

# **Kansas Department of 4-H Youth Development**

# **Volunteer Screening Policy and Procedures**

Revised March 2018

**K-STATE**  
Research and Extension



**Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service**

# 4-H Youth Development Policy Guide

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## Rationale

One principle of positive youth development is based on the benefit of a positive, sustained relationship of the young person with a caring adult. Youth gain the confidence, connections, and caring they need to achieve their potential. In Kansas, nearly 1,000 individuals apply to become new 4-H volunteers each year, and the organization depends on thousands of volunteers to help fulfill the role of a caring adult.

As the largest youth development organization in Kansas and across the nation, 4-H must lead by conducting the most effective strategies and practices in volunteer screening and selection. All youth deserve a safe and caring environment, and all parents and guardians should expect that when their children are entrusted to the 4-H program, each child will be in a safe setting with caring adults.

Kansas 4-H continues to grow and improve. Strengthening its policy for volunteer registration fulfills an obligation to children, parents, volunteers, and employees. Providing greater security for all people involved in Kansas 4-H is the right thing to do. It is also important that we protect the image and integrity of 4-H, K-State Research and Extension, and Kansas State University.

## Definitions

**volunteer:** a non-paid representative of the extension unit for which the individual provides services.

**registered volunteer:** an adult or teen who has completed the full volunteer screening process — including application, reference check, interview, background check, and orientation — and has been appointed by the appropriate extension unit board.

Registered volunteer status is required for adult or teen volunteers with **authority to independently plan and conduct educational experiences** for youth with other adults present or in a public

setting. It is also required for a volunteer whose position places the individual in close, ongoing interaction with youth. Examples: community/organizational leader, project leader, activity leader, judging team coach, or camp counselor; Discovery Days, camp, exchange trip or overnight event chaperone; countywide project leader; or chauffeur (driver) for any 4-H activities, etc.

**episodic volunteer:** a volunteer helping with a single “episode” or activity (along with a registered 4-H volunteer). This person is not required to complete the volunteer screening process. Episodic volunteers serve as workshop presenters, judges, guest speakers, etc.

## Who Must Complete

4-H volunteer screening must be completed by:

- any individual who works in close, ongoing interaction with youth, or
- any adult or youth with authority to independently plan and conduct 4-H educational experiences for youth with other adults present or in a public setting.

Volunteers who do not fit into one of the above criteria would be considered *episodic* and do not need to complete the screening.

## Timeline

The new Kansas volunteer screening process began August 1, 2014, and replaces the Volunteer Information Profile (VIP).

## Initial Screening

All volunteers who serve in roles requiring screening (refer to definition) must complete the process and be appointed by the local extension board. This includes new and continuing volunteers who have not been screened and appointed previously through VIP.

**Volunteers —in roles that require screening — must complete the process before beginning their duties.**

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## Annual Renewal

Conduct renewals between August 1 and December 31. In order to continue serving, volunteers must complete the renewal form each year. The Kansas 4-H Volunteer Service Renewal Form is here: <http://www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/4H953.pdf>.

## Rescreening

4-H volunteers will be rescreened every three years. Volunteers registered before August 1, 2014, will receive their first rescreening between August 1, 2017, and December 31, 2017, and every three years thereafter. Rescreening of volunteers who are screened and appointed after August 1, 2014, will take place between August 1 and December 31 every third year after the initial screening and appointment.

## Local Extension Board Screening Decisions

### **Teen Camp Counselors — youth ages 14 to 15**

- » Full screening recommended, or
- » Board decides only if the Child Abuse and Neglect screening is needed; completed annually with no charge.

### **Teen Camp Counselors — youth ages 16 and older matching the volunteer definition**

- » Required to complete the entire volunteer screening process.
- » 18-year-olds considered adults and are required to complete the volunteer application.

## References

- » If reference is required on all volunteer applicants.

## Review Committee

- » Determine if separate review committee, subcommittee of board, or entire board is used to determine the volunteer status.

