



# Chartering 4-H Clubs and Adult Volunteer Groups

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## **What are 4-H Charters?**

A 4-H Charter certifies a group as an official Virginia 4-H entity that meets minimum requirements as set by the Virginia 4-H program. A 4-H group with a charter has the following privileges:

- Authorization to use the 4-H name and emblem, under guidelines set forth by the Unit Extension Office and the State 4-H Office.
- Inclusion under Virginia Tech's financial and insurance programs.
- Authorization to raise, allocate, and disburse funds in support of local 4-H programs, projects, and groups.

## **What groups are required to have a 4-H Charter?**

The United States Department of Agriculture requires all 4-H groups to have a charter signed by a representative of National 4-H Headquarters, the Extension Director, and issued by the State 4-H office

The following 4-H groups in Virginia must have a 4-H charter. Each of these 4-H groups must also renew its charter annually.

### *Youth-based 4-H groups:*

- All types of 4-H clubs including school-based clubs;
- Cloverbud groups.
- In general, any group of 4-H members who are organized as a specific club or Cloverbud group should be chartered. See the definitions of 4-H club and Cloverbud group below for more information. Temporary youth-based groups such as 4-H judging teams and 4-H camp counselors are not required to be chartered unless they are organized as a club.

### *Adult volunteer-based 4-H groups:*

- Unit, district, and state 4-H volunteer leader associations or their equivalent;
- Unit, district, and state 4-H Leadership Councils or their equivalent;
- Unit, district, and state 4-H All Star organizations;
- State IFYE Association;
- 4-H Foundation;
- 4-H educational centers; and
- 4-H collegiate clubs.

In general, adult volunteer-based groups that use the 4-H name and/or handle 4-H funds should be chartered.

## **4-H Programs versus 4-H Groups**

A distinction must be made between 4-H clubs and groups and 4-H programs. 4-H school-enrichment programs, special-interest programs, after-school programs, and 4-H EFNEP/SCNEP programs are presently not required to have charters. These programs are not organized using the club/group delivery method. However, if an after-school program includes an after-school 4-H club, then that club must be chartered.

The following information details specific minimum requirements that 4-H groups must meet in order to be eligible for a 4-H Charter.

### ***What is a 4-H club?***

A 4-H club is an organized group of youth, ages 9 to 19, with elected officers and a planned program that is conducted throughout the year or the majority of the year. Youth are responsible for decision making, including the collection and distribution of funds. Clubs are guided by trained volunteer leaders. Members may focus on one or more project areas and will participate in a variety of learning experiences during the year. 4-H clubs may be operated on the unit, district, or state level. 4-H clubs that are required to have 4-H Charters include community clubs, project clubs, after-school clubs, and military clubs. 4-H clubs that draw members from across the whole school population such as a middle or high school 4-H club also must have a 4-H Charter. In-school, classroom-based 4-H clubs are also required to have 4-H Charters; however, they must meet slightly different charter application requirements.

### ***What are the minimum requirements for a 4-H Charter for clubs?***

1. Membership of at least five 4-H members (diversity of membership is encouraged)
2. At least two enrolled and trained volunteer leaders (an agent can serve temporarily as one of these leaders)
3. Enrollment through 4-H Online including Health History Report, Code of Conduct for youth, Standards of Behavior for Virginia 4-H Volunteers, and Media Release forms on file for all members and leaders.
4. Elected and trained youth officers (see *A Guide for 4-H Club Officers*, VCE publication 388-274)
5. An adopted club constitution and bylaws (see *Virginia 4-H Club Constitution and Bylaws*, VCE publication 388-211)
6. A written annual club program plan (see *Virginia 4-H Club Annual Goals and Program Plan*, VCE publication 388-210)

### ***What are the requirements for the annual 4-H Charter renewal for clubs?***

1. Continue to fulfill the six minimum requirements for an initial 4-H Charter
2. Submit a 4-H Club and Organization Civil Rights Compliance Form (see VCE publication 490-156)  
Submit a Charter Renewal Application to the Unit Extension Office (see VCE Publication 388-059)
4. Submit a 4-H Club Annual Audit Report if handling funds (found in the 4-H Treasurer's Record Book, VCE publication 388-025)
5. Submit a 4-H Property Inventory Report if property is owned (see VCE publication 388-140)

### ***What are the minimum requirements for a 4-H Charter for in-school, classroom-based clubs?***

For unit Extension programs where there are 4-H clubs organized by school classrooms that meet during the school day, or as an extension of the school day under the supervision of school personnel, the 4-H employee giving leadership to the unit 4-H program, can issue one 4-H Charter per grade in a school upon verification that all classroom 4-H clubs in the grade meet the following requirements.

