



UW-MADISON EXTENSION

# Wisconsin 4-H Policy Update for 2025-26

May 2025

Below are selected highlights from the changes over the past year to Wisconsin 4-H Policies. To review all Wisconsin 4-H Policies please visit: [Wisconsin 4-H Policies – Wisconsin 4-H](#)

## ***4-H Name, Emblem and Records Policies***

All new and updated Wisconsin 4-H Name, Emblem and Records Policies can be found on the Wisconsin 4-H Policy website: [4-H Name, Emblem & Records – Wisconsin 4-H](#)

### ***4-H Program Educator Roles (New Policy)***

- **Educational Administrator and Chartering Authority**

All county-based 4-H programs are required to have a 4-H Program Educator who is an employee of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension. The Educator is both authorized and responsible for overseeing the daily operations of the local, county-based 4-H program, ensuring compliance with all relevant policies, procedures, and laws. In addition, the Educator plays a crucial role in guiding the direction of the program, ensuring it meets the needs of the local community while adhering to the larger mission of 4-H.

- **Volunteer Manager**

The 4-H Program Educator is tasked with managing and supporting 4-H volunteers. This involves making sure their activities are in line with established policies, procedures, and expectations, while offering the necessary guidance, training, and mentorship to enhance their effectiveness. By fostering a strong volunteer base, the Educator helps create a positive, sustainable learning environment for youth.

- **Educator and Positive Youth Development Advocate**

The 4-H Program Educator is responsible for delivering research-based educational programs aimed at promoting positive youth development within local communities. This includes offering direct programming for youth, supporting coalitions and partnerships, and collaborating with community organizations, schools, and other stakeholders to enhance the 4-H program's impact and broaden its reach. Through these efforts, the Educator ensures that 4-H thrives and continues to positively influence the lives of young people in the community.

### ***4-H Leader Organizations (New Policy)*** <https://4h.extension.wisc.edu/4-h-leader-organizations/>

Although not required for county-based 4-H programs, 4-H Leaders Organizations are chartered 4-H groups that provide opportunities for 4-H volunteers and youth leaders to support the local 4-H program. Much like a school PTO/PTA (Parent Teacher Organization/Association), 4-H Leader Organizations activities include:

- Fundraising for 4-H programs and activities
- Supplemental recognition for 4-H members and 4-H volunteers including awards and scholarships
- County-wide 4-H programming
- 4-H Promotion

As with all chartered 4-H clubs and groups, 4-H Leader Organizations are accountable to the local 4-H Program Educator and must submit an annual Charter Application and Annual Financial Report.

### ***4-H Alumni Groups (New Policy)***

4-H Leader Organizations may establish 4-H Alumni Committees focused on fostering networking opportunities for 4-H alumni, promoting alumni involvement in the 4-H program through roles such as guest speakers or volunteers, and supporting fundraising efforts for the Leader Organization. These committees will consist of approved 4-H volunteers; however, the committee could plan events open exclusively to 4-H Alumni with 4-H Program Educator approval.

### ***Collegiate 4-H (New Policy)***

Collegiate 4-H Programs offer college students valuable opportunities for service, leadership, and professional development. Through these programs, students can assist with a wide range of activities, including supporting local, county, and state 4-H programs. It is important to note that Collegiate 4-H Chapters are not permitted to directly program with youth; instead, they must operate under the direct supervision of 4-H staff or approved 4-H volunteers. In addition, Collegiate 4-H members are encouraged to engage in campus activities and promote positive youth development.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) formalizes the relationship between Collegiate 4-H Clubs and the 4-H organization, granting permission to use the 4-H name and emblem. The MOU also provides access to Wisconsin 4-H staff, resources, and professional development opportunities.

The MOU must be signed annually by the Wisconsin 4-H State Program Leader. Copies will be retained by both the local college or university chapter and the Wisconsin 4-H State Office.

## ***4-H Membership and Participation Policies***

All new and updated Wisconsin 4-H Membership and Participation Policies can be found on the Wisconsin 4-H Policy website: [Membership and Participation Policies – Wisconsin 4-H](#)

### ***Wisconsin 4-H Membership Policies (Updated Policy)***

Youth who have disabilities, and are enrolled in a public or private high school special education services, may ask for an exemption from the enrollment age requirement by completing the [Disability Accommodation Request Form](#). All requests must be approved by the Wisconsin 4-H State Program Leader.

