

# **Alaska 4-H Policies & Procedures**

*November 2006*

*Note: These Policies and Procedures are a supplemental document and a compliment to the "4-H in Alaska" publication, dated February 2006*

The volunteer leader is the heart of the 4-H program. A volunteer may serve in a multitude of roles; organizational leader, resource leader, club leader, or one of a variety of short-term responsibilities. Volunteers may provide leadership and service to individuals, 4-H members, other volunteers, and to the organization serving at the club, district, and with state levels.

The purpose of the 4-H Program is positive youth development. Positive youth development grounded in the essential elements of Mastery, Independence, Generosity, and Belonging. Decisions and actions carried out on behalf of the 4-H Program should reflect this purpose. Negative or abusive treatment of youth, by staff or volunteers, will not be tolerated. Though adult volunteers are an essential part of the 4-H Program, the focus should be kept on developing youth in a positive manner.

## **ADVANTAGES OF VOLUNTEERING**

Advantages to volunteers include support in their position, training, and other learning opportunities. Volunteers are encouraged to enhance and develop their skills while serving as leaders. Other advantages for volunteers may include references upon request, liability insurance, and supplementary accident insurance, and leader's guides to projects.

## **VOLUNTEER APPLICATION PROCESS**

Any individual who participates in educational programs of the University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service is entitled to a safe environment. To become a volunteer with the Alaska 4-H Youth Development Program the following steps must be completed.

1. Submittal of the First Year leader Application.
2. Submittal of the Acknowledgement and Media Release Form
3. Verification of three references as listed on application.
4. Completion of a Background/Criminal History review.

Once everything is completed and the District Agent approves, completion of New Leader Training is required.

## **ORIENTATION AND TRAINING**

Each volunteer is provided with an overview of the organization, local Extension Office information, and the support systems available to help them in their work. Orientation can be done one-on-one or in a group setting. All volunteers will receive basic training for their position and will also be required to complete additional training that is designed for the position within a specific timeframe. Training will ensure that each volunteer has the knowledge and skills needed to be success in her or his work.

## **PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT**

Each volunteer will periodically have the opportunity to have a performance assessment completed. The performance assessment should include both a review of the volunteer's performance and a discussion of any suggestions that the volunteer may have concerning the position or project with which the volunteer is connected. The session should be utilized as an opportunity to ascertain the mutual interest of the District 4-H Program and the volunteer in the volunteer's continued service in his or her position. It shall be the responsibility of each Department 4-H Agent in a supporting relationship with a volunteer to schedule and conduct the performance assessment.

The position description and standards of performance for a volunteer position should form the basis of the performance assessment.

Standards of performance shall be in each volunteer position description, a copy of which is provided to the volunteer at the beginning of his or her assignment.

## **REAPPOINTMENT**

The District 4-H Agent/Extension Staff must approve volunteers annually. Prior to the completion of her or his term, each volunteer who is to be appointed to the same position or rotated to a different position may receive confirmation of such reappointment or rotation. Reappointment is based on past performance, adherence to Alaska 4-H Policies and Procedures, values as well as positive relationships with the community, parents, other volunteers, and employed staff. There will be mutual acceptance of position accountabilities, expectations, and time commitments.

The following steps must be completed:

1. Complete Re-Application Volunteer Leader Form.
2. Sign Acknowledge and Media Release Form
3. Complete Background/Criminal History check every third year.
4. Participate in Annual Volunteer Leader Training provided by the University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service.

## **RELEASE**

Either the Agent or the 4-H volunteers may initiate a release from a position. A volunteer is requested to give as much notice as possible when resigning. A minimum of two weeks is desirable.

Situations may arise that make it necessary to release an individual from a position. The UAF Cooperative Extension Service Agent may release an individual because of, among other things, restructuring of positions, elimination of the volunteer position in which the individual serves, the volunteer's inability or failure to complete the requirements of the position, or the refusal to comply with the Extension office concerning 4-H policies.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR PARENTS AND VOLUNTEERS WORKING WITH 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

- 1) Adults should work with young people in reasonably open spaces where others are welcome to enter. (Not behind closed or locked doors.) Be

aware that while spending time along with a single youth can be positive and helpful, it may also create reasons for concern for everyone involved.

