

Vermont

4-H

Leader Training Series

Selecting The 4-H Volunteer Role Right For You

Club Leader

Being part of the 4-H Youth Development program means not only that you help young people learn and have fun, but also that (as a volunteer) you find the best way to support 4-H with your volunteer efforts. This is a sampling of leadership roles available to you. Use the “Volunteer Interest Inventory” (later in this information sheet) to help you select the role best suited to your interests and talents. Once you select the role(s) of interest to you, contact your county/regional 4-H office for more information on how to become involved!

For 4-H volunteers who like to work directly with children, being a local club leader is an excellent opportunity. The *organizational club leader* may organize the club, and serve as liaison with your county/regional 4-H office. *Assistant leaders* may help with certain events or activities. *Project leaders* may help the club with one or more projects or specific subjects. *Teen leaders* are older, experienced 4-H members who can complement the leadership team in a club.

School Enrichment

Assist with 4-H programs within the classroom or in after-school activities. These programs may be subject (project) related, general information about 4-H, recreation, etc. Volunteers are needed all year long.

Judge For County Events

Adults are always needed to serve as judges for various 4-H events. These volunteers should be skilled in the subject (project) which they are judging, able to communicate with children, and understand the philosophy of 4-H and recognition.

Speakers' Bureau

Your county/region may have a speakers' bureau. As a member of this bureau, you would receive specialized training for giving 4-H related presentations to the general public and to

Adapted from: Ginny Diem, County 4-H Agent, Somerset County, New Jersey, 1990, revised 1994



I Like:

meeting new people
traveling
working with cloverbuds: 5- to 7-year-olds
working with 8- to 12-year-olds
working with teens
working with adults
teaching
leading a group
helping, but staying in the background
working with my hands (physical activity)
organizing events and activities
learning new things
other (list: _____)

Special talents I would like to share with others:

Use this list of interests to match volunteer opportunities that best meet your needs. If you have many interests, don't be afraid to start in a small way and then build up your volunteer roles. Remember to take on new challenges and to keep growing!

Work closely with paid 4-H staff in your county/region to design a position description for that volunteer role especially for you! A position description is simply a tool to organize the general description of an assignment.

Key Considerations to Discuss Before Agreeing to a Position Description

- Is the task reasonable?
- Is the task easily understood?
- Are duties and responsibilities clear?
- What resources are available to me for this assignment?
- Who will be my advisor or supervisor?
- Is an estimate of required time included?
- What qualifications do I need for the position?
- Will I enjoy and learn from doing this job?

What to Include

Time Requirements: Is it a short-term or an ongoing position? List time requirements and length of commitment.

Supervisor: Who will supervise you in this position?

Position Responsibilities: The position description should include the duties of the position and special requirements, if any are needed.

Qualifications: What qualifications does the position require?

Training: Find out the type of training available and when it will be provided. Examples: Regular training for a group of volunteers, or training on a one-to-one basis.

Matching your talents with your interests and availability are a primary function of a good job description. This agreement is designed to protect you, clarify your role within the program, and serve as a communication tool in defining your responsibilities on the 4-H team.

A Good Match

Reference:

Designing and Developing Volunteer Leadership Systems - Daniel E. Lindsey, University of Minnesota, 1983

Liability of 4-H Volunteers

Many volunteers are concerned about their liability if a 4-H member is injured while under their supervision. All things in life involve some sort of risk. When working with youth, this is especially true. To avoid problems, volunteers must successfully minimize and manage risk. Proper planning and common sense go a long way! Although *not* to be considered legal advice, here are some facts and issues to know and keep in mind while serving as a 4-H volunteer:

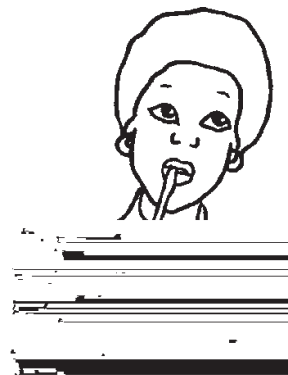
● Lawsuits involving organizations such as 4-H are commonly in one of two areas: **personal injuries/property damage** or **discrimination**. Injuries can occur in unsafe situations, often in the absence of adequate or proper supervision. Discrimination is usually claimed in cases where unfair rules are adopted by a club or where fair rules are not applied impartially.

