



Maryland 4-H In-Person Activities Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Baseline Conditions & 4-H Requirements

Q: My county is open for business. Why can't I follow my county's directives on gathering size, indoor meetings, mask wear, and other things?

A: Maryland 4-H has established **Baseline Conditions** that apply across the entire state program. The baseline conditions take into account the Governor's executive orders as well as University of Maryland guidelines and requirements. 4-H baseline conditions may be more restrictive than local conditions, but they must be followed by all 4-H in-person activities and programs.

Q: I think everyone should make their own choice whether they want to wear a mask or not. How can 4-H make mask wearing mandatory?

A: Maryland 4-H policy is that CDC-recommended face coverings must be properly worn at all in-person 4-H activities in programs. The policy is consistent with the Governor's executive orders, CDC guidelines, and University of Maryland protocols. Any person who cannot or chooses not to properly wear a face covering while attending an in-person 4-H activity may not attend or participate. This requirement is to help ensure the health and safety of everyone involved.

Q: I can't wear a mask because I have a medical condition. Do I have to wear one to lead my club meeting?

A: If you cannot wear a mask or face covering because of a health condition or for other reasons, you may not lead or attend an in-person 4-H activity or program. You should consider other ways you can lead 4-H activities, such as using virtual or distanced programs.

Q: If we are meeting outdoors, why do we have to wear masks?

A: The Governor's Executive Order that went into effect on July 31, 2020 requires all Marylanders to wear a mask outdoors when physical distancing is not possible. Even during an outdoor activity, it may be difficult for youth and adults to practice continuous and consistent physical distancing. Proper wear of face coverings at 4-H activities and programs held outdoors is required.

Q: Governor Hogan's order allows horseback riding without masks. Why do we have to wear masks and follow 4-H rules when our 4-H horse drill team practices?

A: The Governor's Executive Order that went into effect on July 31, 2020 requires all Marylanders to wear a mask outdoors when physical distancing is not possible. Even though it may be relatively easy for equestrians to maintain physical distance while mounted, horses can be unpredictable and you may find yourself in unexpected close contact with another rider or person. Additionally, drill team maneuvers may bring riders closer than 6 feet together. Proper wear of face coverings at 4-H activities and programs held outdoors, regardless of type, is required.

Meeting Places

Q: My club meets at the county 4-H office. Can we still meet there, even though it's not open for business?

A: You should contact your local 4-H Educator with this question. Local 4-H programs will have different rules and policies for use of their facilities.

Q: Our club meets in the church basement. They said we can have up to 50 people in the room, and they have about 40 people at the Friday Fellowship. Why can't we have a 4-H meeting the same size?

A: The current **Baseline Conditions** for an in-person 4-H activity limit group size to 25 OR the number of people the room can accommodate, allowing 56 square feet per person. This limit was established based on guidance and directives of the State of Maryland, University of Maryland, and University of Maryland Extension (UME). Even though your host location allows larger groups, you must follow the Maryland 4-H group size limit. Baseline conditions will eventually change to allow larger groups, but you must follow the rules that are in effect at the time the activity is held.

Q: How am I supposed to know the square footage of the room where I want to hold my 4-H project meeting? How do you even calculate square footage?

A: Contact the owner of the facility. They should be able to tell you the dimensions of the room, and how large the useable space is. If you plan to meet in a building that is accessible to the public, you may be able to find facility plans or information on a website.

To calculate square footage, multiply the room length (in feet) by room width (in feet). The product is the square footage. ($L \times W = \text{sf}^2$). To determine how large your 4-H Activity can be based on the size of the room, use the formula found in the **Planning an In-Person 4-H Activity Worksheet**. The worksheet can be downloaded from the [Maryland 4-H Website](#).

Q: I calculated the number of people we can have at our 4-H meeting in the room where we always meet. The number came out to be only 10 people! If the maximum 4-H group size has been increased to 25, why do we have to stay limited at 10?

A: The University of Maryland, of which 4-H is a part, requires that all indoor activities be limited to the number of people that can fit in a room or space allowing 56 square feet per person. This rule is necessary to allow a minimum of 6 feet physical distance between everyone present. If your meeting room is small, you may not be able to include as many people as you are normally used to having at your meetings.

If you would like to hold a larger gathering (up to 25 people) consider changing your meeting location to a larger room that can accommodate more people or holding your meeting outside.

