



# Extension FactSheet

4-H Youth Development, 2120 Fyffe Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210



## Ohio 4-H Volunteer Development Opportunities

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*4-H volunteers want to be the best they can be. Certainly, the natural abilities and interests of volunteers will be greatly appreciated as they give their time to those areas. At the same time, most 4-H volunteers want to continue learning and building their own skills.*

### What Is Volunteer Development?

Volunteer development is a continuous process, beginning with identifying a need that volunteers can fulfill, and ending with a decision to renew the volunteer commitment, to transfer into another volunteer role, or to discontinue volunteer service. Along the way, the volunteer, the volunteer administrator (Extension professional), and the sponsoring organization (OSU Extension) each have an obligation to engage in developmental opportunities that will assist in achieving both individual goals and the goals of the organization.

The best developmental opportunities are those that ensure the volunteer is equipped with the most current knowledge, information, skills, and abilities in order to develop youth enrolled

in the 4-H club, program, or activity. Volunteer development should be focused on the desired end result, which in this case, is positive youth development.

### What Development Opportunities Are Available?

A number of volunteer development opportunities are available locally, statewide, and nationally to all types of 4-H volunteers. Each of these can be categorized and will be discussed in brief detail.

### County Opportunities

All potential 4-H volunteers are required to follow the Volunteer Selection Policies and Procedures adopted by OSU Extension that require an orientation. County Extension Educators will lead new volunteers through this orientation process. Most counties provide developmental opportunities for volunteers beyond the volunteer selection process. Many counties provide educational programs for volunteers throughout the

year that focus on specific leadership topics that will enhance the efforts of volunteers. For example, with competition being a regular component of the 4-H system, the topic of sportsmanship is often featured at county volunteer workshops.

Club volunteers usually complete a series of topics that include running club meetings, recreation, and program planning. Serving on advisory councils and subject matter committees, such as fashion boards and livestock committees, are other ways in which volunteers can strengthen their leadership skills and provide additional service to the county 4-H program.

### **Specialized Volunteers**

Some 4-H projects and activities (i.e. Shooting Sports, ATV Safety, PetPals, and those programs involving food preparation and service) require volunteer certification. For example, to become a Shooting Sports Instructor, volunteers must complete specific educational programs that are guided by a specified curriculum that includes instruction on safety, youth development, and specialized subject matter.

### **Ohio 4-H Volunteer Conference**

The Ohio 4-H Volunteer Conference (OVC) is typically held on the second Saturday of March in Columbus, Ohio. During the OVC, about 100 educational, hands-on workshops are presented. The topics are organized into subject matter and scheduled in five concurrent sessions during the event. Registration is due to county Extension offices by mid-February, is nominally priced, and includes lunch.

The OVC is available to all 4-H volunteers, including those serving as organizational, community club, project, Cloverbud, school enrichment, and special emphasis volunteers, as well as middle managers/key leaders. Older youth who are serving in meaningful leadership roles in their county or on the state level are also encouraged and welcome to attend.

### **North Central Region 4-H Volunteer Forum**

The North Central Region 4-H Volunteer Forum (NCRVF) is held annually, and involves 4-H volunteers from the 12 states in the North Central Region (including Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin). The location follows a 12 state rotation.

The NCRVF is typically four days (Thursday afternoon through Sunday morning) and is held in the autumn, generally during mid-October. The Forum features approximately 75 educational workshops presented in five concurrent offerings with a number of educational tours, hands-on activities, and keynote speakers. A feature of the NCRVF is the networking, sharing, and exchange of information that takes place among the volunteers from the 12 states. It is hoped that participants in the forum will share some of their new knowledge and ideas with 4-H volunteers in their county.

Registration materials are available through each county Extension office and the state 4-H office, and are generally due to the state 4-H office during late summer. Many counties offer either full or partial scholarships to 4-H volunteers who are interested in attending.

Contact your county Extension office for more information regarding any of these opportunities.

### **Additional Educational Activities**

Developing volunteer skills also happens through service. Consider the following alternatives of teaching, chaperoning, and serving on committees.

#### ***Teaching Opportunities***

Volunteers are encouraged to teach 4-H members, junior leaders, other volunteers, and Extension staff whenever possible. Examples of these teaching opportunities include county recruitment and orientation activities for 4-H members and youth, as well as county, state, and regional vol-

unteer conferences. State and Regional Volunteer Conferences often require workshop proposals, which must be submitted several months prior to the event. Most Extension professionals, however, welcome volunteers to teach at local educational programs. Contact the county Extension office to express your interest and area of expertise.

### ***Trip Chaperones***

Many 4-H trips and activities require adult chaperones. The duties of adult chaperones may seem minimal, but providing that security to the youth, and being a positive adult role model is vital. Extension professionals sometimes have a difficult time securing appropriate volunteer assistance for chaperone duties. To take advantage of these opportunities, or to determine what trips will need adult chaperones, contact the county Extension office.

### ***County, Regional, and State Committees***

Volunteers provide important input in determining the direction of 4-H programs, establishing local goals and program priorities, hiring staff, evaluating programs, selecting award winners, and staging events and activities. These opportunities exist at the county, regional, and state levels. Examples include the county 4-H Committees, county project committees, 4-H Foundation Boards on county and state levels, county and state award selection committees, and many others. The first step toward getting involved is to make your interest known to the county Extension Educator. The Educator can then funnel your interests to the appropriate contact person.

Consider expanding your knowledge and skills by attending one or more of these unique volunteer development experiences.

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