

National 4-H Conference Guidebook for 1862, 1890 and 1994 Staff and Volunteers

**Institute of Youth, Family, and Community • Division of Youth and 4-H 1400
Independence Avenue, SW • Washington, D.C. 20250-9410**

Table of Contents

PURPOSE	3
Definitions	3
WORKING WITH YOUTH.....	4
Training	4
Conduct	5
Communications.....	5
Privacy.....	5
Medical Care.....	6
Insurance	6
Supervision	6
Transportation.....	7
Physical Safety	7
Socializing	7
Other Prohibited Behaviors	7
Health and Medical Emergencies	8
Missing Persons.....	8
COVID-19.....	8
Crisis Communications Protocol	9
PROTECTING YOUTH.....	9
What constitutes neglect or abuse?	9
How can I help prevent child abuse?	10
How do I report an instance of child abuse or neglect?	10
INFORMATION COLLECTION.....	12
CIVIL RIGHTS.....	13
CODE OF CONDUCT	15
RESOURCES	17
Crisis Communications	17
Reasonable Accommodations	17
Division of Youth and 4-H Staff.....	17
Conference Logistics Coordinator	18

PURPOSE

The purpose of this guidebook is to assist [NIFA Land-grant Colleges and Universities \(1862, 1890 and 1994\)](#) staff and volunteers in understanding their role at National 4-H Conference and the expectations of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). Although this guidebook specifically addresses many requirements, it is not intended to cover all possible situations.

All 1862, 1890 and 1994 Land-grant Colleges and Universities are invited to select and send high school-aged 4-Hers, along with adult chaperones, to National 4-H Conference. Each is encouraged to partner within their state to select a diverse state delegation based on age, background, geographic distribution and/or experience with the 4-H Program.

Definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms are defined as:

Minors are persons younger than the age of 18 and are under the care of 1862, 1890 and 1994 chaperones at National 4-H Conference. Minors must receive permission from a parent or guardian to attend Conference. Minors are treated differently from adults for many legal purposes, including child protection and privacy.

Youth are individuals attending National 4-H Conference online or in-person as a participant (also referred to as a delegate). Youth must be 15 to 19 years-old during the dates in which National 4-H Conference is held to participate. A small subset of youth may apply and be selected to serve as youth leaders.

Youth Leadership Team (YLT) plays a key role in helping to create a sense of community at National 4-H Conference; amplifying youth voice into planning and implementing activities; and encouraging young people to turn their ideas into action. YLT members must be 15 to 19 years old, currently enrolled in high school and enrolled in a 4-H Youth Development Program through a Land-grant College or University at the time of Conference. YLT members cannot participate as a delegate representing their Land-grant College or University. The **YLT Adult Advisors** assume responsibility of chaperone for YLT members during National 4-H Conference. See [2023 National 4-H Conference Leadership Position Descriptions](#).

Conference Logistics Coordinator has entered into a formal agreement with USDA-NIFA to work cooperatively with the agency to plan National 4-H Conference and provides goods and services towards the completion of its purposes and activities.

Land-grant Colleges and Universities (1862, 1890 and 1994) Staff and Volunteers serve as adult coordinators and/or chaperones to a group of youth (also referred to as a delegation) that represent their institution of higher education at National 4-H Conference. A subset of 1862, 1890 and 1994 staff may apply and be selected to serve in as a YLT Advisor or Collegiate Facilitator Adult Advisor role (see [2023 National 4-H Conference Leadership Position](#)

[Descriptions](#)). The 1862, 1890 and 1994 staff and volunteers report to their State 4-H Office/Land-grant College or University.

Collegiate Facilitators play a key role in providing facilitation, team building and guidance to youth preparing their Youth Perspective Briefing. Collegiate Facilitators must be 19 to 25 years old, currently enrolled as a student at a college or university and enrolled as a 4-H adult volunteer at a local 1862, 1890 or 1994 Land-grant College or University. Collegiate Facilitators are not considered a youth/delegate, adult coordinator, or chaperone. **Collegiate Facilitator Adult Advisors** play key roles as adult coordinators in working with the Collegiate Facilitators prior to and during National 4-H Conference. See [2023 National 4-H Conference Leadership Position Descriptions](#).

