Florida 4-H Chaperone Guidebook

Roles & Responsibilities

4-H Chaperones provide supervision to 4-H members during in and out of state 4-H events and activities. To become a chaperone, you need to complete the following forms: Volunteer Appointment Form, 4-H Health Statement, and 4-H Code of Conduct. Your county 4-H agent will conduct a background screening and interview. If you are appointed as a volunteer, you will need to complete the 4H online chaperone training modules as well as the orientation and risk management trainings with your 4-H agent. After scoring a successful score on your quiz, your agent will then appoint you as a certified chaperone! Your general responsibilities include:

• Become familiar with event and 4-H rules and procedures
• Participate in a briefing for 4-Hers and their parents before the event.
• Accompany the participants to the event activities.
• Share the responsibility for driving a vehicle to event activities as needed.
• Be present to supervise and assist 4-H members at activities and lodging areas. Know where members are at all times.
• Cooperate with Extension faculty, staff, and volunteers in enforcing 4-H and event rules and procedures.
• Attend any and all adult briefing meetings for or during the event and share information from that meeting with members.
• Assist with any activities as requested by event personnel.
• Update skills and knowledge by attending leader training meetings that are applicable.
• Maintain sensitivity to the individual differences of 4-H members such as differences in interests, abilities, personal needs, cultural heritage, and family support.

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Code of Conduct

Code of Conduct forms are a part of every 4-H event. They are signed by both adults and youth. The form is a contract between the attendees and the Florida 4-H program. Breaking the contract will result in consequences to the offender, decided by a review committee formed at each event. Chaperones should establish consequences for violation of code of conduct while on a trip. All members of the group should know what the consequences are. Use the Florida 4-H Review board procedure to handle any discipline issues.

Parental consent is found in the verification portion of the Code of Conduct form. The parent acknowledges that they are aware of and agree to the rules listed in the Code of Conduct Form. With that signature, they are also consenting to public release of photos. If you have any questions, call your county 4-H agent.

Chaperone Best Practices

1. Treat each person with dignity and respect and be a team member with other chaperones and staff.
2. Encourage youth to participate in all activities.
3. Supervise youth during the full event.
4. Assist with the logistics of the event.
5. Understand, monitor and enforce Code of Conduct and member discipline, housing and health for the event.
6. Complete all necessary reports.
7. Review and assist in implementing the risk management plan.
8. Division of responsibility at the event
   a. Who does what?
   b. Assign youth to a chaperone
   c. Schedule sleep and rest times; daily briefings
   d. Establish a sense of team
9. Make sure appreciation is expressed verbally or in writing from the group.
10. Collect for appropriate tips as a group; include the bus drive or tour guide in your meals or activities where appropriate.

People seldom improve when they have no other model but themselves to copy. ~Oliver Goldsmith

Florida 4-H Dress Code

There is a standard dress code for all 4-H events. The complete dress code can be found at: http://florida4h.org/events/files/4H_image_factsheet.pdf. In general:

- Appearance should be neat and clean
- No clothing deemed inappropriate (see below)
- No bare feet
- Hats should be worn respectfully. Hats are not appropriate during meals and group sessions while indoors
- Event leaders may ask individuals to modify their clothing selection if standards of decency in appearance are not met

Items that are never appropriate for 4-H events or activities:

- Shorts more than 4” above the knee
- Blouse straps must be at least 2” wide
- No spaghetti straps (unless it is a formal event), halter or tube tops
- No cut-off or muscle shirts
- No offensive or inappropriate language, graphics or logo t-shirts
- No holes in clothing (Shirts or pants/shorts)
- No pajamas
- No low cut pants or shirts

Some events such as camp will require a more casual dress, where others, such as Congress will be more business or formal.

Behavior Management

Chaperones help monitor behavior and intervene if necessary to prevent undesired consequences. Interventions that work best are respectful and preserve youths’ dignity and redirect their behavior. These simple non-verbal tools act as reminders for youth and allow them to monitor their own behavior.

- Proximity - get close
- Planned ignoring - watch youth, but don’t reinforce acting out
- Eye contact - catch youth’s eye, let him/her know you’re watching (be mindful of cultural differences)
- Signal interference - Put your finger to lips to say quiet. Extend hand palm down to suggest settling down.
- Body language - Stay in control, appear calm.
- Remove distracting objects - Avoid confrontation while you move something distracting out of sight.
- Model & show behavior you want to see
General Risk Management

It is important to plan for the unexpected as much as possible. While you plan an event or activity, take time to consider the risks and develop a risk management plan that includes a strategy to address each risk. A written plan should be in place and turned into the 4-H Agent prior to the event. The Pre-Event Planning Guide was developed to help in this planning process. Make sure you complete this guide and take it with you on the event.

