

4-H Youth
Development
Principles



North Dakota
Center for
4-H Youth
Development
2008

4-H Youth Development Principles of Practice
Guiding Philosophy for 4-H Youth Development Professionals

1. 4-H Youth Development programs at all levels are **conducted under the authority of NDSU Extension and the United State Department of Agriculture**
 - a. Local & County level 4-H Youth Development programs and 4-H Youth Development volunteers are accountable to the North Dakota State University Extension professionals responsible for 4-H Youth Development programs.
 - b. 4-H Youth Development groups/clubs and volunteers operate under the guidance and control of Cooperative Extension.
 - c. Use of the 4-H name and emblem is protected by law, and controlled by NDSU Extension.
2. 4-H Youth Development programs **must comply with University and National 4-H policies, and state and federal law.**
3. 4-H Youth Development's **principle outcome is positive youth development**
 - a. Programs should provide appropriate challenge and quest – while making safety a priority
 - b. Everyone can succeed in 4-H – support should be available to promote success
 - c. Young people should be encouraged to make their own decisions in 4-H Youth Development, both individually and collectively, and should be allowed to sometimes fail, within an environment of safety and support
 - d. 4-H Youth Development is flexible enough to accommodate many different needs & interests
 - e. 4-H Youth Development values academic achievement and problem prevention, but those are not the primary objectives of our programs.
 - f. 4-H Youth Development values and encourages the involvement of parents with their children
 - g. 4-H Youth Development delivers programs through a variety of methods and groups
 - h. 4-H Youth Development provides a safe environment for both youth and adults. All persons (adults, youth, guests, spectators) will behave in a civil and respectful manner. The 4-H program reserves the right to ask persons who violate this principle to cease participation.
4. 4-H Youth Development **programs are public**
 - a. Programs are intended to advance the public good
 - b. Programs and activities are open to all
 - c. Programs and activities should be visible to the public
 - d. Program participation should not be limited to family activities
 - e. 4-H Youth Development provides opportunities for youth to have experiences beyond their family, and to interact with caring adults who are not family
5. 4-H Youth Development **respects and encourages youth voice**
 - a. Youth and adults work as partners
 - b. Young people have rights
 - c. Young people should be treated with dignity
 - d. 4-H Youth Development provides opportunities for youth to have experiences, interactions and be motivated by positive peers

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6. 4-H Youth Development **programs and groups are inclusive**
 - a. Policies, practices, and images that limit participation must be avoided
 - b. Programs and activities should promote a sense of "belonging" for all
 - c. Participation is not based on ethnicity, race, gender or sexual orientation.
 - d. 4-H Youth Development programs and activities should strive to always provide a welcoming and respectful environment
 - e. 4-H Youth Development does not exclude children whose parents are not involved
7. **Serving** as a 4-H Youth Development volunteer **is a privilege, not a right.**
 - a. Persons wishing to become or continue as a volunteer leader must comply with North Dakota 4-H Youth Development Volunteer Behavior Expectations
 - b. NDSU Extension has the authority to decide whether or not a person is suitable to serve as a 4-H Youth Development volunteer
 - c. NDSU Extension has the authority to discipline or remove volunteers
8. 4-H Youth Development programs for youth are **delivered primarily through volunteers**
 - a. Paid staff develop and manage a system where volunteers work with youth
 - b. Paid staff rarely lead or advise youth groups or clubs on a continuing basis
 - c. New programs should be designed to be led by volunteers
 - d. 4-H Youth Development provides volunteers with opportunities for personal growth and satisfaction
9. 4-H Youth Development programs are **non-formal, primarily offered during out-of-school time**
 - a. 4-H Youth Development programs are voluntary, rather than compulsory; build skills through authentic hands-on learning, provides meaningful feedback without assigning grades.
 - b. 4-H Youth Development partners with schools and compliments academics, but is not a substitute for them
 - c. 4-H Youth Development employees are not classroom workers or school teachers but serve the community as youth development professionals
10. **Local decision making** within 4-H Youth Development is important and preferred
 - a. Youth should be involved as valued resources in decisions affecting them
 - b. Youth should have a meaningful voice on councils, boards and committees at the county, region, state and national levels of NDSU Extension
 - c. Respectful, fair, and open decision making processes should be used
 - d. NDSU Extension has ultimate responsibility and authority

Sources:

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