USDA-NIFA Staff refers to the paid and unpaid employees, volunteers, interns, cooperators and contractors of USDA-NIFA that are directly involved in carrying out National 4-H Conference.

USDA Partners directly support the educational programming of National 4-H Conference and may include Congressional committees; youth-serving agencies across all levels of government; nonprofit and for-profit entities; and individuals.

WORKING WITH YOUTH

USDA is committed to providing a safe and secure environment where youth can participate and learn while preparing for and participating in National 4-H Conference and at related events that are operated by USDA partners whether in-person or online. Even though National 4-H Conference is considered a “working Conference” for youth participants, the child labor provisions under the Department of Labor’s (DOL) Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) do not directly apply to voluntary activities such as the National 4-H Conference program; however, [child labor laws](#) are designed to protect the educational opportunities of youth and prohibit their employment in jobs that are detrimental to their health, safety and well-being. It is USDA’s utmost priority to create a safe working environment and positive youth development experience for youth at National 4-H Conference.

RISK MANAGEMENT

NIFA’s Division of Youth and 4-H is utilizing the “[Framework for Best Practices in Youth Protection](#)” as the foundation for its overall risk management policy at National 4-H Conference. While these policies primarily protect minors, they also serve to protect adults who work with minors.

Training

- 1862, 1890 and 1994 staff and volunteers must participate in a comprehensive online orientation that communicates the youth protection policies, procedures, and expectations of USDA-NIFA prior to the commencement of National 4-H Conference.

Conduct

- Adults are expected to be positive role models in their interactions with youth by behaving in a caring, honest, respectful, and responsible manner.
- Each young person and their parent or legal guardian, if under 18 years of age, must read the participant code of conduct that communicates behavioral expectations. The code of conduct is included in the National 4-H Conference Delegate Handbook and affirmation that it has been read, understood, and will be abided by must be submitted as part of the National 4-H Conference Registration Form. See form on [National 4-H Conference Resources Page](#).

Communications

- Please follow your individual federal, state, employer and/or institutional policies for communicating with youth during National 4-H Conference.
- USDA-NIFA will only send group communications related to announcements, assignments, logistics, mentoring or similar matters directly to participants who are minors if permission from a parent or legal guardian through a consent form is received.
- USDA-NIFA will not email one-on-one with minors. If permission from a parent or legal guardian through a consent form is received, USDA-NIFA staff and/or partner email communications with minors will be copied to 1862, 1890 or 1994 staff and volunteers and/or parent or legal guardian.
- Please follow and utilize your 1862, 1890 or 1994 policies related to texting or messaging apps (include Snapchat, WeChat, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, and similar instant messaging apps) to communicate with youth.
- Only approved platforms with accounts linked to an established USDA user account will be used for online programming to provide a higher level of security, which is crucial to online youth protection. Approved platforms include but are not limited to Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

Privacy

- Personal information is collected by USDA-NIFA only if necessary and destroyed in accordance with [USDA's document retention policies](#) and the Federal Records Act.
- All personal information collected by USDA-NIFA is treated as confidential and is secured at all times. The unauthorized disclosure, use and dissemination of personal information is prohibited.

February 2023

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

- USDA-NIFA recognizes that safeguarding the personal welfare of youth participants is of paramount importance. To discourage those behaviors that threaten personal safety, selective use of video and audio recording features is utilized at National 4-H Conference. Video or audio recording features will only be turned on when necessary and appropriate.
- USDA-NIFA will only video, audio record or photograph a minor if permission from a parent or legal guardian through the [National 4-H Conference Registration Form](#) is received.

