

MSU Extension

MONTANA 4-H

VOLUNTEER CERTIFICATION

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES



Contents

BACKGROUND	2
DEFINITIONS.....	3
WHO IS CERTIFIED THROUGH THIS PROCESS	4
VOLUNTEER CERTIFICATION FORMS AND DOCUMENTS	5
VOLUNTEER CERTIFICATION PROCESS	6

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Montana State University and the Montana State University Extension Service prohibit discrimination in all of their programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital and family status. Issued in furtherance of cooperative extension work in agriculture and home economics, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Douglas L. Steele, Vice Provost and Director, Extension Service, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT 59717

BACKGROUND

Most people who choose to work with youth are caring, responsible people who, at all times, have the needs and best interests of the youth in mind. They are members of caring communities that are significant in helping young people on their journey to competent and contributing adulthood.

Montana State University Extension continues to respond to the needs of 4-H youth by providing positive youth development experiences under the leadership of adult volunteers. MSU Extension must make sure that the process of selecting individuals to serve as volunteers adequately identifies, selects, trains, and supports those interested in volunteer leadership. It is clearly the responsibility of MSU Extension and the 4-H Program, including 4-H volunteers, to make best efforts to ensure that the youth who come to 4-H programs are treated with respect and dignity, and are provided with safe, caring environments in which to learn and have fun.

Extension staff members and volunteers have the potential to profoundly impact the well-being of 4-H youth members. In addition to providing safe, caring environments for youth, Extension staff and volunteers must also be positive role models. These individuals must focus on positive communication with 4-H youth, address challenges in a positive manner, and concentrate on the individual needs of all youth.

The responsibility for the well-being of 4-H youth lies with all individuals involved in the 4-H program. The Montana State University Extension Volunteer Certification process is designed to help carefully select and match appropriate individuals with the youth-related efforts that best meet the needs of everyone involved.

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DEFINITIONS

Adult Volunteer

An adult volunteer is anyone, at least 19 years of age, who without salary/wage or expectation of salary/wage performs a task at the direction and on behalf of the agency. In some special cases, volunteers may receive a stipend for a specific service or program.

Certified Volunteer

A volunteer that has completed the Montana 4-H certification process and has received a letter of acceptance from MSU Extension.

Direct Volunteer

An individual who volunteers in a capacity that includes face-to-face, unsupervised contact with youth. Examples included but are not limited to: organizational leaders, project leaders, chaperones, volunteers transporting youth, exchange hosts.

Episodic/Resource Volunteer

An individual who volunteers for a single or limited activity, event, or program. These individuals do not have sole responsibility for youth and are under the supervision of a certified volunteer or MSU Extension faculty member. Examples include but are not limited to: fair judges, members serving on special committees, assistants/helpers at 4-H events, guest speakers. Usually, these persons do not have an enrollment form on file, but should have some kind of documentation of their service (letters, programs, fair-books, etc).

Youth Volunteer

Any young person under the age of 19 who is a participant volunteering for some 4-H responsibility. These individuals do not have sole responsibility for youth and are under the supervision of a certified volunteer or MSU Extension faculty member.

WHO IS CERTIFIED THROUGH THIS PROCESS

Adult Volunteers serving as direct volunteers are subject to the Montana 4-H Volunteer certification process.

Adult Volunteers serving in an episodic/resource capacity (guest speakers, judges, etc) that do **not** have sole responsibility for youth and are under the supervision of a certified volunteer or staff member are **not** subject to the certification process.

Youth Volunteers are not certified through this process.

In order to insure a fair and equitable procedure related to all volunteers and facilitate a safe environment for 4-H Youth, no volunteers will be grandfathered in – all current volunteers and new direct volunteer applicants must be certified through this process. Furthermore, volunteer or employment criminal background checks from other organizations or agencies will not be accepted in order to meet the criteria of the Montana 4-H Volunteer certification process.

Once an individual has successfully cleared the certification process and been accepted as a volunteer, he/she will be considered a certified volunteer as long as no break in service occurs or he/she is not dismissed as a 4-H volunteer. Volunteers will be re-screened if there is a break in service for one calendar year or more or if new information arises regarding their background. MSU Extension retains the right to screen a volunteer at any time during his/her service. Future changes to this policy may require follow-up screenings of certified volunteers on a periodic basis.

Volunteers should complete the following on a yearly basis:

1. Review/edit and sign an annual volunteer enrollment printout from the Blue Ribbon program.
2. Complete and sign the Montana 4-H Volunteer Personal Background form.
3. Complete and sign the Montana 4-H Volunteer Agreement and Standards of Behavior form.

If a volunteer who has successfully completed the certification process moves from one county to another within Montana, as long as there is no break in service that exceeds 30 days, the volunteer certification may be transferred without an additional criminal background check. Transfer will not be complete until the new County Extension Office receives a copy of the following:

1. Volunteer Acceptance Letter provided by the County Extension Office that conducted the initial certification
2. Enrollment information from Blue Ribbon
3. New signed forms from the volunteer:
 - a. Montana 4-H Volunteer Agreement and Standards of Behavior
 - b. Montana 4-H Volunteer Personal Background

VOLUNTEER CERTIFICATION FORMS AND DOCUMENTS

4-H Volunteer Application

This form is utilized when an individual is applying to be a 4-H Volunteer.

