

Virginia 4-H Volunteer Welcome Guide



Welcome to Virginia 4-H!

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Virginia 4-H volunteer! You are joining a network of thousands of adult volunteers across the commonwealth who are dedicated to helping youth “make the best better.”

Volunteers are the heart of the 4-H program. Because 4-H is a volunteer-led, Extension-staff-supervised organization, your role is essential in providing positive, hands-on learning experiences that help youth build skills, confidence, and compassion. You are a mentor, a guide, and a partner in their development.

This guide is intended as a brief welcome and introduction to the Virginia 4-H program. It covers our history, our structure, your role, and the critical policies that ensure a safe and positive environment for all participants. Your local Virginia Cooperative Extension agent or 4-H staff members will provide more comprehensive information and training.

We are thrilled to have you join our team. The work you do will have a lasting impact on the lives of Virginia’s youth.

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What Is 4-H?

4-H is the largest youth development organization in the United States, with millions of members and a vast network of volunteers. 4-H is the official youth development program of the land-grant university system and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Our Mission

The Virginia 4-H mission is “to develop youth and adults working with those youth to realize their full potential — becoming effective, contributing citizens through participation in research-based, non-formal, hands-on educational experiences.”

Our Philosophy: “Learn by Doing”

4-H uses a simple but powerful model: “Learn by Doing.” This hands-on, experiential learning model means young people are involved in their own learning. Instead of just reading about a topic, they **do** it. They build the rocket, grow the garden, code the robot, or lead the meeting. This process allows them to learn from their successes and their mistakes in a safe, supportive environment.

The Four Hs

- **Head:** Clearer thinking. 4-H challenges youth to think, make decisions, and solve problems. We focus on STEM, critical thinking, and managing goals.
- **Heart:** Greater loyalty. 4-H helps youth develop character, compassion, and a strong sense of self. We focus on civic engagement, teamwork, and building positive relationships.
- **Hands:** Larger service. 4-H members “learn by doing” and give back to their communities. We focus on leadership, generosity, and community service.
- **Health:** Better living. 4-H promotes healthy lifestyles, both physically and emotionally. We focus on healthy eating, personal safety, and social-emotional well-being.

The 4-H Pledge

The pledge is recited at the beginning of 4-H meetings and events.

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.

The 4-H Emblem

The emblem, or symbol, is a green four-leaf clover with a white H on each leaf that represents the four Hs. The green clover symbolizes new life and growth, while the white Hs symbolize purity of character.



Our 4-H History

National Beginnings

4-H began at the turn of the 20th century as a response to a changing world. Researchers at land-grant universities were developing new scientific methods for farming, but many adults were resistant to changing their traditional ways.

To introduce these new ideas, educators like A.B. Graham in Ohio began forming corn clubs for boys and tomato clubs for girls. The goal was to reach youth who were more open to new ideas and would take these practices home to their families.

These clubs proved incredibly successful. In 1914, the Smith-Lever Act formally established the **Cooperative Extension System** — a partnership between the USDA and the land-grant universities. This act created the framework for the 4-H program to be available to youth nationwide.

Virginia 4-H History

Virginia has a rich 4-H history that predates the Smith-Lever Act.

- **1907-1908:** Corn clubs and tomato clubs began forming across the state with figures like T.O. Sandy in Burkeville, Virginia, playing a key role in their organization.
- **1910:** The first All Star awards were given to outstanding 4-H members in Virginia in recognition of their achievements in project work and leadership. This tradition continues today with the Virginia 4-H All Stars, which was chartered in 1921.
- **1917:** Virginia held its first organized county 4-H Camp in Loudoun County.
- **1928:** Jamestown 4-H Camp, the first 4-H Camp in Virginia, built specifically for 4-H members, was established.

The Virginia 4-H Program

Our Structure

Virginia 4-H is the official youth development program of **Virginia Cooperative Extension**. VCE is a partnership between Virginia's two land-grant universities, Virginia Tech and Virginia State University; the USDA; and local governments across the commonwealth.

This structure means that our programs are research based. The curriculum and best practices you use as a volunteer are developed by experts in youth development, agriculture, STEM, and healthy living.

This partnership flows from the national level down to your local community.

1. **National:** USDA and land-grant university system.
2. **State:** VCE (at Virginia Tech and Virginia State University).
3. **District:** VCE district offices (central, northeast, northwest, southeast, southwest).
4. **Unit:** Your local VCE office (county or city).

Your primary connection to the 4-H program is your **local VCE office** and your **4-H Extension agent/staff members**.

