

## **2026 State 4-H Congress Competition Policies and Guidelines**

*This policy document outlines the official rules and expectations for youth participating in 2026 Virginia State 4-H Congress competitive events. All participants, adult volunteers, and 4-H Agents should review these guidelines carefully prior to competition.*

### **1. Participant Responsibility**

Participants must review all rules, resource materials, and score sheets with their local 4-H Agent prior to competing at State 4-H Congress.

### **2. Use of Official State Rules**

All state-level contests will use only the rules, score sheets, and materials posted on the official competition webpage. Local and district rules may differ, but units are encouraged to align with state rules to ensure fairness. For contests with a national-level equivalent, participants should review related national rules for potential differences.

### **3. Age Eligibility**

Only senior-level 4-H youth ages 14–19 (as of September 30 of the 4-H year) are eligible to participate in competitions at State 4-H Congress. Mixed-age acts that include members younger than 14 are not eligible.

### **4. Participation in Qualifying Events**

All State Congress competitors must participate in a qualifying contest, which may occur at the unit or district level depending on local practices. Units and districts are encouraged to hold their contests prior to Congress.

### **5. Competition Categories and Topics**

A list of sample topics is provided for reference but does not restrict participant creativity. All entries must clearly fit into one of the designated category areas. Judges and contest managers have final authority. Categories may be combined as needed by the competition committee to ensure the contest room runs efficiently.

### **6. Scoring System**

The Danish Awards System will be used: Blue Ribbon: 90–100; Red Ribbon: 75–89; White Ribbon: 74 and below

The highest-scoring blue ribbon in each category will receive a medal. Modifications have been made for competition categories with scores exceeding 100 points.

### **7. Single Event Participation Rule**

A participant may compete in only one competitive event at State 4-H Congress, even if they qualified in multiple events at earlier levels. This rule helps prevent scheduling conflicts.

## **8. Share-the-Fun Entry Limits**

For Share-the-Fun (STF) contests, each unit may submit one act per STF category.

## **9. Entries in Other Categories**

Except for Share-the-Fun, units may send multiple participants in all other categories (e.g., Public Speaking, Presentations, Fashion Revue). Contest-specific rules determine numbers of teams and team sizes.

## **10. Consistency of Genre Across Levels**

The genre of the project, presentation style, performance type, garment, etc., must remain consistent from unit/district levels to the state contest. Youth may improve or refine their entry based on judge feedback, but cannot change genres.

## **11. Restrictions for Past State Winners**

A youth who earns the overall state winner medal in a category may not compete in that same category again at the state level. They may, however, compete in other categories in future years. Medal winners should not modify an existing project to fit into a new category.

## **12. Attendance Requirements**

While contestants are encouraged to attend the full Virginia 4-H Congress experience, attendance is not mandatory. Youth may register as one-day participants to compete. Pre-registration is required; deadlines will be posted with Congress registration materials.

## **13. Competitor Presence During Contest**

All competitors must remain in the designated competition room or area for the entire duration of their contest. This expectation supports peer learning and encourages sportsmanship.

## **14. Restrictions on Audience Attendance**

Only competitors, room chairs, judges, and approved contest staff or assistants may remain in the competition area. Parents/guardians, Agents, coaches, and other supporters will not be allowed in the contest room. This policy fosters youth independence and mirrors real-world interview and evaluative settings.