

UConn 4-H CHAPERON GUIDELINES

There are many exciting opportunities for volunteers to serve as chaperons at 4-H events and activities. These range from local field trips with club members to state and national 4-H conferences involving hundreds of teen 4-H'ers. While all of these events are fun and educational, chaperons for events do have specific responsibilities. Please review the following Policy for 4-H Chaperons with parents, guardians, or other volunteers who may assist as chaperons for field trips, exchanges, etc.

As a chaperon at a 4-H event, you are representing 4-H. The responsibility that the University of Connecticut 4-H Program has for supervision of the member is delegated to you. Through this delegation, you are assigned temporary custodial responsibility. Any parent/guardian who attends an official 4-H event, paying their own way, must follow the guidelines for chaperons and may be called upon to perform chaperon duties.

Selection

Age requirements for chaperons vary slightly depending on the activity, conference or event.

- For national 4-H award trips and competitive events, chaperons must be 25 years of age or older by the date of the event or be employed as a UConn Extension faculty/staff member. Family members should not be chaperons for youth attending these events. However, this will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis as parents/guardians often serve as coaches for national 4-H competitive events.
- For New England 4-H Programs at the Big E, chaperons may be 21 years of age or older by the date of the event provided there is another chaperon from the state delegation who is 25 years of age or older.
- UConn 4-H robotics teams participate in regional and national competitions. Custodial chaperons must be 21 years of age or older by the date of the competition. Chaperons under the age of 21 will serve in a non-custodial capacity.
- Overnight chaperones supervising at county 4-H fairs must be 21 years of age or older by the date of the event provided there is another chaperon over the age who is 25 years of age or older. Chaperons under the age of 21 will serve in a non-custodial capacity.
- Other 4-H entities such as 4-H Camps & 4-H Education Center at Auerfarm will adhere to their organization policies and the associated State of CT Camp Licensing Guidelines.

An appropriate chaperon/youth ratio or, in most instances, at least 1 adult to 8 youth must be maintained. Chaperons should be selected who will maximize the educational value of events for youth and who will exercise mature judgment and action to assure the health and safety of participants.

Chaperons should:

- Be recognized as mature adults, and elicit positive response and respect from youth.
- Be willing to assume and exercise the chaperon responsibility.
- Enjoy working with youth.
- Believe youth should have a chance to develop self-discipline, but be firm with the necessary rules.
- Be able to maintain a relationship with youth that encourages fun but demands respect, being one with the group instead of one of the group.
- Have the stability to let youth question established ways of thinking and doing without compromising responsibility.
- If driving is involved, be a good driver and obey all traffic rules, regulations, and laws. Be sure all occupants of the vehicle are wearing seat belts.
- Have knowledge of the type of activities in which the youth will be involved, the purpose of the event, and its present and potential relationships to community and county 4-H activities.
- Understand and believe that the purpose of 4-H is to develop “blue ribbon youth.” This may or may not mean a first place or a championship in a particular event. Dealing with last place in a mature manner may do more to develop “blue ribbon youth” than winning first place.

Authority

Chaperons should be delegated full authority to make decisions about the job they are asked to perform with priority consideration given to the educational purposes of the experience and the health and safety of individuals and the group. This authority might include:

- Discipline
- Making recommendations for withdrawal of premiums or prizes
- Calling Extension professionals and parents/guardians and sending youth home
- Making decisions about the appropriate time to leave events (e.g. in the event of bad weather, driving conditions, etc.)

For the well-being of the entire group of participants at an event, chaperons must exercise responsibility for all youth (whether from their own group or not) in carrying out the stated rules of the event. Except when a chaperon has specifically been appointed to exercise broader responsibility, this responsibility for youth from other delegations should be limited to expression of concern about

behavior and the communication of problems to appropriate chaperons. Chaperons should maintain morally responsible behavior and the excellent reputation enjoyed by 4-H.

Chaperons should know the name and phone number of the person(s) conducting the event as well as Extension professionals in their home state who are responsible for coordination of the state's participation, and should contact these individuals for clarification of stated rules of the event and discuss special circumstances and solutions to problems.

Any enforcement of rules must be done with sensitivity and understanding of the needs of youth. This should be balanced with the expectation that 4-H members will fully participate in the event and will carry out their responsibilities.

