

# Cross County Lines Participation Procedure

## Procedure: Cross County Lines Participation

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### Policy/Procedure

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*The membership policy in Kentucky 4-H is that a young person is to become a 4-H member within the county where he/she is a resident or attends school.*

Participation close to home usually allows the young person and his/her family to become more fully engaged in 4-H and more actively involved in the greater community. As the term “cooperative” implies, Extension relies on families, volunteers, local government, community partners and individuals to make 4-H a reality within each of the 120 counties. Working with local volunteers, 4-H agents and councils are to place a *high priority* on providing educational opportunities within *each county* that meet the needs and desires of young people and that meet the requirement of having programs in at least six core curriculum areas.

Generally, where a young person participates in 4-H becomes an issue when competition is involved; where a young person is a member becomes important to fair and ethical competition. **It is assumed that a young person is a member of 4-H in the county of residence or county where the young person attends school. To compete as part of any other county’s 4-H program, a transfer of membership must be clearly established through a request by the member, approval by the agents and councils involved and appropriate documentation.**

There are two situations where exceptions to the general membership policy may be considered by the counties involved:

#1 If a program or project in which the 4-H'er is interested is **not** available in the county of residence or in the county where the 4-H'er goes to school

#2 If family situations exist that make it very unlikely that a young person can be involved locally. *For example: When parents divorce, children may live part time in two counties. Home school parents may band together to form a club so their children can be part of a group. A young person with a disability might function better in one group/situation than he/she would in another.*

When competition is involved and situations which warrant consideration for an exception are present, the agents and councils in the counties involved may choose to allow youth to transfer membership across county lines. The exceptions provide flexibility for 4-H agents to work with one another to conduct the highest quality 4-H experiences for Kentucky youth but it also allows the counties to decline. This policy protects the right of counties to place limits on how many youth they choose to allow to cross county lines. It is the 4-H agent's and 4-H council's right in a given county to say they do NOT wish to participate in cross county lines projects and programs, and that right should be respected by the petitioning families, 4-H agents and county 4-H councils in the involved counties.

***When competition is a possibility, the following parameters are to enter into the decision of whether youth are allowed to transfer 4-H membership to a county other than the county of residence or where youth attend school.***

- Determination of whether a young person may cross a county line is to be done on a **case by case basis** by the agents and councils involved.
- What's best for the child should be the primary consideration in handling each request.
- Crossing should NOT be done (a) with the intent of gaining competitive or financial edge, (b) "because another county has a better program," or (c) because the member or family members are unable to get along with others.
- Youth cross only for the projects or portions of projects which are not available in the county of residence/where youth attend school. 4-H membership and participation for **all other** 4-H events and activities will remain in their county of residence or the county where they go to school.
- Youth crossing into another county must meet all related deadlines (registration, ownership, and otherwise) for the county by which they wish to be accepted.
- When counties decide to share resources or "cooperate", membership is **not** transferred. If competition is involved:
  - Youth compete on behalf of their county of residence/where they attend school.
  - Teams are to be made up of kids from only one county. (County A may have a team and County B may have a team.)
- When membership is "transferred" for a specific project/portion of a project,
  - Youth compete through the county which has accepted them.
  - Teams may be made up of kids from more than one county and registered as part of the county by which they have been accepted.
  - Transferred members are to carry a copy of the approved request form to each competitive event to verify county of membership.
- A member who crosses county lines cannot compete in the same project in other counties.
- Crossing county lines should not become a common occurrence. Councils and agents are to continually recruit volunteers to expand the program locally so that crossing county lines to participate in a project not available becomes unnecessary. District Directors will monitor the number and reasons why youth are permitted to cross county lines.

- Owning land or property in another county does not qualify as a place of residence.
- Agreements are to be processed at the **beginning** of the project experience for the year, allowing youth an adequate opportunity to participate in educational experiences in the county accepting them.
- Crossing must be agreeable to both counties involved; otherwise, crossing is not permitted.
- Once an agreement is finalized, it will remain in place until August 31, the end of the program year.
- Counties are to submit wrap up all transfers for the program year and submit the report by July 1.

## **Guidelines to assist counties with decision making:**

### **When considering requests:**

- **What's best for the child should be central to the decision.**
- **Do NOT allow crossing...**
  - When the reason given is **“the other county offers a better program.”** “Shopping around” for the best program is not permitted.
  - When the intent appears to be to gain **competitive advantage** (such as, to become more competitive in district or state contests or to form a more competitive team). Competitive advantage is not an agenda 4-H intends to support.
  - When the intent appears to be **financial gain** (such as, to sell an animal in a more lucrative sale or board an animal at a cheaper location). Personal gain is not an agenda 4-H intends to support.
  - When 4-H members or families are **unable to get along** with others in the county.
  - When the intent appears to be to **disregard rules**. Teaching youth to find loopholes or skirt rules should not be part of the 4-H experience.
- **Counties may share resources or "cooperate" to offer a project or portion of a project.**

In order for a project/program to be made available, counties may find it beneficial to share resources (such as facilities, equipment, etc. This may even mean that members from two different counties meet at the same time and location.). When this occurs, each county will maintain its own club/special interest group but resources are shared between the two clubs/groups. Each county's club/group maintains its own identity, membership, etc.

  - Paperwork: No Form A is needed because membership is not transferred.
  - Competition: Individuals compete on behalf of their county of residence/where they attend school.
  - Team Competition: Teams are to be made up of kids from only one county. (County A may have a team and County B may have a team. They cannot have a team made up of members from both counties.)
- **A county which does NOT have a particular club/group in a project may allow youth to "transfer" membership to another county for that project.**

Youth may request to transfer membership in the project to another county offering that project. Youth granted transfers may fully participate in all the activities associated with the portion of the project/program not currently available in the home county.