There are four (4) risk strategies to remember:
- Reduce the risk
- Avoid the risk
- Transfer the risk
- Assume the risk

Pre-planning your event will give you as chaperone the security of knowing the “what ifs” and how you will handle.

Special Risk Management Areas

Transportation
- Avoid transporting one youth alone in a vehicle
- Driver must be at least 18 years of age with at least 2 years successful driving experience, a valid driver’s license and current automobile insurance.
- Be aware of county requirements when transporting youth.
- Seven to 12 passenger vans are now recommended because of the risk involved in transporting youth in the top-heavy 15 passenger vehicles.
- Driving personal vehicles to transport youth to 4-H events is the least recommended transportation option as personal insurance will be primary. The state and/or county will be the excess coverage depending on the situation.
- When renting a vehicle, it should be in the name of the county 4-H club or county. Again personal insurance becomes the primary insurance.
- There must be a seatbelt for each passenger and driver. No youth are allowed to ride in the back of a pickup truck under any circumstances.

Appreciating Diversity

Learning to appreciate, communicate, and work with diverse groups is one of the essential life skills that our youth will need as they enter adulthood in order to be successful citizens and employees. 4-H members will learn to accept individuals and value diversity when they see attitudes modeled by adults who advise them. Youth will notice even subtle signs of prejudice or non-acceptance in the actions or speech of adult leaders. As a role model for 4-H youth, you have an obligation to value diversity and create supportive, inclusive environments for youth to learn. As a chaperone, you will be expected to:
- Understand that it is important to include everyone
- Understand that not everyone shares the same beliefs and values
- Understand that different cultures have different comfort levels with personal space and privacy
- Understand that not everyone has the same mental/physical abilities

Swimming
1 Certified Lifeguard = 25 youth

Chaperone Ratios
1 Adult = 8 youth ages 8-10
1 Adult = 10 youth 11 - older

Chaperone must be 21 years of age and a screened, registered volunteer

Camp Counselors must be 14 years and completed training and teen volunteer screening forms

Characteristics of Effective Youth Chaperones
- Youth are viewed as resources.
- Adults are caring and ensure safe environments.
- Rules are viewed as ways to help youth feel they belong.
- Adults are flexible and responsive to changing needs.
- Youth are delegated real work and real responsibility.
- Youth are a valued place of a constructive group.
- Adults help youth learn how to form close, durable human relationships.
- Help youth earn a sense of worth as a person.
- Help youth achieve a reliable basis for making informed choices.
- Allow youth to express constructive curiosity and exploratory behavior.
- Help youth find ways of being useful to others.
- Are youth optimistic about a promising future with real opportunities for themselves?
- Help youth cultivate the inquiring and problem-solving habits of their minds.
- Help youth learn to respect democratic values and responsible citizenship.
- Help youth learn about and build a healthy lifestyle.
Health, Safety and Security

Maintaining good health and keep youth safe at an event is a primary role of a responsible chaperone. 4-H staff and volunteers need to use common sense and general health care procedures when responsible for youth.

Medication
Medication other than inhalers should be kept and administered by the chaperone. All medications should be accompanied by a Medication Form.

First Aid
There should be at least one certified adult in first aid at any 4-H event. Be familiar with where the first aid station is and emergency procedures. Call 911 if youth has trouble breathing, has been in a vehicle accident, having a seizure, requires medical attention beyond basic first aid, cannot stop bleeding, or is unconscious. Inform the event coordinator and parents of the emergency as soon as possible.

Security
Youth and adults should always use the buddy system and never walk alone. Youth should not leave their rooms after bed checks. Many events will not allow youth or adults to enter the building where the event is taking place without their nametag.

Accidents and Insurance Claims

If there is an incident, you will need to document it using the Florida 4-H Incident Report Form. Don’t forget that if you transport a child in your own vehicle, and you have an accident, then your personal insurance will be the primary coverage! 4-H event insurance is through American Income Life. If there is an insurance claim (such as for an emergency room visit), written notice of a claim must be filed within 20 days of commencement of any loss covered by policy or as soon as reasonably possible. All claim reports must be completed and signed by chaperone that is unrelated to the patient. Reimbursement is made directly to the medical provider unless otherwise indicated. Provide the following on the form:

- Complete medical diagnosis
- Itemized statements for services
- Prescription receipts complete with Rx and price
- Proof of payment with an itemized bill if payment has been made

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