



4-H Cloverbud Program Policy Information

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“Participation, safety, personal development and learning are the highest priorities for involvement in 4-H.”

Introduction

Participation, safety, personal development, learning and fun are the highest priorities for Michigan 4-H Youth Development in providing cloverbud programs for 5- to 8-year-olds. The policies outlined in this document seek to ensure that 4-H cloverbud members remain safe and have positive, developmentally appropriate experiences in 4-H.

Determination for developmental appropriateness rests with 4-H staff members, supported by Michigan State University Extension.

Program Name

County 4-H programs are asked to use the name “4-H cloverbuds” when identifying 4-H members aged 5 to 8. Even if a county 4-H program chooses to use a different name for members in this age group, the county 4-H program still must follow the policies established for Michigan 4-H cloverbuds.

Participant Age

Children aged 5 to 8 on January 1 of the 4-H program year are 4-H cloverbud members.

Enrollment

Leaders will complete 4-H member enrollment forms for 4-H cloverbud members. On the form, the club name and number should be that of their 4-H club (for example, Trail Blazers 4-H Cloverbuds or Busy Bee 4-H Cloverbuds). The **project code** for 4-H cloverbuds is **FD: Introductory 4-H Projects**. This is the code for recording the involvement of 5- to 8-year-olds on the federal ES-237 statistical report. Counties may use additional tracking methods in the Blue Ribbon software program to record members’ specific interest areas.

Learning Experiences

Children aged 5 to 8 need to be involved in activities and learning experiences that are developmentally

appropriate. Children in this age group typically are full of energy and willing to learn, and need educational materials designed for their specific abilities, needs and interests. In addition, activities and learning experiences should be geared to the informal settings offered by 4-H. Research indicates that competition at this age is not developmentally appropriate. It is important that 5- to 8-year-olds be involved in activities where the risk of failure is minimized and the opportunity to experience success is maximized. Educational programs for 5- to 8-year-olds should focus on cooperative learning. The participation and learning of the child should be the ultimate goal.

Curriculum

The curriculum used in 4-H cloverbud activities must be developmentally appropriate. The *Michigan 4-H Cloverbud Resource Box* offers more than 75 age- and developmentally appropriate activities. Theme areas in the box include plants and animals, citizenship, service learning, healthy lifestyles, environmental and earth science, consumerism and family science, science and technology and more. For more 4-H cloverbud resources, visit the following curriculum and educational resource sites:

- Montana 4-H Cloverbud Clubs (<http://www.montana.edu/www4h/cloverbuds.html>)
- Ohio 4-H Cloverbud Connections (<http://cloverbudconnections.osu.edu/>)
- National 4-H Cooperative Curriculum System (<http://www.n4hccs.org/>)
- Minnesota 4-H Policy (<http://www.fourh.umn.edu/staffonly/policy/#mn4h>)
- Pennsylvania 4-H Cloverbuds Curriculum (<http://pa4h.cas.psu.edu/Curricula/Cloverbuds.html>)
- Missouri 4-H Clover Kids (<http://4h.missouri.edu/go/Cloverkids/>)



Participation in 4-H Activities

It is important that a parent or adult or older teen volunteer be with cloverbud members while they participate in 4-H activities at all levels. The recommended ratio is one adult or older teen for every six children. Some activities may require a higher ratio of adults or older teens to children. For example, animal activities require a 1-to-1 ratio. Cloverbud members may participate in 4-H at the local, county, regional and state levels in the following ways:

- **At the local level** – Cloverbuds may participate through authorized 4-H delivery systems such as community clubs, project clubs and special interest groups. Activities may include meetings, community service activities, tutoring, recreation and tours.
- **At the county, regional and state levels** – Cloverbuds may participate in noncompetitive, age-appropriate activities that are designed for this age group. These activities may include day or resident camps, workshops and clinics.
- **State 4-H workshops and events** – Refer to specific workshop and event announcements for age guidelines.

Cloverbuds & Animals

Cloverbuds often do not own the project animals that they work with in 4-H educational experiences. Animals used during the year at club events and meetings can be brought in or shared by older members to help cloverbuds become accustomed to working with animals.

