

# UVM Extension Policy Guide For 4-H Volunteers and Staff



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This document includes overarching policies that guide the 4-H program, volunteers and staff. The purpose for these policies is to ensure safety, legal compliance, and to reduce risk while providing our educational opportunities for Vermont youth.

UVM is committed to programming that is welcoming and supportive of youth, staff and volunteers of all sexual orientations, abilities, gender identities and other differences. We believe having diversity adds to the quality of our programs and we will not tolerate bullying or harassment. The UVM 4-H program should serve as a safe space for all participants.

Please note that these policies are subject to change as new information or other resources become available to you. New policies may also be added. Please check back periodically to keep yourself up to date.

Questions regarding policies in this handbook may be answered by your County 4-H Educator or the State Program Director. Any forms referenced can be found on our website under 4-H leader resources.

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. University of Vermont Extension, Burlington, Vermont. University of Vermont Extension, and U.S. Department of Agriculture, cooperating, offer education and employment to everyone without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status. Any reference to commercial products, trade names, or brand names is for information only, and no endorsement or approval is intended. 12/2023

## Chaperones, Both Overnight and Day Use

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- All 4-H events should be chaperoned by either leaders or a combination of leaders and parents. Parents wishing to chaperone will, at the minimum, be asked to complete our background checks and youth protection training prior to service.
- If a chaperone plans to drive during a 4-H event, the chaperone must also complete the UVM Online Driver Certification form. This should be completed by reaching out to the county educator and completing the process at least three weeks prior to when the chaperone needs to drive for 4-H.
- The ratio of chaperones to 4-H members varies with different events, but should be at least 1:10 for ages 15+, 1:8 for ages 11-14, 1:6 for ages 8-10, and 1:5 for Cloverbuds, for most activities. Some activities, especially those associated with animals, may require a ratio of 1:5. Eastern States requires a ratio of 1:5 for the dormitory.
- Club meetings should have at least 2 sanctioned volunteers present.
- Chaperones should be at least 19 years of age or older, depending on the event.
- Overnight activities vary with the age of the 4-H participants. At no time should a volunteer stay in a room alone with a child age 12+ unless that adult is related to the child, or as defined by the event (example – Eastern States Exposition). Youth ages 5-7 must have a chaperone sleep in the same space (tent, hotel room, dorm, etc.) but never the same bed unless that adult is related to the child. It is recommended that chaperones for youth ages 8-11 not share the same room or tent, except when safety may be a factor due to extenuating circumstances.

## Club and Committee Monies

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- 4-H clubs and committees derive their tax exemption from a UVM affiliated non-profit called UVM Community Partners and must follow money management policies laid out in the treasurers book. Monies for 4-H activities should not be processed through a personal account. Directions and frequently asked questions are listed on our website (<https://www.uvm.edu/extension/youth>) under leader resources, financial management. Please check with your County 4-H Educator to learn what steps are needed to handle money for a club.
- All clubs will be required to turn in financial reports, available on the web in both the leader training series or in the treasurer's book.
- In the event of a club folding, all monies in the 4-H account shall be turned over to the entity listed in the club bylaws. It may be the County 4-H Foundation or State 4-H Foundation if no County 4-H Foundation exists. Or, the money will revert back to the parent corporation, UVM Community Partners.

## **Clubs and Club Property**

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4-H clubs cannot own animals, land, or vehicles. 4-H volunteers may own animals or vehicles; they are the tax responsibility of the individual 4-H volunteer. It is also the responsibility of the 4-H volunteer to assure he/she carries adequate property or physical damage insurance on privately owned animals or vehicles and that the volunteer maintains automobile liability insurance in accordance with Vermont statutes. If transporting 4-H participants, volunteers should secure a minimum of \$100,000 each person/\$300,000 each accident in automobile liability insurance limits.

## **Contracts**

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Neither staff nor volunteers may sign any contracts required to secure facilities, caterers, etc. If you do, you may be held personally liable. All contracts must be signed by the UVM Purchasing Department.

Please see your educator for assistance.

## **Corporate Sponsorships**

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In order to better coordinate our fundraising efforts for 4-H, we have established some simple steps to follow before soliciting a person or business for funds.

