

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

Fairs and Field Days

community/civic groups. Your name would be included on a speakers' bureau list.

4-H activities at fairs and field days take the help of all adult volunteers, parents, and members. There are many opportunities to become involved in this major event.

4-H Volunteer Groups

County/regional 4-H programs function through numerous advisory and program support groups. 4-H leaders' groups and project advisory committees may be opportunities for you to give input in your county.

Resource Person

You may have a special talent that you would like to share with youth. It may be related to your career or a hobby. You would volunteer to help at a club meeting or perhaps present a workshop at a county event. Examples are: sharing your experience as a veterinarian, or giving a photography workshop.

Key Volunteer Roles

A key volunteer leader is a resource person who provides support to the 4-H program *beyond* the local club and community, and in particular, to other volunteers. Following are examples of a few volunteer roles beyond the local club:

County or area recruiter. Volunteers know their local communities and can be excellent recruiters for other adult leaders.

County or area trainer. If you have an interest in training other volunteers in their roles as club leaders, you may wish to become a trainer. In either a community or county-wide setting, you would be trained to assist new leaders as they organize new clubs.

Mentor to club leaders. The mentoring process allows a new club leader to be paired with an experienced volunteer. An understanding volunteer who has had experience as a club leader can be very helpful to the new leader.

Activity or event coordinator. If you have a strong interest in a particular 4-H activity or event, you may wish to become a coordinator.

Project key leader. In many counties with more than one club in a particular project area, there may be a project key leader who coordinates educational efforts within that project.

Do any of these volunteer roles interest you? This inventory may help you select a volunteer role that is based on your interests and talents.

Volunteer Interest Inventory

What Do You Like?

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.

Position Descriptions

Key Considerations to Discuss Before Agreeing to a Position Description

Key Factors

- 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?

A Position Description Should Include:

Position Title: With a general description of a position.

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

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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 insurance with minimal limits is offered, particularly for individuals who don’t have such coverage, or as additional coverage beyond what families already carry. Clubs are

Adapted from: Keith G. Diem,
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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 experiment with trying to short out a motor “to see if sparks will shoot out.”
- Leaving members unattended in a meeting room.
- Reprimanding a member for not following an established club rule, but ignoring another member’s violation of the same rule.
- Not properly instructing and supervising a member of a food and nutrition project, who tries to cook food in a metal container using a microwave oven.
- Allowing members in a science project to mix unknown or dangerous chemicals together “to see what will happen.”
- Asking a teen leader to fix a flat tire on your car or mow your lawn during your rabbit club meeting.
- Refusing to admit a boy into your club one day because “there isn’t enough room” and then allowing two girls to join the next day (or vice versa).
- Forcing a member who cannot swim to “try a few laps” while on a club outing at a local lake.





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Opportunities for 4-H Volunteers

County/Regional Opportunities

State Opportunities

*Adapted from: Ginny P. Diem,
County 4-H Agent, Somerset
County, New Jersey, 1994*

Congratulations on accepting the role of a 4-H Volunteer! As you learn more about the 4-H Youth Development Program, you will find that volunteers are valued as important resources. The 4-H program provides many opportunities that will not only help in your role as a volunteer, but may also assist in your personal or professional life.

Following is a summary of 4-H volunteer opportunities. The 4-H Motto is meant for you as well as for 4-H members as you take advantage of these opportunities “To Make the Best Better.”

County/Regional 4-H Volunteer Training

Every region offers training for 4-H volunteers involved in the program. This may take the form of county/regional leader training meetings, local training in small groups, or one-on-one training with a paid 4-H staff member or volunteer trainer. To take advantage of county/regional volunteer training means meeting with other volunteers in the county/region and learning through informal sharing and workshops.

A variety of other county opportunities are available for 4-H volunteers. Check with your county/regional office to find out what is available.

State 4-H Leader Forum

The State 4-H Leader Forum is usually a weekend event which draws 4-H leaders from all over the state to take part in educational workshops, special activities, and sharing. The cost is minimal; scholarships are usually available.

Vermont 4-H Cabinet

The Vermont 4-H Cabinet works with the Vermont 4-H Youth Development program to provide input on the direction of

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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Becoming Involved in 4-H Volunteer Groups

4-H Leaders' Association

There are many opportunities for 4-H volunteers to increase their involvement in the 4-H program. Becoming involved with a 4-H volunteer group can give you the chance to share your unique skills and talents beyond your club. In addition, these groups can help to support you in your role as club leader through training sessions, discussion, and involvement in county/region-wide events and activities.

The county/regional 4-H leaders' council is an organization of adult volunteers working together to develop and provide leadership for the 4-H program and its members. Your county/regional leaders' organization may have a different name, but the goals probably include most of the following:

- Identify the needs of adult volunteers.
- Help in orienting and training volunteer leaders.
- Share ideas and experiences.
- Plan and conduct county/region-wide programs and activities.
- Promote 4-H programs.
- Cooperate with other 4-H and non-4-H youth-related organizations.
- Advise the county/regional 4-H staff on program policies and implementation.

In general, all 4-H volunteers are invited to participate in regularly scheduled leaders' council meetings and committee meetings. Membership in the council in some areas also includes parents and others interested in 4-H and youth development.

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

County/Regional Project Advisory Groups

Counties/regions may have project advisory groups to work with certain project areas. These groups bring together adult volunteers and youth representatives from different clubs in the same project area. Their role may be to help plan and implement county/region-wide events in the project area, raise funds to support the project, promote the project, and provide advice to the 4-H staff on implementing the project. Project advisory groups found in counties/regions generally include horse, dairy, and clothing.