Age- and developmentally appropriate activities or topics that could be explored in learn-by doing experiences include:

- Identifying species, breeds, parts and tracks of animals
- Recognizing differences between animals
- Constructing the ideal animal
- Selecting and identifying equipment
- Observing animal behavior
- Learning livestock terms
- Determining an animal's age
- Exploring a veterinary clinic
- Grooming an animal
- Identifying products from animals
- Exploring what animals eat

- Touring a feed store
- Feeding an animal
- Visiting a zoo, pet store or farm
- Attending a 4-H meeting
- Giving a short presentation
- Keeping a scrapbook
- Learning animal photography

4-H volunteer leaders must work within the guidelines of the cloverbud policy to ensure that children are safe at all times. Their emphasis remains on the young people and on providing educational, activity-centered experiences.

If 4-H cloverbud members are to have direct contact with an animal, the contact must take place with direct, one-on-one assistance from a responsible parent, guardian or adult volunteer. The parent, guardian or adult volunteer must be with or near the child at all times while the child is in contact with the animal.

4-H cloverbud members must wear ASTM- or SEI-approved helmets for all 4-H cloverbud horse experiences.

Five- and 6-year-olds may be involved with animals on a halter and lead. They must be directly assisted one-on-one by a parent, guardian or adult volunteer who is on the ground holding the animal's halter or lead to maximize safety. When 5- and 6-year-olds are working with horses, assistance must be provided by adults on foot, rather than mounted on other horses.

Children aged 5 and 6 may be involved with nonhalted animals such as swine, chickens and rabbits. Again, each 4-H cloverbud must be directly assisted one-on-one by a parent, guardian or adult volunteer while the child is in contact with the animal.

4-H cloverbuds who are 7 and 8 (who haven't reached the 4-H age of 9) may be involved with an animal on a halter and lead. They must be assisted by either a parent or guardian or another adult or older youth volunteer who is on the ground holding the halter and lead.

In the 4-H horse project, walk-trot experiences may be an appropriate activity for children in this age group, with adult volunteers in the ring with the children at all times.

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Cloverbuds & Bicycle Activities

Cloverbuds participants in bicycle activities must wear properly fitted, ANSI- or SNELL-approved helmets.

Cloverbuds & Food Preparation Activities

Adult or older youth supervision must be provided at all times in activities involving food preparation and handling.

Cloverbuds & Service Learning Activities

Service learning activities are excellent, engaging activities for 4-H cloverbuds; however, the safety concerns involved in road and stream cleanups make them inappropriate for this age group. The Michigan Department of Transportation and most county road commissions have specific guidelines on the age of participants and adult-to-child ratios for “adopt-a-road” programs. The appropriate organization should be contacted before arranging such activities.

An excellent reference on cloverbuds and service learning is “Service and Cloverbuds – A Great Fit,” which is available online at <http://web1.msue.msu.edu/cyff/youth/commserv/cloverbudservice.pdf>.

Cloverbuds & Shooting Sports Activities

Youth aged 7 to 8 can participate in BB gun and basic archery training. Participation is at the discretion of the certified 4-H instructor. The participant must be under direct, one-on-one adult supervision when involved with BB gun and basic archery training.

Cloverbuds & Competitive Events

4-H cloverbud events and activities shall not be designed or structured as peer competitions. Peer competition is defined as two or more individuals

or groups working to achieve an outcome where one individual or group is declared the winner or finishes in first place. A 4-H or 4-H–sponsored event is one that uses the name of the event and the 4-H name and emblem in promoting the event. Examples of competitive events include judging contests, exhibits, shows and other performance activities. It is not the intention of this policy to prevent young people aged 8 and under from participating in informal games at 4-H gatherings or meetings (for example, family volleyball games at 4-H picnics or games of dodgeball at 4-H meetings).

4-H Exhibitions

Cloverbuds are encouraged to exhibit the work they complete in their 4-H cloverbud groups or clubs. The setting must be noncompetitive, with equal recognition given to all participants. “Show and tell” type of noncompetitive interviews, in which cloverbuds members – either individually or as a group – bring an exhibit to talk about, is an appropriate type of exhibition experience. Occasionally this exhibit is a live animal, but more often pictures, drawings or other items are used. If a 4-H cloverbud exhibition activity involves direct contact with animals it must follow the Michigan 4-H Cloverbud program policies.

4-H–developed competitive classes, sales, treaties and auction activities are not appropriate activities for this age group.

In some cases non-Michigan 4-H organizations such as fair boards or other sponsors may offer activities for this age group that are not consistent with 4-H cloverbud policies. Participation in these types of activities is the decision of the young person and his or her family and is not considered a Michigan 4-H Youth Development activity. It is important for the sponsoring unit to take every possible precaution to ensure the child’s safety.



For More Information

For more information on programming with 4-H cloverbuds, contact your **county MSU Extension office** or:

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