

# OKLAHOMA 4-H

# RULES & GUIDELINES

August 1, 2025 – July 31, 2026

## The Vision

Oklahoma 4-H will be recognized as a national leader in developing youths' abilities to become productive citizens and catalysts for positive change to meet the needs of a diverse and changing society.

## The Mission

4-H, the youth development program of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, provides opportunities for all youth to reach their fullest potential by developing and enhancing skills for living.

## The 4-H 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.

## The 4-H Motto

"To make the best better."

## The 4-H Emblem

A green four-leaf clover with the letter H on each leaflet representing the Head, Heart, Hands and Health.

## The 4-H Colors

Green represents nature's most common color and represents youth, life and growth. White represents purity and high ideals.

**Welcome to 4-H!** The Oklahoma 4-H program is full of opportunities for a family to work, play and learn together. This publication will help families understand the general rules and guidelines that govern Oklahoma 4-H membership and participation. We encourage families to review the document, so they know what to expect as a child participates in 4-H events and activities. Please direct questions regarding 4-H rules and guidelines to your county Extension office.

## What does it mean to be a "member in good standing?"

Participation in some events is limited to members who are in "good standing." "Good standing" is enrollment status designated as "Active," and may include, but is not limited to, meeting deadlines, attending a majority of project and club meetings prior to an event, and/or meeting other published requirements established by the club, county, district and/or state. In all cases, these requirements must provide equal access for all young people, apply to all project areas (cannot single out any project areas) and must not create barriers to participation.

Membership rules and guidelines, stated in this publication, will be followed at all levels of the Oklahoma 4-H Program. The Oklahoma State 4-H office will have final ruling on any interpretation or discrepancy resulting from any 4-H membership rules and guidelines, 4-H managed contest/activities/events eligibility or enrollment issue within the state of Oklahoma.

## Program Specific Rules and Guidelines

Each 4-H program, activity or event may have its own unique rules and guidelines. Care will be taken to avoid rules that exclude youth for reasons they cannot control. Cooperation among Extension staff, volunteers, parents and sponsors is essential to solving specific problems that may arise. **It is the family's responsibility to obtain rules and guidelines for any program/activity/event in which they choose to participate.**



## Parental Involvement

Families are important and enhance the 4-H experience. Parents are encouraged to attend meetings with their child(ren) and support the 4-H club, project or activity leader(s) and staff as requested. Parents who are disruptive at meetings, verbally abusive to members or other adults, or who exhibit threatening behaviors will be subject to exclusion from the 4-H program. If a parent's negative behavior persists, membership status may be withdrawn from their child.

**4-H Program Insurance:** Only youth and certified volunteers who have submitted enrollment (electronically or on the paper enrollment form) will be covered by 4-H program insurance.

## 4-H Member (3rd-12th Grades) Enrollment Guidelines:

**Members must reside or attend school in Oklahoma.**

**Grade for Enrollment:** 4-H age will be determined by the youth's public-school grade as of September 1 each year.

A child's "grade division" will not change until re-enrollment on August 1.

Youth may enroll in 4-H on August 1 if they are 8 **AND** in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade on September 1. If they turn 8 after September 1 and are in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, they will not be eligible to enroll as a 4-H member until the next 4-H year, but they may participate as a Cloverbud. When a child turns 9, they may join as a 4-H member regardless of grade level. 4-H



membership ends on July 31 following the completion of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, equivalence of 12<sup>th</sup> grade, GED or having reached the age of 19 on or before September 1, **whichever comes first.** For any exemption, a "*Request for*

*Exception for Over-Aged Members*" must be initiated with the County staff. <https://4h.okstate.edu/educators/forms-and-applications/>. Graduated high school seniors may complete their 4-H career by exhibiting in the fall fairs (see pages 4 and 5 for additional information).

**Enrollment, with all rights and privileges, requires that enrollment be "ACTIVE" within ZSuite Data Management System.**

**\*\*Cloverbud Enrollment – see page 3**

**Parental/Guardian Authorization:** Oklahoma 4-H must comply with Oklahoma State University's Minors on Campus policy.

The enrollment process requires that a legal parent or guardian accept or decline required authorization and sign the enrollment. It is illegal for anyone other than the legal parent or guardian to complete an enrollment for a minor child.

