

# Starting a New 4-H Club



## Pike County Guidelines



**THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY**

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,  
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES



**PIKE COUNTY**  
[pike.osu.edu](http://pike.osu.edu)

CFAES provides research and related educational programs to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis. For more information, visit [cfaesdiversity.osu.edu](http://cfaesdiversity.osu.edu). For an accessible format of this publication, visit [cfaes.osu.edu/accessibility](http://cfaes.osu.edu/accessibility).

## Dear Potential 4-H Club Leader:

Thank you for your interest in beginning a new 4-H Club in Pike County! Community Clubs are an important part of the Pike County 4-H Program, involving more than 800 youth each year.

A well run 4-H club has the potential to make a life-long positive impact on youth. 4-H youth have the opportunity to meet new people, build new skills, and discover more about their own interests and abilities. There are approximately 40 4-H clubs in Pike County, and if you surveyed them all you would probably find 40 different ways of leading and managing the clubs. However, all successful clubs have a few things in common:

- Clubs are led by caring adult volunteers, who are there to help the youth accomplish their own goals (and not just the goals of the leaders).
- Club advisors provide organized leadership, ensuring that all families have the information they need to fully participate and benefit from club, county, and state opportunities.
- Members have a key role in making all club decisions, including those about learning activities, community service projects, and club structure.

The information in this packet describes the basic process of starting a new 4-H Club. Please review the information carefully, paying special attention to the deadlines listed on the back page. You are not expected to navigate this entire process on your own; as a matter of fact, you cannot. You will need the help of Extension staff with many of the steps. This packet serves merely as a guide and not as a do-it-yourself kit. The staff members at the OSU Extension Office are committed to helping our volunteers succeed and will provide assistance with the process of beginning new clubs. Please, always feel free to call with questions or concerns.

**The very first step in beginning a new club is being approved as a 4-H volunteer.** Maintaining the integrity of our program and the safety of our youth are our highest priorities. Please help us to do so by refraining from working with youth until after this screening and approval process has been completed.

Sincerely,



Extension Educator

Pike County 4-H Youth Development

### STEP 1: Volunteer Screening and Selection

New clubs require **at least 2 screened**, approved adult volunteers. All OSU Extension volunteers must complete a volunteer screening and selection process before they begin volunteering in any capacity. **This process includes:**

- Written Application
- Volunteer Standards of Behavior Form & Pike County Code of Conduct
- Criminal History Fingerprint Background Check
- Review of References
- Personal Interview
- New Volunteer Orientation
- Completion of "Activities and Programs with Minor Participants" training



Potential new volunteers may begin this process by contacting the OSU Extension Office for an **application packet**. Please note that it can take several weeks to complete this step, so please plan ahead and start early.



**Important Note:** Until Step 1 has been completed, you cannot begin the other steps. ALL volunteers must complete the screening and training process before they can begin to work with youth.

### STEP 2: Adding Youth Members

All clubs must have at least 5 members from at least 3 different families. Members may be a combination of Cloverbuds and/or 4-H youth.

Ohio 4-H membership is based on a child's age AND grade as of January 1 of the current calendar year. Eligibility for Cloverbud participation begins when a child is age 5 and enrolled in kindergarten. Eligibility for participation in 4-H projects and competitive events begins when a child is age 8 and in third grade. Any youth age 9 or above is eligible for project membership, regardless of grade level. A youth's 4-H eligibility ends December 31 the year he or she turns 19.

New club advisors are often aware of a need or interest for the new club before beginning the process, but cannot enroll members until they are notified that their volunteer process has been completed. Please note that youth are not official members of the club until the enrollment process has been completed.

### STEP 3: Your Club's First Meeting!

Sometimes this first meeting is scheduled before the minimum five members have been recruited. This is okay, provided you continue to recruit members before the enrollment deadline!

Usually the first couple organizational meetings are informal, because a constitution has not yet been adopted and officers have not been elected. This is the one time it is okay for the adult advisors to operate the meeting without youth officers. **It is still expected that youth participate in all items of business.** Remember, 4-H clubs belong to the members!