1. Membership of at least five 4-H members (diversity of membership is encouraged)
2. One enrolled and trained volunteer leader if that leader is the classroom teacher. If the club leader is a person other than the teacher or paid Extension staff member, there must be two enrolled and trained volunteer leaders present.
3. Individual or Group Enrollment form for all members and leaders through 4-H Online.
4. Elected and trained youth officers (see *A Guide for 4-H Club Officers*, VCE publication 388-274)
5. An adopted club constitution and bylaws that can be generic for all clubs in the school (see *Virginia 4-H Club Constitution and Bylaws*, VCE publication 388-211)
6. A written annual club program plan that can be generic for all clubs per grade (see *Virginia 4-H Club Annual Goals and Program Plan*, VCE publication 388-210)

### ***What are the requirements for the annual 4-H Charter renewal for in-school, classroom-based clubs?***

1. Continue to fulfill the six minimum requirements for an initial 4-H in-school, classroom-based club 4-H Charter.
2. Submit a charter renewal application to the Unit Extension Office.
3. Submit a 4-H Club Annual Audit Report if handling funds (found in the *4-H Treasurer's Record Book*, VCE publication 388-025).
4. Submit a 4-H Property Inventory Report if property is owned (see VCE publication 388-140).

### ***What is a 4-H Cloverbud group?***

A 4-H Cloverbud group is an organized group of youth ages 5 through 8, without elected officers, which emphasizes parental involvement and support. It is led by trained adult volunteers with a focus on hands-on, non-competitive, learn-by-doing activities.

### ***What are the minimum requirements for a 4-H Charter for Cloverbud groups?***

1. Membership of at least five 4-H members (diversity of membership is encouraged)
2. At least two enrolled and trained volunteer leaders (an agent can serve temporarily as one of these leaders)
3. Enrollment through 4-H Online including Health History Report, Code of Conduct for youth, Standards of Behavior for 4-H Volunteers, and Media Release forms on file for all members and leaders.
4. A written annual program plan (see *Virginia 4-H Club Annual Goals and Program Plan*, VCE publication 388-210).

### ***What are the requirements for the annual 4-H Charter renewal for Cloverbud groups?***

1. Continue to fulfill the four minimum requirements for an initial 4-H Charter for Cloverbud groups.
2. Submit a 4-H Club and Organization Civil Rights Compliance Form (see VCE publication 490-156).
3. Submit a Charter Renewal Application to the Unit Extension Office (see VCE Publication 388-059).
4. Submit a 4-H Club Annual Audit Report if handling funds (found in the *4-H Treasurer's Record Book*, VCE publication 388-025).
5. Submit a 4-H Property Inventory Report if property is owned (see VCE publication 388-140).

### ***What are the minimum requirements for a 4-H Charter for 4-H adult volunteer-based groups?***

4-H adult volunteer-based groups are any structured group of adults who are formed to support the mission and programs of 4-H. Minimum requirements include:

1. A minimum of five enrolled 4-H volunteers.
2. Elected and trained officers.
3. Enrollment through 4-H Online including Health History Report, Standards of Behavior for 4-H Volunteer Leaders, and Media Release forms on file for all organizational officers.
4. An organizational purpose which is consistent with the mission and goals of Virginia Cooperative Extension and Virginia 4-H.
5. An adopted constitution and bylaws.

### ***What are the requirements for the annual renewal of the 4-H Charter for adult volunteer-based groups?***

1. Continue to fulfill the five requirements for an initial 4-H Organization Charter.
2. Submit a 4-H Club and Organization Civil Rights Compliance Form (see VCE publication 490-156).
4. Submit a 4-H Organization Annual Audit Report if handling funds (found in the *4-H Treasurer's Record Book*, VCE publication 388-025).
5. Submit a 4-H Property Inventory Report if property is owned (see VCE publication 388-140).

