



National 4-H Shooting Sports
Conrad N. Arnold,
Program Coordinator
3762 Seymour Drive
Trappe, MD 21673
www.4-hshootingports.org

MEMORANDUM

From: Co-Chairs of the 4-H Shooting Sports National Steering Committee

Todd Kesner	Mark Tassin	Kevin Allen
4-H Program Leader	4-H Program Leader	4-H Program Leader
Montana State University	Louisiana State University	Oklahoma State University

To: State 4-H Program Leaders and State 4-H Shooting Sports Coordinators

RE: 4-H Shooting Sports Minimum Standards

Date: January 18, 2017

Guidance for the 4-H Shooting Sports program is provided to the 4-H National Headquarters and to the states through the National 4-H Shooting Sports Committee. The national committee is composed of two Extension 4-H Specialists from each of the four geographic Extension Regions as well as three state 4-H Program Leaders who serve as Co-chairs.

The 4-H Shooting Sports program reaches more than 420,000 youth each year and is currently active in 46 states. In many states, it is one of, if not the, single most popular 4-H project. With this popular project comes a responsibility to protect the well-being and safety of 4-H members, leaders and families. This program has a stellar safety record over the 36 years of its existence—with only five reported injuries (none of them fatal or serious). It is one of the safest 4-H projects in the country.

There are three ways in which program consistency, thus program safety, is maintained:

1. Use of the approved 4-H Shooting Sports curriculum
2. A standard structure for the training and certification of 4-H Shooting Sports Instructors
3. Program minimum standards and best practices at the state level

This memo will address the importance of program standards and best practices at the state level. The minimum standards for the 4-H Shooting Sports program, as identified by the National 4-H Shooting Sports Committee, are listed in the attachment to this memo. **Note that there has been a 10th minimum standard added to the list regarding Cloverbud involvement in shooting sports.**

The question has come up if states must follow these minimum standards or are they optional. Do these minimum program standards only apply to 4-H Shooting Sports activities or do they need to extend to all 4-H club activities? (i.e. the program standard regarding paint-ball or archery tag activities) The answer to that question can be answered in two parts---1) program safety, and 2) legal exposure to your state 4-H program and Land-Grant University.

(Over)

Program Safety

Many of the minimum standards listed were established because of an injury that has occurred in the past, or because certain practices that might be common in the world of shooting sports may not support the safety training found in the 4-H program. Thirty-six years of experience managing this program are behind the reasons for these minimum standards.

Example—regarding the paint-ball/archery tag minimum standard, both ends of an arrow can inflict harm. When you allow 4-H members to run with arrows in hand on an archery tag range, serious injury can occur from the nock end of the arrow. In addition, the national committee's major reason for the paint-ball/archery tag standard is that these activities completely "un-train" one of the major safety tenants of the 4-H shooting sports program. All 4-H members are taught to **always** keep firearms and archery equipment pointed in a safe direction and never to point them at a person or even a person-shaped target.

Legal Exposure

This subject comes down to a simple fact. If someone is injured in your state 4-H shooting sports program because your state has chosen to disregard a program minimum standard or best practice that has been established by the program management body, that is recognized by 4-H National Headquarters, then your state Extension program has just placed itself in a very precarious legal situation. The national committee would never say that a state "Must follow these minimum standards," because we do not have the authority to set policy. However, when written, recognized national program standards are ignored, resulting in damage or injury, the legal counsel of the injured party has just been given significant evidence to support their case in a court of law.

The National 4-H Shooting Sports Committee **does not** want to see a state 4-H program or land grant university put in a difficult legal position and we **do** want to strive for the safest 4-H Shooting Sports program possible at the national, state and county level. For this reason, the national committee and 4-H National Headquarters asks all state 4-H Shooting Sports Coordinators and 4-H Program Leaders to examine the minimum standards and best practices being utilized in your state. We would then encourage states to follow these long-held program minimum standards and best practices and insure that they are communicated in your state 4-H policies.

If any states have any questions or concerns on this topic, please feel free to contact the Co-chairs listed in this memo for further discussion and information.