● A Latin term commonly used regarding proper care is *in parentis locus*. Translated, it means “in the place of a parent.” In other words, when you are entrusted with the care of someone else’s children, you should do everything a good parent would do with his or her own child under the same circumstances. The best way to accomplish this is to **provide proper and adequate supervision for all children, based on their ages and experience**. Consider the question, “What would I want another person who is caring for my child to do?” Consider safety first!

● Many families have some sort of medical coverage to help pay for serious injuries sustained. However, basic insur-

Adapted from: Keith G. Diem,
Ph.D.,
County 4-H Agent, Somerset
County, New Jersey, 1990, revised
1994

strongly encouraged to enroll in one of the plans available for basic accident insurance. This coverage is excess over any other collectible insurance. Information is available from your county/regional 4-H office on where to get inexpensive coverage if your club wants its members to participate in such a program.



● County/regional 4-H programs recommend or require **permission forms/liability waivers** for any non-routine 4-H activity, particularly when traveling on a field trip or other outing. The permission and waiver forms ensure that parents have given permission for their children to participate in a given activity, and that they are aware of the risks in participating. Copies of these 4-H forms are available from your county/regional 4-H office. (*Refer to Appendix.*)

● As non-paid staff members of the University of Vermont, 4-H volunteers might be represented by the University in a legal dispute. **Check with your county/regional 4-H staff immediately regarding any situation involving an injury (or other controversial incident) as part of a 4-H activity.** Promptly write down all of the facts of the situation, to account for what happened and how. (*See Appendix for appropriate report form.*)

● **If you transport 4-H club members in your personal vehicle, be sure you carry adequate automobile insurance limits.** We recommend at least \$300,000 each accident. UVM's insurance will not respond to accidents arising out of your driving your personal vehicle.

● **Make safety and fairness priorities in everything your club does!** An ounce of prevention truly is worth a pound of cure! When in doubt about a new activity or club rule, confer with your county/regional 4-H staff first.

● Some examples of situations to avoid:

- Allowing a new 4-H woodworking project member to use a power tool.
- Allowing an experienced electrical project member to

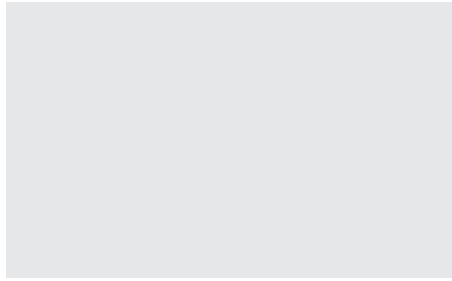




EXTENSION

2004

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the 4-H program statewide. This group also sponsors the State 4-H Leader Forum and provides leadership to 4-H State Day. Each county may have one representative. Each major project area and all 4-H camps have representatives on the Cabinet.

4-H State Day

4-H State Day is a one-day public presentation activity where 4-H members do action exhibits and stage programs, table-top displays, demonstrations, and speeches. Posters and photographs prepared by 4-H members are also displayed. Leaders attend with their groups. 4-H State Day is usually held at Vermont Technical College the last weekend in May.

Vermont 4-H Teen Congress

4-H Teen Congress is a three-day conference held each July for teens from throughout Vermont. Adult volunteers are needed to serve as chaperones at this event.

Volunteer to assist at State 4-H Events

Volunteers are always needed for state events, such as the judging at 4-H State Day, State 4-H livestock events, State 4-H Fashion Revue, or other activities. All volunteers need to be able to communicate with children, and understand the philosophy of 4-H and member recognition. Depending upon the event, volunteers may need to be skilled in the subject matter of the event (e.g., horses).

International Exchanges

Each year 4-H families open their homes to International 4-H Youth Exchange (IFYE) delegates and to Japanese teenagers who stay with them for three to four weeks. County/regional volunteer coordinators are needed to recruit and train host families. Check with your regional 4-H office for this year's schedule of inbound exchanges.

Northeast Regional 4-H Leader Forum

The goals of this leader forum are the same as for the state forum: to give volunteers an opportunity to develop skills that will help them in their role within 4-H. Each year, one state in the northeast region of the United States serves as host for the leader forum, usually held over a weekend in October. Volunteers attend from the thirteen Northeastern states. Partial scholarships may be available at the county, regional, or state level.

