



Kentucky 4-H Dog Volunteer Certification Program Guidelines

Introduction

The Kentucky 4-H Dog Program may seem to be about dogs, but in reality, it is about kids. Young people are very important to us and we want to make sure that we provide the very best educational experience that we can. For most, animal-related programs and projects will provide a variety of life lessons, which will positively impact them for the rest of their lives, no matter what career path they choose to follow. While it is important for youth in 4-H dog clubs and programs to gain a basic understanding of daily care, nutrition, and dog ownership, it's the learning from hands-on experience---making decisions, seeing the results, and accepting the responsibility for the care of a living animal---where lives of youth are changed forever.

In an effort to make sure that every young person involved in a 4-H dog program or project has the best possible learning experience, Kentucky 4-H is developing and implementing the Kentucky 4-H Dog Volunteer Certification Program. This program will put in place a system of "certification" for 4-H volunteers that work with dog programs and projects. In order for a county to offer dog programs and projects through 4-H, at least one volunteer per county club/group must attend a Certification Workshop and complete specialized training. That volunteer must then continue to hone their knowledge and skills in youth development and subject matter training through annual continuing education to continue as a "Certified Volunteer". This program is a step towards providing the finest educational experience for youth that we can.

Dog Volunteer Certification

The Dog Volunteer Certification Program is a statewide effort for 4-H volunteers who work with dog clubs/groups. The certification program prepares volunteers so that they can provide meaningful, well-rounded educational experiences based on principles of positive youth development. The objectives of Dog Certification are:

- A. To provide the knowledge base necessary for volunteers to present in-depth educational experiences to 4-H youth. This knowledge base includes:
 - a. Youth development (including what to expect at different ages/stages of life and how youth learn).
 - b. The best methods to use when teaching youth.
 - c. 4-H club management.
- B. Volunteer recruitment and development.
- C. To provide 4-H leaders with curricula and a ready-to-use set of resources and teaching tools needed to conduct successful learning activities at 4-H meetings.
- D. To provide a measure of consistency among counties in resources available for use in teaching 4-H members.
- E. To ensure that 4-H members have a sound, well-rounded educational experience—it's more than showing dogs.
- F. To provide an opportunity for volunteers to introduce quality assurance and ethics lessons to youth.
- G. To reduce the liability that volunteers may encounter when working with 4-H animal projects and activities. This is accomplished by ensuring that all 4-H Dog Volunteers are following a prescribed and approved curriculum and have been certified by the University of Kentucky to work with youth.
- H. To fulfill the desire of volunteers for greater personal knowledge of the subject matter which they need to teach to youth.

