

Kansas Department of 4-H Youth Development

Volunteer Screening Policy and Procedures

Revised August 2014



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Research and Extension

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

Kansas 4-H Youth Development Volunteer Screening Policy and Procedures

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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.

Who Must Complete the 4-H Volunteer Screening Process?

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.

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 (usually 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.

4-H Community Club (from Kansas 4-H Policy Guide, section F 1.1): an organized group of at least five youth from at least three families, led by two or more volunteer-screened and registered adults, with a planned program that is carried on throughout all or most of the year. Membership in a community club cannot be a requirement for membership in any other organized 4-H club or vice versa.

4-H Project Club (from Kansas 4-H Policy Guide, section F 1.2): an organized group of at least five youth from at least three families, led by two or more volunteer-screened registered adults, with a planned program. Project club participants are usually enrolled in one or more project areas,

with a planned program that is carried out over a specific period. Project clubs may have elected officers and a set of bylaws approved by the membership to govern the club.

Timeline

The new volunteer screening and approval process began August 1, 2014.

Initial Screening

All volunteers who serve in roles requiring screening (see above definitions) must complete the process and be appointed by the local extension unit board. This includes new and continuing volunteers who have not been screened and appointed previously. Volunteers — in roles that require screening — must complete the process before beginning their duties.

Annual Renewal

Annually, between August 1 and December 31, continuing volunteers must complete and turn in the Kansas 4-H Volunteer Service Renewal Form: <http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/bookstore/pubs/4H953.pdf>.

Rescreening

4-H volunteers will be rescreened every three years. Registered (screened and appointed) volunteers as of 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.

Volunteer Screening Process Overview

- Complete *application (provided)*
- Face-to-face *interview (template provided)*
- Reference *check (form provided)*
- Orientation (face-to-face or *online course*)
- Background check (two parts)
 - National Criminal Background Check (CBC) (*online*)
 - Kansas Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry (Kansas Department for Children and Families, DCF) (*form provided*)
- Data file review (first by staff, then by Volunteer Review Committee)
- Volunteer file includes application, interview documentation, references, CBC/DCF results, orientation completion documentation
- Approval and appointment by local extension unit board
- Appointee names are included in or attached to board minutes
- Online Volunteer Screening Resources Site: <http://www.kansas4-h.org/p.aspx?tabid=603>

Detailed Steps to Screen a New 4-H Volunteer

Suggestion: Work with your office professional and/or program assistant to complete these steps.

- The potential volunteer completes Kansas 4-H Volunteer Service Application, available online, <http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/bookstore/pubs/4H673.pdf>, or in print from the local extension office. The online version is a form-fillable PDF that can be completed electronically, saved, and printed. The PDF also can be printed and the blanks filled by hand. In either case, a completed copy is turned in to the local extension office.
- **Option:** Provide the volunteer with the application cover letter (see sample at <http://www.kansas4-h.org/doc16861.ashx>), personalized to the local office, and the application. See <http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/bookstore/pubs/4H673.pdf>.
- The local extension office checks the application for completeness, requests any missing information, starts a file folder for the applicant, completes and places in the folder a Volunteer Screening Checklist for the applicant. See <http://www.kansas4-h.org/doc16812.ashx>.
- The local extension office sends reference check letters (personalized to agent and applicant) to the references given on the application, by traditional mail or email.
- **Option:** Give reference forms (personalized to the local office) and addressed envelopes to each volunteer so they can obtain their own references. The local extension office places returned reference forms in each applicant's folder and marks date(s) received on the Volunteer Screening Checklist and/or Master Log (if used). Screening may proceed with two out of the three references received if both references are positive.
- **Option:** For overall tracking, use the Master

Log: <http://www.kansas4-h.org/doc17496.ashx>. Add each applicant to the Master Log and update as steps are completed.

- An agent or a designated volunteer interviews the potential volunteer, using interview template at: <http://www.kansas4-h.org/doc16786.ashx>. Place the interview documentation in the folder. Continue the process if the interview is positive.

Complete Background Checks

◇ The local extension office provides the background check information sheet (see <http://www.kansas4-h.org/doc16862.ashx>), the Kansas Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry (DCF) check release form (<http://www.kansas4-h.org/doc16598.ashx>), and an envelope. The volunteer completes the form, places it in the envelope and returns it to the local office to be mailed to the Kansas Department for Children and Families: DCF Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry, P.O. Box 2637, Topeka, KS 66601. Search results are returned to the state 4-H office.

◇ The local office gives the volunteer the link for the national criminal background check (CBC): <http://tinyurl.com/cbcks4h> or <https://www.validityscreen.com/apps/id/257/376/0/1>. Results are returned to the state 4-H office.

Hint: Suggest that the volunteer use an office computer to complete the CBC form right away.

