

Minnesota 4-H Code of Conduct



It is the goal of Minnesota 4-H to provide a fun, healthy, and safe learning environment for youth involved in activities and events sponsored by Minnesota 4-H. Minnesota 4-H strives to accomplish this goal by providing opportunities for young people to learn new skills and ways to work with others. Team building, creative thinking, service, sharing, and reflection are important aspects of any 4-H activity. The personal behavior of each participant is important to the success of all Minnesota 4-H events. And, each participant must accept their responsibility to represent themselves, their club, their county, Minnesota 4-H, and the University of Minnesota Extension Service with dignity and pride. Individual behavior shall reflect a healthy respect for self and others in use of language and action. Group behavior shall include safe and appropriate use of public space in a manner respectful of all individuals, including participants and sponsoring organizations or entities.

In order to provide an optimal learning environment, participants will commit to full participation in accomplishing the goals of the event. This includes being on time, participating in the planned activities, completing all tasks as necessary and appropriate for the completion of the activity, and exhibiting good sportsmanship. Participants are expected to remain at the location of the 4-H event/activity during the course of the event unless the parent or legal guardian has provided written permission to the adult in charge.

All reasonable attempts will be made to contact parents or legal guardians of individuals involved in disciplinary action while attending a 4-H event or activity. A reasonable attempt is defined as the attempt by the adult(s) in charge to contact the individual(s) listed on the member information card as the emergency contact in a timely manner depending on the severity of the incident. Prior to participation at a 4-H event or activity, the person(s) to be contacted in an emergency, and where they can be reached, should be updated as needed on the Member Information and Authorization Sheet. If there will be times during the young person's participation when reaching the parent or guardian will be difficult or impossible, additional contacts shall be listed so that any contact needed can be made in a safe and expedient way. This is particularly important when the situation involves the personal safety of the individual or when law authorities will be contacted.

Minnesota 4-H encourages the participation of supportive adults at 4-H events/activities. Adults attending or participating in Minnesota 4-H Youth Development Programs are also requested to conduct themselves according to this Code and assist and support youth in their efforts to adhere to the expectations.

SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

There are specific situations, which infringe on the safety and well-being of the individual participants, the group interaction, and the success of the event. These shall be defined, and consequences outlined, with the intent of maintaining the integrity and safety of the event and the participants involved. The decision and consequence of inappropriate or illegal behavior shall include the involvement of all interested or involved parties before action is taken. Involved parties are defined as the violator, the victim, the adult(s) in charge, parents or legal guardians, and/or law authorities. A reasonable attempt will be made to include all persons relevant to the situation, the individuals involved, and the appropriate authorities.

MOOD-ALTERING SUBSTANCES: The legal age for the consumption, purchase, and possession of alcohol is 21 in the State of Minnesota. Controlled substances such as cocaine, marijuana, heroin, LSD, etc., are illegal to consume, purchase, or possess in Minnesota, regardless of age. Minnesota 4-H will abide by these laws. Participation in a Minnesota 4-H event or activity (including to and from an event) will include agreement by all participants to abide by these laws and the guidelines set forth by Minnesota 4-H.

Use and/or possession of alcohol and/or illegal controlled substances: If a participant is found to be using or in possession of either alcohol or illegal substances, the law enforcement authorities will be contacted. This activity is illegal and punishable under criminal sanctions. The parents or guardians will also be contacted and arrangements will be made to send the participant home. The individual will not be eligible to continue participation in the activity or event.

There may be situations where it is legal for a participant to consume, use, or possess alcohol or other controlled substances (being in a state with a lower drinking age or an international situation, etc.). It is the policy of Minnesota 4-H that there will be no use of alcohol or controlled substances in any 4-H sponsored event, regardless of local laws or customs.

Use of tobacco and/or mood-altering substances: The purchase, possession, or consumption of tobacco, which includes cigarettes, cigars, and chewing or smokeless tobacco, will not be permitted at a Minnesota 4-H event or activity. Mood-altering substances, defined as any substance which is used to create an altered state of consciousness by the user, will not be permitted. Examples of these substances include, but are not limited to, glue, paint, nail polish, and prescription drugs.

If a participant is found using and/or possessing alcohol and/or illegal controlled substances, the parents or legal guardians will be contacted and the participant will be removed from the remainder of the event. Arrangements and travel expenses to remove the participant will be incurred by the participant and/or participant's family.

Any participant found to be using tobacco and/or mood-altering substances will be subject to one of the following disciplinary actions:

- A verbal or written warning or reprimand, with an agreement between all parties that the activity will cease.
- Depending on the nature and frequency of the incident, the parents or legal guardians will be contacted and the participant will be removed from the remainder of the event. Arrangements and travel expenses to remove the participant will be incurred by the participant and/or participant's family.

DISRUPTIVE AND/OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR: This behavior is defined as verbal or physical actions by an individual or individuals which causes intentional and forcible disruption in the activity or involvement of the group. Behavior which singles out an individual or individuals for unwanted and inappropriate teasing, name-calling, shoving, and taunting shall be defined as disruptive. Behavior which intentionally prevents others from participation in the group activity shall be defined as disruptive. Inappropriate behavior shall include but not be limited to, abusive or profane language, clothing which is offensive to others (logos, artwork that degrades others) or is inappropriate for the occasion (clothes too tight, too open or not covering parts of the body adequately), rude or destructive actions, littering, and disobeying requests by adults in charge.

Consequences for these types of behavior are as follows:

- An apology or restitution shall be agreed upon by all parties involved for minor disruptive or inappropriate behavior, such as teasing.