Q: My project group meets at my house. Why can't I decide if people have to wear masks or stay 6 feet apart on my private property?

A: As a 4-H volunteer, you act as a representative of the Maryland 4-H program. Therefore, as you perform volunteer duties you have a responsibility to follow and enforce rules. One of the rules for in-person 4-H activities is that all participants must properly wear face coverings at all times. This applies whether the activity takes place on public property or private property. The same is true of the requirement for physical distancing at 4-H activities.

Additionally, hosting in-person 4-H activities on your private property is **strongly discouraged**, because you bear heavy risk of personal liability if something happens or someone gets sick. You should consider holding 4-H club meetings and other 4-H activities at another location.

Q: If I hold a 4-H activity at my house, do we have to follow the indoor group size restrictions?

A: Yes, the maximum group size requirements apply to all 4-H activities regardless whether they are held on public or private property. You may only have as many people present for your 4-H activity as can fit into the space, allowing 56 square feet per person. Don't forget that maximum allowable number would include any members of your own family who may be present, as well as 4-H leaders and members.

Volunteer Training

Q: I have been a certified UME Volunteer for years. I have done both my initial orientation and my refresher training. Why do I have to do another training?

A: As of August 1, 2020, and until further notice, every volunteer who wants to lead, host, or participate in an in-person 4-H activity must complete the **Returning to In-Person 4-H Programming** online training. This training specifically addresses the risks and challenges of holding an in-person 4-H activity in the current pandemic environment, and it covers the required procedures and protocols. The training only has to be completed one time, before you request to hold your first in-person 4-H activity since programming was suspended in March 2020. If you do not want to lead or host an in-person 4-H activity you do not have to complete this training.

Q: I don't do computers. How can I do this training so I can hold club meetings and activities again?

A: If you do not have the ability to complete this training online, contact your local 4-H Educator. They can help you find a way to access and complete the training.

Request and Approval Process

Q: Why do I have to request approval to have a simple club meeting? I have never had to before!

A: The worldwide health emergency caused by the COVID-19 virus has caused us all to be very cautious when interacting with others, because the virus is highly contagious. For this reason, Maryland 4-H suspended all in-person activities in March 2020. Now that we are starting to allow very limited in-person activities, we must remain cautious and ensure we are doing everything we can to keep 4-H families and volunteers safe and healthy. Therefore, until further notice all 4-H activities must be approved in advance. Approval may be granted by your local 4-H team after you show that you have a solid plan to practice health and safety precautions throughout the activity.

Q: How do I request to have an in-person club meeting? Is there a form or something?

A: You will have to submit an online request to hold your club meeting. The request can be made no earlier than 30 days and no later than 10 days prior to the meeting date. Follow the procedures described in the **Restoring Maryland 4-H Programs Volunteer Guidebook** and use the resources available on the [Maryland 4-H website](#) to help you prepare your request.

Q: Who makes the decision whether or not our 4-H activity can meet in-person?

A: Your 4-H Educator will review your request and make the initial decision whether your request should be approved or denied. The 4-H Educator's decision to approve the request will be reviewed by the Area/City Extension Director and the State 4-H Staff. The A/CED, State 4-H Staff, and State 4-H Program Leader will either affirm or override the 4-H Educator's initial approval decision. Once the review process is complete, you will be notified of the final decision to approve or deny your request.

If your 4-H Educator decides to deny your request, the decision is not reviewed. You will be notified of the final denial decision and the reason behind it.

Q: My 4-H Educator denied our request to meet in person. I don't agree. Who do I talk to?

A: The denial decision of the local 4-H Educator is final. The reason your request was denied should have been explained when you were notified. Unless your 4-H Educator specifically said otherwise, you may submit a revised request to hold the 4-H activity at a later time. If you want to submit a new request, be sure you address or correct any issues that may have caused the original denial.

Post Activity Reporting

Q: Why do I have to file a report after the 4-H activity? I never have before.

A: COVID-19 is a highly contagious but still somewhat mysterious virus. It is possible someone may have or carry the virus when they attend your 4-H activity, but not know until later. If we learn a possible exposure to COVID-19 happens at a 4-H activity, we must be able to quickly provide accurate information to health officials about the activity and who attended. Therefore, leaders are required to file a short report and upload their attendance roster within 48 hours of the end of the activity. This requirement will remain in effect until lifted by the State 4-H Program Leader.

