



4-H Youth Development

MARYLAND 4-H ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

University of Maryland Cooperative Extension administers the 4-H youth development program. The mission of the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension 4-H Youth Development program is to develop youth to reach their fullest potential as capable, competent, caring, and contributing individuals. Each county and Baltimore city in Maryland conducts 4-H youth development programs to accomplish this goal. To accomplish this mission, Maryland 4-H affirms the use of different organizational structures, designed to best meet the needs of the youth we reach. We strive to provide all youth with a 4-H experience that provides both high content (subject matter/curriculum) and high context (essential elements for positive youth development).

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

A. 4-H Clubs

4-H clubs are a group of youth, led by an adult, with a planned program that is carried on throughout all or most of the year. 4-H clubs may meet in any location and typically have elected officers and a set of by-laws approved by the membership to govern the club. Maryland 4-H club guidelines include:

- 1) Minimum of five members between the ages of 8 and 18.
- 2) Organized with elected officers such as president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer.
- 3) Adult leadership provided by at least one MCE volunteer organizational leader.
- 4) Project and activity leadership provided by MCE volunteers and teen leaders.
- 5) At least six or more regularly scheduled club meetings per year.
- 6) A written, planned educational program that provides a variety of learning experiences.
- 7) Written by-laws developed by club members.

A1. **Community clubs** typically meet in the evenings or on weekends and offer self-chosen, multiple learning experiences and activities.

A2. **In-school clubs** meet during school hours but have officers and planned activities beyond school enrichment.

A3. **4-H after-school clubs** are organized within child care settings. They have officers and planned activities.

A4. **Military 4-H clubs** are organized by the Armed Forces, often on military installations, and principally for military dependents.

B. 4-H Afterschool and Out of School Programs

Educational programs offered to groups of youth outside of school hours, usually in a school or other community center and incorporating 4-H curricula, with at least six hours of instruction and participation. These 4-H programs are not a part of the school curriculum and are not restricted to members of organized 4-H clubs. The program should include the use of trained program staff and/or MCE volunteers. (Note: 4-H clubs in afterschool and out of school time programs should be reported under “II A3 Organized 4-H Afterschool Clubs.”)

C. 4-H Special Interest Groups or Short Term Programs

4-H Special Interest Groups or Short Term Programs are defined as groups of youth meeting for a series of defined learning experiences, usually specific in subject content and with at least six hours of instruction and participation. The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), Food Stamp Nutrition Education (FSNE), and Junior Master Gardeners are examples of 4-H special interest or short term programs. These educational programs are not a part of the school curriculum and are not restricted to members of organized 4-H clubs. The program should include the use of MCE volunteers.

D. 4-H Camping Programs

4-H camping programs are defined as an Extension-planned educational experience of group living in the out-of-doors.

E1. Overnight camping includes being away from home at least one night (resident, primitive, or travel camping) and is not restricted to members of organized 4-H clubs.

E2. Day camping consists of multiple-day programs, with youth returning home each evening, and is not restricted to members of organized 4-H clubs.

E. 4-H School Enrichment

4-H School Enrichment is defined as groups of youth receiving a sequence of 4-H learning experiences in cooperation with school officials, during school hours, to support the school curriculum with at least four hours of instruction. Teaching may be done by extension staff, MCE volunteers, teachers, or other school-based staff.

F. 4-H Independent or Individual Study

4-H Independent or Individual Study youth participate in planned learning which occurs independent of a formal group setting, as an individual, paired, or family learning effort. The work is self-directed, usually with limited adult involvement except for parents (or mentors). Self-study, home study, mentoring or shadowing with an “expert,” and whole families learning together are examples of 4-H independent or individual study

Clover 4-H Clubs/Groups

Clovers, ages 5-7, may participate in 4-H Clover Clubs/Groups. Clover Clubs/Groups may be individual club units, or part of existing 4-H Clubs/Groups. Clover participants, ages 5-7, must be provided age-appropriate learning opportunities separate from older youth. Individually established Clover Clubs/Groups are not chartered. The minimum requirements for 4-H Clover Clubs/Groups are:

1. 2 MCE Volunteers trained in the following areas:
 - MCE Volunteer Policy
 - Policies and curriculum of the Maryland 4-H Clover program.
 - Learning and developmental characteristics of youth, ages 5-7.
2. Five or more youth, ages 5-7
3. 1:6 ratio (adults/teens: members) minimum that must be maintained
4. A planned program which utilizes age appropriate Clover curriculum