Virginia Cooperative Extension

- ★ **Land Grant Universities**
Virginia Tech & Virginia State University
- ▲ **District Offices**
- **Unit Offices**
- ◆ **Agricultural Research & Extension Centers (ARECs)**
1-Shenandoah Valley 2-Alson H. Smith, Jr. 3-Middleburg
4- Eastern Virginia 5- Eastern Shore 6-Southwest Virginia
7-Reynolds Homestead Forest Resources 8-Southern Piedmont
9-Tidewater 10-Hampton Roads 11-Virginia Seafood
- ◆ **Departmental Research Center**
Northern Piedmont
- **4-H Educational Centers**
A-Northern Virginia B-Jamestown C-Airfield
D-Holiday Lake E-W.E. Skelton F-Southwest
- **Planning District Borders**

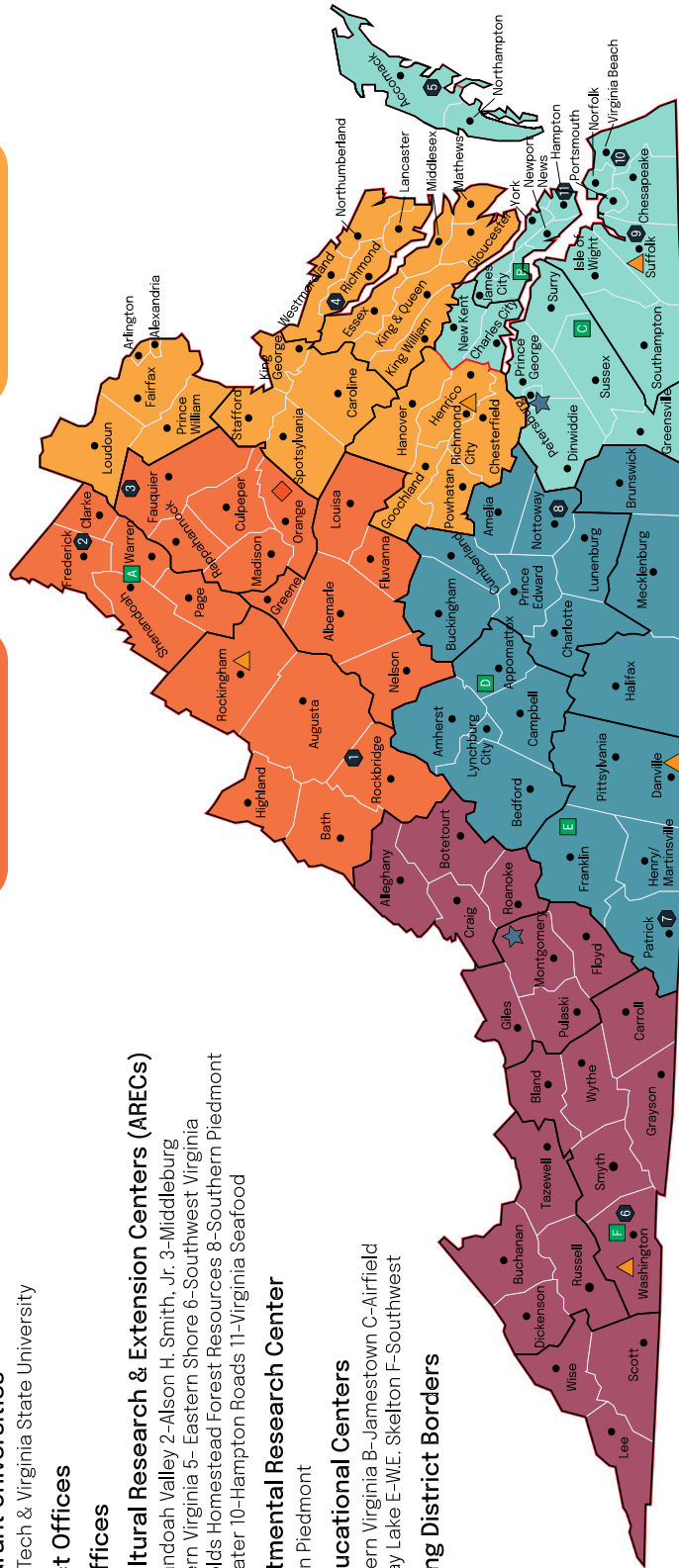
Northwest

Northeast

Southwest

Central

Southeast



VCE/0622/VCE-107

Safe Environment for All

As a part of Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia 4-H provides a safe and welcoming environment to all members and volunteers. If you would like to read our full nondiscrimination statement, please visit <https://ext.vt.edu/accessibility.html>.