Medical Care

- In accordance with individual 1862, 1890 and 1994 policies, staff and volunteers should have access to any information necessary such as a [Medical Information and Release Form for 4-H Youth and Adults](#) to ensure that appropriate medical care is provided to those in their care.
- If an emergency situation arises such as injuries (e.g., broken bones or sprains); respiratory distress; vomiting and/or diarrhea; falls; cuts/bleeding; or possible poisoning, 1862, 1890 and 1994 staff and volunteers are responsible for seeking medical assistance for those in their delegation.

Insurance

- 1862, 1890 and 1994 staff and volunteers should know and follow established procedures for reporting accidents or making insurance claims based upon the policies of your state, employer and/or affiliated institution.
- The Conference Logistics Coordinator will provide individual accident insurance from American Income Life Insurance Company for participants attending National 4-H Conference activities. See the “Contact Information” section for contact information.

Supervision

- 1862, 1890 and 1994 staff and volunteers must ensure proper supervision and have enough adult helpers to ensure that no youth in their delegation are left unaccompanied. USDA-NIFA reserves the right to dismiss, suspend and/or bar the Land-grant Colleges and Universities from National 4-H Conference who provide inadequate supervision.
- The ratio of five youth per one adult is the preferred rate of supervision at events and activities related to National 4-H Conference. For this purpose, adult is defined as someone 21 years of age or older.

Transportation

- When transportation is not provided by the Conference Logistics Coordinator, 1862, 1890 and 1994 staff and volunteers should walk, drive (e.g., personal vehicles, rental vehicles or car sharing apps like Lyft and Uber), bike, [Metrorail](#), or [Metrobus](#) in accordance with their 1862, 1890 and 1994 policies.
- The Conference Logistics Coordinator will only transport individuals including minors if consent through the [National 4-H Conference Registration Form](#) is received.

Physical Safety

- Adults may not be housed in sleeping accommodations with youth.
- The Conference Logistics Coordinator will book rooms directly with the Conference hotel. 1862, 1890 and 1994 staff and volunteers are responsible for following their institution's policies regarding sleeping arrangements and communicating their delegation's rooming assignments to the Conference Logistics Coordinator. See the "Contact Information" section for contact information.

Socializing

- Engaging in any sexual activity, making sexual comments, telling sexual jokes or sharing sexually explicit material (or assisting in any way to provide access to such material) at Conference is prohibited.
- Engaging in or allowing youth to engage you in conversations regarding romantic, sexual, or related matters is prohibited.

Other Prohibited Behaviors

- Do not provide or in any way facilitate a minor's access to alcohol, tobacco products, illegal or prescription drugs, pornography, or gambling.
- 1862, 1890 and 1994 staff and volunteers must follow their policies related to smoking, vaping, and using smokeless tobacco. All persons are prohibited from smoking within 25 feet of any federal building.
- Engaging in any abusive conduct of any kind at Conference, including but not limited to verbal abuse, cyberbullying, striking, hitting, punching, poking, spanking or restraining is prohibited.
- If restraint is necessary to protect a youth or others from harm, all incidents must be documented and immediately disclosed to the 1862, 1890 and 1994 State Coordinator, the parent and/or legal guardian of the young person and USDA-NIFA. This policy extends to youth-on-youth behavior.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Health and Medical Emergencies

The safety and health of delegates is always of utmost priority. In case of a major catastrophe, all participants will meet at a designated gathering point. These gathering points are identified by each 1862, 1890 and 1994 chaperones for their respective delegation. Each delegation will take roll to ensure that the entire group is present. The group will then be escorted to Airport Plaza 1, located on S Clark Street across from the hotel. 1862, 1890 and 1994 staff and volunteers are responsible for informing parents and legal guardians about emergency situations.

During health and medical emergency situations, call 911. It is important to remember to:

- Remain calm. Do not panic.
- Your priority is to protect your life and the lives of those in your delegation.
- Be alert and aware.
- Remain flexible as needs may change.
- Report anyone or anything unusual, suspicious, or hazardous to the Front Desk of the Conference hotel either in person or by dialing 0 from the hotel phone.
- Call 911 from your cell phone.

