**Explorers Guidebook**

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**UConn Policy on the 4-H Explorers Program**

The UConn 4-H Explorers is a unique membership category that is age appropriate for youth 5 and 6 years old (as of Jan. 1 of the program year). These programs require more adult supervision, and the focus is on cooperative learning rather than competition. The UConn 4-H Explorers program follows a set of program guidelines based on developmental appropriateness.

It is neither the intent nor the objective of the UConn 4-H Explorers program to duplicate 4-H member experiences that are designed for older youth, nor to create a “mini-4-H” club. While the UConn 4-H Explorers is a component of the overall UConn 4-H Youth development Program, and UConn 4-H Explorers members are recognized as full-fledged members, they are considered and enrolled as a special membership category regarding activities and policy. UConn 4-H Explorers do not take on projects: Explorers programs are activity based and not project focused. As the name implies, UConn 4- H Explorers engage in hands-on activities that introduce the entire scope of 4-H programs. They do not have any one specific project area that covers a year of meetings. 4-H Explorers experience the broad spectrum of topics offered by 4-H. Leaders are trained in the policy, curriculum, and developmental stages of 4-H Explorers.

The focus of recognition for UConn 4-H Explorers is participation. Explorers may receive participation ribbons, certificates, or other appropriate 4-H recognition which encourages continued involvement. It is a non-competitive program. There is no judging or evaluation, either individually or in a group effort. Special comment forms can be used instead of judging forms, for positive feedback. There is a specific UConn 4-H Explorers Activity Summary, which can be filled out individually or as a club, instead of 4-H Activity and Project Records.

**UConn 4-H Explorers**

4-H Explorers SHALL:

* Be at least 5 years old as of January 1 of the 4-H year.
* Be enrolled in UConn 4-H as Explorers, and their chosen project area is by default ‘UConn Explorers’.
* Learn to get along with others.
* Explore a variety of interests through hands-on activities.
* Build self-confidence through healthy experiences.
* Have their own program activities, and do not just ‘join in’ with older youth.
* Receive participation recognition.
* Fill out the UConn 4-H Explorers Activity Summary. An adult may assist in filling out the form and it can be done as a group record or individual.
* 4-H Explorers may participate in county/state events including 4-H Fairs), where specific Explorers program activities have been put in place.
* Have Leaders who attended a UConn 4-H Explorers training and are approved UConn 4-H Volunteers.

4-H Explorers SHALL NOT:

* Have on-going projects of any kind (including animals, large or small)
* Participate as competitive exhibitors
* Submit verification forms, as they do not have any on-going projects
* Do not hold any offices or leadership roles in their club
* Hold voting privileges
* Receive any placing ribbons or awards (including Danish)
* Focus on a single project area

**Starting up an Independent 4-H Explorers Club**

The strongest program delivery for 4-H Explorers is where all participants are of Explorer age (5 and 6 years old), meeting as small groups of children with a trained Leader. These groups explore a wide variety of subject matter through short-term activities.

If developmentally appropriate, 7-year-olds may participate as a 4-H Explorer.

UConn 4-H Explorers can enroll as independent members. The parents must contact their county 4-H office for training and curriculum.

**Incorporating a 4-H Explorers sub-group into an Existing Club**

When incorporating 4-H Explorers into a multi-age club, there is a separate sub-group for Explorer members led by a designated, trained 4-H Explorers Leader. They can meet at the same date/time/location, but preferably with a separate room or area to utilize Explorer materials and resources. 4-H teens may serve as Junior Leaders but only under the direct supervision of the trained Explorers Leader.

A club can choose to not include 4-H Explorers in their club.

**Becoming a UConn 4-H Explorers Leader**

Contact your county 4-H Office to notify them of your intent and set up your training.

* Become an approved UConn 4-H Volunteer: first by submitting the volunteer application.
* Complete steps 1-3 of the UConn 4-H on-line training.
* Complete UConn background checks and training as required.
* Attend a UConn 4-H Explorers Leaders Training (offered on a county level or on-line).
* Agree to follow the UConn policy and guidelines for the 4-H Explorers program.
* Use the recommended 4-H curriculum.

**Explorers Leader Training**

Topics covered in the training include:

* Steps to Getting Started
* 4-H Ages and Stages
* Experiential Learning
* Planning and Implementing for Success
* Positive Learning and Group Management
* Curriculum Review
* Activity Summary Review

**4-H Explorers Curriculum**

Below is a list of curriculum for use with the UConn 4-H Explorers.

* Clover Adventures: A Leader’s Resource Guide. University of Maryland, Frederick County 4-H Youth Development curriculum
* The Big Book of 4-H Cloverbud Activities, Ohio State University
* UConn 4-H Explorers At the Fair
* UConn 4-H Explorers Activity Summary

The Primary Club Leader, upon attending the UConn training, will receive copies of the curriculum.

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