The 4-H Year

In Virginia, the official 4-H year runs from **Oct. 1 to Sept. 30**. This is the year used for enrollment, projects, and determining a member's 4-H age.

4-H Age Groups

A youth's 4-H age is their age as of **Sept. 30** of the **current** 4-H year. This age determines their eligibility for programs and competitions.

• 4-H Cloverbuds (ages 5-8)

- This is a noncompetitive, activity-based program. The focus is on cooperative learning, exploring different topics, and building social skills.
- Cloverbud youth may experience an introduction to 4-H camping through brief overnight stays at one of our 4-H Educational Centers and by attending day camps.

- **Important:** Cloverbuds do **not** participate in competitive events and typically do **not** have long-term projects (e.g., raising market animals). More information about the Cloverbud program is available later in this guide.

• Juniors (ages 9-11)

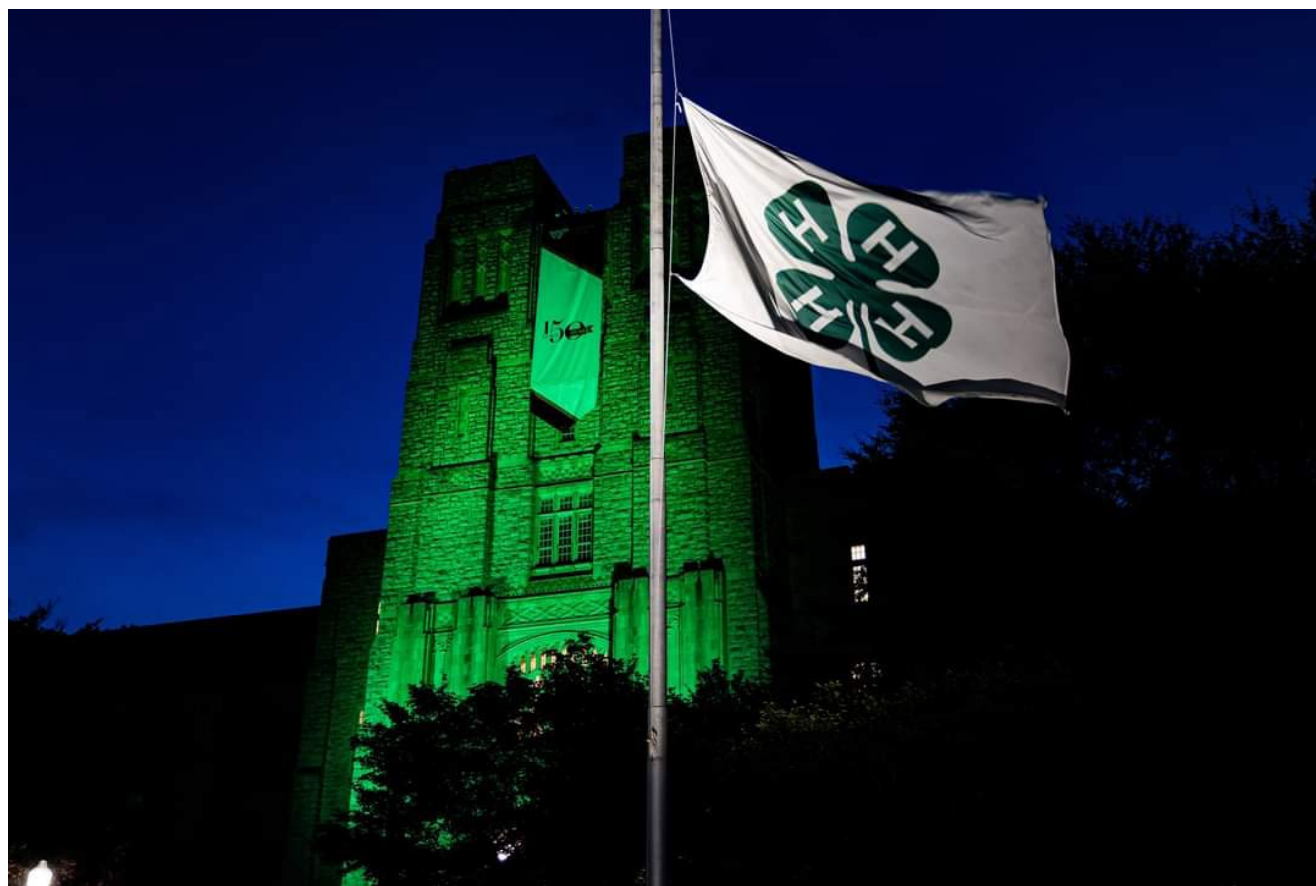
- Juniors are eligible to enroll in a wide variety of 4-H projects. They can begin participating in competitions at the county/city and district level and may attend overnight camp.