Q: What is the purpose of the post-activity report? We keep minutes and roll call in the Secretary's book.

A: The post-activity report allows your 4-H Educator and other 4-H faculty/staff members to have quick access to information about your 4-H activity at any time it may be needed. If we learn a possible exposure to COVID-19 happens at a 4-H activity, we must be able to quickly provide accurate information to health officials about the activity and who attended. Therefore, leaders are required to file a short report and upload their attendance roster within 48 hours of the end of the activity. You should still keep minutes and record roll call in the Secretary's book. This post-activity report is completed by leaders and is separate from the duties of a club secretary.

Q: When I fill out the post-activity report form I have to type in the name of everyone who was present, as well as upload the Attendance Record. Why do I have to type in all the names if they are already listed on the Attendance Record?

A: Submitting a typed list of names as a response to one of the report questions allows the State 4-H Office to search the response database for a specific name and quickly identify all 4-H activities that person may have attended. The search function does not work on uploaded attachments, because they are scans or photographs of the form. Because we may have to quickly provide information in response to COVID-19 contact tracing, we must be able to search the response database to identify what 4-H activities an individual attended and who they may have had contact with.

Planning an In-Person 4-H Activity

Q: Do I still have to have Zoom meetings if I can have an in-person meeting?

A: For the continued safety and well-being of all 4-H families and volunteers, it is **strongly recommended** you continue to hold 4-H activities in a virtual or distanced format. Home is still the safest place to be. Just because you can meet in person (if approved in advance), doesn't mean you must or should. If you do decide to return to in-person meetings you can still use technology such as Zoom to allow 4-H families join "live" if they cannot or choose not to attend in person.

Q: My project group has 35 members. How am I supposed to have an in-person meeting that includes all of them?

A: The best way for everyone to participate together is by holding virtual meeting. If you want to meet in-person you may need to split your group meeting into multiple sessions to allow everyone the chance to participate. Each session must be led by at least 2 certified UME/4-H volunteers and may not exceed the maximum group size. See the **Planning an In-Person 4-H Activity** section of the **Restoring Maryland 4-H Programs Volunteer Guidebook** for more information about multiple-session 4-H activities.

Q: Can I have one meeting and separate kids/volunteers/parents into 3 groups of 20 each in different parts of the barn? As long as I keep everyone apart in their groups, what's the difference?

A: The best way for everyone to participate together is by holding a virtual club meeting. However, holding a 4-H activity with multiple concurrent sessions is a possibility, as long as clear procedures are established and followed to guarantee groups don't come into contact with each other. Additionally, each group must be led by at least 2 certified UME/4-H volunteers who will be designated as leaders of the 4-H activity. You must prepare a detailed plan of how you will manage concurrent multiple sessions, and your plan must be approved by your 4-H Educator. See the Planning an In-Person 4-H Activity section of the **Restoring Maryland 4-H Programs Volunteer Guidebook** for more information about multiple-session 4-H activities.

Q: We need to build our club's booth. How are we supposed to stay 6 feet apart while we do that?

A: Be creative! You might be able to devise a plan where each 4-Her can complete a part of the booth at home, then deliver their contribution to someone for the final assembly. There are lots of ways you can use technology for a virtual "booth building party." If you decide you must meet in-person, there are ways you can practice physical distancing while working together to complete your project. See the **Best Practices** in Appendix F of the **Restoring Maryland 4-H Programs Volunteer Guidebook** for more ideas.

Q: When we have Shooting Sports practice I have to get close to kids so I can correct their body position. How can I require physical distancing? It just doesn't work for us.

A: Activities that require occasional close contact are not exempt from physical distancing requirements. There are specific considerations and instructions for Shooting Sports activities, that can be found in the **Restoring Maryland 4-H Programs Volunteer Guidebook**.

Q: Everyone is wearing masks at our Shooting Sports practices, but when kids put on their safety glasses the glasses fog up from the masks. They don't have clear sight when shooting, which is not safe. Why do kids have to wear masks when shooting?

A: Maryland 4-H protocols for Shooting Sports practices have been updated to allow all youth shooters and archers to remove their masks/face coverings while on the shooting line. Shooters/archers must put their masks back on before stepping back from the line after shooting. See page 19 of the **Restoring Maryland 4-H Programs Guidebook** for updated requirements.

