UF IFAS Extension UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

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4-H VOLUNTEER TRAINING SERIES

Planning a Successful Field Trip

This is one publication in the 4-H Volunteer Training Series. This EDIS series prepares 4-H volunteers to apply positive youth development best practices. Field trips can be great experiences for youth to learn project content and life skills. Field trips also contribute to the experiential learning philosophy of 4-H. This publication includes some suggestions to make field trips educational, safe, and fun.

Develop a Plan for Educational 4-H Project Learning Activities

Planning 4-H club activities ahead of time will make it a more engaging experience for youth and a less stressful one for you. Involve youth in planning and doing. As you plan project activities such as field trips, consider the following:

- What do youth want to learn?
- What teaching methods will be used?
- What opportunities for hands-on experiences will be included?
- How can the field trip be used to introduce or culminate a project?
- How can the trip/activities be made more special and fun?
- Use the 4-H Risk Management Checklist for assistance in identifying any safety concerns.

Identify a Variety of Potential Field Trips

Look for places that

- match the needs of youth projects,
- are relevant and interesting to youth (give them choices when possible),
- are affordable, and
- are close by or within a reasonable traveling distance.

Involve Youth in the Discussion and Planning of Potential Field Trips

Encourage youth to research possible field trip destinations. Brainstorm ideas together and allow them to vote on the choices.

Tips for Brainstorming with Youth

- Have them consider where they would like to go to learn more about something.
- Discuss why these places would be beneficial to the club.
- Discuss potential concerns or barriers for individual sites.
- Create a list of potential destinations.
- Have youth vote on the destinations.
- Plan the trip together.

Tips for Deciding on a Destination

- Write places on a board/poster for themselves.
- Write ideas on index cards or sticky notes.
- Shout out ideas and have someone else record for the group.
- Give time for each member to share their input, making sure everyone gets an opportunity to provide ideas.

Written by K. G. Diem. Revised by Karen Henry, Claire Davis, Heather Kent, Melinda Souers, Paula Davis, and Candi Dierenfield.
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.

Tips for Voting

- Place three colored dots/stickers by their top three choices.
- Rank their list most liked to least liked.
- Write on a secret ballot/piece of paper.
- Raise their hand or take a standing vote.
- Ask for each vote during roll call.
- Use voice voting: "All in favor say aye."
- If the group is large, the group might create a ballot box where youth and parents can place suggestions. (See Tips for Deciding on a Destination.) A committee can review the ballots, make a list of the ideas, and then have the membership vote.
- Use the process that works best to involve all members.

Prepare 4-H'ers for the Trip

- Explain where they are going and what they will do.
- Agree on rules of behavior and safety.
- Encourage them to devise questions to ask when they get there.
- Identify important points of interest in advance.
- Provide communications about what they will need to know or do in advance. Clarify expectations and information regarding food, clothing, money, whether siblings and parents can attend, if parents need to provide transportation, registration deadlines, the minimum or maximum number of attendees required to hold the trip, and so forth.

Consider These Field Trip Ideas

- Environmental centers, nature centers, or state/national parks
- Bird sanctuaries or wildlife refuges
- Historical sites or museums
- Hiking, biking, walking, and/or canoeing
- Farms, orchards, greenhouses, or nurseries
- Factories or corporations
- Government offices and/or agencies
- University offices, laboratories, or research stations
- Hospitals or veterinary clinics
- Airports, train stations, or bus terminals
- Cultural festivals
- Supermarkets or other retail stores
- Zoos, hatcheries, or aquariums
- Radio stations, television stations, or newspapers
- Police or fire stations
- Restaurants or bakeries

Bring the Field Trip to You!

When you cannot go to the "field," bring the "field" to you. This can be done by video, guest speaker, demonstration, games, or simulations. Let kids use their imagination and natural curiosity. By being creative, nothing is an obstacle to fun learning.

Contact the Site

- Call in advance.
- Make reservations if needed.
- Find out if there are fees. Ask for group rate discounts and check methods of payment.
- Visit the site in advance, if possible.
- Check to see if the site is accessible for people with disabilities.
- If there is a contract, you do not sign. Extension volunteers are not allowed to sign contracts. If a faculty member, staff member, or volunteer signs a contract, it means that they become personally liable for the terms of the contract. See EDIS publication #4H10.4, "Risk Management for Florida 4-H Youth Development Work: Records and Contracts," for more details.

Arrange Transportation

- See EDIS publication #4HFSV90.8, "Risk Management for Florida 4-H Youth Development Work: Transportation," and the Florida 4-H Policies & Best Management Practices for more specific information.
- When using personal vehicles, personal insurance is primary. See EDIS publication #4H10.5, "Risk Management for Florida 4-H Youth Development Work: Insurance." Also, the minimum age to drive youth participants is 18.
- When using rental vehicles under the UF Contract, an agreement is signed at the rental agency—this is not a contract, and individuals can sign the agreement when the vehicle is picked up.
- Make sure drivers have valid licenses and follow laws and policies.
- Know how much time the trip will require.
- Have maps and directions available for all drivers.
- Share costs of fuel and tolls. Save receipts if being reimbursed.
- If the trip is long, arrange for relief drivers. Make sure to plan stops every couple of hours.
- Have phone numbers for all drivers and youth if they have a cell phone.
- Getting there can be half the fun. Consider side trips or singing and playing games along the way.
- Have copies of health forms in the vehicle with youth being transported.