Missing Persons

Please call the local police department once you notice someone in your delegation is missing and ask to file a missing person's report. Explain that you would like to report a missing person and specify how long the person has been missing, or the last time you saw them. Some police departments will ask you to wait 24-72 hours to file an official report, unless the circumstances of the missing person appear dire or concerning. To file the missing person report, you will need to tell them the person's full name, date of birth and residential address.

COVID-19

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends knowing the COVID-19 Community Level in your area in order to take action to protect yourself and others from COVID-19. Each level helps convey how much COVID-19 is impacting your community using data on hospitalizations and cases. Using this data, communities are classified as low, medium, or high. The data is updated weekly.

The National 4-H Conference hotel is in, Arlington County, Virginia. Off-site events are being held in Washington, D.C., District of Columbia County. You can find community levels and prevention steps by county at [COVID-19 by County | CDC](#).

In addition, USDA's COVID coordination team continues to implement changes based on the CDC guidance. If protocols change at National 4-H Conference due to COVID-19 community levels, USDA-NIFA will communicate these changes to 1862, 1890 and 1994 staff and

February 2023

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

volunteers either ahead of or during the event.

Crisis Communications Protocol

A crisis is when an unexpected act or occurrence—whether accidental or intentional—creates a disturbance in National 4-H Conference activities involving youth and/or adults. These incidents require USDA-NIFA to respond with the safety and well-being of all attendees as the top priority. A crisis or emergency has the potential to significantly impact National 4-H Conference operations, and depending on the nature of the crisis, it could cause a serious threat to life and/or loss of property. If not handled effectively, these situations can also result in damage to public confidence and trust.

USDA-NIFA’s Office of Public Affairs will provide guidance and direction to National 4-H Conference and its attendees and partners in the protection, response and recovery from all incidents or events. See the “Contact Information” section for the designated individual who is identified to handle communication with the media and public regarding the situation.

PROTECTING YOUTH

1862, 1890 and 1994 staff and volunteers must know and follow their established institution procedures for reporting suspected child abuse. Youth protection policies vary based upon the state, employer and/or affiliated institution. Certain states and/or institutions may require all youth-serving professionals and/or volunteers to be trained as mandated reporters due to their direct supervision of minors. In these roles, individuals are trained how to recognize, and report suspected abuse of minors. As mandated reporters, these trained individuals are required to report any suspected child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. In some states, these policies will apply to all programs involving minor participants hosted by the institution and may direct that once trained as a mandated reporter, the individual is always a mandated reporter – even outside of institution-related function.

What constitutes neglect or abuse?

- a. Physical Abuse: Any physical injury inflicted other than by accidental means.
- b. Sexual Abuse: When a person uses power and directly involves the child in any sexual act, involves the child in pornography or forces the child to witness sexual acts.
- c. Emotional Abuse: A pattern of harmful interactions between an adult and child such as criticizing, belittling, and rejecting.
- d. Neglect: The failure of an adult to provide for a child’s basic, educational, or medical needs (i.e., food, shelter, supervision, and clothing).

How can I help prevent child abuse?

These tips will not only help to protect children, but also yourself from potential false allegations, including:

- i. Recognize and understand signs of child abuse.
- ii. Be alert and act on your suspicions.
- iii. Know the procedure for reporting child abuse.
- iv. Avoid one adult/one child interactions.

How do I report an instance of child abuse or neglect?

- Trust your Gut. If something does not look safe, sound safe or feel safe – report it.
- Making a Report is Asking for Help and Services. When you report, you are asking for a professional to help a child and their family. You do not need proof. You are not making an accusation.
- You May Be the Only Person to Act. If you reasonably suspect a child is unsafe – report it. Anonymous reports are accepted from anyone. Anyone making a report in good faith is protected against civil/criminal penalty or adverse employment action. Your identity is held confidential and will not be revealed.