- After the DCF registry and CBC results are sent to the state 4-H office, that office will compile and send them to the appropriate local unit office via email. The local unit office prints a copy of the email, places it in the applicant's folder and records its receipt.
- The local extension office updates the checklist and Master Log (if used), as items come in and/or steps are completed. Weekly progress checks are made. A reminder note may be sent to references if information is not received by the return deadline.

- The applicant completes the required 4-H Volunteer Orientation. This requirement may be met with a face-to-face orientation meeting or online orientation course: <http://www.kansas4-h.org/onlinetraining>. Orientation completion is documented, placed in the applicant's folder, and recorded.
- When the applicant's folder is complete, the local agent or staff reviews the folder for completeness, possible concerns, and/or "red flags."
- The applicant's folder is presented for review by the appropriate committee (local board as a committee of the whole, appointed board committee, or Volunteer Review Committee) for review and recommendations. (See the next section — *Data File Review* — for more information.) The committee may recommend full appointment as a 4-H volunteer, restricted appointment, or non-appointment.
- The review committee sends names of each recommended appointee to the local board to be considered for appointment as a Registered 4-H Volunteer of the local extension unit. The report from the review committee includes the names and recommended appointments (full or restricted) and that ____ (fill in the number) had applied but were not recommended for appointment. If board discussion is needed, it must be done in executive session as a personnel matter. All discussions in executive session are confidential.
- The local board acts on the recommendations of the review committee and appoints recommended volunteers. Appointment action is taken in open session. Names of appointed volunteers and their roles and restrictions (if any) are included in or attached to the minutes. Board action is final and not appealable to the state 4-H office or any other body.
- The names of applicants not recommended for appointment are kept confidential and given to the board chair by the volunteer review

committee. The board chair sends a letter to thank the applicants for their interest and notify them of non-appointment. A sample letter is available on the online Volunteer Screening Resources site: <http://www.kansas4-h.org/p.aspx?tabid=603>.

- Applicants appointed by the local board receive an appointment letter, including the appointee's role and any restrictions, from the board chair. A sample letter is available in the online Volunteer Screening Resources site at: <http://www.kansas4-h.org/p.aspx?tabid=603>. (Log in for full access.)
- The local office notifies club leaders of each volunteer's appointment.

Data File Review

After the staff review, the Volunteer Review Committee considers applicant files. The purpose of this review is to assist the local board in making the best decision concerning which volunteers will be appointed to work with local 4-H programs.

The Volunteer Review Committee may be one similar to the previous VIP Review Committee (a committee of volunteers appointed by the local board), the local board as a committee of the whole, or an appointed subcommittee of the local board. The committee follows the Volunteer Review Committee procedures and practices section of this handbook.

After review, the committee makes recommendations to the local extension board.

Recommendations are:

- full appointment
- restricted appointment
- non-appointment

The files and the information they contain are confidential. See the *Confidentiality* section on page 8 of this handbook.

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 the child decides to pursue an action after reaching the age of majority, the records may be needed in defending the action.

Retain all records relating to an ongoing situation.

If an applicant is not approved by the board or volunteer review committee, all information in the file should be retained for two years after the decision is made.

Criminal Background Screening Checks

The Criminal Background Checks (CBC) involve the following:

- Kansas Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry maintained by the Kansas Department for Children and Families. (Specific to Kansas 4-H: A paper form is sent by postal mail.)
- National Criminal Background Check conducted by the selected commercial firm. (Information and permission form completed online.)

Costs and Payment

CBC Initial screen: \$22.50

CBC Rescreen: \$16.50

Costs effective August 1, 2014

Child Abuse and Neglect Registry (DCF): Free
Fee waived because Kansas 4-H is a Kansas Mentor Organization

From August 1, 2014, through August 31, 2015, K-State Research and Extension will pay the screening cost for new volunteers. A new volunteer is one who has not served as a 4-H

volunteer in the past two years and is serving in a role that requires screening: working directly with youth or providing public leadership for 4-H programs. (See definition for further clarification.) Local units are responsible for the cost of screening for volunteers who are not new and did not complete the process by July 31, 2014. Starting September 1, 2015, local units will be responsible for all screening costs. The first time a volunteer is screened, the initial screen fee is charged. Each subsequent screen is invoiced at the CBC rescreen fee.

Payment Process

The provider will invoice the state 4-H office, which will bill local units monthly.

'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:

1. Use of an illegal substance or controlled drug not used as prescribed by a doctor.
2. 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.
3. 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.)
4. 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.)

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5. Information on the National Criminal Background Check or Kansas Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry (communicated from the state 4-H office) may result in an automatic disqualification.

The screening process may bring forward information that does not appear to be at the “red flag” level but might indicate that additional scrutiny is advisable. Further investigation is warranted. Examples of “yellow flags” could include a long-ago DUI, minor property crime, financial impropriety, or 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.ksre.ksu.edu/bookstore/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 Volunteer Registration between Extension Units

A registered 4-H volunteer who moves to a new location and wishes to volunteer for the new unit, or who did not move and wishes to volunteer for a different local unit, must complete volunteer screening in the new unit. This includes the full process with two exceptions. The exceptions are:

the Orientation (if taken online) may transfer and the background checks may be transferred if they have been conducted within three years of the application to the new unit.

