



TITLE IX & 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Given that 4-H is a federally assisted program and as such, all programs, activities, events and competitions (state, area, county, local, regional and national) must be non-discriminatory according to federal law. Additionally, the 4-H program may not accept sponsorships, donations or awards that are based on discriminatory practices.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) proscribes discrimination on the basis of sex in any educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. Since Cooperative Extension 4-H Programs receive Federal financial assistance for education programs, they must adhere to USDA regulations prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex.

Consistent with these regulations, no State Extension may have an exclusive or formally sex-segregated 4-H program. Although, some individual 4-H clubs attract members of only one sex, this is the result of interests and choice and should not be a requirement of membership.

Gender specific competitions and awards are not permissible under Title IX of the Educational Amendments enacted by Congress in 1972. This act states:

“No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

This means that the practice of arranging competitions or awarding trips or other awards, scholarships, etc. on the basis of male or female categories is not acceptable in 4-H Youth Development Programs. In all cases, the requirements for competitions must provide equal access for all youth and must not be designed to create barriers to participation.

Cooperative Extension and 4-H Youth Development employees and volunteers are obligated to eliminate any practices that limit, deprive, or tend to deprive any youth of opportunities for membership or otherwise discriminate against these youth because of gender.

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4-H Fair Queen and/or King Contests (or contests sponsored by 4-H Fair Associations and subcommittees) where the awards are based upon a combination of factors related to personal appearance, poise, and talent of participants **are permissible activities** exempt from Title IX. In addition, any event or activity involving ongoing contact (such as sports like basketball) is also exempt. These 4-H events may not however, discriminate against any participant based upon race, color, national origin, sexual orientation, parental status, or marital status.

Those contests, however, (whether they carry the title King or Queen or any other title) which are based on a 4-H member's participation and/or record of achievement are considered competitions related to educational programming and are not exempt and are inappropriate gender based competitions.

Does this mean there can't be County Fair Queen Contests?

If the contest is based upon personal appearance, poise, talent and similar factors or a combination of them – the contest is a permissible activity. If, however, the contest finalists are determined based on 4-H achievement records or other activities which involve the outcome or impact of educational programs and knowledge, then they should not be gender specific but all youth should have the opportunity to participate.

For questions concerning 4-H Clubs or Affiliated 4-H Organizations, please contact the 4-H National Headquarters—USDA at (202) 720-2908 or at 4hhq@nifa.usda.gov. For additional Fact Sheets, or other materials related to 4-H programming, please visit <http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov>.