Throughout National 4-H Conference, 1862, 1890 and 1994 staff and volunteers will be interacting with youth from varying states. If you witness or believe that there is a substantial threat of child abuse and/or neglect, please act according to your individual federal, state, employer and/or institutional policies to report.

SCENARIOS AND SUGGESTED BEST PRACTICES

The following is a list of scenarios and best practices. It is by no means a complete list of potential instances but a good starting point to think about – “How might I respond in a situation like this?”

Scenario 1. During a roundtable, a participant chooses to share a personal story that deals with a traumatic situation they have experienced. What do you do after this story was verbally shared?

- Thank the youth for sharing and validate their story.
- Remind the group that this is a safe space for sharing, and what is shared in the group, stays with the group. However, be sure to note that what is said here is not a confidential space (recognize this in the opening group norms). If in a virtual environment and media releases are signed by participants, remind them that meetings and chat boxes may be recorded.
- Take note of the facts that were shared. Questions to ask yourself: Is the youth in immediate or potential harm of themselves or others? Is it a reportable concern that has not been resolved?

If the answer to either of these questions is “yes,” contact the 1862, 1890 and 1994 staff and volunteers for that delegate for further guidance.

- Follow your individual federal, state, employer and/or institutional policies in reporting child abuse and/or neglect of a minor.

Scenario 2. You become aware from a participant that they received unwanted correspondence from another delegate in the roundtable. What do you do to manage this situation?

- Thank the youth for sharing this situation with you.
- You may ask a question or two to help understand what the uncomfortable situation was, but do not play the part of investigator.
- Remind the large group that correspondence between delegates is to be kept to a working relationship during National 4-H Conference. Their actions, words and messages must reflect the signed code of conduct they completed.
- Encourage reminders of professionalism and no tolerance for inappropriate messaging during group norms/ground rule building.

Scenario 3. You witness something that seems suspicious in the background of a Zoom call. An adult comes in and out of the video frame and looks over the shoulder of the youth. The participant is muted, but it appears that they are in an argument based on body language. Following this, the young person does not engage with the group as much as they did previously.

- Send a private message to the youth recognizing that they haven't been contributing as much and that you'd like to encourage them to participate more.
- Verbalize their presence and ask them an open-ended question to draw them back into the discussion. Allow for space if needed.
- Take note of the facts you observed. Discuss with liaison about if this is something that needs to be further acted on (may include: discuss with facilitator advisor, conference leadership, state chaperone and/or individual follow-up with youth).
- If it is decided that further action may be needed, follow your individual federal, state, employer and/or institutional policies in reporting child abuse and/or neglect of a minor.

CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS

1862, 1890, and 1994 staff and volunteers who work with youth related to National 4-H Conference must successfully complete a criminal background check by their institution and/or employer. USDA requires a fingerprint-based criminal background check of state and national criminal records and sexual offender registries for all employees.

It is the responsibility of each 1862, 1890 and 1994 State Coordinator to verify that their staff and volunteers attending National 4-H Conference have successfully completed a criminal background check as required by their institution.

TRAINING

On an annual basis, 1862, 1890 and 1994 staff and volunteers who work with youth at National 4-H Conference are required to complete a comprehensive online orientation training session

offered by USDA-NIFA. This training is in addition to any risk management trainings regarding the appropriate supervision and protection of minors and youth required by their state and institution.

INFORMATION COLLECTION

FORMS

It is the responsibility of each 1862, 1890 and 1994 State Coordinator to register their state delegation by submitting a Registration Form for each participant to event organizers through the [registration website](#).

USDA-NIFA will collect no personal information about National 4-H Conference participants unless participants choose to provide information to us, in accordance with [Departmental Regulation 3515-002](#). If participants choose to provide us with personal information by filling out the Registration Form with their personal information and submitting it to us through email or website, event organizers will use that information for the purpose of providing, operating, improving, and promoting National 4-H Conference, and in certain circumstances, a related National 4-H Conference activity or function. If certain personal data is not provided, it may limit an individual's ability to participate in National 4-H Conference.