Duties

Chaperons will provide supervision for the entire length of the activity, i.e. for the duration of the field trip or twenty-four hour supervision for overnight trips. Broadly speaking, this means chaperons should adhere to the same schedule as that established for youth, i.e. check with youth delegates in the morning, attend meals, workshops and social activities and be present at curfews. Chaperons will provide for monitoring after curfew to insure that curfew is being maintained.

An exception may be when one chaperon has made arrangements with another chaperon to assume responsibility for specific period(s) of time. In this case, youth must know to whom they are responsible and for what period of time. The "delegated chaperon" must know the location of the original chaperon at all times and be able to contact that person in the event of an emergency.

Chaperons will:

- Have undergone a UConn 4-H background check prior to attending the overnight event.
- Participate in UConn Minor Protection training before attending the overnight event.
- Enroll and be active in UConn 4-H Enrollment system
- Understand and enforce rules of conduct.
- Accept the responsibility that being a chaperon is the primary purpose for their attendance at a 4-H event.
- Make appropriate arrangements for lodging if the arrangements are not being made by an Extension employee.
- Chaperons may not room with one youth delegate in a hotel or conference center setting.
- A married couple who is chaperoning may room together if it fits in with the conference rooming situation. For example, sharing a room would not be appropriate if there are designated gender floors.

- Unmarried chaperons of the opposite sex will not room together.
- Retain in their possession a list of all the individuals (youths and adults) in the delegation and, specifically, those for whom they are responsible. The list must include each person's name, address, telephone number, and the name of a parent/guardian (and their address if it is different from the young person's) and where they can be reached in case of an emergency. Also get the name and number of one or two alternate emergency contacts. Chaperons should also carry in their possession participant health forms which note special medications or medical problems, including food allergies along with a medical treatment release, signed by a parent/guardian for each individual so they can be admitted to a hospital for treatment, if necessary.

This information should be available to all chaperons at all times. In situations where a chaperon is planning an event, they should obtain forms from Extension staff. Inform the Extension staff member about the group's trip and prepare an accounting for the group.

All medications must be in a medicine bottle and labeled with the participant's name, doctor's name and phone number, medication name, and dosage.

It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to contact the 4-H volunteer or professional staff in writing to make them aware of any medication that will need to be administered during the program. Parent must designate on the health form whether medication will be brought to the event or not and whether the medication or medical devices can be self-administered (age 14 and above only) or need to be administered by the on-site provider. Limited amounts of medication for life threatening conditions may be carried by the child or ward (i.e. bee sting kits, inhalers).

- Meet with the appropriate Extension Educator, Extension Coordinator or Extension Specialist to review expectations, regulations, and finances.
- Keep track of finances for the trip and file an accounting with the appropriate Extension Educator, Coordinator or Specialist upon returning.
- Attend scheduled pre-trip orientation meeting(s). At that time, participants will meet chaperons and discuss details about the trip such as:

4-H Code of Conduct	Transportation Arrangements
General Trip Information	Finances
Medical Forms	Parent/Guardian Permission Forms
Use of Photos Permission Form	

- Know the schedule for the day and make proper arrangements to enable participants to meet the schedule such as times of events/meetings, chaperon assignments, etc.
- Make sure all participants are present and accounted for before leaving any location, e.g. morning, evening/"lights out," different destinations during the day.
- Use rotating supervision to cover after curfew hours.

- Make regular checks on special situations such as medications needed, homesicknesses, etc.
- Be sensitive to interactions with delegates and among delegates from the state and from other states.
- Allow no behavior which excludes others from participating.
- Be an enthusiastic role model for participants and abide by the same rules as the participants.
- Not engage in relationships of an inappropriate personal nature with a minor youth in their custodial care.

Chaperons need to be aware that delegates may perceive adult behavior in an unintended manner. Therefore, a cautious awareness is recommended.

Immediately after an event, or sooner if appropriate, chaperons shall report to the Extension employee responsible, the results of the event, including emergencies, injuries, evaluations, recommendations, etc.

If differences arise, the final arbitrator is the University of Connecticut Extension representative (Assistant Director, Associate Director or Dean and Director).

Revised 12/24