

Ohio State University Extension Employees as 4-H Volunteers Guidance

Ohio State University Extension has the following guidance regarding OSU Extension employees serving in a 4-H volunteer capacity. Due to the potential for conflict of interest in securing judges, handling finances, tracking volunteer hours, handling enrollment forms or paperwork submission, etc., OSU Extension employees are not eligible to serve as a 4-H volunteer in an OSU Extension program in which they are or could be directly involved. This guidance does not apply to employees who serve as Master Gardener Volunteers (MGV), Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalists (OCVN), or any other non-4-H OSU Extension volunteer position.

If an employee has questions after consulting the FAQ below, they should reach out to their direct supervisor or associate state 4-H leader for what is permissible.

This guidance was approved by Extension Administrative Cabinet on November 1, 2022.

Examples of situations that **are** permitted

- 4-H educator in county A as a 4-H volunteer in county B.
- 4-H program assistant/coordinator at state office as a 4-H volunteer in any county.
- Office assistant in county A as a 4-H volunteer in county B.
- FCS educator in county A as a 4-H Endowment Board committee member in county B.
- SNAP-Ed / EFNEP program assistant in county A as a 4-H volunteer in county A.
- A temporary employee (e.g., office assistant, intern, program assistant) in county A as a volunteer conducting non-related job responsibilities in county A.
- 4-H, FCS, ANR, or CD educator/PA/PC/PM in county A serving as an advisor for Junior Leaders, Junior Fair Board, CARTEENS, Food and Fashion Board, or other teen-led group as part of their job responsibilities in county A.
- The OSU Extension professional is serving in a 4-H volunteer capacity when there is no other option for someone else to serve as a 4-H volunteer. For example, a group of youth with behavioral needs and/or accommodations who would benefit from the additional educational supports provided by an in-county Extension professional.

NOTE: Approval must be obtained from the state 4-H leader and associate state 4-H leader prior to serving in this capacity. To seek approval for this, the county professional emails their request, with rationale/justification for why they need to provide this educational role, steps they will take to minimize potential conflicts of interest, and confirmation they have discussed the situation with their direct supervisor. This should happen as soon as possible, but no later than 30 days prior to serving in the 4-H volunteer capacity.

Examples of situations that **are not** permitted

- 4-H educator in county A as a 4-H volunteer in county A
- 4-H program assistant in county A as a 4-H volunteer in county A
- FCS educator in county A serving on 4-H Endowment Committee in county A
- Office assistant in county A as a 4-H volunteer in county A
- ANR educator in county A as a 4-H volunteer in county A
- ANR program assistant in county A as a 4-H volunteer in county A
- Area leader in any county they directly supervise



FAQ's - Ohio State University Extension Employees as 4-H Volunteers Guidance

- **What if I am currently a volunteer and my respective situation is not permitted?**
 - Finish the commitment you signed up for (e.g., finish the year if the person is a 4-H community club volunteer, or if there are term limits on a committee, finish the respective term), or request approval to continue (see NOTE on p. 1).
- **What if my job responsibilities change and I will now be directly involved with programming for something for which I am a volunteer?**
 - Finish the commitment you signed up for (annual commitment, if 4-H volunteer) and conclude, or request approval to continue (see NOTE on p. 1).
- **What if my job responsibilities change and/or I no longer serve in that position and I want to be a volunteer?**
 - You are welcome to apply to serve in the volunteer capacity.
- **As an ANR educator, I serve as a livestock judging coach for 4-H members as part of my job responsibilities. Am I able to continue serving in this capacity?**
 - Yes. This guidance is related to volunteer roles, not job responsibilities.
- **Does this apply to spouse/partners/family members of OSU Extension employees?**
 - No. Spouses/partners/family members are eligible to serve as a 4-H volunteer providing they meet the necessary requirements (application, background check, training, etc.). These individuals should not ultimately be responsible for countywide finances (e.g., Advisory Council treasurer).
 - Consideration should be given to not creating the perception that there is a conflict of interest.
- **How does this impact short-term volunteering (such as judge, speaker, presenter, or fundraising assistance)?**
 - OSU Extension employees may serve in these capacities in the same ways as outlined above, related to what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. See "Does this apply to spouse/partners/family members of OSU Extension employees" question for spouses/partners/family members.
 - Consideration should be given to not creating the perception that there is a conflict of interest.
- **If I am an Ohio State employee who lives in county A and wish to volunteer in county B, can I transfer my own children's 4-H membership to county B?**
 - You would follow the 4-H Membership Across County Lines policy for your child's 4-H membership. You would be welcome to apply to serve in the volunteer capacity.
- **Are current OSU Extension employees grandfathered in?**
 - Several years ago, current employees were grandfathered in as 4-H volunteers in their counties. However, this is the new guidance, and the "grandfathered in" option is no longer available. Current 4-H volunteers can finish the commitment they signed up for (annual commitment, if 4-H volunteer) and conclude, or request approval to continue (see examples above).
- **I work in county A and want to be a 4-H volunteer in county B. Do I need to apply and do all the paperwork, training, etc.?**
 - Yes. You must fulfill and meet the necessary requirements to serve as a 4-H volunteer (application, background check, training, etc.).