



## Kindergarten-3rd Grade Programs in 4-H

### 4-H MEMBERSHIP:

4-H membership is open to all youth **beginning at age 8 or 4th grade** and not to extend beyond the age of 21, with most programs age limit at 18 (with actual enrollment dates and ages determined by the state), without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, disability, or public assistance. The 4-H program also has additional program components which reach additional audiences, including Collegiate 4-H, Family Programs, and Kindergarten-3<sup>rd</sup> grade programs.

### KINDERGARTEN-3<sup>rd</sup> GRADE PROGRAMS (Cloverbuds, Cloverkids, etc.):

It is at the discretion of the State 4-H Program Leader to determine if the state 4-H program will include an additional age-appropriate program component designed especially for children in Kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. These programs require more adult supervision and the focus is on cooperative learning rather than competition. In addition, 4-H Cloverbuds programs follow a set of program guidelines based on developmental appropriateness. A “developmentally appropriate” program is one that is based on the general characteristics of an age group and adapts to meet the individual needs of each child. Sometimes a 4-H Cloverbuds member will be physically capable of doing something but will not be able to understand the reason for the process or the result. Participation in that activity would be just as inappropriate as participation in an activity that is unsafe because of physical limitations. While it is recognized that state or county 4-H programs may use different names to identify this unique membership category, “4-H Cloverbuds” will be used within this document for consistency and ease.

It is neither the intent nor the objective of the 4-H Cloverbuds program to duplicate the 4-H member experiences that are designed for older youth, nor to create a “mini-4-H” concept. While the 4-H Cloverbuds program is a component of the overall 4-H Youth Development program and 4-H Cloverbuds members are recognized as 4-H members for the purposes of enrollment, they are considered to be in a special membership category with regard to program and policy. As a result, the 4-H Cloverbuds program is fundamentally different than general membership in 4-H.

### PURPOSE OF THE 4-H CLOVERBUDS PROGRAM:

The overall purpose of the 4-H Cloverbuds program is to foster the development of life skills that are essential for the cognitive, social, emotional and physical maturation of Kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> graders by providing a unique educational opportunity. Children in these grades are a distinct audience for 4-H, with unique learning characteristics and developmental needs that are different from older children and youth served through 4-H membership. As a result, the 4-H Cloverbuds program is designed with specific educational objectives and program policies focused on the kindergarten-3<sup>rd</sup> grade child.

Participation, safety, personal development, learning and fun are the highest priorities in providing 4-H Cloverbuds programs. The policies, guidelines for the kindergarten-3<sup>rd</sup> child program outlined in this document seek to ensure that 4-H Cloverbuds members remain safe and have positive, developmentally appropriate experiences in 4-H. State and county programs that offer the 4-H Cloverbuds program are expected to utilize age appropriate programmatic goals, policies, curriculum, and cooperation-based methods to give feedback and recognition.

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### CHARTERING 4-H CLOVERBUDS, 4-H CLOVERKIDS OR SIMILAR PRIMARY GRADE PROGRAMS:

No matter what a state or county 4-H program chooses to use as the name for members in this age group (ex. Cloverbuds, CloverKids, Cloversprouts, etc.), the program must still follow the national and state policies established for this special membership category and these groups must be chartered to recognize their program and enable them to use the 4-H Name and Emblem.

### COMPONENTS OF THE PROGRAM:

4-H Cloverbuds programs are activity-focused and not project-focused and built on cooperative learning, rather than competitive activities. 4-H Cloverbuds members participate in occasional, non-competitive, sampler-type, age-appropriate, properly supervised events or activities sponsored or conducted by 4-H groups. 4-H Cloverbuds members do not participate in the ongoing, planned series of activities, whether it is a 4-H Shooting Sports program (e.g. archery, air gun, hunting, etc.), science project, an animal project (e.g. raising of cows, sheep) or any of the project areas of 4-H.

The primary difference between a 4-H Cloverbuds activity and a 4-H project is that a Cloverbuds member engages in varied activities which focus on developing a specific skill or concept utilized in completing the activity rather than focusing on a long-term planned course of study in a specific project (subject) area. As a result, 4-H Cloverbuds members should not have ongoing projects, of any kind – including animal projects – nor should they participate as competitive exhibitors with animals – large or small, because within the 4-H program, exhibits are intended to showcase the culmination of a long-term project.