## Volunteer Status Decision

- » Accepted
- » Accepted with restrictions
- » Rejected

## Volunteer Applicant Steps

### **Adult Volunteer Steps**

1. Complete and submit the [\*Kansas 4-H Volunteer Service Application\*](#) to local extension office.
2. Register self with the Kansas 4HOnline Enrollment System.
3. Receive confirmation from local extension office concerning “approved” status given through Kansas 4HOnline, then complete the Kansas 4-H Volunteer Orientation available through the Kansas 4HOnline.
4. After completing the Kansas 4-H Volunteer Orientation, notify the local extension office about completing the Kansas 4-H Volunteer Orientation and schedule an interview appointment.
5. Upon completing the interview, the extension office will provide information for the required background checks. Follow directions provided for each background check and submit information.
6. Local extension office will compile information and submit applicant’s packet for processing. Extension office will send a letter concerning volunteer status and appointment for 4-H work.

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## **Extension Office Steps for Adult Kansas 4-H Volunteer Service Application**

1. Provide the Kansas 4-H Volunteer Service Application to the volunteer applicant [via web](#) or paper copy.
    - a) Receive volunteer applicant's completed application; review application for required information.
    - b) If extension office requires references, make sure references contact information is listed on application.
      - i) Send reference form to all three references.
      - ii) Once reference forms are returned, file them in volunteer applicant's folder.
    - c) Create a folder for the volunteer applicant's paperwork.
    - d) Insert a [Volunteer Screening Checklist](#) in volunteer's folder.
  2. The volunteer applicant must enroll in the Kansas 4HOnline Enrollment System.
    - a) Give the volunteer applicant the brochure [Join the Club, Using the 4HOnline Enrollment System](#).
    - b) Give the volunteer applicant the link for the [4HOnline Enrollment System](#).
    - c) Once the volunteer applicant enrolls in the 4HOnline, "Approve" the volunteer applicant's enrollment.
  3. The volunteer must complete the Kansas 4-H Volunteer Orientation Training.
    - a) Give the volunteer applicant the brochure [Kansas 4-H Volunteer Orientation Training](#).
    - b) Give the volunteer applicant the link for the [4HOnline Enrollment System](#).
    - c) *Extension board may determine Camp Counselors do not have to complete the Kansas 4-H Volunteer Orientation Training. Camp counselors are required to attend Camp Counselor Training.*
    - d) Once the volunteer applicant completes the Kansas 4-H Volunteer Orientation Training, print the orientation training report and file it in the volunteer applicant's folder.
  4. Volunteer applicant will need to schedule a face-to-face interview.
    - a) Confirm the Kansas 4-H Volunteer Orientation Training has been completed.
    - b) File notes from the face-to-face interview in volunteer applicant's folder.
  5. Once the face-to-face interview is completed, provide the volunteer applicant with the Department of Children and Families [Child Abuse and Neglect Registry form](#) and the link for the [National Criminal Background Check](#).
    - a) Extension office or volunteer applicant sends completed paper copy of the **Child Abuse and Neglect Registry form** to the Kansas Department of Children and Families, P.O. Box 2637, Topeka, KS 66601.
    - b) OR Extension Office can scan completed **Child Abuse and Neglect Registry form** and email it as an attachment to Keli Yungeberg at [keliy@ksu.edu](mailto:keliy@ksu.edu).
    - c) *All volunteer applicants must complete the **Child Abuse and Neglect Registry form**.*
    - d) *Camp counselors are required to complete the **Child Abuse and Neglect Registry form** annually.*
    - e) *If the volunteer applicant is a youth (age 15 or younger), place [youth volunteer label](#) on the lower left hand corner of the **Child Abuse and Neglect Registry form**.*
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- f) *Volunteer applicants 16 years of age and older, must complete the **Child Abuse and Neglect Registry Form** and the **National Criminal Background Check**.*
6. The State 4-H Office will send results from the **Child Abuse and Neglect Registry** and **National Criminal Background Check**:
- a) Posted directly on Kansas 4HOnline System.
  - b) OR direct email sent to designated person at Extension Office.
  - c) Place the background check results in the volunteer applicant's folder.
7. Prepare volunteer applicant's folder for volunteer review committee.
- a) Make sure everything is complete according to the checklist.
  - b) Note any suspicious information for review committee.
  - c) Supervise the review committee process.
8. Review committee reviews volunteer applicant's folder.
- a) Review committee gives recommendations to the Extension Board: approves, approves with restrictions, or rejects.
  - b) Review committee initials and date the *Review Committee Recommendation Form*.
9. Extension Board takes action on volunteer applicant's folder.
- a) Extension Board approves, approves with restrictions, or rejects volunteer applicant's folder.
  - b) If further discussion is warranted, board must go into *Executive Session*.
  - c) If volunteer applicant is rejected, Board Chair signs letter to be sent to volunteer applicant.

