



RISK MANAGEMENT FOR 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT WORK

Volunteers and Youth Protection

This is one publication in the EDIS series *Risk Management for 4-H Youth Development Work*.

This series is intended to prepare UF/IFAS Extension faculty, staff, volunteers, and youth to satisfactorily complete the important task of providing best practices in risk management strategies.

Our goal is to conduct educational events and activities that coincide with the 4-H mission and mandates while protecting the safety of participants, sponsors, property, finances, and the goodwill/reputation of the 4-H name. Planning and preparation can mitigate the inherent risk of events and activities. This risk management guide outlines ways to prepare for and deal with the specific risks associated with your program.

Early planning is key to conducting successful events and activities. A helpful tool in this process is the planning guide and matrix from another part in this series, EDIS publication [#4HFSV90.1](#), “Pre-Event Planning Guide and Matrix.” As you work through this matrix, you may have questions that are unique to a specific situation and may not be completely answered by the series. Extension faculty and staff should refer these questions to appropriate personnel. Questions that require time for research punctuate the need for early planning.

This publication will focus on basic overall precautions to be taken by everyone involved with 4-H. Another tool is the Risk Management Checklist, which can be used as a guide when planning an activity or event. Find it in another part of this series, EDIS publication [#4HFSV373](#), “Risk Management Checklist.”

Volunteers

It is a privilege to serve as a Florida 4-H Youth Development Program volunteer. Volunteers have an important role in maintaining both a safe environment for 4-H youth and a sense of belonging within the 4-H group and organization.

All volunteers who work with youth in a supervisory role, and/or who work with Florida 4-H on an ongoing basis, will participate in youth protection. Additional information and guidelines for this process are located in the [Florida 4-H Policies & Best Management Practices](#).

Volunteer Selection and Screening

The intent of the UF/IFAS Extension volunteer selection process is to share a common philosophy and follow appropriate protocols to provide safe and secure environments for everyone involved in UF/IFAS Extension’s youth programs.

Background screenings are mandatory for all volunteers who will have Care, Custody, or Control of youth, volunteering 10 or more hours a month. For additional information regarding background screenings, please contact your county UF/IFAS Extension 4-H agent. In addition to completing a Level 2 Department of Children and Families (DCF) Clearinghouse background screening, all volunteers must enroll yearly as a volunteer on [4-H Online](#), complete a notarized Affirmation of Good Moral Character form, and successfully complete the UF Youth Compliance online Youth Protection Training (# YCS800) and Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Training (#YCS100)

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An Equal Opportunity Institution. 4-H is the nation’s largest youth development organization. Over 230,000 members in the State of Florida help to make up the community of more than 6.5 million young people across America. 4-H is a non-formal, practical educational program for youth. Florida 4-H is the youth development program of Florida Cooperative Extension, a part of the University of Florida/IFAS.

annually. The training courses last about 30 minutes total, and each includes a brief quiz. Volunteers can complete the Youth Protection Training and Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Training on the [UF Youth Compliance website](#) using a web browser. Florida 4-H volunteers should complete the training through 4-H Online annually when renewing volunteer status or as part of the new volunteer onboarding process. For more information, refer to EDIS publication #4H444, “[UF/IFAS Extension Florida 4-H Youth Protection Policy](#).”

4-H Code of Conduct

4-H volunteers at the local, state, or national level represent the UF/IFAS Extension Florida 4-H Youth Development Program and must abide by the Code of Conduct found in the [Florida 4-H Policies & Best Management Practices](#).

Volunteer Role

UF/IFAS Extension county directors or their designee may appoint volunteers to positions of program responsibility. County faculty should clearly define volunteer roles. There are several volunteer role descriptions found in the Volunteering for 4-H section of the [Florida 4-H Policies & Best Management Practices](#).

Volunteer Reassignment or Dismissal

Volunteers may be reassigned at the discretion of the county director. Volunteer services may cease at any time at the request of the volunteer or at the discretion of the UF/IFAS Extension agent. Refer to [Florida 4-H Policies & Best Management Practices](#).

Health Information

It is mandatory for all participants in 4-H programs, including adults, to complete the health form. For more information, refer to the

Membership and Participation section in [Florida 4-H Policies & Best Management Practices](#).

Treat all health information confidentially, although 4-H activities are not subject to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) Privacy Rule. Visit the U.S. Health and Human Services website for more [HIPAA information](#).

As a volunteer leader, it is beneficial for you to have some basic medical and emergency contact information for members whose parents might not be present. Any information collected for health care reasons within a 4-H setting shall be protected and not shared. In case of an emergency, always call 911 first.