In general, the handling of animals (large or small) requires discipline and motor skills that have yet to be fully developed in most children in the K-3 age range and when coupled with the unpredictable behavior of animals, does not provide the optimal safe educational environment.

4-H Cloverbuds members that have engaged in a group activity may *exhibit or showcase* in a noncompetitive event, or can feature other items from their group activities. However, 4-H Cloverbuds members are not eligible to receive premium funds as a result of exhibition. 4-H Cloverbuds members may receive participatory ribbons but may not receive regular competitive purple, blue, red or white 4-H ribbons.

In addition to the educational focus, 4-H Cloverbuds programs also require additional adult supervision, and do not conduct formal business meetings or elect officers. 4-H Cloverbuds clubs handle their finances differently than clubs of older children, with the majority of funding issues handled by the adults.

The 4-H Club Name and Emblem are held in trust by the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture for the educational and character-building purposes of the 4-H program and can be used only as authorized by the statute and according to the authorization of the Secretary or 4-H National Headquarters. Within each state, the State 4-H Program Office and Cooperative Extension Service has the designated authority for state and local 4-H youth development programs, including the 4-H Cloverbuds program. Each State 4-H Program Office determines appropriate policies and practices in accordance with federal regulations, state and local policies, and university regulations. Please consult your State 4-H Program Office for more specific requirements or information related to kindergarten-3<sup>rd</sup> grade programming within your state or local area.

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## FAQ'S

### 1. Can 4-H Cloverbuds programs conduct or participate in competitive activities?

The emphasis of 4-H Cloverbuds programs is on cooperative learning – that is, learning how to get along with peers in a cooperative rather than competitive manner. 4-H Cloverbuds members are to participate in activities and opportunities, in which they practice skills, discover talents, and learn about fairness in a non-judgmental environment. With the emphasis in 4-H Cloverbuds programs being activity-based, rather than focused on long-term projects or study, the result, is that 4-H Cloverbuds programs do not conduct or participate in competitive activities because those activities are the culmination of a long-term project.

In addition, competitive activities require motor skills, reflexes, and strength that often are not yet fully developed in young children. Grades K-3 children are sensitive to criticism; often have not developed frustration tolerance or the full ability to manage their emotions, which often results in not being able to accept failure well. 4-H Cloverbuds activities should be conducted in a positive environment that focuses on the members' strengths rather than analyzing their deficiencies. 4-H Cloverbuds members need opportunities to practice skills, discover talents and learn about fairness in a non-judgmental environment.

### 2. Can 4-H Cloverbuds members exhibit at Fairs or other Public Events?

It is strongly recommended that State 4-H policies not allow 4-H Cloverbuds to participate as competitive exhibitors related to any activities. However, 4-H Cloverbuds members are encouraged to *exhibit or showcase* activity-related items (posters or demonstrations) from their club at appropriate venues. Additionally, this policy recommendation is for the overall safety of the 4-H Cloverbuds member and the public at any public exhibition/ event.

### 3. What safety equipment should 4-H Cloverbuds members wear?

4-H Cloverbuds members must wear appropriate safety helmets or other safety equipment (life vests, knee pads, etc.) when engaged in activities such as riding bicycles, skateboards, canoeing, or other activities. Please consult with your State 4-H Program Office for specific requirements.

### 4. Are Kindergarten-3rd grade programs insured in the same way as 4-H clubs and programs?

Those leading a K-3 special membership category programs should be sensitive to risk management issues, and should consult with insurance providers. Many providers insure "4-H participants" which is defined as 4<sup>th</sup> graders and up and may not cover K-3 participants in activities or events not specified without an additional rider.

### 5. What educational resources are available for 4-H Cloverbuds programs?

It is important that children in grades K-3 be involved in activities where the risk of failure is minimized and the opportunity to experience success is maximized. The most reliable way to find activities that are based on the general characteristics of the age group is to select from the many 4-H Cloverbuds resources that are available throughout the 4-H system and which are being compiled on the National Directory of 4-H Materials

[www.4-hdirectory.org](http://www.4-hdirectory.org) .