1. Read the Private Sponsorship Guidelines, attached, to determine if the business is a good fit with 4-H.
2. If it is a good fit, please call your local 4-H Educator or the committee coordinator (Lisa Muzzey for shooting sports, Wendy Sorrell for livestock, etc.) with the name(s) of the business(es). Please indicate whether you are willing to solicit the business yourself, or if you think someone else should. The coordinator will then call UVM Extension's Development Officer with this information on your behalf.
3. The Development Officer will check to make sure that no one else is soliciting the business or has just recently solicited the business. If you are going to solicit the business yourself, Kurt will also provide you with that business's giving history and any other information that might be helpful to you when you make your request.
4. If you solicit the business yourself, please contact your Educator or Coordinator shortly after the solicitation to report both the outcome of the visit and any information that we should know for the future, who will then let the Development Officer know the outcome.
5. If you solicited the business yourself, please send a personal thank you note after the visit, regardless of the outcome. You should also send a tax receipt for the gift once it arrives, but the personal thank you is what strengthens the relationship for the future. A copy of this receipt should also be given to the staff coordinator or Educator.

If any of this is unclear or you have any questions, please call Sarah Kleinman at 1-866-571-0668.

## Definition of a 4-H Club

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- In order to be considered a 4-H club, the club must have at least 4-5 unrelated youth enrolled. The sense of belonging (one of the 4 essential elements) does not exist if there are not enough participants.
- Clubs with less than this number should disband and enroll as independent members.
- A 4-H club should have by-laws or a constitution on file with the County 4-H office, elected officers, and at business and project meetings.
- Two trained, screened adults should always be present at 4-H club meetings.

## Dress Code/Behavior

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Clothing and behaviors, both verbal and non-verbal, can say a lot about a person. When participating in a 4-H event, or representing 4-H at a local, regional, state or national opportunity, 4-H'ers are expected to abide by both their code of conduct as well as dress code. While these codes can leave a lot to interpretation, it is important to recognize that individual choices can, at times, bring unwanted attention either to an individual or to the group as a whole. The 4-H Program's top priority is to the safety of all of its members. Volunteers, chaperones and parents should ensure that 4-H members understand appropriate clothing choices and acceptable behaviors relevant to the trip or experience; for example:

- When going on an interview, ripped jeans or a dirty t-shirt are not appropriate – cleaner clothing would be a better choice to help show respect for that position or person with whom you are to meet. There are times however, when ragged clothes may be appropriate, perhaps with community service activities or other informal environments.
- Loud screaming, suggestive behavior, revealing clothing, laughing or vulgar language can, in any environment, draw attention from bystanders and can lure strangers into conversation.

Volunteers, chaperones and staff should be knowledgeable about the environment in which they take 4-H members, and prepare them accordingly with expectations around appropriate behavior and dress. 4-H'ers should also understand why they are being asked to dress and conduct themselves in a certain manner, to help reinforce the expectation and further develop life and job skills around understanding self as well as communicating and relating to others. Further resources can be provided through your 4-H Educator if you need help or would like to explore this topic more in-depth.

## Driving

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In order for any UVM Extension employees or volunteers to drive during an Extension sponsored event, the Vermont DMV Record Request and Verification Authorization Form must be filled out in its entirety and processed by the Department of Risk Management. A check of motor vehicle record must be conducted once a year for any volunteer that plans to drive youth during 4-H events.

Informal arrangements made between families to carpool to a 4-H club meeting or event does not constitute driving for a 4-H event. Driving during a 4-H event or for a field trip, between program locations, or whenever driving of youth is arranged by a volunteer, is considered driving for an official 4-H event. In these circumstances, all volunteers and chaperones driving should have submitted the Vermont DMV Record Request and Verification Authorization form and completed a motor vehicle record check. When completing this form, volunteers and chaperones should contact their educator at least 3 weeks prior to their need to drive during a 4-H event to provide ample time for the driver checks to be submitted and approved.

Adults may never drive alone with only one child in the car for 4-H purposes, unless the child is their own. At least two youth must be in the car if the driver is not related to those youths. Any driver with more than three violations in a two-year period may not drive until they have been 12 months violation-free and had another DMV check done.

