



Michigan 4-H Participant Age Policy

FOR THE 4-H PROGRAM YEAR BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 1, 2018, AND BEYOND.

Michigan 4-H Youth Development programs are designed with respect for the physical, cognitive (thinking), social and emotional development of youth. When parents and caregivers entrust their children to the care of others in organizations such as 4-H, these organizations must hold themselves to a high standard of accountability for the positive development of those young people.

The following Michigan 4-H Participant Age Policy is designed to provide guidelines for age-appropriate youth involvement that is mentally and physically safe, developmentally appropriate and educationally focused.

MICHIGAN 4-H PARTICIPANT AGE POLICY

Michigan 4-H Youth Development programs are open to young people aged 5 through 19. “4-H age” is determined by a young person’s age as of January 1 of the program year, which runs September 1 through August 31.

4-H participation can involve age-appropriate experiences designed for youth aged 5 to 7 and youth aged 8 to 19.

4-H CLOVERBUD MEMBERS (AGES 5 TO 7)

Many county 4-H programs offer programs for children aged 5 to 7 (officially called “4-H Cloverbuds” by Michigan 4-H Youth Development). Like 4-H activities for older youth, 4-H Cloverbud programs are designed to be safe, age appropriate, educational and fun. A key difference, however, is that 4-H Cloverbud activities have a noncompetitive, exploratory focus.

Effective programming with this age group is activity-based, cooperative, fun, experiential and varied. 4-H participation at this level is considered introductory and less project focused than programs for older 4-H’ers. It allows youth members to experience a variety of learning opportunities.

4-H MEMBERS (AGES 8 TO 19)

4-H programs are offered in all Michigan counties for youth aged 8 to 19. These activities are designed to be safe, age appropriate, educational and fun. Most counties offer noncompetitive and competitive opportunities (that is, events in which participants’ efforts are judged, ranked or placed) for young people in this age group. 4-H participation at this level can be focused on specific projects with an emphasis on developing and improving skills. (Within this age group, there may also be specific age restrictions on participation in events and activities based on content.) Once a young person passes 4-H age 19, he or she can stay involved in 4-H activities as a volunteer or resource person, but not as a 4-H member.

4-H experiences for youth aged 8 to 13 allow for development of positive self-image, allow for more responsibility and decision-making, encourage independence in thought and learning, encourage teamwork and friend-making skills, and encourage thinking, planning and doing to create positive futures.

4-H experiences for youth aged 14 to 19 are designed to help them increase and maintain their knowledge of self and their self-esteem, increase their independence, increase their responsibility and complex decision-making skills, enhance their goal-setting and goal-reaching skills, build strong relationships and improve interpersonal communication skills.





4-H ENROLLMENT

The first step in the enrollment process is selecting a club. 4-H clubs are the primary delivery model for 4-H programs and provide youth with unlimited opportunities for learning, relationship-building and fun. County 4-H program coordinators will assist youth and families in identifying a 4-H club in the community that meets their interest areas and availability, if they have not previously selected one.

Once a 4-H club has been determined, 4-H enrollment is handled online through the 4-H Online system at mi.4honline.com. For assistance accessing the internet, contact the [county Michigan State University \(MSU\) Extension](#) office.

There is a \$20 participation fee for each child enrolled in 4-H during any given program year. This fee applies to 4-H Cloverbuds and 4-H members. For families with three or more children, the maximum enrollment fee per family is \$60 per year.

WHAT YOUTH CAN DO IN 4-H BY AGE

A variety of 4-H experiences are open to Michigan young people aged 5 to 19. A sampling is listed here. Please note that not all 4-H experiences are open to all age groups.

AGES 5 TO 7

Age-appropriate activities in all 4-H project areas including but not limited to animal experiences with direct one-on-one adult assistance; low-risk community service activities with adult supervision; noncompetitive shows and exhibitions, day camps and club activities (4-H Cloverbuds may not participate in competitive classes, sales, treaties and auctions at 4-H events. See the 4-H Cloverbud Learning Guidelines document at http://msue.anr.msu.edu/resources/michigan_4_h_cloverbud_learning_guidelines for more specific examples.)

AGES 8 TO 13

Age-appropriate activities in all 4-H project areas, community service activities, camps, trips, tours and exchanges, and fair and nonfair noncompetitive and competitive events including demonstrations, exhibitions, shows, sales and auctions.

AGES 14 TO 19

Age-appropriate activities in all 4-H project areas, teen leadership experiences including leading specific project area learning by younger youth, camps, trips, tours and exchanges, fair and nonfair noncompetitive and competitive events including the state 4-H awards program, demonstrations, exhibitions, shows, sales and auctions.

AGES 20 AND OLDER

4-H'ers with disabilities may continue as 4-H'ers regardless of their upper age with special permission from their county 4-H staff. (Note that Michigan law stipulates that a student with a disability is entitled to continue in a special education program of service until the end of the school year in which he or she reaches age 26.) Determination for developmental appropriateness rests with the 4-H staff member, supported by MSU Extension.

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Youth without disabilities are encouraged to continue their 4-H involvement after age 19 by moving into [volunteer roles](#) that help to develop age-appropriate leadership skills.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

You can find out more about the 4-H Participant Age Policy by reading the 4-H Participant Age Policy Frequently Asked Questions on the internet at http://msue.anr.msu.edu/resources/michigan_4_h_participant_age_policy_faq. You can also contact your county MSU Extension office, found on the web at <http://msue.anr.msu.edu/county> or:

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