

Ohio State University Fact Sheet

State 4-H Office

2120 Fyffe Rd., Columbus, OH 43210-1084

Types of 4-H Volunteers

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Who Is a 4-H Volunteer?

Ohio State University Extension defines a 4-H volunteer as: "Anyone who contributes time, energies, or talents to the Ohio 4-H Youth Development Program and is not paid by Ohio State University Extension funds."

In What Ways May a 4-H Volunteer Be Involved?

There are many ways in which individuals may volunteer for 4-H. While many 4-H volunteer roles involve working with youth, others do not. In Ohio, there are six specific types of 4-H volunteers. These include:

A youth volunteer is an older 4-H member with the ability to function in any 4-H volunteer role. Examples include mentoring younger 4-H members, serving on Junior Fair Board, Fashion Board, a 4-H Committee, Camp Counselor, 4-H Carteens, 4-H Ambassador, etc.

A 4-H Committee member is an individual who contributes time, energy, resources, or talent to any 4-H sponsored committee. Committees may be standing (ongoing) or ad hoc (appointed for a specific purpose, which, when accomplished, usually terminates the member's appointment to the committee and disbands the group.)

A special emphasis volunteer is an individual who works with a 4-H group which offers a series of activities designed to meet the needs and interests of youth within a community. The most flexible of 4-H groups, special emphasis programs may be offered to any number of young people in a variety of settings or locations. Special emphasis groups may focus on any of a number of topics; most of which should be based upon addressing specific needs of youth in that community. Special emphasis groups focus on one or more topics through after-school programs, juvenile diversion programs, sports clinics, etc. These groups may also be organized by individual volunteers as small, informal gatherings which meet in homes or local meeting places. Special emphasis groups attract youth from the surrounding community by focusing on a particular area of speciality, such as rocketry, computers, woodworking, cultural arts, foods, clowning, photography, etc. Special emphasis groups may also focus on a specific delivery method, such as a day camp.

A school enrichment volunteer is any individual, often a classroom teacher, who works with a 4-H program in a formal classroom setting. This program may either be short-term or ongoing throughout the entire school year. School enrichment programs are offered during school hours to enrich the formal classroom curriculum. A school enrichment program focuses on hands-on experiences, and provides real life application of knowledge gained, increasing the understanding of difficult concepts, and encourages the development of students as young adults.

A club advisor is an individual who works with a 4-H community or project club. The club advisor's function is to assist the club's members as they plan the club's program, conduct club business, and enroll individually or as a group in one or more 4-H projects. Specifically, there are three types of 4-H club advisors. An organizational advisor serves as the primary liaison between the county 4-H professional and the club's membership, parents, and other advisors in that club. A project advisor assists 4-H members with project experience in a given subject matter area. An activity advisor works with members in planning and conducting club activities. Examples of these activities include fund-raising, tours, community service, etc. All of these advisors work together as a team in supporting the 4-H club, its membership, and the members' families. In some clubs, one person may assume all three of these responsibilities.

A middle manager is any individual who serves in a coordination role between Extension staff and other volunteers, parents, or 4-H members. There are three types of 4-H middle managers. Key leaders serve as experts in a particular subject matter area, or with specific activities and events. Master volunteers teach subject matter to other volunteers, parents, or older youth volunteers. Committee members assist professional Extension staff in planning, implementing, and evaluating the 4-H programs in a county.1

Although most people think that 4-H volunteers work with 4-H members, this need not be the case. A person or group may volunteer for 4-H by assisting Extension staff, other 4-H adult volunteers, by working on special projects, or by helping at the fair, camp, school or other events. 4-H Volunteers may work in their home, at the Extension office, at a camp or fairgrounds, or almost anywhere. Contact your local Extension Agent to make him/her aware of your interest and abilities. There is probably a volunteer opportunity waiting to be fulfilled.

References

Safrit, R.D. (1994). Ohio 4-H Program Agent's Handbook. Chapter 9: Volunteerism.

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