### **4-H membership may only be held in one county.**

- Membership must be in the county where the youth live or go to school.
- Virtual and homeschool membership will be determined by the youth's physical home address.
- If a county does not offer a particular project, a youth may cross county lines to participate in educational programs and project clubs but may not join that county's competitive teams. However, he/she may compete representing his/her home county.
- When a 4-H member's parents live in separate counties, the youth must declare membership in one county and the family must notify the Extension office in both counties where custody and residency is shared. Even when custody is jointly shared, youth may not exhibit or compete in 4-H activities in two counties. The youth's parents' court decree governs determination of the custodial parent. If this is not present, the person who claimed the child on his/her federal and state income tax the previous year generally is considered to be the custodial parent.
- A "*Petition for 4-H Membership Transfer*" form <https://4h.okstate.edu/educators/forms-and-applications/> will be complete when:
  1. A 4-H member/family moves from one county to another within the state of Oklahoma.
  2. A member/family wishes to request 4-H affiliation in a county other than where they live or go to school. The petition must have the approval of Extension staff in BOTH counties involved. The signed agreement will be kept on file in each Extension office.

**\*\*NOTE\*\*** Some events affiliated with 4-H, but not managed by 4-H, such as county fairs and livestock shows, may require exhibitors to be residents and/or students in the county where they are competing. It is the family's responsibility to check with the governing body for specific guidelines.

At the time enrollment is completed/transfer filed in the new county, all membership rights in the former county/state are surrendered.

If “length” of membership is required for participation in a specific activity in the new county, membership time in the former county/state is considered when the new/transfer of enrollment is completed in a timely fashion.

Oklahoma 4-H transfers membership, within the state, without an additional program fee. If the program fee has not been paid for the current program year, it must be paid to the new county at the time of the transfer.

**Annual Enrollment:** The 4-H year in Oklahoma begins August 1 and ends July 31 of the following year. All enrollment becomes “inactive” August 1 each year, no matter the date enrolled. The ZSuite Enrollment System will annually close for maintenance and updates the month of July and no new enrollment will be accepted during this time.

**Active Enrollment Status:** An individual who

- Meets the age and grade requirement or is 9 years old.
- Completes the 4-H enrollment process (through ZSuite enrollment system or submitted paper enrollment) and
- Has paid the 4-H program fee and is considered “ACTIVE.”

**Members-at-Large:** Members are expected to participate in local 4-H clubs. If a club is not available in your area or if the club’s meeting time creates an unusual hardship, families should work with their county Extension staff to establish a new chartered 4-H club.

**Loss of Membership:** Membership in 4-H is a privilege and may be denied to or withdrawn from persons who have exhibited any of the following behavior(s):

- Convicted of a crime.
- Banned from school or school-related programs or another organization.
- Violated the 4-H Code of Conduct.
- Exhibited behavior that may discredit the image of the 4-H program.
- Placed another individual or animal at undue risk.
- Violated published rules or guidelines governing the 4-H affiliated events or activities.

**Enrollment for Livestock Shows:** Livestock shows at local, county, district, state, and regional levels have their own governing boards, rules, and guidelines. Oklahoma 4-H values partnerships with these identities and has authorized the use of the 4-H Name and Emblem provided

they comply with USDA Policies and OK 4-H Rules and Guidelines for 4-H Membership and Cloverbuds.

It is the family’s responsibility to obtain and comply with said rules. The 4-H program’s role is to verify date of enrollment or enrollment status. The show’s governing board determines eligibility.

## 4-H Cloverbud (K-2nd Grade) Program and Guidelines

The Cloverbud program is family-oriented and noncompetitive. Due to the developmental skills of this age group, Cloverbud members will not be permitted to participate in events where they or their projects are compared or judged against their peers.

Research has shown children in this age range have unique learning characteristics and developmental needs different than older youth. Cloverbud programs are activity focused, not project-focused and build on cooperative rather than competitive learning.

