

4-H Membership Across County Lines

POLICY

Youth are expected to affiliate with the 4-H program in their county of residence. However, in some circumstances, it is appropriate for a youth to participate in a county other than their county of residence. This can be done with the approval of the 4-H professionals in both the county of residence and the county of request. Once granted, the permission for membership across county lines shall be permanent and stable for the duration of the youth's 4-H membership. If the youth's circumstances change (e.g., residence, school, or custody), the cross county lines membership can be reevaluated. This privilege is extended only to those youth who maintain membership in good standing.

PROCEDURES

Ohio State University Extension administers the Ohio 4-H Youth Development program. Our mission is to enable youth to reach their full potential as capable, competent, caring, and contributing citizens. Each county in Ohio conducts the 4-H Youth Development program to accomplish this mission. In order to affirm Ohio State University Extension's position concerning 4-H cross county lines (and/or cross state lines) membership, the following philosophy and process statements are provided:

1. 4-H membership in two counties (and/or two states) is not permitted.
2. Cross state lines membership has the same considerations as cross county lines membership.
3. When the county of residence does not have a 4-H program (due to financial or other reasons), youth may not join 4-H in another county. Previously approved cross county lines or cross state lines memberships are revoked.
4. In situations where membership in a county other than the county of residence is desired, the 4-H professionals in both counties must be in agreement regarding the application. The agreement, based on their professional judgment in accord with the mission, does not supersede item 3 above.
5. Consideration for membership may not be motivated by perceived competitive or sale advantage in another county, any change due to controversial issues, or other similar motivations.
6. Should families own residences in more than one county, the county of residence is determined by the public school system in which the youth would be enrolled, regardless of actual attendance.
7. Parents, guardians, and youth should become familiar with all policies, procedures, and guidelines for the county in which membership is requested. Some Ohio counties limit participation in the county junior fair to those who reside in the county.
8. Any consideration for membership in a county other than the county of residence, within the limits of this policy and not addressed by the above statements, should be brought to the attention of the Ohio 4-H Youth Development assistant director or associate state leader to identify a course of action in these special situations.
9. The decision to allow or deny cross county lines membership is made by the county 4-H professionals in the county of request and the county of residence, and is fully supported by the state organization.

Why Request 4-H Membership in Another County?

Youth are expected to affiliate with the 4-H program in their county of residence. OSU Extension programs are typically supported at the local level by taxes, so it makes good sense that a child participate in the county program supported with taxes from parents or guardians. However, there are circumstances in which membership in a county other than where one lives is a practical and reasonable request. The request for cross county membership must be made 30 days prior to the 4-H membership enrollment deadline of the county being requested.

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Common situations or conditions **acceptable** for asking such a transfer of membership include:

- The school district in which the child attends is located across two counties. The child's school friends may therefore be members in a county other than where the child resides.
- The county of residence does not offer the specific 4-H program being sought, such as shooting sports. In such cases, a youth can request membership across the county lines to participate in a program not available in the county of residence.
- The parents of a child are legally separated or no longer married to each other and live in two different counties. A request for membership in the county in which the 4-H project work will be completed is reasonable. Parents may be asked to provide court documentation which verifies custody agreements.

Reasons that are **not acceptable** for granting a transfer of membership include:

- The Junior Fair Livestock auction prices are typically higher in the other county.
- The parents or guardians of the 4-H members were members of the club in the other county so it is hoped the youth can have membership offering the same family legacy.
- The camp or county fair schedule in the other county better fits the family's vacation plans.
- The county fair schedule in the other county better fits the youth's school schedule.
- If animal projects are involved, the animal is housed on someone else's property in the other county. If this is the case, the 4-H member is encouraged to select an entirely different project. 4-H membership is based on the residence of the child, not the residence of the animal.
- The 4-H member is banned or suspended in the county of residence. Suspended membership is suspension of Ohio 4-H membership, and thus the suspended member is not eligible to transfer membership to another county.

How to Request Cross County Lines Membership

Parents seeking 4-H membership for their child in a county in which they do not reside should complete the ***Request for 4-H Membership Across County Lines*** form. It must be submitted to the county Extension 4-H professional in the county of request no later than 30 days prior to their 4-H membership enrollment deadline. That professional then contacts the 4-H professional in the county of residence, discusses the request, and makes a final decision. Please allow 30 days from submission for final notification.