



WHAT IS 4-H?

Preparing youth to be positive, contributing members of society is certainly one of the most important tasks facing our society today. The 4-H and Youth Development Program of the Texas Cooperation Extension has been a key player in the field of youth development since its modest start in 1908. In recent years, between 10 and 15 percent of all Texas youth between the ages of 5 and 19 have been enrolling as 4-H members or 4-H clover kids each year. Annually, approximately 50,000 adults volunteer their time, talents, and resources in support of the 4-H and Youth Development Program. Providing leadership to an educational program of this size and scope is a challenging task.

BASIC FACTS

Motto

“To Make the Best Better”

Emblem

The 4-H emblem is the four-leaf clover with the letter “H” on each leaf, standing for head, heart, hands and health.

Colors

The 4-H colors are green and white. Green symbolizes nature’s most common color and represents life, springtime and youth. White symbolizes purity.

Pledge

I Pledge

My head to clearer thinking,
My heart to greater loyalty,
My hands to larger service and
My health to better living,
for my club, my community,
my country and my world.

Prayer

“Help me, Oh Lord, to live so that the world may be a little better, because Thou didst make me.”

Creed

I believe in 4-H for the opportunity it will give me to become a useful citizen.
I believe in the training of my Head for the power it will give me to think, to plan and to reason.
I believe in the training of my Heart for the nobleness it will give me to become kind, sympathetic and true.
I believe in the training of my Hands for the dignity it will give me to become useful, helpful and skillful.
I believe in my country, my state and my community and in my responsibility for their development.
In all these things I believe, and I am willing to dedicate my service to their fulfillment.

4-H Year

September 1 to August 31

Age of 4-H Members

1. Any youth may become a member of 4-H when he or she has reached 9 years of age, or 8 years of age and has entered the third grade. “Entered the third grade” is interpreted as September 1 of the year the member is enrolled in the third grade.

2. A youth’s eligibility for membership will expire on August 31st of the calendar year in which the 19th birthday occurs.

3. Special education youth who are older than 19 and have not graduated from high school may participate in 4-H & Youth Development programs as members, with approval by the County Extension Agent. Participation would be limited to club or county level. County Extension faculty would have the option, on a case-by-case basis, to allow special education youth older than 19 to participate in competitive events at the club or county level.

WHAT ARE PARTICIPATION AVENUES IN 4-H?

Youth can participate in 4-H programs in numerous ways. Several avenues of participation are available to promote youth participation in 4-H:

4-H Clubs

An organized group, meeting at regularly scheduled times with one or more volunteer leaders and elected youth officers. 4-H clubs normally meet on a 9 to 12 month basis with one or more meetings per month. Several types of clubs can be organized:

- A. Community or neighborhood clubs consist of members who live in reasonable proximity to each other. These clubs often offer a wide variety of 4-H projects to the participating members.
- B. Project clubs are organized around a common interest in a particular project or group of projects. Project clubs can be organized to learn about gardening, agriculture, astronomy and other areas of interest to youth.
- C. School clubs are organized in community schools. Project activities are usually conducted outside of school hours and can be organized around one single project for all or several members. These clubs are usually led by teachers or other volunteers.

Short-Term Groups

4-H members work on short term projects that are completed in six or more meetings. Each group works on a specific topic or project. Groups work under the supervision of an adult volunteer or teen leader. Currently, two major types of short-term groups are recognized in this category:

- A. School curriculum enrichment: Through cooperative arrangements between schools and the Texas Cooperative Extension, school teachers present Extension-developed learning materials in the classroom. These educational experiences are designed to enhance the educational programs of the schools.
- B. Special interest projects: Usually these groups organize for the duration of the project instruction under the leadership of adult or teen volunteers. Groups can have a formal structure or not. At the end of each program, youth are invited to become involved in either additional special interest projects or organized clubs.

4-H Clover Kids

This program is affiliated to 4-H and is specially designed for youth ages five to eight and not currently enrolled in third grade. A "4-H Clover Kids" group can be organized within a regular 4-H club.

4-H Activities

Many types of activities and projects are available to 4-H members. Every 4-H member is expected to complete at least one Extension sponsored project every year. In addition to project activity, 4-H youth are expected to participate in club organization and management, community service projects and leadership development. Many young people attend leadership programs, competitive or educational events, and camp programs as part of their 4-H experience.

Who Sponsors 4-H?

4-H is sponsored jointly by the Texas Cooperative Extension , The Texas A&M University System, Extension Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, (USDA) and County Commissioner's Courts. Many private donors also provide either financial or in-kind program support.

Volunteer leaders are the cornerstone of the 4-H program in the community. They conduct educational activities with youth and serve in other specialized roles. Orientation and assistance with the total 4-H program is provided by County Extension Agents in each county. State and area 4-H and youth specialists support County Extension Agents with materials as well as technical and management assistance.

The Organization

Local 4-H members, parents and volunteer 4-H leaders determine objectives and establish annual goals for their 4-H club or group. These goals are normally established on the basis of those goals identified for the 4-H program at the county level. Most counties have a 4-H subcommittee concerned with overall planning, program direction and support for Extension 4-H and youth work. The subcommittee's work is coordinated by the Extension Agent in the county.

Many counties also have a county adult leaders association which serves primarily as a vehicle for providing leader training and support of the 4-H program. Furthermore, many counties have a county 4-H council composed of one or more representatives of each 4-H club or group in the county to enhance county-wide coordination and participation in planning and conducting 4-H activities.

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