Regional and National Opportunities

Summary

Be sure to read your county/regional 4-H newsletter to learn more about these and other 4-H volunteer opportunities. Your 4-H office can provide additional information. Take advantage of these many volunteer opportunities to expand your world of 4-H beyond your community or project.



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Share Your Skills

The 4-H Program depends on volunteer participation to provide as many quality activities to 4-H'ers as possible. Think about sharing your time and talents through one or more of these organizations. To find out how you can contribute to one of these organizations, contact your county/regional 4-H staff for more information.

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4-H

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Communication and the 4-H Volunteer

**Communication:
A Two-way Process**

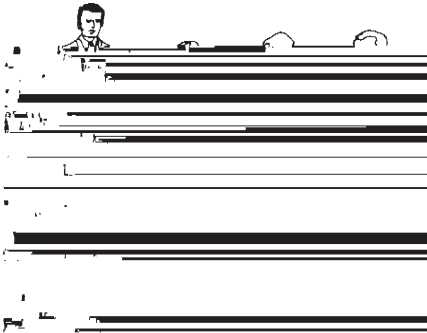


**Communicating
as a 4-H Leader**

*Adapted from: Rita L. Natale,
Regional 4-H Agent, South New
Jersey, 1990, revised 1994*

Communicating with the County/regional 4-H Office

- receiving training from the 4-H staff
- reading 4-H newsletters
- completing paperwork



Types of Communication

Keep in mind when working with 4-H'ers that there are many ways to communicate. Be aware of facial expressions or other forms of nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication often sends the strongest message and can cancel a verbal message. Listen by observing and you'll be able to build better 4-H club relationships.

Listen! This means working to understand what the speaker is saying.

Maintain eye contact with children and adults—it lets them know they are communicating with you.

If you don't understand what your 4-H'er, parent, or 4-H staff member is saying, ask!

Be honest and straightforward—set a good example for your 4-H'ers.

Be aware of the nonverbal communication going on among your 4-H'ers.

When necessary, set aside an appropriate time and place for communication (conference with a parent, etc.)

Encourage your 4-H'ers to communicate. Ask them, "What questions do you have?" and let them do the talking as often as possible.

Respond to the requests made by the 4-H staff—that

Throughout Vermont, the 4-H Youth Development Program is planned and conducted by paid 4-H staff. Ideally, the paid 4-H staff and volunteers work together as a team in carrying out the 4-H mission and in conducting the 4-H program.

4-H volunteers are part of a large network of individuals conducting the 4-H program.

include school enrichment programs, special interest programs, and programs run in cooperation with other organizations.

The county/regional 4-H staff also promotes the 4-H program through mass media, cooperating with other agencies and organizations, and holding special promotional events. In addition, the staff makes and maintains contacts within the community for educational and financial resources that support 4-H members, clubs, leaders, and programs.

There are generally three types of paid staff at the county/regional level, including regional 4-H specialist, 4-H educator, and clerical staff.

4-H specialists are responsible for certain aspects of training and assisting 4-H staff, leaders and members in their specific specialty. Every 4-H specialist is also a University of Vermont faculty member and is assigned University-related duties. These may include research, committees, faculty meetings, and more. By fulfilling these duties, the specialist strengthens the link between the local communities and the University, and ensures that 4-H members and leaders receive the most current information and opportunities available.

The 4-H specialist reports to the regional chairperson in his/her Extension region. To become a 4-H specialist, an individual must have at least a master's degree. Funding for the position is generally provided by the University.

The 4-H educator is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the 4-H program within the county/region. As a UVM staff member, each 4-H educator also serves as a link between the county/region and the University by participation on committees, at regional Extension staff meetings, and at state 4-H events.

Each 4-H educator is responsible to the regional 4-H State Program Coordinator, and is usually required to have a bachelor's degree. In most cases, funding is provided by both the university and the county/region.

Clerical workers are provided by the counties/regions. The county/regional 4-H secretary is an important link between the 4-H program and the outside world, as well as 4-H members and

leaders. In addition to providing clerical support, the secretary can also answer many questions and serve as an excellent resource.

State 4-H staff includes the state 4-H Program Coordinator , a