Do Not Forget the Essentials

Make sure all participants bring the following:

- Food (e.g., bag lunches if not buying from a restaurant) and drinks
- Name tags
- Appropriate clothing and shoes for participants to wear
- Money for food, entrance fees, souvenirs, and other trip-related costs
- Cameras and/or video recorders

Make sure to plan the following travel itinerary:

- Lodging, if overnight
- Bathroom locations along the route
- Planned stops along the route

Recruit Adequate Adult Supervision

- Have at least two trained, Level-2 screened adults. The number of additional adults depends on the age of the youth and the type of activity (Figure 1). Based on the completed 4-H Risk Management Pre-Event Planning Guide and Matrix, additional volunteers may be needed.
- Explain roles and responsibilities to adults to ensure all are working according to the same rules and expectations. Adults can also have fun, but their main job is to serve as chaperones.

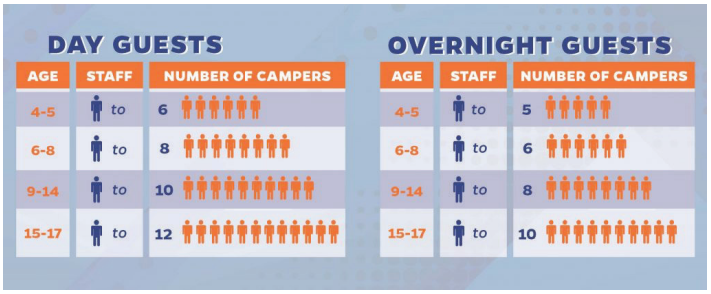

Figure 1. UF youth compliance minimum staff-to-participant ratios.
Credit: UF Youth Compliance, Supervision of Minors, https://youth.compliance.ufl.edu/protection-requirements/supervision-of-minors/

Obtain Copies of Health Forms for Youth and Adults

The leader should carry health forms for the youth and adult participants on a field trip. Copies of health forms can be obtained from your county 4-H Office.

It is good practice to review each participant's health form before the trip to be aware of any special needs.

Chaperones

All chaperones must complete the Youth Protection Training and be screened and approved. Refer to the Florida 4-H Policies & Best Management Practices and EDIS publication 4HFSV373, "Risk Management for Florida 4-H Youth Development Work: Risk Management Checklist," for more information about chaperone screening and training requirements.

Focus on Safety

- Notify your 4-H office if you are planning a field trip. Work with them to secure accident insurance coverage for participants during special events, review risk management plans, and print health forms.
- Bring first aid kits and a bottle of water.
- Keep kids together. Do periodic head counts.
- Break into smaller, more manageable groups. Have check-in times if the group splits up.
- Assign "buddies" (pairs of youth members).
- Keep printed health forms in a notebook for all youth and adults participating in the activity.
- Have a master list of names and cell phone numbers for everyone on the trip.
- Prepare an emergency plan for the unexpected. See EDIS publication #4HFSV374, "Risk Management for Florida 4-H Youth Development Work: Crisis Management and Emergency Procedures."

Capture the Experience and Memories

- Before taking photos, videos, or posting on social media, make sure to obtain photo releases on everyone in attendance.
- Consider creating a group photo database where everyone who attends can share their photos from the trip.
- Ask the club historian to create scrapbook pages about the trip.
- Ask the club reporter to prepare a new article about the trip.
- Encourage youth to journal about their trip.

Evaluate Their Experience and Share Reactions of Participants After the Trip

- What did participants learn?
- How did the experience relate to their 4-H project?
- What did participants dislike and why?
- If you were to do this trip again, what would you change or do differently?
- How will you apply what you learned to your life?
- What type of jobs were available at this location?
- What type of education is needed to work at this location?
- Would you consider this career?

Refer to EDIS publication 4HSFS101.1, "Using an Experiential Model in 4-H," for using the Do-Reflect-Apply experiential learning process.

Say "Thank You!"

This leaves a positive, lasting impression of 4-H and its members.

- Have kids decide how they want to thank people (e.g., parents, chaperones, and tour guides).
- Youth might handwrite personal notes, sign a large group card, or send souvenirs/mementos or postcards.

Share What Was Learned With Others

- Send a 4-H club report to your county 4-H office. Many counties print such highlights in the county 4-H newsletter, in the local newspaper, or on social media. There may also be opportunities to share at the 4-H Youth County Council meeting.
- Give public presentations to other clubs and to the public (such as to local service organizations).
- Create an exhibit to display in public places and at the County 4-H Fair.
- Inform the media by writing a news release or calling them in advance. (Consider inviting a reporter from the local media along with you.) Check with your Extension office for the correct procedures.

Resources

Several publications from the EDIS series, Risk Management for 4-H Youth Development Work:

- 4HFSV373, "Risk Management Checklist"
- 4HFSV374, "Crisis Management and Emergency Procedures"
- 4H10.5, "Insurance"
- 4HFSV90.1, "Pre-Event Planning Guide and Matrix"
- 4H10.4, "Records and Contracts"
- 4HFSV90.8, "Transportation"
- 4HFSV90.11, "Volunteer and Youth Protection"

Florida 4-H Policies & Best Management Practices: https://florida4h.ifas.ufl.edu/media/florida4hifasufledu/docs/Florida-4-H-Policies-Updated-06.17.25.pdf

Publication History

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