

Ohio State University Fact Sheet

State 4-H Office

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Volunteer Development Opportunities

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What Is Volunteer Development?

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

The best developmental opportunities are those which ensure that 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 upon 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 to all types of 4-H volunteers. Each of these can be categorized and will be discussed in brief detail.

County opportunities

Most counties provide developmental opportunities for volunteers throughout the year. New volunteers typically are involved in an orientation to the 4-H program. Club volunteers usually complete a series of topics that includes running club meetings, recreation, and program planning. Most counties provide sessions 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.

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 (i.e. Shooting Sports, Master Clothing) require volunteer certification. For example, to become a Shooting Sports Instructor, volunteers must undergo a specified curriculum which includes instruction on safety, youth development, and specialized subject matter.

Ohio 4-H Volunteer Conference

The Ohio 4-H Volunteer Conference (OVC) is held on the second Saturday of March at the Ohio Expo Center in Columbus. During the OVC, more than 100 educational, hands-on workshops are presented. The topics are organized into subject matter tracks and scheduled in five concurrent sessions. 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 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 Regional 4-H Volunteer Forum

The North Central Regional 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) and the province of Manitoba. The location follows a 12 state rotation.

The NCRVF is 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 which takes place between the volunteers from the 12 states and Manitoba.

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.

Transportation to the NCRVF is coordinated by the state 4-H office.

Contact your county Extension office for more information regarding any of these opportunities. Additional activities are available at a county, multi-county, district, or state location. These may include teaching opportunities, serving as chaperones on trips, or serving on district or state committees. Each of these will be described in more detail.

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 both 4-H members and youth, as well as county, district, state, and regional volunteer 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 teaching opportunities. 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 are often minimal, yet important. Because of busy schedules, Extension Agents often 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.

District 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 on the county, district, and state levels. Examples include county, district, and state 4-H Committees, county project committees, 4-H Foundation Boards on county and state levels, county, district, and state award selection committees, and many others. The first step toward getting involved is to make your interest known to the county Extension Agent. The Agent can then funnel your interests to the appropriate contact person.

All educational programs conducted by Ohio State University Extension are available to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, creed, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, gender, age, disability or Vietnam-era veteran status.

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