Also, it should be noted that Staff, Faculty and Volunteers using their own vehicles for Extension/4-H events must be able to provide proof of insurance prior to driving for Extension events. Driver's personal insurance will be the primary coverage.

Teens may not drive for a club or extension sponsored event.

## Insurance/Risk Management Procedures

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- All clubs should take out club health insurance at the beginning of the 4-H year through American Income Life. <http://www.americanincomelife.com/FourHCoop.aspx>
- Special Event Insurance must also be taken out to cover spectators or others participating in events. <http://www.americanincomelife.com/FourHCoop.aspx>
- Various venues for events and activities may require a certificate of liability. This may be requested through your 4-H Educator. Four weeks prior to the event, please fill out and submit the [request for certificate of liability form](#). Ask your 4-H Educator if you have any questions.
- Be sure to follow the [risk management checklist](#) to help reduce your risk of an accident occurring at your event. Be sure to keep your checklist on file for one year in case it needs to be referred back to for some reason. Ask your 4-H Educator for a copy if you need it.
- If your event is held on private property (not a business) and you expect more than 50 people to attend, you also need to fill out and file the [Facility Use and Indemnification Form](#). Ask your 4-H Educator for a copy if you need it.

## Lightning Policy

4-H has adopted the VPA policy on lightning procedures for outdoor interscholastic activities.

- When thunder is heard or lightning is seen, everyone must stop the activity and go inside.
- Once lightning has been recognized or thunder heard, wait at least thirty minutes (thirty minute rule) before resuming activities. Any subsequent lightning or thunder after the beginning of the 30-minute count should reset the clock and another count should begin.
- When in doubt ... use good common sense -- safety is your most important responsibility.
- Stay away from tall or individual trees, lone objects, standing pools of water, and open fields. Avoid tallest object in field. Do not take shelter under a single tall tree.
- If there is no safe shelter within a reasonable distance, crouch in a thick grove of small trees surrounded by taller trees or in a dry ditch. Crouching with only your feet touching the ground and keeping your feet close together, wrap your arms around your knees and lower your head to minimize your body's surface area. DO NOT LIE FLAT.
- Pay more attention to the lightning threat than the rain. It need not be raining for lightning to strike; lightning can strike far from the rain shaft.

## Mandatory Reporter for Staff and Volunteers

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The University of Vermont 4-H program considers all staff and volunteers mandatory reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect in the State of Vermont. It is the responsibility of staff and volunteers, if they suspect a child is abused or neglected, to report that suspicion within 24 hours, by contacting their County 4-H Educator, or their immediate supervisor.

## Membership in 4-H (including Cloverbuds)

- 4-H members are any youth participant aged 5-18 years of age as of January 1 of the program year. Young people over the age of 18 may participate if appropriate based upon IEP or other demonstrated need.
- Youth who reside in a state other than Vermont and participate in their home state, may join a second club in Vermont as long as the project area is different from their home state. For example, if a youth is enrolled in dairy in their home state, than they may not enroll in a dairy project in Vermont. Those same youth may opt to join project clinics and county competitions that replicate projects in their home state, however, they will not be eligible for Vermont state and national teams.
- Any youth can participate in state level events and competitions (except for those enrolled in another state as above), though participation in certain livestock shows do require additional steps such as record books, approval forms and interviews, most often completed as part of the club or independent member participation. In order to qualify for a national level team representing Vermont, club and independent members must have been enrolled as a Vermont 4-H member by January 1 of the program year and be considered a member in good standing. Unique circumstances resulting from situations such as family moves will be considered on a case by case basis, in consultation with the County 4-H Educator and Event Point of Contact.
- Cloverbuds are youth age 5-7 as of January 1.
- Cloverbuds may not compete in any competition. Cloverbuds may however, have the opportunity to exhibit their work and receive participation ribbons at the county level. Cloverbuds should not be

completing record books or taking part in project work identical to the 4-H members, as it is not age appropriate. Cloverbuds should be engaging in stand-alone activities, not year-long projects, and interactions with animals should only be done under the control of an adult or older teen leader. Please see further guidance under Cloverbud projects for more details about working with animals. Please work with your County 4-H Educator to identify appropriate curriculum and activities for use with Cloverbuds.

