4-H VOLUNTEER INFORMATION SERIES

Nebraska 4-H Youth Development

Safe Learning Environments

Part of being an effective and responsible 4-H leader includes being a role model of health and safety. Members learn about health and safety both directly and indirectly from the adults around them. The role of the leader in providing a healthy and safe environment also includes taking precautions to prevent injury or illness to individuals while they are participating in a 4-H activity.

As a positive role model for youth, you must be sensitive to youth risk behaviors. When acting in official 4-H capacity in the presence of members, avoid the following behaviors:

- **Smoking.**
  Research has shown the harmful effects of cigarette smoke to nonsmokers, especially children and non smokers.
- **Abuse of prescription or over-the-counter.**
  Many readily available substances can be harmful if used incorrectly. Since many of these can be easily obtained by youth, it is very important for leaders to set an example.
- **Use of alcohol at youth activities.**
  Alcohol is currently the most abused drug among youth in the United States. Alcohol and drug-related auto accidents are the leading cause of death among 15 to 24 year-olds.
- **Use of illegal drugs.**

Some things to consider in providing a safe and healthy environment:

- All meeting places, camps, and other sites used for 4-H program activities should provide a safe, clean and secure environment and allow for the participation of all members.

- Club meetings and activities should have ample adult supervision (for example: two adults for every 10 members under 10 or two adults for every 20 members ages 10-12.) For safety, more adults are needed when working with large animals.

- Private passenger vehicles used during 4-H activities must be properly registered, insured and operated by licensed adults.

Extension is a Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln cooperating with the Counties and the United States Department of Agriculture.

The 4-H Youth Development program abides with the nondiscrimination policies of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and the United States Department of Agriculture.

- The number of passengers in a private vehicle should not exceed the number intended for the vehicle. Each person must have and use a seat belt.

- All passengers are considerate of the driver and observe all safe conduct rules.

- Take safety precautions including first-aid kits, road hazard kits and weather related items such as blizzard kits, sun screen and water.

- Leaders responsible for activities and events should be informed of arrangements made for the youth's safe return home.

- When traveling with youth, obtain signed permission forms, including health forms and take a list of the youths' parents' names and emergency phone numbers.

- Leaders should read and follow labels when using any chemically based product and provide ample ventilation and work space during activities such as furniture refinishing, art projects, woodworking, livestock grooming, etc.

- All instructors/leaders in shooting sports, water safety, challenge courses, equine safety, ATV, tractor, etc., should be trained and /or certified in the individual area.

- Under Nebraska law, an equine professional is not liable for an injury to, or death of a participant in equine activities resulting from the inherent risks of equine activities pursuant to 25-21, 249 to 25-21, 253 NRS. Please inform members and parents of this law.

Adapted from: *Piecing It All Together.* Etling, Melang, and Stanley. UNL Extension 4-H.