Anyone interested may also fill out the Leadership Interest Form to voluntarily serve in a leadership position at National 4-H Conference. Youth and adults can apply to be considered for a position on the 1) Youth Leadership Team (YLT) as a youth or adult advisor to the YLT or 2) Roundtables as a Collegiate Facilitator or adult advisor to the Collegiate Facilitators. The information collected will help USDA-NIFA staff determine interest, suitability, and eligibility to serve on the National 4-H Conference leadership team as well as convene and communicate with those selected on planning and implementation activities.

CONSENT

Certain uses of personal data require consent from National 4-H Conference participants, including parent or guardian of the minor, consenting youth and adults. Providing signed consent is voluntary and not required.

The Registration Form includes boxes to provide the following consents:

- a. consent to communicate with participants under 18 years of age (such as email address, phone number or mailing address)
- b. consent to share, feature and/or publish content that identify or can identify the participant (such as essays, stories, notes, artwork, photographs, audio recordings, video recordings, etc.)
- c. consent to share demographic information and/or participate in observations, evaluations or feedback for data processing or optional reporting (such as assessments or formal observations)
- d. consent to transport participants in authorized vehicles to and from activities (such as

February 2023

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

community service, 4-H flag-raising ceremony, federal agencies, monument tours, etc.)

USDA-NIFA will identify the population that has given consent and limit the related data processing activities to just that population. An individual's consent will be honored throughout all aspects of the National 4-H Conference activities and data processing.

PRIVACY

Personal information is not being collected for any purpose other than National 4-H Conference. USDA will only share the information given to us with another government agency or partner if an individual has signed up to participate in an activity or event at National 4-H Conference involving that agency (e.g., a service project with the National Park Service). USDA does not collect information for commercial marketing.

CIVIL RIGHTS

In support of USDA's [core values](#) and commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility, the National 4-H Conference program seeks to actively engage the many communities, identities, races, ethnicities, backgrounds, abilities, cultures and beliefs of the American people, with particular emphasis on historically underrepresented communities in 4-H.

The National 4-H Conference program seeks new and innovative ways to diversify our attendance base; to create inclusive environments and experiences; and to eliminate barriers to inclusion for all who want to participate. We recognize that the full potential of young adults in 4-H cannot be achieved unless we welcome and embrace the full spectrum of an increasingly diverse and multi-cultural American public. At USDA, we are recommitting ourselves to the values of equity, inclusion, and equal opportunity for each other and those we serve.

In accordance with federal law and USDA civil rights regulations and policies, USDA is prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

REPORTING DISCRIMINATION

To file a program discrimination complaint, a complainant should complete a Form AD 3027, [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form \(PDF, 462 KB\)](#), which can be obtained online, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992 or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation.

The completed AD-3027 (PDF, 462 KB) form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

February 2023

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

- i. Mail:
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 Fax: (202) 690-7442
- ii. Email: program.intake@usda.gov

ACCESSIBILITY REQUESTS

USDA is committed to creating inclusive environments where individuals with disabilities can quickly and easily request and obtain reasonable accommodation. If you need a reasonable accommodation to participate in this event, please contact Annie Ceccarini, National Program Leader, at annie.ceccarini@usda.gov no later than 14 days prior to the event. Examples of reasonable accommodations include readers and sign language interpreters, travel-related accommodations such as larger hotel rooms, a motorized scooter to help navigate the hotel or other facility, or modified work schedule. Language access services, such as interpretation or translation of vital information, will be provided free of charge to limited English proficient individuals upon request. If you need interpretation or translation services please visit [NIFA language services](#) or contact Lois Tuttle, Equal Opportunity Specialist, at Lois.Tuttle@usda.gov or (443) 386-9488 no later than 14 days prior to the event.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 13988

Executive Order 13988 titled [Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation](#) prohibits gender-based or sexual orientation harassment or violence of any kind. Incidences of sexual harassment or bullying are to be addressed promptly. See “Reporting Discrimination” section.

