

4-H Section 800 Updates

In the past several years many youth-oriented organizations have adopted more stringent policies to ensure the safety of their participants. The former 4-H policy, while effective, leaves some gaps. The updated policy is intended to prevent abuse, or even the suspicions of abuse.

The new policy went into effect on July 1, 2006. Specific language is found in Section 815.2 A-G of the California 4-H Policy Handbook. A minimum of two fingerprinted, oriented and enrolled adults must be present for all programs, events or activities. In general, there should be no one-on-one interaction in a private space; this includes adult to youth or youth to youth. In regards to transportation, the ratio should be at least two youth to one adult. A youth should not be alone in a car with an adult without written permission from the youth's parents. (Obviously, it is acceptable if the adult is with their own children, as long as non related youths are dropped off first.) Permission slips will be available at the 4-H office as soon as they are provided by the state.

For the duration of any kind of meeting, all 4-H youth are the responsibility of the designated adult volunteers until they are picked up by a parent or guardian. A 4-H member is not to be left unsupervised or transported without specific parental permission except by law enforcement. If a child is left at a meeting and the parent is not there within 30 minutes of the end of the meeting and cannot be contacted, it may be necessary to contact local law enforcement.

In regard to sleeping and restroom facilities at camps and conferences, each gender should have separate facilities. (For bathroom facilities, if there is only one or one area, designated times for each gender can be arranged for facility use.) Only adults of the same gender as the youth may supervise youth in sleeping areas or restrooms. No youth are permitted to sleep in the room of an adult other than their own parent or guardian. Adult leaders must respect youth's privacy in situations where youth must change clothes and only intrude to the extent that health and safety require.

While some of these precautionary measures may seem unnecessary, they are solely for the protection of our youth and adult volunteers. 4-H wants there to be no question that it is an outstanding youth development program that protects its participants to the fullest extent. With these rules in place, there should be no doubt of that fact.