- d) Board action is listed in the board meeting minutes.
  - e) Information in a volunteer applicant's folder is confidential.
  - f) Board action is final, no appeals to the State 4-H Office or any other body.
10. Up-date volunteer applicant's information on the Volunteer Screening Checklist and 4HOnline.
11. Send a status letter to the volunteer applicant and club leader regarding the extension board recommendation.

### **File Retention**

Keep volunteer application files for two years after receiving the application or two years after the end of the individual's involvement, whichever is longest. Shred outdated records.

Retain indefinitely the records of any volunteer who is disciplined or terminated due to allegations of any type of abuse upon a child. If a child decides to pursue an action after reaching age 18, the records may be needed in defending the action.

Retain all records relating to an ongoing investigation.

If a volunteer applicant is not approved by the board or volunteer review committee, all information in the file needs to be retained for two years following the board's decision.

### **Background Screening Checks**

- Kansas Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry maintained by the Kansas Department for Children and Families.

The criminal background check includes:

- National Criminal Background Check conducted by the selected commercial firm. (Information and permission form must be completed online. Password-protected access will be given to volunteer applicants.)

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## **Costs and Payment**

CBC Initial screen: \$22.50

CBC Rescreen: \$16.50

*Costs as of August 1, 2014*

Child Abuse and Neglect Registry: Free  
*Fee waived because Kansas 4-H is a Kansas Mentor Organization.*

## **Payment Process**

The provider will invoice the state 4-H office. The state 4-H office will invoice local units quarterly.

## **'Red Flags' or Special Considerations**

Information gathered during the screening process may warrant increased scrutiny. These could be considered “red flags.”

Suggested “red flags” — which should strongly indicate an automatic disqualification — are:

- Use of an illegal substance or controlled drug not used as prescribed by a doctor.
- Conviction of any crime against another person — adult or child: murder, possession of illegal substance with intent to sell, manslaughter or bodily injury while driving intoxicated, sex offenses.
- Conviction of child abuse or neglect, or a listing on the Kansas Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry. (Kansas law prohibits any person listed in the child abuse registry from working, residing, or volunteering in a child care home or facility regulated by KDHE. The individual's name can appear on the list without a conviction.)
- Conviction of a specific vehicular crime that makes the individual ineligible for automobile insurance through common providers. (Check with local vehicle insurance providers for specific disqualifiers.)
- Information on the National Criminal Background Check or Kansas Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry may result in an automatic disqualification. The state 4-H office

will notify the local office if such information surfaces in the background check.

The screening process may bring forward information that does not appear to be at the “red flag” level but might indicate additional scrutiny is advisable. Further investigation is warranted. Examples of “yellow flags” warranting further investigation could include a long-ago DUI, minor property crime, financial impropriety, or a misdemeanor.

## **Annual Renewal for Continuing Volunteers**

Kansas 4-H policy requires all 4-H Volunteers to renew their volunteer commitments annually. They do this by submitting a completed and signed Kansas 4-H Volunteer Service Annual Renewal Form (4H953). Form 4H953 can be ordered from the K-State Research and Extension Bookstore; it is also available for download on the Kansas 4-H website ([Kansas4-H.org](http://www.kansas4-h.org)) in the Volunteer Screening Resources section, or at <http://www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/4H953.pdf>.

The form asks volunteers to confirm contact information, specify their volunteer role(s) for the year, and update other information.

## **Rescreening**

Registered volunteers must be rescreened every three years. The first rescreening for volunteers registered as of August 1, 2014, will be between August 1, 2017, and December 31, 2017.

## **Transferring Registered Volunteer Files between Counties/Districts**

A registered 4-H volunteer who moves to a new location and wishes to volunteer for the new unit, or who wants to extend volunteering to an additional county/district, needs to resubmit the volunteer screening with the new county/district. There are two exceptions if the volunteer screening has been completed within the past three years:

- » The 4HOnline Volunteer Orientation can transfer; and
- » The Criminal Background and Child Abuse and Neglect Information may be passed between counties/districts.