Guidelines Related to 4-H Dog Programs/Projects and Certified Volunteers

- A. To start or continue to offer dog programs/projects as part of the county 4-H program, the county must have in place at least one (1) volunteer serving in the role of “Certified Dog Volunteer Leader” for each dog club/group.
 - a. If a county does not have at least one Certified Volunteer Leader for each dog club/group, they will not be able to offer that project/program or activities related to that project/program. That means youth will not be able to participate in projects, programs, events, and activities in the dog project/program area.
- B. The county must have a minimum of one (1) Certified Volunteer Leader per club/group certified in dog to offer 4-H dog opportunities such as Dog Bowl and Skillathon, Dog Camp, Dog Show, and Dog Poster
- C. Certified Volunteer Leaders:
 - a. Certified Volunteer Leaders can only be certified in one county.
 - b. County Extension Agents may not serve in the role of Certified Volunteer Leader, but they do have programmatic oversight responsibility for all 4-H programs and projects. COUNTY EXTENSION AGENTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND AND PARTICIPATE IN THE TRAINING WHERE THEIR VOLUNTEERS ARE CERTIFIED.
 - c. Teens may not be a Certified Volunteer Leader, but they can be accredited by attending and completing a Kentucky 4-H Dog Volunteer Certification Workshop.
- D. The specific number of Certified Volunteer Leaders required depends on the structure of the dog program in the county. Each project/program club/group must have a Certified Volunteer Leader, and every 4-H member enrolled in a 4-H dog project/program must be in a project/program club/group led by a Certified Volunteer Leader.
 - a. Scenario A: If a county has one countywide Dog Club, then the county must have at least one Certified Volunteer Leader.
 - b. Scenario B: If a county has separate clubs/groups for dog then each of those clubs/groups must have a Certified Volunteer Leader.
 - c. Scenario C: If a 4-H member is enrolled as an individual / independent study (not in a club/group), he/she must have at least one Certified Volunteer identified as his/her leader.
- E. Each 4-H member participating in any aspect of the dog program must be enrolled in a program/project that is led by a Certified Volunteer Leader.
 - a. If a family chooses not to affiliate with a club/group, then the parent or legal guardian must complete the certification training to become a Certified Volunteer Leader so their youth can participate through independent study.
- F. Except in those limited cases where cross-county participation has been granted, a 4-H member is to participate in 4-H in the county in which he/she lives or goes to school.
- G. To be a 4-H member, each youth must participate in a minimum of six (6) hours of education in the program/project under the oversight of their county’s Certified Volunteer Leader(s).
- H. Educational hours completed by each youth must be documented by the Certified Volunteer Leader(s) and the 4-H YD agent.
- I. The six (6) hour educational requirement must be completed annually by each 4-H member enrolled in dog programs/projects:
 - a. Between September 1 and the date of the Dog Bowl and Skillathon Event.
 - b. Between September 1 and the date of the State Dog Show.
 - c. Between September 1 and the date of the Dog Poster Contest.
- J. Youth who do not receive 6 hours of education in any one year have not fulfilled the requirement for participation in a dog program/project, and are NOT eligible to participate or compete in statewide events or activities during that 4-H year (e.g., Dog Bowl and Skillathon, Dog Poster, and State Dog Show).

The Volunteer Certification Process

- A. To become a Certified Dog Volunteer Leader, a volunteer must attend and complete a Kentucky 4-H Dog Certification Workshop.
 - a. Workshops will generally be held twice a year at county Extension offices located in different parts of the state. Workshops are 1 day in length, beginning on Saturday morning and ending by late afternoon on Saturday.
 - b. The primary goal of workshop is not to provide subject matter training (although some subject matter training may occur). Rather, the workshops are designed to provide training and instruction on youth development, teaching methods, club management, and how to utilize the resource materials and curricula that have been developed.
 - c. In addition to participating in the workshop training, each volunteer participant must successfully complete a teaching practicum (typically done as a team with 2-4 other volunteer participants) to demonstrate their understanding of how to utilize the Dog Resource Kit and curricula.
 - d. Upon successful completion of the Kentucky 4-H Dog Certification Workshop, the Certified Volunteer Leader will sign a contract which states that he/she agrees to offer a minimum of nine (9) hours of instruction per year, prior to the established deadline(s) for the dog projects/programs, and that he/she will require the youth in their project/program unit to participate in a minimum of six (6) hours of educational activities annually.
 - e. To remain as a Certified Volunteer Leader, the volunteer must the volunteer must complete at least two (2) hours of approved continuing educational training every year.

Recertification of Certified Volunteer Leaders

To maintain certification as a Certified Volunteer Leader for dog, the volunteer must complete at least two (2) hours of approved continuing education by August 31th annually. All signed and completed Recertification Training Forms must be submitted to Ashley Osborne by September 15th each year. A 1-hour webcast provided by the State 4-H Office will be available each year by November 1st, and will count as 1-hour of approved continuing education. Additional examples of approved recertification training hours may include (but are not limited to):

- A meeting and tour with a local veterinarian, professional trainer, groomer, or animal shelter.
- Attending a Kentucky 4-H Dog Camp session to further your knowledge in a topic (e.g., agility, tracking, obedience, etc.)

The process for receiving approval and credit for an educational training to count for recertification hours is as follows:

- A. Discuss the educational training with the supervising County Extension Agent (typically the 4-H YD Extension Agent) to gain their approval that the training is appropriate to aid you with the project/program you lead.
- B. Once the Certified Volunteer Leader has completed the recertification training that was approved by their supervising County Extension Agent, the Certified Volunteer Leader must give the signed form to the supervising County Extension Agent for their signature. The Agent will send electronically the completed and signed Recertification Training Form to the State 4-H Office.

