

4-H, the youth development program of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service provides opportunities for all youth to reach their fullest potential by developing and enhancing skills for living.

The 4-H pledge

"I pledge: My head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to large service, and my health to better living for my club, my community, my country and my world."

The 4-H motto

"To make the best better."

The 4-H colors

Green and white.



★The 4-H name and emblem are protected under federal statute 18 U.S.C. 707.