## **Name and Emblem**

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The 4-H name and emblem belongs to the 4-H Youth Development Program, under the authority of USDA and anyone wishing to use it must obtain permission to use it ahead of time.

There are very strict rules surrounding the official image and use of the emblem. A document clarifying appropriate use, color and other information can be found on the web at <https://nifa.usda.gov/4-h-name-and-emblem> or in a pdf file in this document.

If you wish to have a local printer use the name and emblem for a banner, t-shirt, or other printing need, that printer needs a letter granting them permission to use the name and emblem. Please contact your 4-H Educator to produce a letter that you may use.

Vermont 4-H Staff or Volunteers may not grant permission to use the name and emblem if the printer/vendor exists outside the state of Vermont. Permission must then be granted from NIFA or USDA.

## **Naming 4-H Clubs**

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Members and leaders work together to select a name for a new 4-H club/unit/webpage. This name should reflect the positive image of 4-H to our greater community. Once your club is chartered, you will not want to change its name. Therefore it is important that the name can stand the test of time – not too trendy or juvenile. Please avoid using the names of TV cartoons, situation comedies, singing groups, etc. Also, the name should not imply that its membership is limited to any group protected by equal program opportunity regulations. For example, names such as the 4-H Lads or 4-H Lassies, or 4-H Kings or 4-H Queens would be inappropriate.

- Should be specific to the 4-H club or organization either through a unique name or by identifying the county or location. Examples: Share-N-Win 4-H Club (unique name); Calvert County 4-H Horse Club (generic name with county).
- Should not be overtly religious or represent the beliefs of one denomination over another. Examples: God's Children; Wings of a Dove 4-H Club would be inappropriate
- Should not imply that membership is limited or exclusive to any group protected by equal opportunity regulations.
- Should not be offensive or generally seen as demeaning to any group protected by equal opportunity regulations.
- Should present 4-H as a positive opportunity for young people. Example: 4-H Mafia; or Jack the Ripper 4-H Sewing Club would be demeaning and therefore inappropriate.

## Raffles, Lotteries and Gaming

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According to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) (publication 526 – Charitable Contributions, dated 12/2003) the price of raffle tickets, lotteries, etc. are still not deductible as contributions, therefore the purchasers of these tickets may not be getting any value or less than full value for their money. The IRS requires filers who show gaming income and losses, to provide a detailed log or journal of all the gaming activity that resulted in the wins and losses. 4-H groups should not be involved in this type of record keeping and reporting, and would need to be careful not to imply endorsement by having the 4-H Name listed next to an establishment that did not represent the positive youth development ideals of the program.

Although the policy related to games of chance is almost 30 years old, the reasoning is still valid. First, as expressed in the Federal regulations, (Title 7 Code of Federal Regulations section 8) related to the 4-H program, which state; “Fund-raising programs using the 4-H Name and Emblem should be carried out for specific educational purposes.” (Section 8.9). Second, “Private support monies should be: a.) given and used for priority educational purposes and b.) accounted for efficiently” (Section III). These requirements may be difficult to meet in a game of chance or raffle situation. Additionally, the 4-H Name and Emblem may not be used on or associated with products and services sold in connection with 4-H fund raising programs where an endorsement of a commercial firm, product or service is either intended or effected.

National 4-H Headquarters-USDA is not forbidding the involvement of 4-H clubs or organizations in raffles or games of chance, but recommending that careful consideration go into the decision-making related to these activities. Given the longstanding policy of discouraging 4-H participation in these types of activities and the potential implications for the 4-H program and land grant institution, appropriate individuals at the state and local level, including the State Extension Director, should be consulted to determine the suitability of fund raising activities.

## Religion and 4-H

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The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), which is home to the 4-H Youth Development Program, prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, and marital or family status. As a result, 4-H programs must have secular purposes focused on education and must not advance religion. Showcasing one’s religious affiliation in 4-H projects may create a barrier to participation by others; sectarian religious messages may be wrongly perceived as 4-H’s endorsement of that particular sect.

