

Alabama 4-H for Everyone

There's a phrase that you see on Alabama 4-H publications that says that Alabama 4-H offers educational programs, materials, and equal opportunity employment to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status, or disability.



Why do we use that phrase – and what does it mean?

There are two answers to that question. For one thing, as government agencies, 4-H and Alabama Cooperative Extension are bound to follow the law. More importantly, it is the right thing to do. 4-H teaches young people and their families about good citizenship and service to “my club, my community, my country, and my world.” We want to strive to make sure that the face of 4-H always matches the face of Alabama -- with lots of wonderful colors and variety.

As the Youth Development Program of the United States Department of Agriculture, it is especially important that 4-H obeys the law. Basically, when someone is hired to work with 4-H, volunteers to work with 4-H, or when a young person is interested in joining 4-H, they cannot be treated differently because of their race, their religion, or where they came from. It's pretty simple: we can't deny any young person the right to join a 4-H club because of who they are or where they were born. That's the law!

But what does this mean for your club in your community? Think about what your community looks like. Are there kids of different religions in your community? Are there kids from different races – or ones whose families have just come to this country? Does your club look like your community or are all the kids in the club pretty much alike? If your club has all the variety that your community has to offer, congratulations! However, if everyone is the same, it's important that your group reach out to people who are different from you. You can all learn important lessons from one another.

When you reach out across such lines as color and religion, you are following one of Alabama 4-H's basic beliefs-- that every club, every event, every activity be open to “any kid, any time, anywhere.” No matter whether it is a community club, an after-school program, or a one-time special event, the same rules and expectations apply.

Making Sure That We Follow the Law

4-H clubs, events and activities are supported by the government, so everything we do needs to follow a law called: “Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.” That's an important law that says that participation must be open to people of every race, color, or national origin. There is another law, called: “Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.” That law says that no one can be treated differently in a public educational program because they are a man or a woman, a boy or a girl.



Chuck Hill and Molly Gregg, State 4-H Specialists
Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, and other related acts, in cooperation with the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A & M University and Auburn University) offers educational programs, materials, and equal opportunity employment to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status, or disability

You are following the law in your 4-H club, events, and activities if:

1. You do not keep anyone from participating because of their sex, race, religion, color, national origin, age, or disability.

2. Whatever 4-H does in your community should be widely advertised to let all young people and adults know that they have an opportunity to participate. Whenever you send out flyers, newsletters or take out advertising, you should say that “The Alabama Cooperative Extension System offers educational programs, materials, and equal opportunity employment to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status, or disability.”

Our internet 4-H resources include a sample publication template that you can use to publicize your 4-H events. This template, “Local Recruitment Flyer” is located in the “Having A Great 4-H Club” section in Volunteer Resources. You can adapt this template to your own community.

Make an extra effort to include the whole community. Seek to reach out to minority groups by providing information through minority churches, social and fraternal organizations, and other groups and agencies. If there are radio stations or newspapers that reach minority groups, make sure that they are fully informed of all the great opportunities available to everyone through Alabama 4-H.

3. Young people are accepted into 4-H activities on a first-come, first-served basis.

4. Everything that 4-H does in your community should be representative of the overall population. This does not mean you must have “X” number of racial groups; it just means that every activity is open to anyone who wishes to participate and that you are willing to work with anyone.

5. It is important that every 4-H group show that it has made a reasonable effort to include everyone in the community. If there are questions about the diversity within your club, you may be asked to complete an easy-to-use form: *4-H is for Everyone: How Are We Doing?* This form is just another way we can make sure that we are trying to reach everyone in the community.

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System and 4-H staff will assist you in any way.

It’s easy to think of 4-H Civil Rights guidelines and forms as being “government bureaucracy.” That’s really not their purpose. This program is important to the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, of course, but it’s much more important to remind us that we are always doing the right thing for Alabama young people – *all* Alabama young people.