### ***Record Books (New Policy)***

Wisconsin 4-H does not require a record book for membership. Individual 4-H clubs and groups cannot mandate that youth submit a record book to maintain their membership status. However, 4-H Program Educators, 4-H Clubs and/or 4-H Groups may create recognition programs where record books are considered as part of the criteria for selection of awards, scholarships or participation in specific activities.

### ***Dual 4-H Membership Policy (New Policy)***

Youth who live with different family members in two separate counties during a Wisconsin 4-H program year (October 1 – September 30) may request dual membership in both counties. This unique situation allows youth to participate in 4-H activities in both counties, but it comes with specific guidelines and requirements.

The following steps must be followed:

1. Collaboration with 4-H Program Educators: Families must work closely with 4-H Program Educators in both counties to seek approval for dual county membership. This step is essential to ensure that both counties are aware of the membership request, and to gain clarity on the responsibilities and expectations associated with dual membership.
2. Understanding the Implications: Families should fully understand what dual membership entails, including the potential impact on participation in county, state and national 4-H programs, events, and opportunities. It's important to clarify how the youth's involvement will be managed across both counties, including how attendance, leadership roles, and project work will be coordinated. Wisconsin 4-H does not support participation by the same 4-H member in similar competitive 4-H events across two different counties.

By following these steps, families can ensure a smooth process for requesting dual membership while adhering to Wisconsin 4-H policies. The goal is to support youth in their 4-H experience while maintaining fairness and consistency across county programs.

## **4-H Volunteers**

All new and updated Wisconsin 4-H Volunteer Policies can be found on the Wisconsin 4-H Policy website: [4-H Volunteers – Wisconsin 4-H](#)

### ***Re-Enrollment (New Policy)***

All returning Wisconsin 4-H volunteers are required to re-enroll annually between September 1 and November 1. All required trainings and background checks must be completed by December 1. The 4-H Program Educator or their designee has until December 15 to approve all eligible returning 4-H volunteers. IMPORTANT: A submitted application/enrollment form does not mean that an individual is an approved volunteer. Adults who are not approved 4-H volunteers cannot be in custodial care of youth.

### ***Supervision Ratios (Updated Policy)***

Many Wisconsin 4-H programs and activities welcome—and often encourage—parent or guardian participation to enhance their child(ren)'s experience. When a parent or guardian is present, they retain custodial responsibility for their child(ren), and those youth will not be included in staff or volunteer supervision ratios. It's important to note that both the parent/guardian and their child(ren) are expected to follow the Wisconsin 4-H Code of Conduct. Adults who are not approved 4-H volunteers are not permitted to assume custodial responsibility for youth other than their own.

## **4-H Projects and Activities Policies**

### ***Trick Riding at 4-H Horse Programs and Activities (Updated Policy)***

No Trick Riding: trick riding includes any activity involving stunts, acrobatics, or non-standard riding maneuvers that deviate from traditional, safe horseback riding practices. Examples include, but are not limited to: standing on a horse, standing on a horse while it is in motion, vaulting onto or off of a horse, hanging from the side or underside of a moving horse, and riders performing flips or jumps off of the horse.

### ***Firearm Purchasing (Updated Policy)***

County-based 4-H Shooting Sports Programs are permitted to acquire and maintain an inventory of new, powder-burning firearms with approval from the 4-H Program Educator. These firearms are limited to .22 LR pistols, .22 LR rifles,

shotguns, and muzzleloaders. All firearms must be stored and managed in accordance with Wisconsin 4-H State policies. Used firearms are not permitted for acquisition, however, 4-H firearm ownership may be transferred from one 4-H Shooting Sports program to another.

## ***4-H Financial Management Policies***

All new and updated Wisconsin 4-H Financial Management Policies can be found on the Wisconsin 4-H Policy website: [Financial Management – Wisconsin 4-H](#)

### ***Bonding (New Policy)***

A treasurer of a 4-H Club or Group may be bonded to safeguard the organization against financial loss due to theft, fraud, or embezzlement. Bonding serves as insurance, protecting the 4-H Club or Group in the event that the treasurer, or anyone else in a financial position, engages in dishonest actions, mishandles funds, or misappropriates assets. While obtaining bonding is optional, it is recommended, particularly for 4-H Clubs or Groups with an annual income of \$50,000 or more. If a club or group chooses to be bonded, it is their responsibility to cover the cost.

### ***Other***

[\*\*\*Annual Financial Report Website \(NEW\)\*\*\*](#)

[\*\*\*4-H Camp Policy will be updated and posted October 1, 2025\*\*\*](#)