Club Resources

4-H clubs are the foundation for successful club programming. Having the necessary resources can and will help the UF/IFAS Extension 4-H agent and club leader work together in achieving club program success. For more information, refer to [Florida 4-H Volunteer Resources](#).

Opportunity for All

4-H membership is available to all youth ages 5–18 without regard to race, color, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or national origin. However, selected projects or programs do have enrollment restrictions. Not all projects or program activities are deemed appropriate for all age ranges due to either developmental appropriateness, safety, or other considerations.

The University of Florida, under the guidelines of ADA and 504 federal legislation, is required to make reasonable accommodations to the known physical and mental limitations of otherwise qualified individuals with disabilities. To help provide the best possible service to students, staff, faculty, and visitors, the University of Florida has an ADA Compliance Office with a

coordinator responsible for access for persons with disabilities.

Florida 4-H programs are required to be open to all youth and adult volunteers regardless of religious background or creed.

For more information on opportunities for all within the program, refer to [Florida 4-H Policies & Best Management Practices](#).

Emblem Use

UF/IFAS Extension faculty, 4-H volunteers, and 4-H members must adhere to 4-H National guidelines and procedures that are established for any print or electronic presentation of the 4-H emblem. For more information, refer to the Name and Emblem section of [Florida 4-H Policies & Best Management Practices](#) and the [National 4-H Name and Emblem Use Handbook](#). Contact your UF/IFAS Extension 4-H agent for more information on current Florida 4-H branding guidelines.

Internet/Social Media Safety

As the internet becomes predominant in society, youth are using the web more often. In designing UF/IFAS Extension or Florida 4-H websites, youth should not be identified by their names or 4-H clubs.

It is important for adults and youth to be aware of the risks associated with internet use. The Florida 4-H program must handle and monitor the use of personal information in a confidential manner. All Florida 4-H websites must contain the 4-H clover emblem. Using the 4-H clover emblem on a website must adhere to federal regulations. All Florida 4-H websites must link to <https://florida4h.ifas.ufl.edu/>.

Also, refer to the [UF Social Media Guidelines](#) for posting on social media platforms. When creating social media pages or webpages, UF/IFAS guidelines state, “Authorization to present a social media account as an official university activity

must come from the Associate Vice President of UF/IFAS Communications. Accounts should have two TEAMS employees with admin access at all times to ensure that account access isn’t lost” (UF/IFAS Communications, n.d.).

For more information, refer to the Websites and Social Media section in [Florida 4-H Policies & Best Management Practices](#) and the Interactions With Youth Virtually section of the [UF/IFAS Extension Youth Protection Policy](#).

Shooting Sports State Plan and Program Guidelines

Under Florida Statute § 790.115 (2023), the possession of firearms, destructive devices, other weapons, and ammunition (for antique firearms, short-barreled shotguns, short-barreled rifles, automatic rifles, and other destructive devices) at any 4-H activity or event is prohibited. An exception is made for education classes to be conducted on properties designated for 4-H use, provided the firearms are handled, used, and stored in a safe and responsible manner and in accordance with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations. Please refer to the [Florida 4-H Policies & Best Management Practices](#) for specific details. Additionally, EDIS publication [#4HSFV90.10](#), “Florida 4-H Shooting Sports Program State Plan: Program Guidelines and Best Management Practices” is available for an example of this exception.

References

UF/IFAS Communications. (n.d.). Social media services. Accessed on October 3, 2025, from <https://ics.ifas.ufl.edu/our-services/social-media/>

Weapons and Firearms, Fla. Stat. § 790.115 (2025). http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=0700-0799/0790/Sections/0790.115.html

Resources

Florida 4-H: <https://florida4h.ifas.ufl.edu/>

Florida 4-H Policies & Best Management Practices: <https://florida4h.ifas.ufl.edu/media/florida4hifasufledu/docs/Florida-4-H-Policies-Updated-06.17.25.pdf>

Florida 4-H Volunteer Resources: <https://florida4h.ifas.ufl.edu/get-involved/volunteer/volunteer-resources/>

4-H Online: <https://4honline.com/>

Risk Management for 4-H Youth Development Work EDIS series: https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/collections/series_risk_management_for_4-h_youth_development_work

UF Social Media Guidelines: <https://brandcenter.ufl.edu/social-media-guidelines/>

UF Youth Compliance: <https://youth.compliance.ufl.edu/>

UF Youth Compliance Trainings: <https://youth.compliance.ufl.edu/protection-requirements/youth-protection-training/>

USDA and NIFA 4-H Name and Emblem Use Handbook: <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource/fy-2019-4-h-name-emblem-use-guide-20191108.pdf>