• Intermediates (ages 12-13)

- Intermediates take on more advanced projects and can participate in district-level and some state-level competitions, camps, and other events.

• Seniors (ages 14-18)

- Seniors are eligible for the highest levels of competition, including state and national events. They are strongly encouraged to take on leadership roles as club officers, teen counselors, and mentors for younger members.
- **Eligibility terminates on Dec. 31 of the year the member turns 19.**



The Heart of 4-H: Our Volunteers

Your Role Is Essential

The 4-H model is **volunteer led and Extension staff supervised**. This means that you, the volunteer, are the primary mentor and facilitator of learning for our 4-H members. Your 4-H Extension agent and staff members provide you with training, curriculum, and administrative support, but you are the one who builds a positive, supportive relationship with the 4-H'ers. It is important to remember that 4-H members make decisions and lead their own clubs, but adults provide the vital role of guidance, oversight, and support.

By giving your time, you are helping youth discover their passions, develop skills, and become confident leaders.

Types of Volunteer Roles

There are many ways to volunteer in 4-H, from year-long commitments to one-day opportunities. All roles are valued and necessary for the program's success. A few examples are:

- **Organizational/club leader:** The “head coach” of a 4-H club. This volunteer works with members, coordinates the club's meetings, helps youth officers run meetings, manages communication with families, and works with the local Extension office to ensure all policies are followed.
- **Project leader:** A volunteer with a passion for a specific topic (e.g., horses, gardening, rocketry). This volunteer leads the educational project meetings for youth in a club, guides them through the curriculum, and helps them complete their project work.
- **Camp volunteer (adult):** A critical role at Junior 4-H Camp, adult volunteers chaperone youth, assist with classes, and provide a safe, supportive presence for campers. This role requires an overnight commitment and is essential for camps to function.
- **Activity/event volunteer (episodic):** A volunteer who helps occasionally or with a single event and must always be supervised by a VCE employee or fully enrolled volunteer. This role could include:
 - **Judging** presentations at a local contest.
 - **Guest speaking** about your career at a club meeting.
 - **Helping** set up or clean up at a fundraiser.

- **Committee/board member:** A volunteer who serves behind the scenes on a committee, such as a 4-H Educational Center board, camp planning committee, or scholarship committee.

No matter your skills, interests, or time availability, there is a role for you in Virginia 4-H!

Benefits of Being a 4-H Volunteer

Volunteering with 4-H doesn't just benefit youth; it offers incredible rewards for volunteers as well. When you give your time, you get so much in return. For example:

- **Make a measurable difference.** Witness firsthand as youth gain confidence, learn new skills, and become leaders. Knowing you played a part in their success is one of the most profound rewards.
- **Develop your own skills.** You will have the opportunity to develop and refine valuable personal and professional skills, including public speaking, teaching, project management, conflict resolution, and leadership.
- **Join a community.** You'll connect with other caring adults, parents, and community leaders. The 4-H network is a supportive and welcoming community of peers.
- **Share your passion.** 4-H provides a platform for you to share your hobbies and passions — whether that's gardening, coding, public speaking, or rocketry — with an eager audience.
- **Lifelong learning.** You get direct access to research-based curriculum and training from Virginia Cooperative Extension. Many volunteers find they learn just as much as the youth do!
- **Add to your experience.** Your volunteer role is a valuable addition to your resume or portfolio and demonstrates your commitment to the community, as well as your leadership and youth development skills.
- **Support.** In addition to other benefits, enrolled 4-H volunteers are covered by liability insurance and bonding through Virginia Tech when acting in their official volunteer role. Virginia 4-H also provides ongoing training and resources.

Our Commitment to Positive Youth Development

In 4-H, we pride ourselves on being rooted in a strong foundation of quality programming that leads to long-term outcomes. Our “positive youth development” approach focuses on the intentional promotion of social, emotional, and cognitive learning that leads to positive behaviors and developmental outcomes among young people. Your local 4-H Extension agent will train you in the principles of positive youth development and the educational models we use to advance 4-H’s mission.



