



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN UW COOPERATIVE EXTENSION AND 4-H GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS IN WISCONSIN

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Background

Since the beginning of Cooperative Extension and 4-H in Wisconsin in 1914, formally organized, chartered 4-H clubs have provided youth with access to University of Wisconsin Extension programs. Today there are more than 2,000 4-H clubs in Wisconsin. In addition, nearly every county has a 4-H volunteer leader organization. Most of these groups have existed as formal associations since the 1930s. A variety of other 4-H committees and groups exist, often formed to carry out program management or specific educational functions at the county level. These county level groups typically function as subgroups of the county 4-H leader association. District and State 4-H committees and groups also exist to support and extend Extension programs statewide. Cooperative Extension personnel monitor the activities of all these 4-H groups, and serve as advisors to county and state 4-H leader associations.

In the context of leadership development, Extension has encouraged 4-H leaders to play an active decision making role in county and community 4-H programming. This “volunteer empowerment” approach has encouraged 4-H groups to operate with a measure of autonomy. As a result, these 4-H groups and associations have developed a strong sense of programmatic and organizational ownership. This approach has produced strong organizational leadership, and a committed core of constituents who value and support Cooperative Extension.

Federal Authority

The 4-H name and emblem are protected by federal law, and USDA is responsible for overseeing its proper use. At the state level, the Director of Cooperative Extension and the State 4-H Program Leader are responsible for authorizing and monitoring the use of the 4-H name and emblem. The USDA policy states in part,

“The Administrator of the Extension Service may grant authorization for the use of the 4-H Club Name and Emblem for educational or informational uses which the Cooperative Extension Service deems to be in the best interests of the 4-H program and which can be properly controlled by the Cooperative Extension Service.”¹

At the county level, the UWEX 4-H Youth Development Agent is responsible for authorizing and monitoring the use of the 4-H name and emblem. A second USDA policy statement describes the responsibilities of the agent:

“(1) To authorize use of the 4-H name and emblem... (2) To keep a record of all 4-H organizations... (3) To secure from each 4-H organization...a periodic (at least annually) report of their activities. (4) To review each 4-H organization’s activities to determine that it continues to meet the particular 4-H objectives for which it was established... (5) To issue a letter, 4-H club charter, or certificate of authorization authorizing...use of the 4-H name and emblem.”²

University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension and 4-H

The relationship between Cooperative Extension and 4-H groups is unique. Federal law protects the 4-H name and emblem, and USDA administrative policy prescribes Extension's responsibility for controlling the use of this name and emblem. These 4-H groups are created solely to extend and support Cooperative Extension youth educational programs, and are considered a formal component of Cooperative Extension's educational efforts. 4-H groups and associations are accountable to Cooperative Extension for their activities and finances. Their continuing existence is dependent upon Cooperative Extension's authorization and oversight.

1. *The 4-H Name and Emblem: Guidelines for Authorized Use.* USDA, 1984.
2. *Tax-Exempt Status of 4-H Organizations Authorized to Use the 4-H Name and Emblem.* USDA, 1993.



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