At these first meetings, club members can begin discussing a club name, provide ideas for club activities, and decide on future meeting dates.

### STEP 4: Choose Your Club Name and Submit It for Approval

Once your club name is chosen, you must submit it to the Pike County 4-H educator for approval. All club names must officially end with the phrase "*4-H Club of Pike County.*" For example: you decide to name your club "Clovers United." It's official name would be "Clovers United 4-H Club of Pike County." Please refer to the fact sheet, "Choosing a 4-H Club Name" at the end of this document.

### STEP 5: Adopt a Club Constitution and By-Laws

All 4-H clubs must adopt a constitution before members can be enrolled. Ohio 4-H has a template for club constitutions, so this process is as easy as filling in a few blanks and having members vote to accept the constitution. **A copy of this constitution has been attached.** However clubs should provide an official copy with their club name entered for members to approve and sign. There are very few changes which can be made to a club constitution. All members should then sign the constitution and receive a copy including new members who join at a later date.

By-laws are optional, and can be completed at any time after the constitution is adopted. By-laws are where clubs can include specific rules such as attendance policies, community service requirements, special officer positions or other rules. If by-laws are adopted they must be signed by members and submitted to the Extension Office to be added to your official constitution. Please see the attached sample By-Laws.

Be sure to provide your Pike County 4-H educator with a copy of your club's signed constitution!

## **STEP 6: Apply for an EIN # from the IRS**

All 4-H Clubs are **required to apply for an EIN** (Employer Identification Number) from the IRS.gov website. 4-H clubs are legal organizations with their own EIN number. All clubs are required to obtain an EIN number before they can receive a charter or enroll members, even if they do not plan to handle money. The Extension Office will file your yearly required 990-N postcard.

The easiest way to apply is online. If you do not have internet access, you can arrange to use a computer at the Extension Office. Instructions for obtaining an EIN are available on-line at <http://go.osu.edu/einhelp>.

\*When providing your club name, be sure to include “4-H Club of Pike County” (see STEP 4)

## **STEP 7: Complete a Tax Exempt Authorization (TEA) Form and Blanket Exemption Form**

The “TEA” form and blanket exemption form are simple forms to complete once you have received your EIN#. Once completed, return both forms to the Pike County Extension Office. We will submit the TEA to the state 4-H office for you. These forms allow you to purchase books for your club without being charged sales tax.

## **STEP 8: Complete Your Club Charter**

Once you have your club name, constitution, and EIN #, you are prepared to review Ohio 4-H’s club charter checklist. The charter is a list of requirements you agree to abide by as an Ohio 4-H club. This form is to be completed each year and a copy given to the Pike County Extension office.

## **STEP 9: You are Ready for Official Member Enrollment!**

All 4-H members (youth and volunteers) must enroll online each year through a web-based system called “**4-H Online**.” While the system is fairly intuitive, we provide enrollment “how-to” sheets for advisors and families. Again, do not hesitate to contact the Pike County Extension office for help!

A county enrollment deadline is set each year, usually for mid-March. However, families may begin enrolling their youth as early as January 1 (and sometimes sooner)! Many clubs begin their meetings once the new **4-H club year begins** (which is October 1), and are ready to begin enrollments in late fall, early winter.

## **TIMELINE OF CONSIDERATIONS FOR VOLUNTEERING**

### **October 1 - The new 4-H program year begins!**

- You would like to start a 4-H club, but first realize you must become an approved volunteer!
- You pick up a volunteer application from the Extension Office immediately, knowing it will take several weeks to be approved.

### **November 1 – Your volunteer application is ready; now it's BCI time!**

- Plan to attend 2 required trainings this month: one for ALL volunteers and one specifically geared for NEW volunteers.
- You turn in a completed application to the Extension office, making sure you have included all pertinent information (including references).
  - ✓ Extension office will send forms to your references.
- You visit a local agency to complete your BCI fingerprints check; you take instructions with you to ensure the paperwork is done correctly!
  - ✓ Instructions and form are found in this packet

### **December 1 – Thinking about your youth membership. Tying up loose ends.**

- The holidays are approaching, but you decide to touch base with a few families to gauge interest in youth joining your 4-H club.
- You call the Extension Office to check the status of reference responses. You contact individuals who have not sent back a reference form to the Extension Office.
- Hand out "4-H Family Guides" (booklet listing 4-H projects and member information) to potential members.

