4-H Age, Membership & Participation Criteria

Age Criteria
Age is based on the current calendar year between and including January 1 and December 31. 4-H age is the youth’s age on January 1 of the calendar year.

Membership Criteria
- **County Membership**
  The potential member is 8 years old as of January 1 of the current year. The potential member is no older than 18 years old by January 1 of the current year. (The last year of eligibility is the calendar year the member becomes 19.)

- **Clover Kid (Clover Bud) Membership** (Program available in some counties.)
  The potential member is 5 - 7 years old by January 1 of the current year. This is a non-competitive program designed for this age group.

  Certain Programs designed for children with special needs/disabilities may establish age limits outside of those stated above.

Participation Criteria
- **State Participation**
  A 4-H member is allowed to physically compete on the state level (i.e. judging, speech, presentation, etc.) if he or she meets the age requirements set by the State 4-H office. This does not pertain to competing with static exhibits such as clothing, foods, etc.

- **National Participation**
  A member is allowed to compete on the national level when he/she is 14 years of age as of January 1.

- **Accommodations for Participation**
  4-H educational programs should be sufficiently flexible to allow participation by all youth. The County 4-H Council will consider waiving rules and regulations when requirements place unreasonable restrictions on youth with special needs, (for example, grooming rules for livestock shows that restrict parental help or record book requirements for youth with writing disabilities.)
Methods of Participation
4-H offers youth a variety of ways to become involved. Participants in any of the following categories are considered 4-H members.

- **4-H Club**
  Members of an organized group, led by an adult, with a planned program carried out in several months of the year denotes a 4-H club.

- **Independent**
  A youth that participates in the 4-H program without enrolling in a 4-H club is an independent 4-H member. This youth enrolls in and completes projects the same as other 4-H members, but without the benefit of a club setting.

- **School Enrichment**
  This mode of participation is when groups of youth receive 4-H learning experiences during school hours in cooperation with school officials. It involves direct teaching by Extension staff or trained volunteers, including teachers.

- **Special Interest/Short Term Programs**
  This mode of 4-H participation involves youth organized and/or coordinated by Extension staff, meeting for specific learning experiences. Usually a single subject is addressed, such as a photography clinic.