Q: Our dog club wants to start our dog training classes again. We meet once a week at the park. Can we get back to work?

A: Yes you can, as long as you request and receive advance approval from your 4-H Educator. See the **Planning an In-Person 4-H Activity** section of the **Restoring Maryland 4-H Programs Volunteer Guidebook** for more information. Be sure to review the additional procedures for activities involving live animals.

Q: I want to take my 28 4-H Dairy Judging Team kids to a farm on the Eastern Shore to practice. We aren't having a club meeting, so these rules don't apply, right?

A: A 4-H activity is any gathering in a common location of 4-H members, families, and/or volunteers for a 4-H-related purpose. The 4-H activity designation does not apply only to club activities; it includes project-related or team-based activities such as Dairy Judging practice. Your requested 4-H activity must be approved in advance by your local 4-H team. In addition, you may have to modify your planned trip to ensure the activity meets current **Baseline Conditions**, which place limits on group size. Talk to your 4-H Educator about ways you may be able to hold a modified 4-H activity and what you will need to do to get it approved.

Transportation & Parent/Guardian Presence

Q: My club's policy is that parents must remain at the meeting. Why can't they stay and watch, as long as we have less than 25 kids actually participating?

A: Parents/guardians are encouraged to remain on-site but away from an in-person 4-H activity. It is up to the activity leaders if they want to allow parents/guardians to watch, but if they are allowed to stay within the activity "bubble" they must be counted toward the maximum group size. Depending on the activity, parents/guardians may be able to observe from a distance or watch/join the activity virtually. Remember, if the 4-H activity is held indoors the maximum group size may be smaller than 25 people, based on the size of the room.

Q: Do kids have to come with their parent/guardian? It makes me nervous to have a 4-H activity without them there to watch their kids. What if their kid gets sick or causes trouble and they aren't here to deal with it?

A: 4-H volunteers who lead in-person activities may require that parents/guardians bring their own children to the activity, and that they remain on-site as the activity is conducted. Be sure to clearly communicate your expectation ahead of time and have a plan to respond if a parent/guardian is not able to bring their child. Contact your local 4-H Educator for advice, if needed.

Q: Can Club Leaders pick up members at their houses and bring them to the meeting? That's what we have done in the past.

A: Carpooling is strongly discouraged unless absolutely necessary. Whenever possible, a parent/guardian or other household member should transport 4-Hers to an in-person 4-H activity. This prevents close, prolonged contact between individuals who do not share a household. If carpooling is necessary, the parent/guardian of a child who will ride with another family should complete the **Permission to Travel** form and give it to the 4-H activity leader.

Health & Illness

Q: Why do I have to collect Health Pledges?

A: Health Pledges are "proof" that the participant believed they were healthy, agreed to follow rules and protocols, and understood the potential risks of participating in an in-person 4-H activity in the current environment. Health Pledges must be collected and kept in case someone gets sick and there is an investigation or lawsuit later.

Q: Is collecting paper Health Pledges safe?

A: According to published scientific studies, the COVID-19 virus can survive on paper only for a very short time. This finding is supported by the CDC. Collecting papers that have only been handled by one or a few people presents practically no risk of infection. Even so, you should collect papers in a contactless method if possible and wash your hands as soon as possible after collecting them.

Q: Why can't a kid who has a "Yes" answer on their Health Pledge participate in my 4-H activity?

If a participant answered "Yes" to one of the 3 health-related questions on the pledge, they are saying they 1) are sick or have symptoms that are associated with COVID-19, 2) have been recently exposed to someone who has or was exposed to COVID-19, or 3) someone in their household is in quarantine because of a possible COVID-19 exposure. In any of these 3 cases, it is possible that the participant could be a carrier of the COVID-19 virus. You cannot let them or anyone else who arrived in their vehicle enter the activity. You should recommend the parent/guardian contact their doctor and ask them to go home.

Q: What if I try to send a kid home because their parent refuses to sign the Health Pledge? How can I make them leave?