### ***How does a 4-H group receive a charter?***

The organizational leader of a 4-H group first completes a 4-H Charter Application Form (VCE publication 388-069 for 4-H clubs and Cloverbud groups, VCE publication 388-141 for adult volunteer-based groups, or VCE publication 388-145 for in-school, classroom-based clubs). Leaders of locally based 4-H groups submit the application form to the local Extension office for approval from the Extension employee providing leadership to the unit 4-H program. Clubs that are based at a district or state level (such as 4-H Cabinet) must submit their charter application to the State 4-H Office at Virginia Tech. For schools with large numbers of classroom-based clubs, the Extension employee member giving leadership to the unit 4-H program, can use one application form, VCE publication 388-145, to verify that all classroom 4-H clubs per grade in the school meet the necessary requirements.

Local club charter applications are then submitted to the State 4-H Youth Office at Virginia Tech by either sending the paper forms, or using an online form found on the VCE Intranet. Upon final approval by the State 4-H Leader, the charter certificate is returned to the unit office. The 4-H agent (or representative) then presents the charter certificate to the local 4-H group.

### ***When should a 4-H group seek a charter?***

All Virginia 4-H groups listed above must have a charter in order to function. This includes existing as well as new 4-H clubs and organizations.

An existing 4-H group that has documentation of an existing charter may continue to operate under its present charter as long as the group meets the minimum Virginia 4-H charter requirements for groups listed above and is operating under the original group name for which it was chartered. If an existing 4-H group does not have a charter, the organizational leader should work with the group and the unit 4-H employee to meet the charter requirements. An existing 4-H group that has misplaced its charter certificate should reapply for a charter.

For new 4-H groups, applications for 4-H Charters can be submitted at any time during the year. Leaders for new 4-H groups should apply for a charter within the first three months of start-up. Provisional Charter status is granted to new 4-H groups for the first three months after start-up in order to provide time for the group to meet the charter requirements. During that period, the group may only have meetings/activities aimed at fulfilling the chartering requirements. No events, fundraisers, or other use of the 4-H name and emblem make take place until the charter is granted.

### ***How long is the 4-H charter valid?***

A 4-H charter will remain valid until the end of the 4-H year (October 1–September 30) in which it was issued. Groups can maintain their charters each year by complying with the renewal requirements. Beginning in October of 2007, all chartered 4-H groups must submit a charter renewal application form (VCE publications 388-059 for 4-H clubs and Cloverbud groups, 388-142 for adult groups or 388-146 for in-school, classroom-based clubs) in order to maintain their charters. The specific deadline for submitting charter renewal forms is determined by the 4-H office responsible for the group. 4-H groups failing to meet the minimum charter renewal requirements can be granted a Probationary Charter to provide time to return to full status. The Extension staff member providing leadership to the 4-H club or organization can determine if a Probationary Charter will be granted and the length of the probation period. However, the probationary period cannot be longer than six months. Failure to meet the minimum 4-H group charter renewal requirements after the probation period will result in the charter being revoked.

### ***What circumstances might result in the loss of a 4-H Charter?***

Failure to meet the minimum 4-H group charter requirements or the renewal requirements, changes in the 4-H group name, disbanding or separation of the group into multiple entities, or failure to follow Virginia Cooperative Extension/4-H policies can result in the loss of a 4-H charter. The Extension employee member providing leadership to the 4-H group, in consultation with the State 4-H Office, has the right to revoke a 4-H group's charter in their unit. 4-H groups may re-apply for a charter.

After a group loses its charter (for what ever reason) it can no longer use the 4-H name or emblem or raise, allocate, or disburse funds in support of 4-H programs. The group no longer has tax exemption status.

If a group loses its 4-H Charter, the members and leaders of the group can still be involved in 4-H. They just cannot be part of 4-H in the group that lost its charter. They can (a) join other existing groups, (b) start a new group, or (c) become lone members. Adult volunteers can serve as volunteers in other capacities.

## ***Whom should I contact if I have questions about 4-H charters?***

If you have questions about starting a 4-H club/group, or the chartering process, please contact your local Extension office for more information. Extension employees may direct any questions to the 4-H Organizational Specialist in the State 4-H Office at Virginia Tech.

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