4-H Volunteer Disclosure and Consent

This form is reviewed and signed when an individual is applying to be a 4-H Volunteer. This form must accompany the 4-H Volunteer Application.

4-H Volunteer Agreement and Standards of Behavior

This form outlines Montana 4-H Standards of Behavior for 4-H volunteers. This form also presents MSU Extension 4-H expectations of 4-H volunteers and outlines what 4-H volunteers can expect from MSU Extension 4-H. This form must accompany the 4-H Volunteer Application **and** is completed on an annual basis as certified volunteers re-enroll.

4-H Volunteer Personal Background

This form is used for re-enrollment of a certified volunteer on a yearly basis.

4-H Volunteer Certification Policy and Procedures

This document outlines the Montana 4-H volunteer certification policy and process.

4-H Volunteer Certification Spreadsheet

This spreadsheet is utilized as a check sheet to track the progress of volunteer applications through the certification process. Extension Offices complete appropriate sections of the spreadsheet and submit the spreadsheet to the Montana 4-H Center via email utilizing the following address: 4hvolunteer@montana.edu. The 4-H Center will complete appropriate sections of the spreadsheet and return it to the County Extension Office via email. Extension Offices are encouraged to keep a master spreadsheet with all individuals that have gone through the certification process.

VOLUNTEER CERTIFICATION PROCESS

The Montana 4-H Volunteer Certification process includes completion of:

- Montana 4-H Volunteer Application
- Montana 4-H Volunteer Agreement and Standards of Behavior
- Disclosure and Consent form
- Criminal Background Check administered through HireRight
- Check against the Montana Sexual and Violent Offender Registry
- Orientation of accepted volunteers
- Annual re-enrollment of accepted volunteers

All background check information received through the volunteer certification process is confidential and should be handled as such. Information, forms, and letters should be stored in the volunteer applicant's file when not in direct use by a County Extension faculty or staff member. These files should be secured and accessible only by County Extension faculty or staff.

STEPS IN THE VOLUNTEER CERTIFICATION PROCESS

1. Volunteer applicant discusses volunteer opportunities with a County Extension faculty or staff member.
2. Applicant completes:
 - a. Montana 4-H Volunteer Application
 - b. Montana 4-H Volunteer Agreement and Standards of Behavior
 - c. Disclosure and Consent Form for Background Check.
3. County Extension Office:
 - a. Collects the forms from the applicant, checks for completeness, and creates a file for the volunteer applicant.
 - b. Collects \$12 from the applicant to cover the criminal background check or agrees to pay the \$12 fee (council, county budget, county foundation, etc.).
 - c. Checks volunteer applicant name against the Montana Sexual or Violent Offender Registry - <http://www.doj.mt.gov/svor/> . If the volunteer applicant is listed on the registry, the County Extension Office will notify the Montana 4-H Center for Youth Development.
 - d. Enters volunteer applicant information on the HireRight website: www.hireright.com
 - e. Enters volunteer applicant information on the Volunteer Certification Spreadsheet.
 - f. Submits the Volunteer Certification Spreadsheet via email to 4hvolunteer@montana.edu
 - g. Submits via certified mail (or other mailing service that allows package tracking) to the Montana 4-H Center for Youth Development:
 - i. Payment Form - complete form

- ii. Fee payments - payment should be in the form of one county check (not individual applicant checks or cash) and should be made payable to Montana 4-H.
 - iii. Copy of Volunteer Application(s) in which the applicant(s) self-disclosed information in questions a-e in Section III – Personal Background.
- 4. Montana 4-H Center for Youth Development:
 - a. Reviews information obtained in the criminal background checks from HireRight and information received from the County Extension Offices regarding the applicant.
 - b. Makes a decision regarding the volunteer application. A committee at the Montana 4-H Center for Youth Development will make decisions regarding volunteer acceptance with consultation from Extension Human Resources and/or MSU Legal Counsel as needed. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis and will be based on the nature of information provided by the applicant, information obtained through HireRight, and information obtained through the Montana Sexual or Violent Offender Registry.
 - c. Notifies the county regarding acceptance and non-acceptance of submitted volunteers.
- 5. Letters will be sent to applicants:
 - a. County Extension Offices will notify applicants that are accepted as volunteers using the template acceptance letter provided by the 4-H Center (www.montana4h.org) or a county specific letter of acceptance.
 - b. The Montana 4-H Center for Youth Development will notify applicants that are not accepted as volunteers or are accepted as volunteers with imposed conditions with a letter which will be copied to the County Extension Office. A grievance policy will be outlined in the letter.
- 6. Accepted volunteers will participate in a volunteer orientation. Counties will provide leadership for orientations. Orientation resources can be downloaded from the Montana 4-H website (www.montana4h.org).
- 7. Accepted volunteers will reenroll every year. Volunteers should complete the following on a yearly basis:
 - a. Review/edit and sign an annual enrollment printout from the Blue Ribbon program.
 - b. Complete and sign the Montana 4-H Volunteer Personal Background form.
 - c. Complete and sign the Montana 4-H Volunteer Agreement and Standards of Behavior form
- 8. County Extension faculty or staff will review all forms for completeness and review the Montana 4-H Volunteer Personal Background form for new information regarding the volunteer's self-disclosed personal background.