



## UF/IFAS Extension Florida 4-H Youth Protection Policy

### Definitions

**Level 1 Volunteer:** serving in a non-supervisory (Care, Custody, or Control of Minors) role of youth or non-supervisory role of other volunteers. Serving less than 10 hours per month.

**Level 2 Volunteer:** serving in a supervisory youth (Care, Custody, or Control of Minors) or supervising other volunteers or volunteering more than 10 hours per month.

**After-School/Out-of-School Programming:** extended learning programs occurring outside of the normal school day hours.

**Summer Programming:** summer activities and events to include Residential/Overnight and Day Camp events at the local, state, or national levels.

**Law Enforcement:** an individual employed by local county or state law enforcement agency, having completed all DCF background screening requirements.

**Military Youth Programs:** an individual employed by military youth programs, working on installation, and completed required military youth program background screening requirements.

**School District Staff:** employed by a local school district, having completed DCF requirements.

**4-H Online:** approved volunteer and membership management system for UF/IFAS youth development programs.

### Reporting Child Abuse, Neglect, or Abandonment

Florida state law mandates any person who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that a child is abused, abandoned, or neglected by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child's welfare is a mandatory reporter. Required reports include those of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect, sexual abuse of a child, and juvenile sexual abuse; reports of death; and reports involving a child who has exhibited inappropriate sexual behavior. Immediately report abuse to the central abuse hotline. Additional information can be located at the University of Florida Youth Compliance website <https://youth.compliance.ufl.edu/reporting/>.

#### 1. Report to DCF.

- Telephone: 1-800-962-2873 (24-Hour Hotline)
- Fax: 1-800-914-0004
  - [Fax Reporting Form](#)
- TDD: 1-800-453-5145
- Online: <https://www.myflfamilies.com/services/abuse/abuse-hotline/how-report-abuse>

#### 2. Report to Youth Compliance.

#### 3. Report to your supervisor.

#### Procedure for Reporting to Youth Compliance Program:

#### 1. After reporting child abuse to DCF, submit

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An Equal Opportunity Institution. 4-H is the nation's largest youth development organization. Over 230,000 members in the State of Florida help to make up the community of more than 6.5 million young people across America. 4-H is a non-formal, practical educational program for youth. Florida 4-H is the youth development program of Florida Cooperative Extension, a part of the University of Florida/IFAS.

Incident Report to UF Youth Compliance within 12 hours of reporting abuse.

2. Obtain confirmation number for abuse report.
3. Provide a valid email address if online report is submitted.
4. Provide reporter's information, the date and time abuse was reported, and DCF confirmation number.

## Register Youth Programs in 4-H Online

### Enrollment System in Lieu of UF Youth Compliance Program

Keeping up-to-date information about 4-H participants and their interactions with other people is required. In accordance with Youth Compliance requirements for UF-affiliated youth activities, all youth supervised by UF/IFAS Extension entities must be reported individually in [4-H Online](#), regardless of program hours.

- Volunteers associated with youth activity must have current profiles in 4-H Online.
- Youth and adult profiles must be connected to the specific program in 4-H Online.
- A roster (group enrollment) may be added to 4-H Online when it is difficult or impossible to enroll youth individually. A youth roster must include name, birthdate, mailing address, parent/guardian names, and contact information. Also, include names of employees and volunteers serving with youth.
- Employee/Volunteer roster needs to include the name, phone number, date of most recent Youth Protection Training completed, and date of most recent screening (if required).

UF/IFAS youth activities that are not reported in 4-H Online must register events directly with Youth Compliance office.

## Youth Protection Training

All University of Florida-affiliated youth programs are responsible for ensuring that any program employees, volunteers, and other individuals directly in contact with minors under the age of 18 successfully complete an annual Youth Protection Training. This training must be completed before interacting with 4-H youth.

Volunteers must access the training at [4-H Online](#) as a part of the enrollment process.

UF Faculty & Staff access the training in these steps:

1. Navigate UF's myTraining at <http://mytraining.hr.ufl.edu/>.
2. If you have a Gatorlink account, you may use that credential to log-in.
3. Start the training by choosing: YCS800.

Visit <https://youth.compliance.ufl.edu/protection-requirements/youth-protection-training/> for more information about the Youth Protection Training.

## Background Screening Requirements

Level 2 Department of Children and Families (DCF) Clearinghouse background screening is required by state law before having Care, Custody, or Control of Minors for working/serving 10 hours or more in a month during a Florida 4-H program.

Both 4-H UF/IFAS Florida Afterschool (e.g., leading a community 4-H club) and Florida 4-H Summer Program screenings are required for Level 2 screening.

Out of state background checks will be required by DCF for individuals who have lived outside of Florida in the past 5 years.

## Additional Screening Information

- Volunteers needing DCF Clearinghouse screening will also need to complete the Attestation of Good Moral Character and Privacy Policy forms in 4-H Online.
- A break in service of over 90 days will require rescreening and clearance prior to beginning service with youth. For episodic volunteers (who serve specific functions throughout the year), it is not considered a break in service if they remain an enrolled 4-H volunteer and their service remains in good standing with the IFAS faculty/staff who has appointed them.
- Individuals with background screening through the DCF Clearinghouse must be rescreened every 5 years from the original fingerprinting date on file in the DCF Clearinghouse database.
- Volunteer screening information must be kept updated.
  - Approval/Denial letter by the county agent in 4-H Online
  - DCF Clearinghouse eligibility and print expiration dates, along with DCF report record and date uploaded by the person facilitating screenings.