### **Steps for New or Additional County/ District**

1. Contact the previous or current extension office concerning information needed from the volunteer applicant.
2. Request volunteer application.
3. Review information received from the transferring extension office.
4. Approve and appoint through the extension board.
5. Rescreen based on date of the original screening and background checks.

### **Confidentiality**

Maintaining the confidentiality of all profiles and supporting documents is the cornerstone of keeping trust with the volunteer applicants. Each volunteer applicant is entitled to privacy and fair treatment under the law. It is the intent of Kansas 4-H to treat all volunteer applicants fairly and respectfully.

1. Anyone (paid or nonpaid) involved in the volunteer screening process and with access to personnel files needs to understand the importance of confidentiality. Each person must read and sign the Confidentiality Statement, agreeing to protect the privacy of individuals involved.

#### » **Nonpaid Staff/Volunteer:**

[http://www.kansas4-h.org/resources/volunteers/volunteer-screening-resources/docs/Non-Paid\\_Staff\\_Confidentiality\\_Statement.pdf](http://www.kansas4-h.org/resources/volunteers/volunteer-screening-resources/docs/Non-Paid_Staff_Confidentiality_Statement.pdf));

**Paid Staff:** [http://www.kansas4-h.org/resources/volunteers/volunteer-screening-resources/docs/Paid\\_Staff\\_Confidentiality\\_Statement.pdf](http://www.kansas4-h.org/resources/volunteers/volunteer-screening-resources/docs/Paid_Staff_Confidentiality_Statement.pdf).

2. Information that must be kept confidential: Kansas 4-H Volunteer Service application, references, and interview notes. These documents can only be accessed by those who have completed the confidential statements and are responsible for the 4-H program — extension agents, office professionals, the local volunteer review committee, and the extension board.
3. Local unit office professionals who have been assigned the responsibility of maintaining checklists and handling correspondence are also required to read the confidentiality section and sign the Confidentiality Statement agreeing to protect the privacy of individual applicants.
4. Information about volunteer applicants and reasons for acceptance, acceptance with restrictions, or rejection as 4-H volunteers must be kept confidential. Only the volunteer review committee and local board can be involved in discussing applicants. Discretion and privacy must be used in the review and discussion, preferably in executive session.
5. The volunteer applicant files are to be kept for two years: 1) from received date of application without renewal or 2) ending date of individual's involvement with the 4-H program, whichever is longest. Dispose of records by shredding. If a volunteer is disciplined or terminated due to allegations of any type of abuse upon a child, records must be retained indefinitely. (See *File Retention* on page 6.)
6. Treat the volunteer application files as confidential personnel files. The volunteer applicant may have access to review the contents of his or her own personnel file; however, reference information and interview notes are confidential and must be removed before the volunteer applicant can review the file. The volunteer applicant may **only** view the file in the extension office or obtain

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copies of the file contents by written request in accordance with the *Kansas Open Records Act*. Volunteer applicants cannot remove contents or the file from the extension office. The volunteer applicant files are considered personnel files, so only review committee members, local extension board members, and local extension agents or staff may examine the contents. The files must remain confidential, and no member of the public may review volunteer application files.

7. Kansas law includes an Open Records Act: *It is the public policy of Kansas that public records shall be open for inspection by any person.* Subject to certain exceptions, the act requires that records kept by public agencies be open for public inspection. This applies to records kept by the local offices of K-State Research and Extension, as well as any state or area extension office.

Questions about the Kansas Open Records Act and requests for public records should be directed to the Kansas State University Designated Records Custodian, as outlined in the K-State Policies and Procedures Manual: <http://www.k-state.edu/policies/ppm/3000/3060.html>. The area director should receive a copy of any such correspondence.

### **Volunteer Review Committee (optional)**

1. The volunteer review committee is to identify a volunteer work force that will provide a safe, caring, and positive environment for youth. (See *Position Description*, on page 10).
2. This committee shall consist of three to five individuals who represent a broad knowledge base of human resources, law enforcement, and child protection, as well as an understanding of the nature of local extension programs. In addition to these three to five individuals, staff members who have responsibility for youth programs shall serve on this committee.

