

Risk Management for 4-H Youth Development Work: Basic Building Blocks for All¹

Dale Pracht, Marilyn Norman, Kate Fogarty, and Jean Hink²

This is the second of an eight-part series that explains Risk Management for 4-H Youth Development Work. This publication will focus on basic overall precautions to be taken by everyone involved with 4-H.

In many 4-H activities, it is important to recognize the possibility of risks occurring. The goal of any 4-H experience is to successfully conduct educational events and activities that coincide with the 4-H mission and mandates while protecting participants. The safety of participants, sponsors, property, finances, and the goodwill/reputation of the 4-H name can be at risk. Although risk may sometimes be avoided, other times it is inevitable or worth the trade-off for the activity planned. This risk management guide has been created to prepare for activities that may involve risk and outline ways to deal with the risk.

Alcohol and Drug Use

Under no circumstance should a 4-H volunteer or youth partake in alcohol or other drug use before or during 4-H events. This is not tolerated and can lead to expulsion from 4-H activities. The risk that is

involved in alcohol and other drugs being present during activities is great; every precautionary step to avoid this risk is necessary for the safety of the youth involved (Handbook, 1999, p.4).

Emergency Procedures

Even with risk management plans in place, emergencies still happen. Planning for emergencies is needed as a part of the risk management plan. Some emergencies include:

- Truancy (e.g., youth leaving premises of camp location in which adults are custodians)
- Accidents or injuries
- Weather related changes
- Medical conditions (preconditions or those brought on by something at the event)

In the Case of an Emergency

1. Your first priority is to provide appropriate medical attention to the injured participant. Call 911, police, or ambulance as appropriate. Note: If it is necessary to leave the accident scene to

1. This document is 4H10.2, one of a series of the 4-H Youth Development Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Original publication date August 2010. Visit the EDIS Website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
2. Dale Pracht, assistant professor; Marilyn Norman, associate professor and State 4-H Program Leader; Kate Fogarty, assistant professor; Jean Hink, extension agent, Pasco County, Florida; Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences; Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences; University of Florida; Gainesville 32611.

secure emergency care, a responsible program representative should stay at the scene.

2. Contact the parent or guardian as soon as possible.
3. Contact the county extension director.
4. Contact UF Extension. Start with the district director and then state 4-H program office. If the incident occurs after hours or on weekends, don't hesitate to contact the program leader or district director at home. The individual you contact will be responsible for making additional UF Extension contacts on your behalf.
5. The county, district, and state personnel will want to coordinate media responses with local staff and in some cases may prefer to be the source of information for media regarding the incident. The program leader or district director's office can help facilitate your access to immediate support from UF staff. UF-Extension has support available to assist in the situation. It is important to have one spokesperson for the media and a back up person if that person is not available.
6. After the situation is stabilized and the appropriate parties have been contacted, complete a detailed accident/incident report. A general incident report is located at <http://www.ehs.ufl.edu/RiskMgmt/Acdntrpt.htm> Contact your county insurance/risk manager to determine if your county requires the information in a specific format.

It is important that paid and volunteer staff involved in a program or event knows the emergency plan. Don't attempt to work through handling the emergency alone. There is a strong support available through UF-Extension. Use it.

Emergency Plan



Figure 1. Emergency Plan Flowchart

Finances

Financial matters can be risky especially in 4-H club settings. In order to maintain a secure way of dealing with financial matters, the following guidelines have been put in place.

- Money raised in the name of 4-H must be handled properly. The *4-H Program Handbook* (also, see EDIS Fact Sheet 4-H 5.1 *Procedure for Handling 4-H Accounts: 4-H Financial Management* <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/4h251>) provides specific guidelines to insure that 4-H monies are handled in a responsible, accountable manner and used for 4-H youth educational programs.
- Employee Identification Numbers (EIN) for each club or county entity using the 4-H name and emblem should be on file in the county extension office.
- Fundraising efforts and club accounts should be reviewed and approved by the county extension office on a regular basis.

Health Information (Participant Form)

- A health information/consent for medical treatment form is mandatory for all participants in overnight programs, including adults.
- Treat all health information confidentially, although 4-H activities and camp are not subject to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPPA) Privacy Rule and be found at <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/understanding/summary/index.html> .
- Work with your facility to insure that risk management plans are in place to make your educational experience successful.

Internet Safety

As the Internet becomes more predominant in society, youth are using the Web more and more often. In designing Extension or 4-H Websites, youth should not be identified by their names or 4-H clubs.

- Warn children about the dangers of putting too much information on social networking sites. For example, children may add messages to their sites, such as, "Gone to 4-H Camp Ocala...be back next week." Anyone interested in finding 4-H Camp Ocala and seeing this child could very easily find it and visit.

It is important for adults and youth to be aware of risks associated with Internet use. It can put an individual at risk as well as the whole group of people in any given setting.

Religious Neutrality

While working with anything 4-H related, note the following:

- There should be minimal to no expression of only one faith
- Taking the risk of offering a prayer at a meeting that may offend someone of a different culture should be considered
- The youth may spontaneously pray, offer inspirational thoughts, or read verses from an inspirational or religious source. An adult doing this instead of a child may symbolize that the adult is open to only one religion and not the many that are visible in the world today (Religious neutrality, 2006).

References

4-H statement on religion neutrality. (2006). From 4-H and religious expression 110502 doc, approved by Florida legal counsel.

Brenner, E., & Freundlich, M. (2006). Enhancing the safety of children in foster care and family support programs: Automated critical incident reporting. *Child Welfare*, 85(5), 611–632.

Drug and alcohol abuse. (1999). In Florida 4-H program handbook (Sec 4: p.4). Gainesville, FL: UF.