HARASSMENT

It is important that National 4-H Conference participants know how to report harassing conduct they may witness or experience. It is also important to know you must refrain from harassing, bullying, intimidating, or behaving unprofessionally against other 1862, 1890 and 1994 staff and volunteers, youth, USDA-NIFA staff, federal partners or non-profit organizations involved with National 4-H Conference.

Harassing conduct cannot be corrected if a supervisor, manager, or other USDA official does not become aware of it. Any participant in National 4-H Conference who has been subjected to harassing conduct is encouraged to inform the person(s) responsible for the conduct that it is unwelcome and offensive and request it cease. If the conduct continues, is severe, or if the person is uncomfortable addressing the responsible person(s) about the conduct, the person is encouraged to report the matter to:

- i. The 1862, 1890 and 1994 staff and volunteers of the youth engaging in the misconduct if the alleged harasser is from a state delegation. If the alleged harasser is an adult, contact the 1862, 1890 and 1994 State Coordinator. A USDA-NIFA staff will be able to provide

this information to you.

- ii. The Division Director of the Division of Youth and 4-H if the alleged harasser is a USDA employee, associated with the conference logistics coordinator, hotel staff or other person involved in National 4-H Conference events and activities. See the “Points of Contact” section for contact information.
- iii. If anyone believes they are a victim of a criminal offense, they may contact local law enforcement at 911, which will determine whether the offense requires other civil authorities to be notified.

CODE OF CONDUCT

1862, 1890 and 1994 staff and volunteers involved with or attending any activity or event related to National 4-H Conference are required to uphold the [USDA Core Values](#) and principles of [positive youth development](#) and conduct themselves according to these standards. The standards also apply to online activity, including social media internet presence, during Conference.

GROUND RULES

The following Ground Rules apply to all National 4-H Conference participants. Additionally, 1862, 1890 and 1994 staff and volunteers are accountable to additional standards of professionalism that are outlined by position descriptions and the policies of their Land-grant College or University.

Everyone in the 1862, 1890 and 1994 delegation including, youth and their parent or guardian, staff and volunteers must fill out the Registration Form certifying that they have read, understand, and agree to adhere to the *National 4-H Conference Code of Conduct*, which states:

1. **Create a Welcoming Environment for All.** Encourage everyone to fully participate in National 4-H Conference. Recognize that all people have skills and talents that can help others and improve the community. Though we will not always agree, we must disagree respectfully. When we disagree, try to understand why.
2. **Bring Your Best Self.** Respect and follow the rules, policies and guidelines that relate to National 4-H Conference. Conduct yourself in a manner that reflects honesty, integrity, self-control, and self-direction. Accept the results and outcomes of the Youth Perspective Briefing with grace and empathy for other participants. Accept the opinions of evaluators. Be open to new ideas, suggestions, and opinions of others.
3. **Obey the Law.** Commit no illegal acts. Do not possess or use illegal drugs, tobacco products, firearms, weapons, or any harmful object with the intent to hurt others at any time. Do not attend National 4-H Conference activities under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances.

