



Guidelines for Chaperons

Adults who chose to chaperone take on a very important responsibility. Missouri 4-H appreciates the involvement of adults as chaperones and recognizes that you take time from jobs and families to provide young people positive experiences. Nights are short, days long and there is usually lots of ground to cover but we hope you find the activities exciting, thought-provoking and entertaining. The youth are contagiously energetic and motivating and it is a great time to meet new people and enjoy a change of pace from daily routines. Remember, you are making a difference in a young person's life.

Creating safe environments is certainly an important role for the chaperone. It is understood that there are certain rules and regulations that should be followed. The chaperone also should help young people grow, make responsible decisions and have fun.

Generally:

- Enjoy, accept and encourage youth.
- Model the behavior you want youth to emulate.
- Clarify expectations (strive for consistency).
- Don't expect youth to do everything the way you would.
- Display tolerance and flexibility.
- Assist young people in making decisions; when possible (high risk or immediate danger is not involved) do not direct or manipulate, but be available as a coach and mentor.
- Show by behavior that youth input is valued.
- Give away ownership and power.
- Communicate clearly and often.
- Create room for stepping-stones.
- Help them see consequences in decisions they make.
- Invite them to share fears and concerns.
- Stick to any promises you make.
- Increase responsibility as they grow.
- Create expectations that are respectful of young people.

(Adapted From Youth Outreach – Points of Light Foundation)

A chaperone should:

- Be interested and have the ability to work with all youth and adults.
- Be adaptable to situations under pressure, changing schedules, and embarrassing situations.
- Assume responsibility and provide leadership to groups.
- Be enthusiastic, self-confident and have a high level of energy.
- Be a good communicator, tactful and sensitive to others.
- Have a good sense of humor.
- Be 21 years of age.

A chaperone should expect to:

- Be informed and oriented.
- Be supported by staff.
- Be a part of planning (as much as is feasible).

A chaperone should:

- Become thoroughly acquainted with the list of delegate expectations for a given event.
- Work together with other chaperones and staff to supervise delegates' behavior.
- Assume responsibility for discipline should it become necessary. If a problem should arise that you do not feel confident in handling, be quick to seek help from the coordinator, planning committee or other extension personnel.
- Attend chaperone meetings.
- Participate in scheduled activities and programs along with the youth.
- Visit with the delegates from your area several times a day to review the program agenda, delegate expectations, etc. Help them understand what they are experiencing and learning as a result of their educational experience. This is also a good time to check your group for possible health and/or personal problems.
- Carry a conference or event program at all times and be willing to answer questions and give directions.
- Set an example by wearing appropriate clothing for each activity.
- Assist with bed checks each night.

Steps in Handling Discipline Issues:

It is recommended that adult chaperones work in teams of two when handling disciplinary issues. This insures that another adult is available to assist if necessary. If the situation is dangerous to the young person or others, act immediately to reduce the danger. When possible, take the youth aside rather than handling the disciplinary problem in front of peers or others.

1. Step 1 – Politely ask the youth if they think the behavior is appropriate. Listen to their side of the story. If their explanation is not satisfactory, tell them how you expect them to behave.
2. Step 2 – If a youth responds disrespectfully to your first approach, or if the inappropriate behavior continues, call the member's parents and explain the situation, then ask them to talk with their child and put them on the phone.
3. Step 3 – If after steps one and two, the inappropriate behavior continues, call the Youth Specialist to consult on what to do with the delegate. The Youth Specialist may provide this information prior to an event.

Keep the following in mind as you work with delegates:

- Work with another adult chaperone.
- Don't make "threats" such as sending the delegate home unless the action warrants and there is general agreement with the youth staff that sending a delegate home is an appropriate measure. Each participant signs the **4-H ACTIVITY/EVENT ACCEPTANCE** clause which states:

Educational events and activities are coordinated by the University of Missouri 4-H Youth Development Programs. All participants (adult and youth) must observe the following guidelines for conduct:

1. Participate fully in all sessions.
2. Show respect for property and facilities used during the activity and assume financial responsibility for any damage they cause.

3. Observe the established schedule, including being in their own rooms at the announced curfew.
4. Appropriate and courteous behavior is expected. Swearing and obscene gestures are not permitted. All other participants, guests, chaperons, and visitors should be treated with respect and common courtesy. Participants are expected to dress appropriately. Clothing with alcohol or tobacco advertisements or sexual connotations, etc. are prohibited.
5. No alcohol, stimulants, non-prescription drugs or tobacco products will be allowed.

We understand and accept the responsibility for following the above guidelines, and understand that failure to do so will result in dismissal from the event or activity. Further, we accept financial responsibility for damages to property or materials, travel costs, and/or program costs which might result from violation of this agreement. I understand and agree that in consideration of the acceptance of my child in these activities, I release the 4-H, the Curators of the University of Missouri, their respective officers, agents, and/or employees from all liability and loss (including court costs and attorney fees), resulting from any property damage, personal injury and bodily injury, including death, to me or my child, which is caused or claimed to be caused, in whole or part, by the negligent acts or omissions of the 4-H, the Curators of the University of Missouri, their respective officers, agents, and/or employees. I will be bound by all rules and regulations while participating in said events.

- Stick to the facts, things you can observe.
- Stay calm, no matter what.
- Treat all delegates the same.
- For serious situations, keep a record of what you said and did.
- Give second chances.
- Be consistent.

Prepared by:
Mary Jo Williams
State 4-H Youth Development Specialist
812 Clark Hall, Columbia, Mo 65211
WilliamsMJ@missouri.edu