Beyond Ready

Beyond Ready Initiative Framework

4-H Programming

High-quality youth development programs that promote:



Sparks



Belonging



Relationships



Engagement

4-H prepares youth for Work & Life by:

READY FOR WORK

Teaching 4-H Project Content
(STEM, AGRICULTURE, HEALTH)

Building Work Readiness Skills
(PROFESSIONALISM, WORK ETHIC, ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS)

Supporting College & Career Readiness
(ACADEMICS, COLLEGE EXPLORATION, CAREER EXPLORATION)

Fostering Leadership Development
(NAVIGATING NETWORKS, LEADING OTHERS, DECISION MAKING, COMMUNICATION, COLLABORATION)

Offering Real-Life Experiences
(INTERNSHIPS, APPRENTICESHIPS, SUMMER EMPLOYMENT)

Providing Post-Secondary Pathway Development Support**
(MENTORING, PATHWAY PLANNING, CREATING & NAVIGATING)

READY FOR LIFE

Promoting Personal Integrity
(ETHICAL DECISION MAKING, HONESTY, RELIABILITY)

Supporting Responsibility
(SELF-DISCIPLINE, PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY, PERSEVERANCE)

Fostering Purpose
(DIRECTION, MOTIVATION, SENSE OF MEANING)

Promoting Caring & Connection
(CONCERN, COMPASSION, GENEROSITY, CONSIDERATION)

Promoting Goal Setting & Management
(PERSISTENCE, CRITICAL THINKING, PROBLEM-SOLVING)

Encouraging a Growth Mindset
(ORIGINALITY, CREATIVITY, CURIOSITY)

4-H Program Outcomes

Ready for Work and Life

- Content Knowledge & Skills
- Post-Secondary Planning
- Leadership Skills
- Critical Thinking Skills
- Problem-Solving Skills
- Technological Skills
- Social Intelligence
- Persistence
- Flexibility
- Adaptability
- Creativity

**Supporting youth in developing post-secondary (life after high school) pathways is critical and should be a priority in Beyond Ready.

Beyond Ready Goal

10 million youth who are:



Healthy



Productive



Engaged

Revised November 2025

How 4-H Is Delivered

4-H is not a one-size-fits-all program. It meets young people where they are through a variety of delivery methods. As a volunteer, you may be involved in one or more of these.

4-H Clubs

Clubs are the foundation of 4-H and the most well-known 4-H experience. A 4-H Club is an organized group of at least five youth from at least two different families, led by a minimum of two fully enrolled and approved adult volunteers. Clubs meet regularly (e.g., monthly) for a long-term, progressive series of educational experiences. All 4-H clubs must receive a charter from the state 4-H office to operate, and the charter must be renewed annually by the local Extension office.

- **Community clubs:** These clubs typically involve youth of various ages and offer a wide variety of projects and activities.
- **Project clubs:** These clubs focus on a single project area, such as horses, robotics, or shooting education.
- **Military clubs:** These clubs function the same way as community or project clubs but take place on military installations and are open to military-connected youth.

4-H Camping

Virginia 4-H offers one of the strongest camping programs in the nation, centered around our six 4-H Educational Centers. A unique feature of Virginia 4-H is its system of **six 4-H educational centers**, which provide year-round programming, including residential summer camps for thousands of young people.

Virginia's 4-H Educational Centers

- Airfield 4-H Educational Center (Wakefield)
- Holiday Lake 4-H Educational Center (Appomattox)
- Jamestown 4-H Educational Center (Williamsburg)
- Northern Virginia 4-H Educational Center (Front Royal)
- Southwest Virginia 4-H Educational Center (Abingdon)
- W.E. Skelton 4-H Educational Center (Wirtz)

Virginia 4-H is proud that all of its educational centers are accredited by the American Camp Association.



Types of Camps

4-H camping is a delivery mode for positive youth development programming. You may have the opportunity to volunteer at different types of camps, including those listed below.

- **Residential 4-H camps:** Residential camps generally last two to five days. Most camps last five days, with campers staying overnight for four nights. Junior 4-H camps, designed for youth ages 9-13, fall into this category.
- **Cloverbud camps:** Camps designed for youth ages 5-8. These can be day camps or short residential camps.
- **Specialty camps:** Camps that focus on a specific project or theme area. There are a variety of special interest 4-H camps available throughout the state.
- **Day camps:** Campers participate in learning activities throughout the day but do not stay overnight.

In-School & After-School Programs

4-H partners with schools to provide educational programming that meets Virginia's Standards of Learning (SOLs). These are often short-term,

curriculum-based programs led by Extension agents/staff or trained volunteers. There are also some fully functioning in-school and after-school clubs.

Special Interest (SPIN) Clubs

A SPIN Club is a special interest club that focuses on a specific topic for a set period, typically six to eight weeks. This is a great, short-term volunteer opportunity. If you have a skill you'd like to share — from coding to cooking to fly-fishing — you could possibly lead a SPIN Club without the year-long commitment of a traditional community or project club.