## Screening Exceptions & Special Circumstances

### Public School Board Employees

Public school board employees in the state of Florida who have been screened in accordance with Chapter 1012 of the Florida Statutes within the past 5 years are exempt from DCF Clearinghouse background screening when providing 4-H programming during school hours/school district sanctioned activities (such as an afterschool program where the school has care, custody, or control of the minors) and for Florida 4-H Summer

Program (residential/overnight events). Verification on school letterhead sent via official mail or email is required, stating the person is a current employee who has been screened under the Chapter 1012 standards within the past 5.

Private school teachers and employees are screened under the Volunteer and Employee Criminal History System (VECHS). Individuals screened through VECHS are not exempt from being screened through the DCF Clearinghouse.

Please Note: Attestation of Good Moral Character acceptance and Youth Protection training in 4-H Online are required prior to working/serving with minor participants.

### Law Enforcement and Corrections Officers

Currently employed law enforcement and corrections officers in the state of Florida are exempt from DCF Clearinghouse background screening for only Florida 4-H Summer Program (residential/overnight events). Verification on law enforcement letterhead sent via official mail or email is required before beginning service.

Please Note: Attestation of Good Moral Character acceptance and Youth Protection training in 4-H Online are required prior to working/serving with minor participants.

### Military Youth Programs

Employees of any branch of the military also employed in a military youth program facility have been screened through a rigorous process. The Department of Defense-United States Department of Agriculture MOU provides support for the 4-H Military Partnerships. These paid staff, who work in support of the 4-H Military Partnerships by providing 4-H youth development programming on installations, are exempt from screening.

Please Note: Public School Board, Law Enforcement, and Military Youth Program employees who wish to lead a 4-H Club outside of their program

will be required to complete Level 2 Volunteer screening.

#### **4-H Volunteers Serving in Schools**

4-H Volunteers serving during school hours or within a school's after-school program are subject to whatever documentation and/or screening required by the school. Individuals serving as 4-H volunteers must have completed all 4-H volunteer requirements.

#### **Parents/Guardians Attending Events with their Own Children Without Responsibility for other Minor Youth**

A parent/guardian attending a 4-H program with their own children, without responsibility of other minor youth, is exempt from screening. The parent is not acting in a volunteer role during the event.

#### **Teen Counselors**

Youth aged 18 and under who serve as "junior camp counselors," "Counselors in Training," etc. are not required to have a background check because they are not supervising (Care, Custody, or Control of Minors) other minors. These youth are youth participant members of a 4-H leadership program.

#### **Adults Helping with Programs Led by Screened Individuals**

Background screening is not required for adults who are not responsible for supervising (Care, Custody, or Control of Minors) youth during programs, work/serve less than 10 hours in a month, and are always in the presence of screened employees and/or volunteers when in contact with youth. These helpers are never left unsupervised. Examples of adult helpers include event judges, guest educators/presenters, and parents serving snacks or helping with a craft at a club meeting.

## **Background Screening of Employees**

All employees working with the Florida 4-H program are required by Florida law and UF policy to be Level 2 background screened. Employees and the employees' supervisors are responsible for ensuring their UF/IFAS and county employees are background screened and kept current, in accordance with Florida law and UF policy. Business Services will assist in processing screenings through UF Human Resources.

## **Screening Costs**

Although UF Human Resources Services pays for screening of UF employees, the costs of background screening for volunteers and county employees are the responsibility of the UF/IFAS Extension program or respective UF/IFAS units.

## **Volunteer Files**

All volunteer files must be maintained in 4-H Online. All screening documents and results as well as national sex offender search, references, approval, denial, and release letters must be uploaded under the volunteer's profile.

For continuity, it is best practice to upload interview notes, reference checks, training certificates, awards, etc. throughout the volunteer's career.

## **Interactions with Youth (aka Two Deep Policy)**

4-H faculty, staff, and volunteers will eliminate private one-on-one interactions with youth. Program coordinators will ensure they always have two authorized, level 2 enrolled individuals present during any interactions with youth. In situations that require personal conferences, the meeting is to be conducted in view of other adults. This policy includes the transportation and virtual learning of youth participants as part of a 4-H program. One

of the two authorized adults should be 21 years of age or older.

Program coordinators should make certain that activities are coordinated in a way that will ensure that appropriate supervision ratios are always in place. For more information visit <https://youth.compliance.ufl.edu/protection-requirements/supervision-of-minors/>.

## Interactions with Youth Virtually

The University has an approved list of online platforms that can be used. While facilitating online programming, it is imperative to engage in approved platforms with accounts linked to UF. University faculty and staff have access to additional platform features via the UFL system. This provides a higher level of security, which is crucial to online youth protection. Approved platforms include, but are not limited to, Zoom, YouTube, Microsoft Teams, and Google Suite. For additional information related to virtual 4-H programming, please refer to the 4-H Online Youth Protection Resource Guide.

## Need Help

Leadership for 4-H Youth Development programs is provided at the following levels by these individuals:

County: [UF/IFAS Extension 4-H Agent](#)

Extension Administrative Districts: [4-H Regional Specialized Agents](#)

Statewide/Campus:

[Florida 4-H Headquarters](#)

[State Specialized Agent, Volunteer Management and Development](#)

[4-H Business Services](#)

[UF Youth Compliance](#)

For any questions related to 4-H Youth Protection, please contact the 4-H State Specialized Agent of Volunteer Management and Development, Dr. Candi Dierenfield, by email at [candi.lee@ufl.edu](mailto:candi.lee@ufl.edu).

For any questions related to volunteer screening, please contact 4-H Business Services by email at [4hbgs@ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:4hbgs@ifas.ufl.edu).

For questions regarding 4-H Online, please contact Matthew Olson by email at [m.olson@ufl.edu](mailto:m.olson@ufl.edu).