4. **Honor Diversity – Yours and Others’.** Respect and uphold the rights and dignity of all staff, volunteers and youth who participate in National 4-H Conference.
5. **Create a Safe Environment.** Do not carelessly or intentionally harm youth or adults in any way (verbally, mentally, physically, or emotionally). Refrain from romantic displays and sexual activities either in public or private situations. Be kind and compassionate towards others. Do not insult or put down other participants. Harassment, bullying and other exclusionary behavior are not acceptable. Be considerate and courteous of all youth and adults and their property.
 - a. Youth must stay in the designated hotel room assigned to them and may not go to the hotel rooms of others, including adults or youth.
 - b. Report all accidents, physical or verbal abuse or unsafe conditions that threaten the emotional or physical well-being of others or yourself to your adult chaperones and/or 1862, 1890 and 1994 State Coordinators as soon as possible.
6. **Be a Team Player.** Work cooperatively with all youth and adults involved in National 4-H Conference activities. Be responsive to the reasonable requests of the person in charge. Respect the integrity of the group and the group’s decisions.
7. **Participate Fully.** Participate in all the planned activities, be on time and follow through on assigned tasks/responsibilities (including the completion of required research or work assignments) in a manner that ensures the safety, well-being, and quality of the educational experience for self and others. Have fun!
8. **Watch What You Wear.** Use your best judgment. Wear clothing suited for the activity you will participate in. Clothing promoting alcohol and other intoxicants or displaying messages that are racist, sexist, homophobic or any other degrading message that detrimentally impacts the dignity and respect of other Conference participants is never acceptable. If you are unsure about what is appropriate, contact your 1862, 1890 and 1994 staff or volunteers in charge in advance.
9. **Be a Positive Role Model.** Act in a mature, responsible manner, recognizing you are role models for others, and that you are representing yourself, the affiliated Land-grant College or University and the 4-H Youth Development Program. Be responsible for your behavior, use positive and affirming language, and uphold exemplary standards of conduct at all National 4-H Conference activities.

CONSEQUENCES

Land-grant Colleges and Universities, in consultation with USDA-NIFA and the Conference Logistics Coordinator, if applicable, reserve the right to dismiss or remove any National 4-H

February 2023

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Conference participant that does not adhere to the rules and procedures as outlined in this document. Any of the following consequences may be used, depending on the severity of the situation:

- i. Participant may receive a verbal warning.
- ii. Participant may remain at the event/activity but may possibly be barred from a future event.
- iii. Participant may be asked to leave the event/activity. If a youth is asked to leave, the 1862, 1890 and 1994 staff and/or volunteers must notify the parent or guardian(s) as well as arrange their escort home.
- iv. Participant may be alerted to local law enforcement if comprising the safety of others or conducting unlawful activity.

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

Since the nature of offensive behavior may range from minor infractions to serious violations, the disciplinary action should reflect an appropriate consequence. All corrective actions taken are intended to serve a restorative purpose rather than a punitive measure. Land-grant Colleges and Universities should have a disciplinary procedure in place that includes documentation, corrective action or termination from National 4-H Conference, and the appeal process (if any).

RESOURCES

CONTACT INFORMATION

Crisis Communications

The designated individual who is identified to handle communication with the media and public regarding an emergency situation:

- Faith Peppers, Director of Communications, Faith.Peppers@usda.gov, (816) 745-0959

Reasonable Accommodations

The designated individual to submit reasonable accommodation requests to:

- Annie Ceccarini, National Program Leader, Annie.Ceccarini@usda.gov

Division of Youth and 4-H Staff

The staff of the Division of Youth and 4-H at USDA-NIFA include:

- Shannon Horrillo, Division Director, Shannon.Horrillo@usda.gov, (775) 225-4313

February 2023

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

- Annie Ceccarini, National Program Leader, Annie.Ceccarini@usda.gov
- Jeff Sallee, National Program Leader, Jeffrey.Sallee@usda.gov
- Maurice Smith, National Program Leader, Maurice.Smith2@usda.gov
- Bonita Williams, National Program Leader, Bonita.Williams@usda.gov
- Keesha Corbin, Program Specialist, Keesha.Corbin@usda.gov
- Chris Petty, Program Specialist, Christopher.Petty@usda.gov
- Andrea Wikiera, Program Specialist, Andrea.Wikiera@usda.gov
- Akelia Lewis, Program Assistant, Akelia.Lewis@usda.gov

Conference Logistics Coordinator

The staff of the Conference Logistics Coordinator include:

- Susan Stewart, S. Stewart & Associates, susan@sstewartmeetings.com, (770) 619-1232
- Ged Matthews, S. Stewart & Associates, ged@sstewartmeetings.com, (404) 840-2513