NOTE: The State 4-H Office reserve the right to reject trainings that are not appropriate for recertification training. If there is a question concerning the appropriateness of a training for a leader's recertification, it is recommended that the Certified Volunteer Leader or their supervising County Extension Agent discuss the training with Ashley Osborne before the training is completed to determine its appropriateness.

Failure of a Certified Volunteer Leader to complete the two (2) hours of approved continuing education by August 31st annually and submit required paperwork by September 15th annually may result in loss of

certification as a Certified Volunteer Leader. Agents may contact Ashley Osborne regarding leaders that have not completed hours and submitted the required recertification form.

The Role of the Certified Volunteer Leader

- A. Maintain communications with the supervising County Extension Agent (usually 4-H YD agent).
- B. In coordination with the County Extension Agent(s) and the county's other Certified Volunteer Leaders, serve as a 4-H club/group leader to:
 - a. Schedule and coordinate 4-H club/group meetings.
 - b. Determine the subject matter/skills needed by 4-H club/group members.
 - c. Plan a series of learning activities to meet the subject matter/skills needs of the 4-H club/group members.
 - d. Conduct the learning activities or recruit individuals (professional in the field, guest speakers, individuals with a working knowledge of the subject, former members, parents, etc.) to conduct the learning activities.
 - e. Ensure that sufficient educational opportunities are offered so that each 4-H member receives a minimum of 6 hours of instruction each year.
 - f. Document the educational hours each 4-H member receives annually.

NOTE: As the professional with responsibility for all 4-H activities in the county, the County Extension Agent (usually the 4-H YD Agent) is the official representative of Kentucky Cooperative Extension. Final decision over all matters pertaining to management of the dog club at the local level rests with the County Extension Agent.

The Role of the Supervising County Extension Agent

- A. Provide overall management, oversight, and leadership for the dog club(s) at the local level.
- B. Work with the county's Certified Volunteer Leader(s) to plan and outline the educational sessions to be offered throughout the year.
- C. Recruit volunteers to attend/complete certification training.
- D. Assist Certified Volunteer Leaders in receiving their minimum of two (2) hours of approved continuing education and submitting the required recertification form by the August 31st deadline.
- E. Inform volunteers of county and state policies related to the project/program for which they provide leadership.
- F. Provide certificates for each 4-H member who completes the six (6) hours of instruction by the appropriate deadline each year.

Guidelines Related to Instruction

What instruction qualifies towards a youth's hours of instruction? Many of the lesson plans that are a part of both dog curricula include the opportunity for various resource people to present programs and workshops. So long as a county's Certified Volunteer Leader(s) was involved with planning and coordination of the program, these hours could count. Additionally, opportunities exist for Certified Volunteer Leaders from multiple counties to work together in providing educational opportunities for youth. It is recommended that each county's Certified Volunteer Leader(s) and the County 4-H YD Agent determine at the beginning of the 4-H program year the educational programs/topics that will be offered, and the individuals that will conduct the instruction.

- A. Below are examples of educational opportunities, which might qualify toward a youth's six (6) hour educational requirement. This is not an all inclusive list, and is provided as examples only:
 - a. Lessons/learning activities taught by the Certified Volunteer Leader(s).
 - b. Lessons/learning activities taught by Extension specialists, associates, or agents as part of the series of educational activities planned by the Certified Volunteer Leader(s) and the County 4-H YD Agent.

- c. Lessons/learning activities taught by “experts” (such as veterinarians, professional trainers, and past 4-H members who are highly skilled in field, etc.) as part of the series of educational activities planned by the Certified Volunteer Leader(s) and the County 4-H YD Agent.
- d. District or regional educational events (such as coordinated multi-county educational events) may count for up to three (3) hours toward the six (6) hour requirement for youth provided the following criteria are met:
 - i. The Certified Volunteer Leader(s) and the County 4-H YD Agent are in agreement that the educational event will be of value to their 4-H members.
 - ii. The educational opportunity is made available to all club/group members.
 - iii. The 4-H member’s Certified Volunteer Leader(s) or the County 4-H YD Agent attends the educational event to document the youth’s participation, OR documentation of participation is provided by event organizers to both the 4-H member’s Certified Volunteer Leader(s) and the County 4-H YD Agent.