Contact the previous unit office for more information on the volunteer applicant.

Once the steps are completed in the new unit, the applicant can be approved and appointed. Rescreening is based on the date of the previous screening and background checks.

Confidentiality

Maintaining the confidentiality of all profiles and supporting documents is the cornerstone of keeping trust in your unit’s volunteer base. Each applicant is entitled to privacy and to fair treatment under the law. It is the intent of this program to treat all applicants fairly and with respect.

1. All persons involved in the volunteer screening process and with access to personnel files will be informed of the importance of confidentiality. Each person should read this page and sign the Confidentiality Statement (in the [online resources](#)), agreeing to protect the privacy of individuals involved.
 2. Kansas 4-H Volunteer Service application, notes of references and interviews and/or reference forms or letters must be kept in a confidential file that can be accessed only by the local volunteer review committee and the unit staff members who are responsible for youth programs.
 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. All information about applicants and why
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they have been accepted or rejected as 4-H volunteers must be kept confidential. Only the volunteer review committee and local board are involved in discussing applicants. Discretion and privacy must be used in the review and discussion.

5. Volunteer application files are to be kept for two years after being received or two years after the end of the individual's involvement, 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. If the child decides to pursue an action after reaching the age of majority, the records may be needed in defending the action. Retain all records relating to any ongoing situations. If the applicant was not approved by the board or review committee, retain all information in the file for two years. (See *File Retention* on page 7.)
6. Volunteer application files are treated as confidential personnel files. Each 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 allowing the applicant access to the file. The applicant may view the file in the office or obtain copies of the file contents by written request. (See *Open Records Act* information, #7 below.) The individual may neither remove contents nor take the original file from the office. Since volunteer application files are personnel files, only review committee members, local unit board members, and local extension staff may review the files. No member of the public may review a volunteer application file.
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

General Information

1. The purpose of the volunteer review committee (hereafter identified as the 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, conditional approval, or non-approval. 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 in place, these duties fall to the local extension board or a subcommittee of the board.

**Position Description —
Volunteer Review Committee Member**
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

Online Resources List

Posted online at:

<http://www.kansas4-h.org/p.aspx?tabid=603>

- 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.ksre.ksu.edu/bookstore/pubs/4H673.pdf>
- Application Cover Letter Sample (For potential new volunteers; personalize for the local office.)
- Link to Interview Template:
<http://www.kansas4-h.org/doc16786.aspx>
- Links to Reference Form
- Agent Instructions for Enrolling a Volunteer in the Online 4-H Orientation Course
- Link to 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*

Overview of Volunteer Screening

In the fall of 1995, the K-State Research and Extension administrative team approved the pilot of a document that became the Volunteer Information Profile (VIP). On Sept. 26, 1996, administration approved the final draft of the VIP document and Youth Protection Policy. Since then local extension boards throughout Kansas have adopted the VIP and Youth Protection Policy to protect everyone involved with 4-H Youth Development programming. The VIP application and policies were reviewed in 2000, 2005, and 2013.

VIP Development Team

1995 Design Team: Conall Addison, SW Area; Betty LaToush, Scott County; Jo Ellen Arnold, Chair, Franklin County; Jim Lindquist, NE Area Extension Director; Glenn Newdigger, Barber County; Walter Barker, NW Area; Eric Otte, Sedgwick County; Jodi Besthorn, Smith County; Karen Streeter, Riley County volunteer; Charles Call, Brown County; Pam Van Horn, Saline County; Ann Domsch, SE Area; Martha White-Huling, NE Area; Lisa Eickholt, Geary County; Linda Everhart, Saline County volunteer; Pat Fultz, Extension Specialist; Gary Gerhard, Assistant Director of Youth 4-H Programs; Gary Gold, Stevens County; and Beth Hinshaw, Ellis County.

2000 Review Team: Jodi Besthorn, Sedgwick County; Diane Mack, NE Area; Pat Fultz, Extension Specialist; and Pam Van Horn, Saline County.

2005 Review and Revision Team: Rod Buchele, SW Area; Stephanie Einspahr, Kearny County; Byron Hale, Decatur County; Diane Mack, NE Area; Sarah Maass, Lyon County; Gwen Spade, Dickinson County; and Pam Van Horn, Central Kansas District.

2013 Review and Revision Team: Barbara Stone, Assistant Director KSRE, Department Head 4-H Youth Development; Rod Buchele, SW Area, State Volunteer Specialist; Fran Richmond, Frontier District; Jodi Drake, Pratt County; Julie Traxson, Wildcat District; Patsy Maddy, Twin Creeks District; Phil Sloderbeck, Southwest Area Director; and Diane Mack, NE Area.

2013–14: New process announced with start date of August 1, 2014.

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