4-H programs may engage in nondenominational activities that neither advance nor inhibit religion such as allowing moments of silence or displaying a variety of different religious artifacts in a comparative manner. To better understand if your activity or interest is permissible, please contact your County 4-H Educator.

## **Tax Exemption**

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- Any donation or expense personally incurred for 4-H purposes may be deducted on personal income tax forms, including mileage incurred.
- 4-H Clubs and Committees derive their income tax exemption from a UVM affiliated non-profit, UVM Community Partners, and do not need to file any forms with the government.
- Clubs and committees must ensure they do not pay sales tax rather, they should use UVM Community Partners' sales tax number when making tax exempt purchases. To review money management protocol, please review this website <http://go.uvm.edu/c01jo>
- Please see the section on Club and Committee Monies for further financial information.

## **Volunteer Conduct**

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Volunteers are expected to adhere to the code of conduct (see appendix A) and program policies outlined in this manual.

In the event that the University of Vermont 4-H, in its sole discretion, determines that a volunteer of a 4-H program has engaged in conduct that merits disciplinary action, up to and including removal from the program or activity, the University of Vermont 4-H will notify the volunteer in writing of the nature of the unacceptable conduct and proposed sanctions. The individual will have the option to set up a meeting with the University of Vermont Director of 4-H and/or to respond in writing to the University of Vermont Director of 4-H regarding the alleged unacceptable conduct. Following the meeting and/or written response, the Director of 4-H will notify the volunteer in writing of the sanction(s) to be imposed. The volunteer may appeal the sanctions in writing, within 7 calendar days, to the Director of Extension at the University of Vermont, whose decision shall be final.

4-H volunteers should never be alone with youth. Another adult should always be present at 4-H meetings or events.

All 4-H volunteers are expected to successfully pass a background check, every three years or after a 6 month hiatus, through the Vermont Criminal Records Section, Sexual Offender Registry, Child Abuse Registry, or through the FBI National Record Check and complete required youth protection training.

## Youth Protection

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University of Vermont Extension values our volunteers and recognizes the important role these individuals play in conducting many of our programs. Volunteers are crucial to fulfilling the mission of 4-H, which is to assist in the development of our youth to become productive citizens and catalysts for positive change to meet the needs of a diverse and changing society. The Youth Protection Policy is in place to ensure to the best of our ability, that UVM Extension 4-H does its part to provide a safe environment for youth in our programs.

Every new volunteer and paid staff member's acceptance of a position working with youth is contingent upon completing a background check through the Vermont Criminal Investigation Center (VCIC), Sexual Offender Registry, and Child Abuse Registry. In addition, an interview is required and references will be checked. All volunteers are also expected to sign our Code of Conduct and complete youth protection training.

4-H club meetings must always have at least two screened and trained adults present, regardless of the age of the youths. For overnights, youth ages 5-7 must have a chaperone sleep in the same space (tent, hotel room, dorm, etc.), chaperones for youth ages 8-11 should not share the same room or tent, with the exception being when safety may be a factor due to unknown circumstances. Chaperones for youth ages 12+ may never sleep in the same room/tent as the youth except as provided by the rules of specific events with dormitory-like accommodations (example – Eastern States). Chaperones may always sleep in the same room/tent as their own children of any age, if there are no additional children present. Drivers for 4-H organized events may not drive just one child alone unless the youth is the driver's own child.

Providing opportunities for youth to gain life skills is central to the 4-H mission. These opportunities must take place in a safe environment, which is the responsibility of each and every one of us. This policy is in place to guide us in carefully selecting our volunteers and paid staff.

Please review these best practices for optimal youth protection:

Adapted from: <https://www.washington.edu/youth/program-planning/documents-tools-and-templates/model-policy-for-brief-interactions-with-minors/>

### **PREVENTING HARMFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH MINORS**

The following are specific actions volunteers can follow in order to avoid harmful relationships with minors.