Cloverbud members may only participate in noncompetitive activities on a local or county basis as deemed appropriate by the OSU Extension Staff and Parent-Volunteer Association/Council. District and state activities will not be provided for Cloverbuds. \*\*Grade Divisions – see page 5.

Fundraising for Cloverbuds is not permitted.

**Active Enrollment Status:** An individual who

- Meets the Cloverbud age requirement of being 5 years old on or before September 1 and enrolled in grades K-2.
- If a Cloverbud turns 8 after September 1 AND is in the 3rd grade, they will be a Cloverbud until the next 4-H year – see page 2.
- Completed the 4-H enrollment process (electronically or on the paper enrollment form) and
- Paid the 4-H program fee is considered “ACTIVE.”

## 4-H Teen Volunteer Enrollment and Certification

Serving as a certified teen volunteer with the Oklahoma 4-H program is a privilege. Teens who have the potential of working with youth unsupervised as a project leader, teen leader, camp counselor, district/state officers, etc., must complete the same certification process and requirements as an adult, with the exception of having a background check run.

## 4-H Adult Volunteer Enrollment and Certification

Serving as a volunteer with the Oklahoma 4-H Program is a privilege. Volunteers serve at the pleasure of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service and Oklahoma State University. A breach in the Volunteer Behavioral Guidelines or any other established rules/guidelines is grounds for immediate dismissal as a 4-H volunteer.

**Active Enrollment Status:** An individual who

- Meets the age requirement (21+).
- Initially complete the certification process: enrollment, background check, training, and approval process.
- Annually completes the 4-H enrollment process through ZSuite enrollment system.
- Annually complete the required continuing education, including the University-required Working With Minors and Civil Rights (Titles VI, VII, IX) policy review.
- On a regular interval, all volunteers will be re-certified.
- **4-H Program Insurance:** Only certified volunteers who have completed the enrollment criteria will be covered by 4-H program insurance.

## Program Fee

- The cost is \$20 per year and applies to all 4-H youth enrollment (Cloverbuds and 4-H members).
- If a youth is enrolled between August 1 and July 31 of the 4-H year, the full \$20 fee will be collected. There will be no pro-rated fee based on enrollment date.

There will be no refunds issued once enrollment has been approved.

- **The payment must be remitted to the county Extension Office within 30 days of enrollment, or the enrollment will be rolled back to inactive or new enrollment will be deleted.**
- The program fee can be paid:
  - a) Online by credit/ debit card.
  - b) Cash/check/money order to the county Extension office,
  - c) 4-H club or another organization, or
  - d) Requesting financial assistance through the Extension office.
- The 4-H program fee is based on an individual's membership, not by club. Members are required

to submit only one program fee annually through their primary 4-H club.

- Families with three or more children will pay a maximum of \$60 in 4-H program fees. The definition of family is identified as children living at the same address.
- No child will be denied the opportunity to enroll in 4-H due to the inability to pay. Be it understood, the enrollment process is not complete (which means "Active") until the fee is paid.
- Contact the county Extension office about local scholarships or opportunities for satisfying the program fee requirement. Scholarship application available at: <https://4h.okstate.edu/educators/forms-and-applications/>.



## 4-H Participation and Competition

### 4-H Project Work and Exhibits:

Why youth enroll in a project? The 4-H project (entomology, photography, food science, etc.) is the gateway to the 4-H member. Through project work, members "Learn by Doing." The 4-H project is a tool for helping youth develop into more capable adults by teaching them how to set goals, make decisions, follow through with commitments, do evaluations and report their work. Enroll in the number of projects the member will have time to plan and carry out. Choose a project(s) that meets the family situation and lifestyle.

Project work/exhibit(s) is the effort of the 4-H member. Exhibits are the result of the child applying their mastery of knowledge and skills." Projects/exhibits are to be completed during the current enrollment year.

**Fall Fairs** are intended as the culmination or end of the previous 4-H year's project work. Exhibits represent work completed by the member sometime during their previous 12 months of enrollment. A 4-H member's enrollment status must have been "active" the previous year to exhibit in the fall fairs.