- 2) Live by the "2 adult" rule. That is, as much as possible, there will be two adults present when working with youth.
- 3) Always welcome and encourage parents and guardians to attend meetings and events and keep parents informed of member's participation and progress on projects.
- 4) Respect privacy of youth specially when clothes are changed or showers are taken. Adults should get involved when there is a health or safety issue.
- 5) Be alert to the physical and emotional health of the young people you work with.
- 6) There will be a minimum of one responsible adult (at least age 18) for every ten youth for any events including an overnight stay. This is consistent with National 4-H Guidelines (12/1/93).
- 7) Never use physical punishment; or, deny basic necessities, such as food shelter, or medical care. Also refrain from verbal abuse. You also need to report such abuse, if observed.
- 8) One unrelated adult should not be lodged with one youth during an overnight stay.
- 9) Work with youth, families, volunteers, Extension personnel, and the public in a cooperative, courteous, respectful manner demonstrating good sportsmanship and behaviors appropriate to providing a positive role model for youth.
- 10) Accept supervision from Extension personnel and cooperative with other volunteers.
- 11) Uphold every individual's right to dignity, self-expression, and individual development.
- 12) Respect, adhere to, and enforce the rules, policies, and guidelines established for the 4-H Youth Development Program.
- 13) Comply with equal opportunity and antidiscrimination laws.
- 14) Consuming alcoholic beverages, using a controlled substance, or being under the influence of mind-altering chemicals while chaperoning, teaching, directing, attending, or participating with 4-H Youth is grounds for termination.
- 15) Have signed permission for any photos of youth taken at 4-H Youth Development Programs.
- 16) Inform Extension personnel of any incidents that may violate 4-H Policies.
- 17) Treat animals humanely and encourage youth and adults to provide appropriate and ethical animal care.
- 18) Operate machinery; vehicles, and other equipment in a safe and responsible manner when working with youth and adults participation in 4-H Youth Development Programs.
- 19) Insure that 4-H members are not required to purchase materials, equipment, animals, or service from any specific place of business.
- 20) Comply with all applicable laws of the city, district, and state of residence and/or location of 4-H activity.

## **PERSONAL LIABILITY INSURANCE**

It is important that every adult act in a reasonable and prudent manner when working with youth. A reasonable and prudent person will use this document to understand personal obligations and responsibilities related to promoting the well being of youth in Extension programs.

It is critical that the roles and responsibilities of volunteers and staff, who work with youth, be documented in written form before an accident happens. Extension volunteers and staff must record activities and related plans through participation rosters, job descriptions, and/or reports.

A volunteer is protected under the Alaska law, if the volunteer:

- Is acting in a reasonable and prudent manner,
- Is enrolled or registered, as a volunteer with a local or State Extension program,
- Is functioning within a role sanctioned for a youth program of the University of Alaska Extension programs,
- Understands s/he is acting on behalf of the University of Alaska at THIS activity.
- In working under the direct supervision of an employed University of Alaska staff member.
- The individual authorizing the volunteer services is not a family member or co-habitant of the volunteer.

## **AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE**

Volunteers need to rely on their own vehicle insurance policies when working in an Extension youth program. It is recommended that all volunteers and paid staff review their personal property liability coverage and consider a personal and family umbrella liability policy.

## **SAFE OPERATION OF MOTOR VEHICLES, MACHINERY, AND EQUIPMENT**

Anyone who transports youth to participate in Extension youth program activities and events must possess a valid motor vehicle operator's license. Volunteers must also have liability insurance coverage to meet minimum state law.

Teens are not authorized to drive or transport other persons when they are involved in authorized activities.

Adults are role models. Adults are responsible for the safety of youth they work with and influence the development of lifelong safety habits in youth program participants. Adults need to use safe practices and common sense with equipment, chemicals, pesticides, and/or shooting equipment. Protective clothing (helmets, ear, and eye protection, life jackets, etc.) should be used as appropriate for the situation.

## **SHOOTING SPORTS**

To lead a shooting sports project you must be certified and trained by a state 4-H Shooting Sports Instructor. This requires being a registered 4-H volunteer leader and attending a two-day training in the discipline area of your desire.

## **4-H MEMBERSHIP**

All youth and adults participating in 4-H shall be registered as members with the University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service and individually pay the annual membership and insurance fees.

- Cloverbuds is a non-competitive educational program for youth Kindergarten to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade designed to introduce youth children to 4-H in a fun, non-competitive way. Cloverbuds may not participate in large animal, ATV, or shooting sports projects. Cloverbud curriculum is activity oriented, involves cooperative learning, and is focused on life skills taught through a broad spectrum of subject areas. Cloverbud members may be involved in lap animal projects. These are defined as: rabbits, cavies, cats, small dogs that weigh less than the member, chickens, and minigoats.
- Individuals older than 18 years of age who have special needs are eligible to participate in 4-H according to Alaska Policy on Challenged Individuals in the 4-H Program. (See section following MEMBERSHIP).
- 4-H membership is open to all eligible youth. However, individual club leaders will establish the maximum number of club members and type of projects offered.

## **POLICY ON CHALLENGED INDIVIDUALS IN THE 4-H PROGRAM**

The age for 4-H membership will be the same for all 4-H members.