Key Program Areas

4-H projects and programs are generally grouped into four main pillars:

1. **Agriculture** (e.g., animal science, horticulture).
2. **Civic Engagement** (e.g., public speaking, leadership, community service, financial management).
3. **Healthy Living** (e.g., cooking, nutrition, physical fitness, personal safety).
4. **STEM** (science, technology, engineering, and math; e.g., robotics, rocketry).



Getting Started: Your Volunteer Journey

To ensure the safety and well-being of all 4-H members, all adults who work with youth must complete a screening and enrollment process.

Step 1. Contact Your Local Extension Office

Before beginning the online application, you must first contact your local VCE office. Your 4-H Extension agent/staff will discuss volunteer opportunities and expectations and provide you with the necessary information to proceed. You can locate your local Extension office by going online to <https://ext.vt.edu/offices.html>.

Step 2. Create a 4-H Online Profile

Virginia 4-H uses a system called **4-H Online** for all members and volunteer enrollment.

1. Go to <https://v2.4honline.com/>.
2. Select “Sign Up” and create a new **family profile**. 4-H Online is family-based, so you will create one profile for your entire household.
3. Once your family profile is set up, you will add yourself as an “Adult Volunteer” member.

Step 3. Complete the Application and Screening

As you fill out your adult profile, you will be prompted to

- **Select your volunteer type.** Choose the role(s) you discussed with your local 4-H agent/staff. This is a critical step, as your selected role determines the level of screening required.
- **Complete screening questions.** Answer all questions regarding your background.
- **Provide references.** Depending on your volunteer level, you may be required to provide references.
- **Authorize background checks.** All volunteers working directly with youth (Levels 2-4) must undergo a criminal background screening, which is repeated every three 4-H years for returning volunteers (every 4-H year for camp volunteers). Background checks are confidential, and information is not shared at the local level. For more information on our screening guidelines, visit the Virginia Cooperative Extension Volunteer Screening Guidelines (<https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/VCE/vce-629/vce-629.html>).

Volunteer Screening Levels

- **Level 1 (episodic):** One-time/occasional volunteers (e.g., guest speaker, judge) who are **always** supervised by Extension employees or a Level 2-4 volunteer.
- **Level 2 (regular):** Volunteers who work directly with youth, such as club or project leaders. Requires a full application, reference checks, and a background check every third 4-H year.
- **Level 3 (camp):** Any volunteer who chaperones at 4-H Camp held at a 4-H Educational Center. Requires the same screening as Level 2, but it is repeated every year.
- **Level 4 (new):** A first-year designation for new volunteers or those returning after a significant break in service. After the first year, they re-enroll as Level 2 or Level 3.

Volunteer Types in 4-H Online

| VOLUNTEER TYPE | VOLUNTEER ROLE | DESCRIPTION | SCREENING LEVEL | ENROLLMENT ELIGIBILITY |
|--------------------|--|---|-----------------|---------------------------------------|
| New Applicant | New Volunteer | Volunteers who are new to Virginia 4-H or who have had a significant break in volunteer service. | 4 | Open to all volunteers |
| | VCE Employee Hired During Current 4-H Year | Only to be used for paid VCE employees. | 1 | Employees only. Volunteers do not use |
| | VCE Summer Intern | Only to be used for paid VCE employees. | 1 | Employees only. Volunteers do not use |
| Camp Volunteer | Camp Volunteer | Volunteers attending 4-H Camp at a 4-H Educational Center. | 3 | Open to all volunteers |
| | VCE Employee Attending Camp | Only to be used for paid VCE employees. | 3 | Employees only. Volunteers do not use |
| Club Volunteer | 4-H Club Leader | Volunteers who are serving as a leader with an organized 4-H Club/group. | 2 | Open to all volunteers |
| | Club Volunteer | Volunteers assisting with a 4-H Club but not a 4-H Club leader. | 2 | Open to all volunteers |
| | Master Program Volunteer | Only to be used for Extension Master Gardeners, and other Master Volunteers working with 4-H. | 2 | Restricted/need agent pre-approval |
| Program Volunteer | Countywide/Citywide 4-H Program Volunteer | Volunteers working with 4-H but not helping with a specific club and not going to 4-H Camp. | 2 | Open to all volunteers |
| | 4-H Employee Not Attending Camp | Only to be used for paid VCE employees. | 2 | Employees only. Volunteers do not use |
| | 4-H International Host Family | Restricted role for international program. (Do not select without agent permission.) | 4 | Restricted/need agent pre-approval |
| Project Volunteer | 4-H Board Member | Volunteers who serve on 4-H Educational Center boards or other 4-H committees. | 2 | Open to all volunteers |
| | Specialty Project Volunteer | Volunteers who help with certain project work (equine, livestock, etc.) with a county/city or club. | 2 | Open to all volunteers |
| Coach | 4-H Team/ Competition Coach | Volunteers who lead competition teams that travel to events. | 2 | Open to all volunteers |
| | Team/Volunteer Chaperone | Adults who help chaperone day or overnight trips with teams and competitions. | 2 | Open to all volunteers |
| Activity Volunteer | Episodic Activity/ Event Volunteer | One-time or occasional volunteers who assist and are always under direct supervision. | 1 | Restricted/need agent pre-approval |