### Livestock Exhibits

An animal nomination form does not constitute 4-H enrollment. Enrollment must be completed through ZSuite enrollment

system or paper enrollment signed and submitted to the Extension office and 4-H program fee paid to be considered an “active” enrolled 4-H member.

To show livestock (beef, horse, sheep, swine, goats, poultry, rabbits, etc.) in the fall at the state fairs, members must have had an “active” enrollment status during the previous program year by the date published by the show’s governing board.

To show in the spring, youth must have an “active enrollment status” by the date published by the show’s governing board.

***\*\* Be aware of each individual show’s eligibility rules. Each governing board determines eligibility.***

### Grade Divisions

Cloverbud members are a special membership category with regard to program and policy. As a result, the 4-H Cloverbud program is fundamentally different than general membership in 4-H. It is neither the intent nor the objective of “Cloverbuds” to duplicate the 4-H member experiences designated for older youth, nor to create a “mini 4-H” concept. (USDA National 4-H Headquarters Fact Sheet) According to USDA, authorization for the use of the 4-H emblem and use of the 4-H name and program is delegated to the State Office and you cannot use the term “Cloverbuds” as a designation for competitive events. The Oklahoma 4-H Cloverbud program is activity focused, not project-focused and builds on cooperative rather than competitive learning.

The table below is a guide for grade-age divisions. Some events/activities at the county, district, state and national level may use different grade divisions. Event-specific grade divisions will supersede those noted below. A child’s “grade division” will not change until re-enrollment on August 1.

Grade division exceptions might include a) a county chooses to include 7th graders in the senior division; b) grade requirements for elected office; or c) a grade requirement for attending a conference/participating in an event.

	Junior	Intermediate	Senior
Grade	3 <sup>rd</sup> (and 8 years old), 4 <sup>th</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup> , 7 <sup>th</sup> , 8 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup> , 10 <sup>th</sup> , 11 <sup>th</sup> , 12 <sup>th</sup>
	Junior 3-7 Grades		Senior 8-12 Grades

### Enrollment Requirements for Participation

To participate in events/contests beyond the county, youth must have been enrolled for 30 days prior to the event and in “ACTIVE” status in ZSuite at the time registration is submitted. Some events may have additional age/grade classification as well as enrollment requirements. The family is responsible for obtaining the rules and guidelines, from the sponsoring body, of any event they choose to participate.

### Graduated Seniors

Immediately following high school graduation, graduating seniors may:

- Continue to exhibit their projects through the fall state fairs (seniors are responsible for referencing fair guidelines to confirm eligibility).
- Participate in a national 4-H competitive event and/or trip, if qualified or awarded during active membership and are otherwise eligible to participate according to the rules and regulations of the national 4-H trip/event.
- Fulfill their role as a State 4-H Council member when elected during Roundup.
- **As of September 1, 2018, grade will be the determining factor for activities/events/contests/awards.**

### Youth Representing Oklahoma at National 4-H Contests

Youth who have represented 4-H or another youth organization at an event that serves as the national 4-H contest, or its equivalent, are ineligible to return to that contest as a representative of Oklahoma 4-H. Participation in equivalent out-of-state contests will be handled on an individual basis. The Oklahoma State 4-H office will have final ruling on contest eligibility.

Youth enrolled in 4-H who have participated at a national contest may still be eligible to participate and compete in state level contests (See individual contest rules).

### Fundraising on Behalf of the 4-H Name and Emblem

To learn more, download 4-H.VOL.303 **Oklahoma 4-H Club Financial Guide and Treasurer’s Records** a resource developed for volunteers and parents. Additional information can be found at: <https://4h.okstate.edu/volunteers/leadership/>



