

To: Virginia 4-H Volunteers

Date: March 19, 2019

Your Youth Protection Responsibilities as a Virginia 4-H Volunteer

In Virginia 4-H, our first priority is creating a safe, positive, and inclusive environment in which all youth can thrive through participation in experiential learning events and curricula. Your position as a Virginia 4-H Volunteer is vital to creating this environment for 4-H members throughout the Commonwealth, and the 4-H program entrusts you with great responsibility. To achieve the highest levels of safety for our participating youth, we expect all volunteers to be trained in, and to uphold, specific guidelines for youth protection developed by Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech, and National 4-H Headquarters at the United States Department of Agriculture.

You are expected to understand our guidelines regarding harassment, discrimination, and sexual assault. These are detailed in *University Policy 1025: Policy on Harassment, Discrimination, and Sexual Assault*. This includes definitions of each of these and other associated terms, as well as how to identify behavioral signs to indicate that someone is being subjected to this inappropriate behavior. This also includes vital information on your responsibilities for receiving and reporting violations of this policy, possible consequences for not reporting, and important resources that are available to assist individuals in dealing with these difficult, sometimes traumatic, situations. As a part of the University community, these resources are available to you, as well.

You are expected to understand your role as a mandated reporter for any suspicion of child abuse (including sexual abuse) and/or neglect. This is in accordance with *University Policy 4815: Minors on Campus or Participating in University-Related Programs*. This includes all 4-H programs and events. You will be provided with training to help you identify signs for child abuse and neglect, as well as the procedure for reporting these instances. Reporting suspected child abuse/neglect is not just a 4-H policy, but it is a legal responsibility in the Commonwealth of Virginia. You are also expected to understand what actions may be taken against you for failure to report under the law.

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Virginia 4-H has specific policies on working with youth that must be followed at all times. This includes the requirement for all 4-H members and volunteers to be officially enrolled. Each Unit office will provide the specific requirements for enrollment. Volunteers are also expected to adhere to our *Virginia 4-H Policy 3.15.2: Above Suspicion Policy* and *Virginia 4-H Policy 3.15.6 Use-of-Force*. Finally, it is important to remember that 4-H is open to all youth. As a program of the USDA and Virginia Cooperative Extension, all youth, employees, and volunteers must adhere to established Civil Rights Guidelines. This includes our commitment to diversity and inclusion, as well as making accommodations for those with special needs.

With your commitment to youth protection as a volunteer, we can continue to make the best better for everyone in Virginia 4-H. If you have ideas for how we can improve our ongoing efforts for youth protection, we welcome your suggestions. Please feel free to talk with any of our Extension faculty if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeremy C. Johnson', written over a horizontal line.

Jeremy C. Johnson, M.Ed.
State 4-H Program Leader, 4-H Youth Development