



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**. In order to ensure Maryland 4-H programs provide positive 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.



Maryland 4-H Youth Code of Conduct Agreement

Youth Code of Conduct:

Maryland 4-H expects youth participating in programs to behave in an acceptable manner and in accordance with the Maryland 4-H Code of Conduct outlined on the reverse of this document. 4-H participants who engage in unacceptable conduct are subject to discipline. Youth behaviors that are unacceptable under the Code of Conduct include, but are not limited to:

- Possession, use, or distribution of alcohol and/or illegal or illicit drugs
- Possession or use of weapons or dangerous materials
- Possession or use of tobacco products, including smokeless tobacco, e-cigarettes, smokeless “vaping” devices, and/or other nicotine delivery devices
- Misuse of prescription or non-prescription drugs or substances
- Sexual activity
- Lying, cheating, misrepresenting project work, or other unethical practices
- Unauthorized absence from program site
- Physical, verbal, emotional, or mental abuse of, or threats toward, another person
- Theft, destruction, or abuse of property
- 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:

A participant in a 4-H program who engages in conduct that may jeopardize the health or safety of the participant, other people, or the integrity of 4-H will be immediately dismissed from the program or activity. This determination and dismissal will be made at the discretion of the University of Maryland Extension (UME) faculty/staff member or UME volunteer in charge of the program or activity. The dismissed youth participant’s parent or guardian will be responsible for providing transportation away from the program or event.

Following dismissal from a program, the 4-H participant and his/her parent or guardian will be notified in writing of the nature of any unacceptable conduct for which sanctions, up to and including suspension or dismissal from 4-H programs or activities, are being considered. In such cases:

- The county/city UME faculty or staff member with overall responsibility for the program will set up a meeting to hear the 4-H participant. The 4-H participant’s parent/guardian will be present at this meeting. At the discretion of UME or at the request of the 4-H participant, a committee may be appointed by UME to review the matter.
- Following the meeting, the 4-H participant and his/her parent/guardian will be notified in writing of the outcome of the meeting and any sanction(s) to be imposed.
- Sanctions may be appealed in writing within seven (7) calendar days after the 4-H participant receives notice of the decision, to the Area Extension Director (AED). The AED will consult with the appropriate State 4-H Specialist(s) in considering the 4-H participant’s appeal. The 4-H participant and his/her parent/guardian will be notified in writing of the decision of the AED.
- The decision of the AED may be appealed in writing to the State 4-H Leader within seven (7) days after the 4-H participant receives notice of the decision. The 4-H participant and his/her parent/guardian will be notified in writing of the State 4-H Leader’s decision. The decision of the State 4-H Leader is final.

BEHAVIOR PLEDGE

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

4-Her’s Printed Name

4-Her’s Signature

Date

As the parent/guardian of _____, 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 individual in charge of maintaining appropriate behavior at 4-H programs, events, and activities. I agree to accept the appropriate and logical 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