## General 4-H Participation

1. All events and activities planned, conducted or sponsored by the Cooperative Extension Service, are open to all youth who meet 4-H membership criteria. Events not organized by 4-H may set additional participation requirements. If those requirements are inconsistent with the standards expected of 4-H partners, the group may be denied use of the 4-H Name and Emblem, even if the event is open to 4-H members.
2. Youth participating as 4-H members in approved activities or events sponsored by other organizations have the responsibility to abide by the regulations and guidelines of the sponsoring organization.
3. The Oklahoma 4-H Youth Development Program encourages members to maintain good academic standing at school. Local school districts are expected to inform students and families of the student's eligibility status. If a family knowingly violates the school's policy regarding eligibility, 4-H will support the school in any actions taken.
4. Oklahoma 4-H Youth Development supports the use of excused absences in accordance with state law. We are committed to using this privilege responsibly and limiting the number of excused days to a reasonable extent. County Educators will notify a school to inform them about members' participation in approved 4-H activities. The tracking of excused absences, resolution of disputes with school administration regarding this policy, and determination of eligibility are matters to be handled directly between the school and family.
5. Guidelines for 4-H sponsored events and activities will be available prior to the event. Families, volunteers, parents, and members are responsible for checking with the Extension office for county and district information or visiting the Oklahoma 4-H website for state coordinated activities:  
<https://4h.okstate.edu/events/>.



**Oklahoma 4-H Open Membership Guidelines** Oklahoma 4-H supports membership in other youth- serving organizations. Young people and adults are unique, each with their own interests and talents. Different organizations have their own unique and varied strengths and program offerings.

The following are guidelines to be used in advising 4-H members about membership in 4-H and other youth organizations.

## Guidelines for Open Membership

The following practices will guide open membership by Extension staff and volunteers.

- 4-H membership is open to all youth. Members of other organizations are welcome to be actively involved in 4-H.
- When specific activities for more than one organization are held at the same time (as in some judging contests) members will be expected to indicate their preference for organizational representation prior to the development of a team roster so that other individuals may be included on the team.
- When specific community activities create competition for an individual's time or loyalty, the organizations involved should establish a spirit of mutual cooperation and fairness and work out a local agreement prior to the beginning of training, workout or preparation for an event or contest.
- If a young person is declared ineligible to participate in other youth development organizations due to unethical behaviors, he/she will not be permitted to participate in 4-H. Likewise, if his/her local chapter or organization is placed on probation by a fair or show, he/she will not be eligible to transfer membership to 4-H in order to avoid the probation.
- Dual projects in other youth organizations: Members are encouraged to avoid using the same projects, records, leadership activities, etc. for similar awards and recognition in two organizations.
- If a project is nominated at the beginning of the year in one program, it should stay in that same program unless the member physically relocates to a new school where the same program is not available.

It is the family's responsibility to obtain rules and guidelines for any program/activity/event in which they choose to participate to determine eligibility for participation, teams, awards, etc.

### **Use of the 4-H Name and Emblem**

All usage of the 4-H Name and Emblem must be for educational or character-building purposes, uphold the dignity of the 4-H Name, and provide a benefit to the 4-H Program. This means that all uses need to contribute to the appropriate learning and positive development of the youth and adults involved in the 4-H program while aligning with the principles of 4-H and positive youth development and/or refraining from anything that contradicts positive youth development. The use must support 4-H programming, provide a sense of belonging to the 4-H community, and the benefit to 4-H must be equal to or greater than the benefit received by the entity authorized.

**\*\*NOTE\*\*** State 4-H offices (through delegation by their land-grant institution's Cooperative Extension office) are responsible for any 4-H Name and Emblem authorizations that cross local jurisdictions but are contained within the state's geographical boundaries. The term "state" can be interchanged with "land-grant institution" (1862, 1890, and 1994) and is inclusive of U.S. Territories and the District of Columbia. Local 4-H

offices (through delegation by their State 4-H office) are responsible for any 4-H Name and Emblem authorization limited to their local area of jurisdiction. "Local" may refer to a county, parish, borough, region, district, or other term depending upon the structure of the 4-H program within an individual state.

Groups that exclude or treat individuals unfairly based on eligibility criteria for 4-H membership will be denied use of the 4-H Name and Emblem and may have the privilege revoked.

### **Official Clover:**



For additional guidelines, see:

<https://4h.okstate.edu/educators/clover-and-emblem/site-files/handbook-using-name-and-emblem-national-headquarters.pdf>

Oklahoma 4-H Website: [4h.okstate.edu](https://4h.okstate.edu)