

KANSAS 4-H VOLUNTEER SCREENING PROCESS- REVISED OCTOBER 2013 FACTSHEET

One of the principles of positive youth development is that a young person has the benefit of a positive, sustained relationship with a caring adult. It helps youth gain the confidence, connections and caring they need to achieve their fullest potential. In Kansas 4-H, we depend on thousands of adult volunteers to help fulfill the role of a caring adult. It is estimated that nearly 1,000 new volunteers apply to become 4-H volunteers each year.

All of us understand the importance of keeping our children safe from harm. Improved policies for screening volunteers will help provide greater safety and security for children in Kansas 4-H programs. Many youth organizations such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Big Brothers, Big Sisters and YMCA have established similar policies to protect children in their programs. In fact, the Kansas 4-H screening process is being revised according to [Kansas Mentors Gold Star Program](#) standards.

Kansas 4-H is growing and improving all the time, and strengthening our policy for registering volunteers is fulfilling an obligation to children, parents, volunteers and employees. In short, it is the right thing to do to provide greater security for all people involved in Kansas 4-H. It is also important that we protect the image and integrity of 4-H, K-State Research and Extension and Kansas State University.

Effective October 1, 2014, all prospective volunteers who have direct, on-going contact with youth, must be screened through the revised Kansas 4-H Volunteer Screening process. The revised process includes

1. An Application
2. Face to Face Interview
3. References
4. A National Criminal Background Check
5. Orientation
6. Review and Approval by the Local Extension Program.

National criminal background checks will include an address history, criminal records in all county and state jurisdictions within the last 7 years, federal criminal records within the last 7 years, and multi-state sex offender registry from all 50 state registries.

The estimated cost of this type of check is between \$35 - \$40.00 per person. The cost for the criminal background check will be covered by administrative resources for at least the first year (2014) of implementation. As part of the [Kansas Mentors Gold Star Program](#), Kansas 4-H will be able to access funds to support background checks for prospective volunteers. In addition, the Kansas 4-H Foundation can provide support to local units that meet certain criteria. A long term plan for paying for background checks beyond 2014 is being developed that will not cause a financial burden on local units.

General Counsel at Kansas State University has advised that the background checks be handled at the state level in order to establish a secure, uniform practice. The Department of 4-H Youth Development will contract with an outside agency since these checks are beyond the scope of the employee's responsibilities and expertise. A system will be set up to ensure the security of the personal information revealed in the background check remains confidential to the greatest extent possible

As part of the [Kansas Mentors Gold Star Program](#) a re-screening process for volunteers must be in place. While re-screening varies from organization to organization, 1 - 3 years is current best practices among youth organizations. Re-screening of registered 4-H volunteers will be conducted every three years from the volunteer's most recent screening. Volunteers that were screened and registered using the VIP process will be considered newly registered as of October 1, 2014. At that time, all such registered volunteers will be expected to go through the re-screening process within 3 years.

The ACCESS collection and reporting system will be used to manage and track the screening process from application through local approval. ACCESS will also help to manage the annual renewal of volunteers. Local Extension units will be responsible for maintaining this data in ACCESS and its accuracy. Staff at the State 4-H office will assist with the training and support to local units in using ACCESS for volunteer management and reporting. In addition, the ACCESS working group will provide input and recommendations into the tracking and reporting volunteer screening through ACCESS.

Beginning this October, there will be a period of transition to the revised volunteer screening process. All local units will collect and report their current registered volunteers to establish a baseline. The Department of 4-H Youth Development and the KSRE administrative team will provide overall leadership for the revised volunteer screening process. A transition taskforce, including agents, will be involved in managing the transition. In addition, the eight 4-H program expansion pilot sites will implement the revised process, and share best practices.

TASKS AND TIMELINE

The revised volunteer screening process becomes effective October 1, 2014.

October, 2013

Announce the revised 4-H volunteer screening process and the steps towards transitioning to full implementation.

February 1, 2014

All local units submit **current registered** (VIP) volunteers by February 1, 2014.

- Each local unit will submit a list of their current registered (VIP) volunteers to the state 4-H office with a statement signed by the board chair verifying that the volunteers have been approved following the procedures outlined in the current VIP process.
- To be considered a registered volunteer, the individual must be appointed by the Extension Board and the volunteer's name must appear in the Board's minutes.

July 30, 2014

All **pending and new registered** volunteers (using the current VIP process) are up-to-date and recorded by local units using the 4-H ACCESS system.

August 1, 2014

All volunteers that are not registered must use the revised volunteer screening process.

All current registered volunteers must complete a renewal form due by October 1.

October 1, 2014

New volunteer screening policies become effective.

Volunteer renewal forms are collected and recorded through the ACCESS system.

Implementing new 4-H volunteer screening policies will require a commitment of time and resources on the part of all local Extension units, KSRE Administration, State and Area Extension 4-H Specialists to fully implement. KSRE and the Department of 4-H Youth Development is committed to working with staff, volunteers, local Extension boards and 4-H families to make a smooth transition to the revised process.

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