

New York State 4-H Youth Development

Code of Conduct



www.nys4-h.org

Our first priority is to create a safe space for learning, sharing, and collaboration welcoming to all people from all backgrounds, cultures and perspectives. CCE actively supports equal educational and employment opportunities by promoting an environment free from discrimination.

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.

Ground Rules

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

1. **Create a Welcoming Environment for All.** Encourage everyone to fully participate in CCE and 4-H. Recognize that all people have skills and talents that can help others and improve the community. Though we will not always agree, we must disagree respectfully. When we disagree, try to understand why.
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.
3. **Obey the Law.** Commit no illegal acts. Do not possess or use illegal drugs, tobacco products, 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.
4. **Respect and Dignity for all.** Respect and uphold the rights and dignity of all staff, volunteers, families, and youth who participate in CCE and 4-H programs.
5. **Create a Safe Environment.** 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. Be kind and compassionate towards others. Do not insult or put down other participants. Harassment, bullying, and other exclusionary behaviors 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.
6. **Be a Team Player.** Work cooperatively with Extension staff, volunteers, 4-Hers, and all involved in 4-H programs and activities. Be responsive to the reasonable requests of the person in charge. Respect the integrity of the group and the group's decisions.
7. **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 ensures the safety, well-being, and quality of the educational experience for self and others. Have fun!
8. **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.

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9. **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 standards of conduct at all 4-H activities.

Consequences

Any of the following may be used, depending on the severity of the situation:

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.

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

Signature of 4-H Youth or Adult

Date

Signature of Parent/Guardian (if youth)

Date

4-H Program Year: _____

Updated April 2025