### **January 1 – Can I have a meeting now?**

- You call the Extension office to check on your volunteer status and see if your BCI is cleared. If it is, notify the educator that you would like to hold your first meeting to gather youth. Be sure to invite parents to the meeting!
- Once your volunteer status is cleared, you go online to [irs.gov](https://irs.gov) and apply for an EIN #.
- Your club decides on a club name and you submit it to the Extension office.
- Your club decides on a meeting schedule for the rest of the year.
- Enrollment deadline is February 15. At your January meeting, you check in to see how youth / families are doing with their online enrollment ([oh.4honline.com/#/user/sign-in](https://oh.4honline.com/#/user/sign-in)).

## **TIMELINE OF CONSIDERATIONS FOR VOLUNTEERING**

### **February 1 – Am I ready to get started?**

- You hold an election to decide on club officers.
- Remember, the enrollment deadline is February 15.
- After enrollment is completed, you will receive a final report listing members and their projects that will need confirmed by you.

### **March 1 – Let's wrap up the paperwork and get going!**

- You ensure you have been approved as a volunteer
- You complete and turn in the following documents to the Extension office:
  - Club Constitution
  - Club by-laws (optional)
  - Club Charter checklist
  - Tax Exempt Authorization form
  - Blanket Exemption form

THIS IS NOT AN ALL-INCLUSIVE TIMELINE, but it will provide a general sense of what to expect each month as you complete the volunteer process.

AS ALWAYS, please feel free to contact the Extension office with questions or concerns!

## Choosing a Name for Your 4-H Club

**Choosing a name for your club may be the first decision your new group gets to make. Keep these pointers in mind as you select your club name:**

### **Think Non-Discriminatory**

As a program of Ohio State University Extension, Pike County 4-H does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, gender identity or expression, disability, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, or veteran status. Be sure you select a name which is inviting to everyone and does not exclude or offend.

### **Maintain a Positive Image**

Your club name represents Pike County 4-H and the 4-H Program as a whole. Select a name which upholds a positive image of 4-H. Club names cannot promote or insinuate illegal or inappropriate activities for youth. (For example: alcohol, tobacco, drugs, or violence)

### **Represent Your Club Members - Be Unique**

Consider choosing a name which describes your club. Consider the types of projects taken by the members or their geographical location. Choose a unique name to distinguish your group. Try to avoid choosing a name similar to other clubs in your area if possible.

### **Make it a Group Decision**

Allow every member to be involved. Each member can be involved by suggesting possible names or discussing the choices. In a large club, it may be helpful to create a committee who can narrow the choice to just a few. Allow the group to vote on the possible names and choose the one the majority prefer.

### **Submit Your Choice for Approval**

All 4-H club names must be approved by the Pike County 4-H Extension Educator. If you have questions or concerns while selecting your name, please call the extension office for assistance.

## **APPENDIX (Request these forms from Extension Office)**

- New Volunteer Application
- Criminal BCI Instructions
- Choosing a Name for Your Club
- Club Constitution
- Club By-Laws
- Tax Exemption Authorization (TEA)
- Blanket Exemption Form
- Club Charter Checklist
- Club Meeting Wheel
- Meetings at-a-Glance
- Online Enrollment Instructions
- Secretary & Treasurer Books
- Advisor Book Order Form

## **ONLINE RESOURCES:**

- OSU Extension Pike County: [pike.osu.edu](http://pike.osu.edu)
- Ohio 4-H: [ohio4h.org](http://ohio4h.org)
- Facebook: search “Ohio State – Pike County 4-H”
- Ohio online enrollment: <https://oh.4honline.com>
- 4-H Accessories: <https://shop4-h.org/>