



Maryland 4-H Youth Code of Conduct

A goal of the Maryland 4-H Program is to provide opportunities for children and youth to build character. Maryland 4-H supports the CHARACTER COUNTSSM six pillars of character: **TRUSTWORTHINESS, RESPECT, RESPONSIBILITY, FAIRNESS, CARING, AND CITIZENSHIP**. To ensure Maryland 4-H programs provide positive and welcoming environments for all individuals to learn and grow, 4-H participants agree to abide by these expectations of behavior:



I will be **TRUSTWORTHY**. I will be worthy of trust, honor, and confidence. I will be a model of integrity by doing the right thing even when the cost is high. I will be honest in all my activities, and I will not cheat, lie, knowingly give false information, or be dishonest in any other way. I will follow through on commitments I make and responsibilities I accept. I will not engage in illegal or unethical behavior.



I will be **RESPECTFUL**. I will show respect, courtesy, and consideration to everyone, including other program participants, those in authority, and myself. I will act and speak respectfully. I will not use vulgar or abusive language or cause physical, mental, or emotional harm. I will dress in a manner that is appropriate, tasteful, and respectful for youth. I will take care of property and facilities and will not intentionally cause harm or damage. I will appreciate diversity in skill, ability, gender, ethnicity, family, and personal beliefs. I understand that Maryland 4-H does not tolerate statements or acts of discrimination or prejudice.



I will be **RESPONSIBLE**. I will be responsible, accountable, and self-disciplined in the pursuit of excellence. I will live up to high expectations so I can be proud of my work and conduct. I accept my personal responsibility to be informed of and follow policies, rules, and procedures of Maryland 4-H and 4-H events or activities in which I participate. I will be accountable for my choices and actions and I will take responsibility for any mistakes or misconduct in which I participate.



I will be **FAIR**. I will be just, fair, and open-minded. I will participate in events by following the rules, not taking advantage of others, and not asking for special exception or consideration. I will demonstrate good sportsmanship and will accept the final outcome of events and contests.



I will be **CARING**. I will be caring in my relationships with others. I will be kind and show compassion for other people and living things. I will treat others the way I want to be treated. I will show appreciation for the efforts of others. I will help members of my group to have a good experience by striving to include everyone.



I will be a **GOOD CITIZEN**. I will be a contributing and law-abiding member of the organization, community, and society. I will not use illegal or illicit substances such as tobacco, alcohol, or drugs. I will not act in a manner that is threatening, harassing, demeaning, or violent toward others, and I will not use technology or media to promote such actions. I will be respectful to the environment and contribute to the greater good. I will promote a spirit of inclusion by welcoming individuals from all backgrounds in my club and community. I will positively represent Maryland 4-H by holding myself to the standards of the 4-H Pledge and Motto.

SMCHARACTER COUNTS! Is a service mark of the CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition, a project of the Josephson Institute of Ethics.





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Youth Code of Conduct:

Maryland 4-H expects youth participating in 4-H programs to behave in an acceptable manner, as described in the six pillars of character outlined on the reverse of this document. Youth who engage in unacceptable conduct while participating in 4-H programs may be subject to disciplinary action. Youth behaviors that are unacceptable under the Code of Conduct include, but are not limited to:

- Lying, cheating, intentional disregard of 4-H rules or policies, misrepresenting project work, or other unethical practices.
- Unauthorized absence from the 4-H program site.
- Theft, destruction, or abuse of 4-H or personal property.
- Possession, use, or distribution of alcohol, cannabis, and/or illegal or illicit drugs.
- Misuse, abuse, or distribution of prescription or non-prescription drugs or substances.
- Possession or use of weapons or dangerous materials.
- Possession or use of tobacco products, smokeless tobacco, e-cigarettes, smokeless “vaping” devices, and/or other aerosolized liquid nicotine/cannabis delivery devices.
- Sexual activity.
- “Bullying” behavior, including physical, verbal, or emotional threats toward, or mistreatment of, another person.
- Actions or statements that create an unwelcoming, negative, or hostile environment, such as sexual innuendo, slander, profane language, promotion of religious or political views, racial, ethnic, or gender-based slurs, or other disparaging remarks or actions.
- Persistent behavior that causes disruption of a 4-H program, shows disrespect to 4-H volunteers/professionals leading a 4-H program, or creates a hostile or unsafe environment.
- Use of electronic devices and/or social media to bully, demean, harass, or threaten another person.
- Use of technology to create, transmit, post, or willingly receive unacceptable content such as that containing profanity, advocacy of use/possession of alcohol or drugs, violence, sexual misconduct, nudity, etc.

Maryland 4-H Disciplinary Policy and Procedures:

Youth associated with or participating in Maryland 4-H are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the standards of integrity, sportsmanship, and responsibility associated with the 4-H Youth Development program. Youth who fail to observe these standards may be dismissed or removed from 4-H activities, events, or programs, and may be subject to sanctions or disciplinary action up to and including termination of membership. Incidents or issues that may subject a youth to disciplinary action will be managed as follows:

1. The local 4-H Educator will notify the youth and parent/guardian in writing of the nature of the unacceptable conduct, the potential consequences, and the process that will take place.
2. The youth will be offered the opportunity to present their view or explanation by participating in an in-person meeting, presenting a written statement, or both. The youth’s parent/guardian will be present for any in-person communication. Written communication must be presented by the youth, with assistance from a parent/guardian as appropriate.
3. The 4-H Educator, in consultation with the local A/CED, will consider all presented matters and determine the appropriate resolution. The youth will be notified in writing of the 4-H Educator’s decision and any sanction(s) to be imposed.
4. If the youth wishes to appeal the 4-H Educator’s decision, they may do so in one of two ways:
 - a. The youth may request a Review Committee to evaluate the 4-H Educator’s decision and make recommendations to the State 4-H Program Leader.
 - b. The youth may appeal directly to the State 4-H Program Leader.

The youth’s appeal must be submitted in writing by the date designated in the 4-H Educator’s decision letter.
5. The State 4-H Program Leader will review the appeal and notify the youth of his/her decision in writing. The State 4-H Program Leader’s decision is final.

BEHAVIOR PLEDGE

YOUTH: I have read the Maryland 4-H Code of Conduct and the Maryland 4-H Disciplinary Policy and Procedures. I understand that my actions and decisions affect me and others, and that poor actions or decisions by me may result in my loss of privileges for current and future 4-H programs. I will accept the appropriate consequences of my actions, as determined by my 4-H Educator and/or the State 4-H Leader.

4-Her’s Printed Name

4-Her’s Signature

Date

PARENT/GUARDIAN: I have read the Maryland 4-H Code of Conduct and the Maryland 4-H Disciplinary Policy and Procedures. I will support and uphold these principles and will model positive behavior for my child and other 4-H youth and families. I will support the 4-H Volunteer/Professional in charge of maintaining appropriate behavior at 4-H programs, events, and activities. I agree to accept the appropriate consequences of my child’s actions as determined by Maryland 4-H and the University of Maryland Extension.

Parent/Guardian’s Printed Name

Parent/Guardian’s Signature

Date