### Challenged Individuals over 4-H Age

In some of our programs we will be working with individuals who are mentally or physically challenged and exceed the age for 4-H. We will continue to work with these audiences but they will not be enrolled as 4-H members. They will not be covered by our accident insurance. You should ask each individual to provide some proof of accident coverage. If you are working with an organized group such as Special Olympics make sure they have accident insurance. As a leader you are still covered with all the liability and accident insurance you would normally have as long as you are providing your program as a community service. Members assisting with this community service will be covered by 4-H accident insurance. If you are receiving pay for providing these services you need to check with your insurance carrier to make sure you are covered with the proper liability insurance as you will not be covered by University liability.

### Competition

For individuals who are 4-H members, they may compete in regular 4-H classes with all the rights and privileges of 4-H members. If classes need to be set up to accommodate special needs, participants would be consulted to insure they are comfortable with these arrangements. When possible all 4-H members should compete in the same classes with division only made based on grade levels.

### Activities for Non 4-H Members

In many cases challenged individuals over 4-H age may want to have a public display of what they have learned. The 4-H program may sponsor such activities. Be sure to take out special one-day insurance to cover all participants. If competition is

held where regularly enrolled 4-H members are involved, age groups should be maintained. You may want to develop grouping for participants over 4-H age based on criteria provided by the group.

## **PARTICIPATION FORMS**

Many 4-H activities and events involve movement of members from place to place, or physical participation. These activities should always be planned with safety in mind. Supplemental accident insurance will be required annually for all 4-H members enrolled in the program.

Every youth and adult participants must complete a *PARTICIPATION FORM* and have it available at an Extension Program. The *PARTICIPATION FORM* includes a *HEALTH FORM*, *ACKNOWLEDGEMENT-MEDIA RELEASE FORM*, and *CODE OF CONDUCT*. This information is important to the health, care, and well being of the individual, if an emergency occurs.

Every adult is expected to function within the guidelines of the *CODE OF CONDUCT / RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES AGREEMENT* while working in an Extension program role, or when supervising youth.

## **HARASSMENT**

Alaska 4-H is committed to an environment and climate in which relationships are characterized by dignity, respect, courtesy, and equitable treatment. It is the policy of the organization to provide all volunteers with an environment free from all forms of unlawful or unwelcome harassment, including implied or expressed forms of sexual harassment.

Alaska 4-H expressly prohibits any form of harassment of the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, marital status, citizenship, ancestry, veterans' status, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state, or local law.

Any volunteer who feels that she or he has been subjected to harassment of any type, whether by another volunteer, Extension staff member, or any agent of the organization, should promptly report the incident to a supervisor or to the state program director. The agent, upon receiving such a complaint, must report the matter to the state program director, who will conduct an investigation and, depending of findings, take appropriate corrective actions.

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

It is against the Alaska 4-H policies for any individual, male or female, to sexually harass another volunteer, employee, or 4-H member of the same or opposite sex. The Alaska Cooperative Extension Service reserves the right to refuse membership endorsement or reappointment, and to dismiss or suspend from affiliation with the program any volunteer who, in conducting a 4-H program, sexually harasses another volunteer, employee, or 4-H member of the same or opposite sex.

Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual acts or favors, abusing the dignity of another through insulting or degrading sexual remarks or conduct and threats or suggestions that volunteer's status is conditioned upon toleration of or acquiescence to sexual advances. Some examples of sexual harassment that could create a hostile environment include telling of sexual

jokes or stories, the presence of sexually explicit photographs or other materials, touching of another person's clothing, hair or body, making sexual comments about another person's body, making sexual comments or innuendoes, asking personal question about another persons social or sexual life, staring, leering, and making sexual gestures. Any volunteer harassed should promptly report such behavior to an agent or state program leader.

Upon receiving a complaint, the agent will report the matter to the state program director. The program director will conduct an investigation and, depending on the findings, take appropriate corrective action.

## **CHILD ABUSE**

The Alaska 4-H program supports and maintains environments that are free of child abuse and neglect as defined by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act.

Child abuse and neglect are unlawful acts and it is against the Alaska 4-H policy for any volunteer, male or female, to physically, sexually, mentally, emotionally, or verbally abuse or neglect any member. Alaska 4-H reserves the right to refuse membership endorsement or reappointment, and to dismiss or to exclude from affiliation with the council, any volunteer implementing a 4-H program who is found guilty of child abuse and neglect or has been convicted of child abuse and neglect.

## **CHILD ABUSE REPORTING**

Volunteer's who suspect a youth may be a victim of child abuse or neglect should report this to their local extension agent or the state program leader who will contact the State of Alaska, Office of Child Protection (OCP) to make a report. Volunteers may also call the OCP directly. The Anchorage number is 269-4000 and the statewide number is 1-800-478-4444.

If you are unclear about a situation, you may call the numbers and talk to an intake worker about what you have seen or heard. Questioning or interviewing the child about statements she has made or your suspicions is not recommended. Instead, talk to the intake staff at OCP.