



Rensselaer County 4-H Volunteer Code of Conduct

All 4-H Participants—youth, families, volunteers, and Extension staff—in or attending any activity or event sponsored by Cornell University’s Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) 4-H Youth Development Program are required to uphold the values of the NYS 4-H program and conduct themselves according to these standards. The standards also apply to online activity, including social media internet presence.

Our first priority is to create a safe, inclusive space for learning, sharing, and collaboration welcoming to people from diverse backgrounds, cultures and perspectives. Diversity includes, but is not limited to: race, color, religion, political beliefs, national or ethnic origin, immigration status, sex, gender, gender identity and expression, transgender status, sexual orientation, age, marital or family status, educational level, learning style, physical appearance, body size, protected veterans, and individuals with disabilities. CCE actively supports equal educational and employment opportunities. No person shall be denied admission to any educational program or activity on the basis of any legally prohibited discrimination.

CCE is committed to the maintenance of affirmative action programs that will assure the continuation of such equality of opportunity.

Ground Rules

The following Ground Rules apply to all 4-H participants and volunteers. In addition to these expectations, CCE volunteers are accountable to additional expectations outlined in the CCE Volunteer Code of Conduct (page 3). Extension staff is accountable to additional standards of professionalism that are outlined by position descriptions and CCE human resource policies.

- 1. Create a Welcoming & Safe Environment for All.** Encourage everyone to fully participate in CCE and 4-H. Do not carelessly or intentionally harm youth or adults in any way (verbally, mentally, physically, or emotionally). Refrain from romantic displays and sexual activities either in public or private situations. Harassment, bullying, and other exclusionary behavior aren't acceptable. Be considerate and courteous of all youth and adults and their property.
 - a. Youth must stay in the designated dormitory lodging areas: boys may not be in girls' dormitory or lodging areas and girls may not be in boys' dormitory or lodging areas.
 - b. Report any and all accidents, physical or verbal abuse or unsafe conditions that threaten the emotional or physical well-being of others or yourself to the NYS 4-H, Extension staff, and Event Coordinators as soon as possible.
- 2. Bring Your Best Self.** Respect and follow Cooperative Extension rules, policies, and guidelines that relate to 4-H Youth Programs and Events. Conduct yourself in a manner that reflects honesty, integrity, self-control, and self-direction. Accept the results and outcomes of 4-H contests with grace and empathy for other participants. Accept the final opinions of judges and evaluators. Be open to new ideas, suggestions, and opinions of others. Work cooperatively with Extension staff, volunteers, 4-Hers, and all involved in 4-H programs and activities. Respect the integrity of the group and the group's decisions.
- 3. Obey the Law.** Commit no illegal acts. Do not possess or use illegal drugs, tobacco products (vaping), inhalants, firearms, weapons, or any harmful object with the intent to hurt others at any time. (Firearms are allowed only as part of supervised 4-H Shooting Sports programming.) Do not attend CCE or 4-H activities under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances. (This includes youth of age to use products legally).

4. **Honor Diversity – Yours and Others’.** Respect and uphold the rights and dignity of all staff, volunteers, families, and youth who participate in CCE and 4-H programs. Follow [Cornell Cooperative Extension Non-Discrimination Policy](#).
5. **Participate Fully.** Participate in all of the planned programs, be on time and follow through on assigned tasks/responsibilities (including the completion of required records or reports) in a manner that insures the safety, well-being, and quality of the educational experience for self and others. Have fun!
6. **Watch What You Wear.** Use your best judgment. Wear clothing suited for the activity you will participate in. Clothing promoting alcohol and other intoxicants, or displaying messages that are racist, sexist, homophobic, or any other degrading message that detrimentally impacts the dignity and respect of members of our community are never acceptable. Don’t wear revealing clothing, such as short skirts or shorts, midriff-baring tops, and sagging pants. If you are unsure about what is appropriate, contact the local CCE 4-H Educator in charge in advance.
7. **Be a Positive Role Model.** Act in a mature, responsible manner, recognizing you are role models for others, and that you are representing yourself, CCE, and the 4-H Youth Development Program. Be responsible for your behavior, use positive and affirming language, and uphold exemplary stands of conduct at all 4-H activities.

Consequences

Any of the following may be used, depending on severity of the situation: To be determined by CCE Staff and or supervising adult as is appropriate.

1. Participant will receive a verbal warning.
2. Participant may remain at the event/activity, but may possibly be barred from a future event.
3. Participant may be asked to leave the event/activity. If a youth, the parent(s) will be called and the youth will be sent home at family’s expense.
4. Authorities may be notified.

I have read and understand the above and will abide by the Rensselaer County 4-H Youth Development Code of Conduct.

Signature of 4-H Youth or Adult	Date
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4-H leaders and volunteers please initial that the Volunteer Code of Conduct referenced on page 3 has been received and reviewed_____.

- Respect and adhere to CCE rules, policies and guidelines that relate to volunteer activity and the program I serve.
- Execute CCE business in an ethical manner.
- Preserve the confidentiality of information (and sign confidentiality agreement if required by my volunteer role) about program participants and CCE internal affairs that have been entrusted to me.
- Refrain from using my CCE volunteer status for personal or business financial gain.
- Fulfill my assigned volunteer duties, including completion of required records or reports, in a timely manner.
- Use my time wisely and work cooperatively with Extension staff and other volunteers.
- Participate in required training programs and use the recommended policies and procedures.
- Accept supervision and support from professional Extension staff and/or supervisory volunteers.
- Respect and uphold the rights and dignity of all staff, other volunteers and all individuals who participate in CCE programs recognizing that people's values, beliefs, customs, and strengths differ.
- Encourage participation of and respect for individuals of diverse backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives.
- Refrain from the use of alcohol, tobacco and inappropriate language, especially in the presence of minors and never attend or participate in a CCE Event or activity under the influence of alcohol.
- Commit no illegal or abusive act.
- Report all unsafe conditions and accidents to professional Extension staff as soon as possible.
- Handle any animals, machinery, equipment, vehicles or other CCE property that has been entrusted to me in a safe and responsible manner.