Background Screening Requirements

- Level 4: 1 year (then re-enroll as Level 2 or 3)
- Level 3: 1 Year

- Level 2: 3 years

- Level 1: No background screening

Screenings run on 4-H year cycle: Oct. 1 - Sept. 30

Step 4. Application Review and Orientation

After you submit your application, your local 4-H agent/staff will review it, contact your references, and conduct an interview. You will also be required to undergo a criminal background screening (every three years for regular volunteers, every year for camp volunteers) and complete some training modules in 4-H Online. Background screening renewals follow the 4-H year (October 1 - September 30), not the calendar year. Once approved, you will be officially enrolled. You will also be required to complete an orientation with your local Extension agent/staff (which may be online or in person) before you can begin working with youth.

Core Policies: A Safe and Positive Environment

As a volunteer, you are entrusted with the safety and well-being of 4-H'ers. You are a representative of Virginia 4-H and Virginia Cooperative Extension and are expected to adhere to all policies.

Standards of Behavior

During the 4-H Online enrollment process, all volunteers must electronically agree to abide by the **Standards of Behavior for Virginia 4-H Volunteers**. This is your guiding document for ethical conduct. These standards are based on the **Six Pillars of Character** from the **CHARACTER COUNTS!® Coalition**:

1. **Trustworthiness:** Be honest, reliable, and ethical. Handle 4-H funds responsibly.
2. **Respect:** Treat all youth, families, and other volunteers with respect, courtesy, and fairness, valuing the unique backgrounds and experiences they bring.
3. **Responsibility:** Fulfill your volunteer duties. Be a positive role model.
4. **Fairness:** Be open-minded and act impartially.
5. **Caring:** Be compassionate and kind. Put the well-being of youth first.
6. **Citizenship:** Obey all laws and 4-H policies.



Key standards include:

- Conduct yourself with courtesy and appropriate language.
- Abide by all applicable laws and 4-H policies, including those on child abuse, risk management, and substance abuse.
- **Never** use alcohol, tobacco products, marijuana, or illegal drugs at any 4-H program or event.
- Use technology and social media appropriately and in a youth-focused manner.

Mandated Reporting

In Virginia, 4-H volunteers are **mandated reporters** of child abuse and neglect. This means that if you have **any reason** to suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, you are **legally required** to report your suspicion **within 24 hours** to your local Office of Child Protective Services or the state's reporting hotline: 804-786-8536.

- If you believe a child is in danger or that an emergency exists, contact local law enforcement or call 911.
- You must also notify your 4-H Extension agent immediately after making the report.
- This is not an option; it is a legal and ethical requirement. Your 4-H agent will provide you with specific training on this topic.

CHARACTERCOUNTS!® Coalition
Official Member

Core Policies: Working with Youth

These policies are practical, everyday rules to protect both youth and volunteers.

Above Suspicion Policy (Rule of Three)

This is one of the most important policies in 4-H. It is designed to protect youth from harm and volunteers from false accusations.

The Rule: A 4-H volunteer must **NEVER** be alone with a youth who is not their own child.

In practice, this means:

- You must always have at least **two adults** (enrolled volunteers or employees) present when working with a group of youth.
- If two adults are not available, a **minimum of one adult and two youth** must be present.
- This applies to all situations: meetings, car rides, and conversations such as texts, Zoom, communication through social media, etc. If you need to have a private conversation with a youth, you must do so in a location that is **in view of other adults** where you can also be heard (i.e., being “within eyeshot and earshot”).

Transportation Policy

If you are transporting 4-H members (other than your own children) to a 4-H event:

- You must be an enrolled and screened 4-H volunteer (Level 2, 3, or 4).
- You must have a valid driver’s license and the legally required amount of auto insurance.
- You must comply with all state laws (e.g., speed limits, no texting).

- All youth must be secured in properly installed and fastened seat belts.
- The Above Suspicion policy applies to car rides. If you are providing transportation, you should not be alone in the car with only one youth unless that youth is a member of your immediate family.

In some cases, you may have access to a county/city or state vehicle provided by your unit office to use when transporting 4-H youth in the course of a sanctioned 4-H event. Check with your local office on additional policies and procedures when using government vehicles.