Fair/Field Days Planning Groups

There are many opportunities to become involved in the fair/field days. Some counties have a fair committee which is responsible for planning and managing 4-H participation in a county/regional fair. Involvement might include fair/field day planning, setting up and taking down, chairing committees, staffing booths, etc.

Teen Council

Some counties/regions have a teen group for teen leaders. The goal of most of these groups is to enable teens to come together to develop and practice leadership skills. The members may help conduct county/region-wide events and activities, serve in a variety of leadership roles and serve as role models to younger youth. Often adult volunteers are needed to serve as leaders or advisors for these groups.

Statewide Advisory Groups

There are several statewide groups which meet in support of the 4-H program. These include:

- The Vermont 4-H Cabinet, which meets four times a year to serve in an advisory capacity to the statewide 4-H program, as well as to conduct some statewide programs.
- The Vermont State 4-H Foundation, which generates funds in support of 4-H programs.
- Project advisory groups, which support statewide program efforts in specific project areas, such as clothing, dairy, horse, sheep, natural resources, and shooting sports.

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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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*

Communication is a key element in the success of any organization. As a 4-H volunteer, it's important to understand that *communication builds relationships*. This means that your relationship with your 4-H members will be built on the communication which takes place among all of you as a group.

Communication is a two-way process. It involves a sender and a receiver, both sending and receiving messages. To communicate effectively, individuals involved in a communication exchange must be responsible speakers and listeners.



How often does a 4-H leader communicate? The following are some examples of times you'll need to use your communication skills.

Communicating with 4-H'ers/Parents

- teaching your 4-H'ers a skill, helping with projects
- reminding your 4-H'ers/parents of the next meeting date, supplies needed, etc.
- informing 4-H'ers/parents of the next county/region-wide event
- assisting 4-H'ers in preparing for the fair (filling out forms, etc.)
- helping 4-H'ers and parents complete 4-H member registration forms
- training club officers
- recruiting parents to assist with your club



Types of Communication

Communicating with the County/regional 4-H Office

- receiving training from the 4-H staff
- reading 4-H newsletters
- completing paperwork
- requesting educational materials and information about the 4-H program
- volunteering to assist with county/regional events

Communicating with Other 4-H Volunteers

- participating in 4-H leaders' organization meetings
- serving on leader committees
- training a co-leader/teen leader
- asking for/lending moral support
- sharing ideas informally
- attending leader forums/conferences

Other Opportunities for Communication

- informing local press of club activities
- organizing a club fund raiser and/or soliciting donations from local businesses
- serving on county, regional, or state-level leader committees

It's important to know that there are many ways to communicate. The two main types of communication are **verbal** and **non-verbal**.

Verbal communication entails one person speaking and the other listening.

Nonverbal communication comes in a variety of forms. It entails one person observing another person, who is engaging in one of the activities listed below:

- facial expressions (i.e., smile, frown, rolling the eyes)
- gestures (i.e., handshake, nod, making a fist)
- other forms of body language (i.e., turning away from someone, dozing off)
- sounds that are not words (i.e., laughter, snort, groan)

4-H Leader Communication Tips



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.

- 1** Listen! This means working to understand what the speaker is saying.
- 2** Maintain eye contact with children and adults—it lets them know they are communicating with you.
- 3** If you don't understand what your 4-H'er, parent, or 4-H staff member is saying, ask!
- 4** Be honest and straightforward—set a good example for your 4-H'ers.
- 5** Be aware of the nonverbal communication going on among your 4-H'ers.
- 6** When necessary, set aside an appropriate time and place for communication (conference with a parent, etc.)
- 7** Encourage your 4-H'ers to communicate. Ask them, "What questions do you have?" and let them do the talking as often as possible.
- 8** Respond to the requests made by the 4-H staff—that way, they know you're still out there and surviving!
- 9** Use "I" messages.

Reference:

Peer Plus II. 4-H Youth Programs, Cooperative Extension Service, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI. 1984.

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Working with 4-H Staff

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.

The Roles of Volunteers

4-H volunteers are part of a large network of individuals working with 4-H youth throughout the United States. 4-H volunteers are caring adults and teens who serve as positive role models for the youth they work with in our local community 4-H programs.

Volunteers who work directly with youth are screened and trained to ensure that they will serve our youth in the best manner possible.

Whatever the role you may select as a volunteer, you will interact often with paid county/regional 4-H staff. You may also have the opportunity to work with state 4-H staff. It is important that you understand the role of paid staff in helping you to do your job as a volunteer.

The Roles of County/ Regional 4-H Staff

The county/regional 4-H staff is responsible for working directly with volunteers. This includes recruitment, screening, training, evaluation, and supervision of teen and adult volunteers involved in the program. The staff also provides guidance to county/regional 4-H leaders' groups, teen groups, county/regional 4-H foundations, and other advisory groups.

Another responsibility is to plan, conduct and evaluate educational programs in cooperation with volunteers. This may include activities and events such as public presentations, fairs, camps, recognition events, livestock shows, and others. It may also

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

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

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.

4-H Educator

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.

Other County 4-H Staff

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

State 4-H Staff

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 4-H livestock Educator, and clerical staff. The role of the state 4-H staff is to provide support to the county/regional programs. These staff are housed on the UVM campus.

The state 4-H Program Coordinator provides leadership to a number of statewide 4-H programs and serves as the link between Vermont 4-H and our national partners at USDA in Washington, D.C. and National 4-H Council in Chevy Chase, MD. This person is housed in the state Extension office on campus

The 4-H livestock Educator provides support to all 4-H livestock programs and activities. This includes working with all the volunteer leader groups who serve in an advisory capacity to the 4-H livestock programs (beef, dairy, horse, sheep).