1. Establish clear boundaries with minors, i.e. stating what are or are not appropriate conversation topics.
2. Do not send texts to only one minor; include others when communicating with the minor via electronic means.
3. Do not befriend minors in your social media accounts; use groups or other mechanisms to communicate
4. Avoid physical contact with minors.
5. Treat all minors equitably, i.e. fairly and consistently. Avoid showing favoritism.
6. Do not discuss your personal life with minors.
7. Follow appropriate professional attire guidelines and avoid provocative or revealing attire.
8. Do not swear or tell off-color jokes.
9. Do not allow minors in your living quarters unless in groups and with other adults present.
10. Volunteers should not drive alone with only one child in the car for 4-H purposes unless the child is their own. At least two youth must be in the car if the driver is not related to those youths.
11. Do not discuss your own or minor's sex life or activities.

12. Do not smoke, do drugs or drink alcohol in the presence of minors.
13. Do not share sexually explicit literature, magazines, books, music, or videos except those in the context of a sanctioned, appropriate activity that relates to the educational objective of your program.
14. Seek support from 4-H Educator for high-risk situations, such as discussions of very personal stories.
15. When in doubt, seek assistance from your 4-H Educator.

### **Educating minors**

Minors may be informed in a manner that is age appropriate of their right to set their own physical limits for personal safety. They will be encouraged to tell an adult if someone is abusing them. They will also be encouraged to tell an adult if they are in a situation or observe something that makes them uncomfortable.

### **Consequences of behaviors that harm minors**

The University of Vermont and the Vermont 4-H Program take these matters seriously. In the case of suspected abuse or neglect of a minor, the University and Vermont 4-H Program will adhere to existing policies and procedures for corrective action. Actions taken will first and foremost consider the need to ensure the safety of minors participating in the program.

## APPENDIX A

### **University of Vermont 4-H Adult Volunteer Leader Code of Conduct Agreement**

The University of Vermont 4-H expects adult volunteers to conduct themselves in an acceptable manner and in accordance with the University of Vermont 4-H Code of Conduct, as follows:

1. Respect the individual rights, safety, and property of others;
2. Be an active participant in the local volunteer 4-H organization and participate in routine volunteer leader training opportunities and activities;
3. Maintain a courteous and respectful manner, exhibit good sportsmanship, demonstrate reasonable conflict management skills, and act with dignity and pride, both in person and on-line/using social media when interacting with members of the 4-H community;
4. Refrain from using electronic devices and/or social media to post or transmit to or willingly receive from youth unacceptable content such as that containing profanity, advocacy of use/possession of alcohol or drugs, violence, sexually explicit content, or content that is meant to bully, demean, harass, or threaten another person;
5. Remember that the purpose of 4-H is youth development, and act in a way supportive of the 4-H Youth Development Program and its policies and procedures;
6. Recognize and support the responsibilities of the 4-H program staff in setting program standards, priorities and direction through clear communication and direct feedback;
7. Maintain personal and professional confidentiality;
8. Observe all policies, procedures or practices relating to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status, and any other basis prohibited by law;
9. Make reasonable efforts to provide equal opportunities for youth, to participate in project activities, awards programs and other activities and events; and make reasonable efforts to provide access to 4-H related information;
10. Provide a safe environment, free from sexual harassment, violence, verbal or mental abuse, neglect or other harmful behavior;
11. Abstain from alcohol, cannabis, and/or illegal drugs (or be under the influence thereof) while involved in any 4 -H event, meeting or activity;
12. Abstain from tobacco products or tobacco substitutes, including smokeless tobacco, e-cigarettes, smokeless “vaping devices,” and/or other nicotine delivery devices, while involved in any 4-H event, meeting or activity;
13. When acting as a chaperone, never leave the delegation being supervised or the grounds of the 4-H event unless approval is received from the adult in charge of the event or delegation;
14. Forward all lease agreements or use permits with schools or other public or private facilities to the UVM Extension 4 - H Office for review and approval;
15. Process 4-H funds through the local 4-H club, 4-H project group or local 4-H foundation; and keep financial records and make them available for auditing upon request of UVM Extension;
16. When working with animal projects, treat animals in a humane manner and teach program participants appropriate animal care and management;
17. Acknowledge that it is a privilege to represent 4-H Youth Development Programs and act as a positive role model for youth, providing encouragement and support of each member’s self-esteem.