- If there is a second incident with the same individual(s), parents or legal guardians shall be contacted. If, after a reasonable attempt to confer with of all involved parties, assurance cannot be reached that the behavior will cease, arrangements will be made to remove the individual(s) from the event or activity.
- If the behavior involves the use or threat of violence, law enforcement authorities will be contacted.

PERSONAL SAFETY: Personal safety is defined as the ability of an individual to feel safe from verbal or physical abuse, from the threat of physical injury, or from unwelcome actions, remarks, or interactions from others. Some of these actions occur without violence or physical injury, but can leave the targeted individual feeling unwelcome, unsafe or unprotected. If the impact of the incident makes the individual feel his/her personal safety is in jeopardy, then action shall be taken to rectify the situation. There are four areas of concern which will be defined as follows:

Verbal Abuse: Verbal abuse shall be defined as any spoken or written use of language in an abusive, threatening, profane, or obscene manner which degrades an individual or individuals because of their race, religion, ethnic background, gender, sexual orientation, or physical or mental handicaps.

Violence: Violence is defined as the use of physical force against another with the intent to injure, abuse, destroy, or intimidate. Acts of violence can include, but are not limited to, pushing or shoving someone with the intent of causing physical injury, forcing someone to do something against their will, creating an environment in which another person feels for their safety, or damaging the property of others (including clothing, personal items, equipment, and facilities).

Use and/or possession of weapons: Weapons are defined as instruments or items used for offensive or defensive action, which are capable of causing bodily harm or death. Examples of weapons include, but are not limited to, guns, knives, clubs, metal knuckles, throwing stars, explosives, stun guns, ammunition, or mace. While the use and/or possession of firearms are generally considered inappropriate, there are situations where firearms may be used in a legitimate way for an activity or at an event. If listed items are not registered with the appropriate adults prior to the event/activity, it will be considered a weapon.

Individual(s) who engage in verbal abuse will receive one of the following consequences:

- An apology or act of restitution will be sought, if agreed upon by all involved parties, and a verbal or written warning will be issued.
- If there cannot be agreement with the individuals involved, parents or legal guardians will be contacted.
- Depending on the nature and frequency of the incident, the parents or legal guardians will be contacted and the participant will be removed from the remainder of the event. Arrangements and travel expenses to remove the participant will be incurred by the participant and/or participant's family.

If the intent, impact, or result of an action taken by one or more individual(s) against another is established as an act of violence, parents or legal guardians will be contacted, the accused individual(s) will be removed from the remainder of the event (at the participant and/or participant's expense), and law enforcement authorities will be called, if necessary. Personal damage to property will be billed to the families of the individuals implicated.

If an individual is found to use and/or be in possession of a weapon, this will be considered a serious incident and law enforcement authorities will be contacted. Parents or legal guardians will also be contacted and the individual will be removed from the remainder of the event. Arrangements and travel expenses to remove the participant will be incurred by the participant and/or participant's family.

Overnight Activities: Participants in 4-H events/activities that involve an overnight experience are expected to abide by stated curfews and sleep/stay in the assigned location for the total length assigned.

Depending on the severity, individual(s) found to be in violation of the overnight policy will receive one of the following consequences:

- The individual(s) will receive a verbal warning or reprimand, with an agreement to rectify the situation if possible.
- If an individual continues to violate this agreement, parents or legal guardians will be contacted and the participant will be removed from the remainder of the event.

Arrangements and travel expenses to remove the participant will be incurred by the participant and/or participant's family.

PARTICIPANT USE OF VEHICLES: While use of a vehicle to attend an event or participate in an event may be necessary, use of any vehicle for personal reasons while participating in a 4-H event or activity is inappropriate unless arrangements and agreements have been made between the individual(s) and the adult(s) in charge, prior to use of the vehicle. Verbal or written permission from parents or legal guardians will be required before an agreement can be made between the youth and adult(s) in charge of the event. The duration of trip, reason for trip, and estimated time of return should be documented after an agreement has been reached.

SEXUAL BEHAVIOR: Guidelines for appropriate sexual behavior of all individuals, youth and adults, help foster the integrity of the Minnesota 4-H Program and all individuals involved in 4-H sponsored events/activities. Guidelines are aimed towards self-control, healthy responsibility, respect for self and others, and conduct which maintains the safety of all individual(s). Inappropriate sexual behavior shall include, but not be limited to, the following three major areas of concern. The degree of consequence for inappropriate sexual behavior will depend on the seriousness of the behavior. All reasonable attempts to contact and involve parents and guardians shall be made to deal with these concerns in an expedient and safe manner for all individuals involved.

Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome verbal and/or physical advance, unwelcome and/or coerced requests for sexual favors, or unwanted and/or unwelcome sexual physical contact.

Sexual harassment concerns should be reported to the adults in charge, with parents or guardians and law authorities contacted as necessary.

Sexual Contact: Sexual Contact which occurs between a minor and adult is illegal and will be dealt with under the laws which protect minors.

Sexual contact between a minor and an adult must be reported to the law authorities immediately.

Public Display of Affection and/or Contact: Public display of affection/contact involving individuals participating in a Minnesota 4-H sponsored event is inappropriate.

Inappropriate public displays of affection/contact can result in issuance of a verbal and/or written warning, reprimand, or request for behavior to cease in minor cases. If such behavior continues, individuals involved shall be removed from the remainder of the event at the expense of the participant and/or participant's family.

EVENT-SPECIFIC ADDITIONS: While the above expectations apply to all Minnesota 4-H programs, there may be additional rules, procedures, and policies relating to specific 4-H events/activities that will also apply to those events.