A: If you find yourself in a confrontation with a parent/guardian over a Health Pledge or for any other reason, do your best to manage the situation calmly and professionally while continuing to enforce the policy. If the situation escalates or the parent/guardian attempts to “force entry” for their child, you may have to shut down the 4-H activity and send everyone home. It is better to cancel the activity than to place the health and safety of everyone at risk. After the confrontation has been resolved, complete a Maryland 4-H Incident Report to document the details. See Appendix C of the **Restoring Maryland 4-H Programs Volunteer Guidebook** for an example of a completed Incident Report. The report form can be found on the [Maryland 4-H website](#).

Be sure to discuss how to handle situations like this one with your 4-H Educator prior to the activity, so you will be ready to respond and your 4-H Educator will be ready to help.

Q: What if a kid comes with a neighbor but doesn't bring his signed Health Pledge? His parents aren't there to sign one for him.

A: Any person who arrives at a 4-H activity without a properly completed and signed Health Pledge may not be admitted to the activity. A youth member who comes someone other than his parent/guardian must wait outside the activity or be taken home. The 4-Her cannot complete or sign their own pledge, and the adult driver cannot sign for a child who is not their own. While this situation will be disappointing, there can be no exceptions to the Health Pledge “ticket” requirement.

Q: Why do I have to have a plan to deal with a sick kid at the meeting? If a kid got sick at a meeting before, I just had somebody go with him to the bathroom or outside. If he wasn't feeling better in a few minutes, we called his Mom. Why is this any different?

A: Because of the highly contagious nature of COVID-19, additional precautions are necessary to promptly and safely handle illness or display of symptoms that may happen at a 4-H activity. The Response Protocol checklists found in the required **Health & Safety Plan** are based on usual methods of handling illness at a 4-H activity. The “normal process” has just been enhanced with additional hygiene and safety steps. Review the response protocols for a full explanation of how to handle illness of a youth or adult at a 4-H activity.

Q: Mrs. Jones just told me her daughter tested positive for COVID-19 and she probably had it when she was at our club meeting! What do I do? She may have infected all of us!

A: If someone who attended your 4-H activity tells you they or one of their family members is sick, advise them to contact their doctor right away so they can be tested for COVID-19. If they tell you someone in their family tested positive for COVID-19 within two weeks of attending your 4-H activity, immediately contact your 4-H Educator. You should not tell anyone else who was at the 4-H activity about the possible exposure. If you do, you will be violating the confidentiality of the health-related information the 4-H family has shared with you. Notifying your 4-H Educator of what you were told does not violate confidentiality because they will use the information only for official purposes and will not share it with anyone else.

The 4-H Educator will work with health officials as requested to provide information for contact tracing efforts. They will also notify everyone affected that an exposure may have occurred at the 4-H activity and encourage them to contact their doctors and cooperate with State contact tracing efforts. The 4-H Educator will not identify the source of the possible exposure or tell how it may have happened. 4-H volunteers must not share any information that helps others guess or learn who may have been sick or infected while attending the 4-H activity.

General Questions

Q: If I just invite my club's members to come "hang out" at my farm and work on their projects, that's not a "4-H activity," right? So these rules don't apply?

A: A 4-H activity is any gathering in a common location of 4-H members, families, and/or volunteers for a 4-H-related purpose. If you invite people to come to your farm because they are members of your 4-H club, so they can work on 4-H-related projects, that constitutes a "4-H activity" that must be approved in advance by your 4-H Educator. All in-person 4-H activity rules, requirements, and protocols will apply.

Q: What if I just have a meeting without going through all these steps?

A: As part of your volunteer agreement, you agreed to "follow and uphold all of the policies, rules, regulations, and laws" of the Maryland 4-H program and to "exercise good faith and integrity" in performance of your responsibilities and duties as a certified UME Volunteer. If you refuse, ignore, or intentionally fail to follow the requirements and procedures **Restoring Maryland 4-H Programs Plan** your status as a UME/4-H Volunteer may be terminated, you may face sanctions or disciplinary action, and you may be held personally liable for any resulting claims or harms.

The policies, rules, and protocols required for an in-person 4-H activity have been put in place for everyone's health and safety, including yours. By following them you not only "do your duty" as a 4-H volunteer, you protect yourself if something bad happens.

Q: How long do we have to do this?

A: The requirements and procedures of the **Restoring Maryland 4-H Programs Plan** will remain in effect until lifted by the State 4-H Program Leader. They will evolve over time as conditions change, but must be followed until further notice.