3. Suggested resource people to consider include, but are not limited to:
  - law enforcement officials
  - social services professionals
  - attorneys
  - medical professionals
  - human resources professionals
  - 4-H volunteers
  - school/education professionals
  - business and/or corporate personnel
  - local extension board members
  - faith community representatives
4. It is recommended that the local board or 4-H Program Development Committee generate a list of individuals who represent the previously mentioned entities. Contact the individuals to determine their interest and availability to serve.
5. The board chair (or a representative) and extension agent(s) review suggestions and select potential review committee members.
6. Names of candidates selected for the review committee will be submitted to the local board for appointment. Those appointed will be required to sign the confidentiality statement.
7. It is recommended that an agent provide orientation for new review committee members in a face-to-face meeting. After that, members may meet as needed to review volunteer files as a group or individually, and to vote on a recommendation: approval, approval with restrictions, or rejection. In orientation, the agent outlines the purpose of the review committee, confidentiality, the Kansas 4-H Volunteer Screening Policy, review procedures, criteria, decision options, and the operating process for the committee.
8. If a review committee is not appointed, these duties shall become the responsibility of the local extension board or a subcommittee of the board.

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## **Volunteer Review Committee Member Position Description**

**Title:** Volunteer Review Committee Member

**Purpose:** To identify a volunteer workforce that will provide a safe, caring, and positive learning environment for youth

### **Responsibilities:**

1. Complete and sign the confidentiality statement.
2. Objectively review all data files submitted for volunteer positions for the 4-H Youth Development program.
3. Recommend approval or rejection of the volunteer applicant, based upon the facts provided.
4. Recommend to the local extension board — at least a quarterly — individuals approved for appointment as Registered Volunteers.

### **Qualifications:** (one or more of the following)

1. Experience in working with volunteers.
2. Experience in working with youth programs.
3. Understanding of extension programs.
4. Value the need for a safe and positive environment for youth and volunteers.
5. Expertise in one or more of the following areas: law or law enforcement, medicine, social work, human resources, youth, volunteerism, education, or others relevant to the nature of the position.
6. Knowledge and/or experience with risk management.

**Time:** Two-year term, renewable

**Resources:** Agent, K-State Research and Extension

**To Whom Responsible:** Local Extension Unit Board, K-State Research and Extension

## **Dismissal of a Volunteer**

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. In Kansas 4-H, we depend on a team of volunteers to help fulfill the role of a caring adult.

The Kansas 4-H Volunteer Code of Ethics specifies the appropriate behavior, attitudes and actions of the volunteer. Unfortunately, situations occur in which a volunteer may act inappropriately or display behavior that undermines the goal of positive youth development. These actions may even be disruptive to the youth, volunteers and staff around them. If there is immediate concern over the safety of youth or others associated with the program, if the volunteer has been charged with a crime, or if a situation arises regarding inappropriate behavior by a volunteer, the local agent and/or local extension director should consult with the Area 4-H Youth Development Specialist and/or Area Extension Director for the appropriate next steps. Each situation is unique and should be handled individually.

### **Online Resources List**

Posted online at:

<http://www.kansas4-h.org/resources/volunteers/volunteer-screening-resources/>

- Volunteer Screening Handbook
- Volunteer Screening (simplified)
- Detailed Steps to Screen a New 4-H Volunteer
- Volunteer Screening Steps Checklist
- Volunteer Screening Master Log (Excel)
- Link to Volunteer Service Application:  
<http://www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/4H673.pdf>
- Application Cover Letter Sample (For potential new volunteers; personalize for the local office.)

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- Link to Interview Template:  
*<http://www.kansas4-h.org/resources/volunteers/volunteer-screening-resources/docs/Interview%20Template.docx>*
  - Links to Reference Form
  - Agent Instructions for Enrolling a Volunteer in the 4HOnline Orientation Course
  - Link to Online Orientation Course is available through 4HOnline. Volunteers will have to set up an account in 4HOnline in order to take the Online Orientation Course.  
*<http://www.kansas4-h.org/onlinetraining>*
  - Kansas 4-H Volunteer Code of Ethics
  - Background Check Information Handout
  - Links to Background Check website and Kansas Child Abuse and Neglect Registry Information Release Form
  - Registered Volunteer Appointment Process
  - Sample statements and letters:
    - Volunteer Services Confidentiality Statement*
    - Paid Staff Confidentiality Statement*
    - “Interested in Volunteering” Form Letter*
    - “Episodic Volunteers Becoming Registered Volunteers” Form Letter*
    - Volunteer Acknowledgement Form Letter*
    - Rejection Form Letters — Option 1 and Option 2*
    - Placement Letter*
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