Health History Forms

You must have a current, completed **4-H Health History Form** on file for every youth participant at any 4-H activity you are leading.

- These forms are collected annually through 4-H Online, and local 4-H staff members can provide you with access to the forms for your club members.
- These forms provide you with emergency contact information, allergy information, and parent/guardian permission for emergency medical treatment.
- You **must** have these with you (either in a binder or in a secure digital format) at every meeting and event.
- 4-H Health History Forms are confidential documents. It is your responsibility to safeguard the information and only share what is needed for the care of the youth.

Managing Your 4-H Group

Your 4-H agent/staff will provide you with a job description and training for your specific role, but there are a few special management procedures that are important for everyone to know.

Working With 4-H Cloverbuds (Ages 5-8)

The Cloverbud program is a special, noncompetitive program. The focus is on cooperation, exploration, and having fun.

Key Rules for Cloverbuds

- **No competition:** Cloverbuds **do not compete**. They can **participate** and **exhibit** their work, but they should all receive identical recognition (e.g., a “participant” ribbon). They are not to be judged or ranked against their peers.
- **No long-term large animal projects:** Cloverbuds cannot enroll in large animal projects (e.g., horse, market, or breeding beef, swine, goat, sheep). They can learn about animals, but they cannot be the primary person responsible for raising one. They can never be in sole control of a large animal.
- **No shooting sports projects:** Cloverbuds are not allowed to participate in shooting sports projects.
- **Safety first:** Activities must be age appropriate and have a high level of adult supervision. Be sure to ask your local Extension agent/staff about “ages and stages” with regard to youth development.

4-H Financial Management

If your 4-H club handles money (through fundraisers or modest dues), you are publicly accountable for those funds. Some important points regarding 4-H finances include:

- **Get chartered:** All 4-H clubs must have a 4-H charter, which is an official recognition from VCE and the USDA. Your 4-H agent/staff will help you with this process, and it is required before conducting any fundraisers.

- **Elect a treasurer:** 4-H club members should elect a youth treasurer who works with the adult volunteers to manage the club’s finances.
- **Budget:** The club should vote on an annual budget and must vote on all expenditures.
- **Audit:** The club’s financial records must be audited annually.
- **Approved fundraisers:** The Code of Federal Regulations mandates that your club receive pre-approval from your local 4-H Extension agent/staff before taking part in any fundraising activity.

Your 4-H agent/staff will provide you with the official 4-H Treasurer’s Record Book and guide you through this process. You will be trained in 4-H financial policies and be responsible for upholding them along with the youth members.

Using the 4-H Name and Emblem

The 4-H name and emblem are federally protected. They represent the high quality of our program.

- The 4-H name and emblem may only be used for official 4-H educational purposes.
- The name and emblem may **not** be used for commercial or political purposes.
- The emblem should never be altered or distorted.
- Use of the name and emblem at the local level must be pre-approved by your local 4-H agent. Check with them before printing anything (e.g., brochures, t-shirts, banners) with the 4-H clover.

Your Support System and Next Steps

You Are Not Alone!

Volunteering can be challenging, but you are part of a large support system. Never hesitate to ask for help.

- **Your 4-H Extension agent and 4-H staff members:** Are your primary points of contact. They are your 4-H agent and 4-H staff members, who are professionals trained in youth development. The agent or staff member in charge has full responsibility and authority to manage the 4-H program in their county/city. Their job is to
 - Provide you with training and orientation.
 - Help you find research-based curriculum and resources.
 - Answer your questions about 4-H policies.
 - Assist with conflict resolution.
 - Manage the 4-H Online enrollment system for your county/city.
- **Other 4-H volunteers:** Connect with other volunteers in your county/city and beyond. They are a fantastic source of ideas, encouragement, and practical advice.
- **Other VCE volunteers:** VCE Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, Master Financial Education Volunteers, and Master Food Volunteers may work with you to provide their expertise in their programming with youth.
- **State 4-H office:** The state 4-H leader and 4-H specialists at the state 4-H office work with local agents to develop educational materials, serve as resources, and provide access to state- and national-level 4-H educational events.
- **VCE volunteer specialist:** Because of the extensive volunteer network within Extension, VCE has a designated volunteer specialist who assists staff and volunteers with procedures, training opportunities, best practices, and overall support.

Your Next Steps

1. Complete your online volunteer application and screening process.
2. Complete your new volunteer orientation with your 4-H agent/staff.
3. Work with your 4-H agent/staff to find your perfect volunteer role.
4. Get ready to make a difference!

Thank you for making the best better!