- Paperwork: The request process using Form A is to be followed.
- Competition: Youth are registered and compete through the county accepting them.
- Teams: Teams may be made up of kids from more than one county. Since this situation is often subject to scrutiny by others, care should be taken that cross county line procedures have been followed and paperwork is in order.

- **Crossing to participate where youth attends school...**

In situations where a member crosses county lines to attend school, an agreement is only needed if portions of the 4-H experience will occur in both counties. Youth cannot compete in the same event in two counties.

- **Requests for transfer of membership should be rare.**

If multiple youth cross for the same project, the agent and council are to increase efforts to recruit volunteers so that the project/program can be offered within the home county. District Directors will monitor this.

- **Crossing for a Family Situation**

We realize that today's families are often in transition, face crises, etc. In these situations, our goal is to work with families in hopes of 4-H becoming a stabilizing factor for the children involved.

- **Home School Clubs...**

Home school parents often value the opportunity for their children to interact with and learn in a group situation. 4-H has been able to provide this group opportunity through a home school 4-H club with parents serving as leaders. Because it is not unusual for home schooling parents from multiple counties to band together and form a support group, the club may be made up of kids from multiple counties. The counties involved may determine whether the youth will remain members of their home county or whether they will request to transfer membership to the county where the club meets.

- **Team Competition...**

When additional youth are needed for team competition, agents, volunteers, and youth may actively recruit youth who live **in** the county. They are NOT to actively recruit youth from other counties. If additional team members are not recruited from within the county, then youth may compete in individual competition but not in team competition. Clubs with participants from multiple counties are NOT to be formed in order to create a competitive edge.

- **The agreement...**

- **Process agreement at the beginning of participation**--An agreement should be *completed at the beginning of 4-H participation in the project/program for the year*. Projects and programs begin at different times throughout the year. For example, shooting sports clubs often re-organize in the spring. Completing this at the beginning of participation will allow the member to participate in educational experiences and practice sessions--learning concepts, processes and skills

associated with the project area before project related competition occurs. To maintain a safe environment, a 4-H'er is expected to reach a level of mastery before entering a competitive event.

- **Duration of agreement**--Once an agreement is finalized, it will remain in place for the rest of the program year (until Aug. 31).
- **Agreements are no longer required to be done on an annual basis at the state level.** Counties, however, may choose to require that transfers be acted on annually.
  
- **Questions about membership that arise at an event...**

If questions are raised as to whether a young person is a member in a particular county, the approved Form A carried by the young person will serve as evidence at competitive events. Form A's housed in the counties involved will serve as backup documentation.
  
- **"Grandparenting"...**
  - **Beginning PY 2012-13, youth are no longer required to request a transfer of membership annually at the state level. However, counties may choose to require annual requests.**
  - **When a project/program is started in the county of residence,** youth who were approved to cross into another county in the previous year may be given the opportunity to continue participation in the county where they were accepted or return to the county of residence. What's best for the child should be the highest consideration.
  - **When siblings become interested..**The opportunity to be "grandparented" into a project in another county does not extend to siblings, cousins or friends as they express interest in the project. As more youth become interested in the project, the home county should be moving toward having their own program.
  
- **Livestock projects...**
  - Youth must follow the rules contained in "Ownership, Possession, and Care Rules for Kentucky 4-H/FFA Youth Breeding and Market Livestock Projects."  
[\(webpage\)](#) [\(doc\)](#)
  - The exceptions to the membership policy represent an adjustment in the cross-county line guidelines that were shared in the **Livestock Certification Trainings** conducted across the state in 2004-2007. Agents need to make sure that volunteers have the most recent information on cross county participation.
  - **In order to show or exhibit an animal** in a 4-H livestock competitive event, the young person is to take primary responsibility for the daily care of the animal—learning to feed, exercise, groom, and train the project animal. This should be considered when families determine where to house/board animals. A young person who spends little time caring for and learning to handle the animal places him/herself and others in danger at 4-H livestock events.
  - **Clarifications added 9-11-2012:**  
**If the county has a livestock club/group,** then youth should NOT be permitted to transfer membership in order to be a member of a species club or group (such as beef, dairy sheep, swine, country ham, goat, or meats club). Counties may decide to "cooperate" and allow the member from county A to attend educational sessions in County B but the member cannot transfer membership or compete as a member of County B.

- **Youth interested in judging, skillathon, jeopardy, and quiz bowl** may be permitted to cross county lines in order to take advantage of these opportunities if they are not available in the home county. If the livestock program is offered in the home county, they are **only** permitted to transfer membership for these specific opportunities, not the entire livestock experience.
- **Horse projects...** (clarifications added 9-11-2012)
  - **If the county has a horse club/group**, then youth should NOT be allowed to transfer membership in order to be a member of a breed/riding discipline club or group. The counties may decide to “cooperate” and allow members from County A to attend educational sessions in County B but the member cannot transfer membership or compete as a member of County B.
  - **Youth in judging, bowl, hippology and drill team** may be permitted to cross county lines in order to take advantage of these opportunities if they are not available in the home county. If a horse program is offered in the home county, they are **only** permitted to transfer membership for these specific opportunities, not the entire horse program.
- **Shooting Sports projects...** (clarifications added 9-11-2012)
  - **If the county has a shooting sports club/group**, then youth should NOT be allowed to transfer membership in order to be a member of a club for a specific shooting sports discipline (black powder, archery, rifle, shotgun, pistol, etc.). The counties may decide to “cooperate” and allow members from County A to attend educational sessions in County B but the member cannot transfer membership or compete as a member of County B.

## County Agent Responsibilities

This policy is available to help agents/councils make good decisions, keeping the best interest of the young person in mind. The agents in both counties involved are responsible for adhering to these guidelines and parameters.

### Processing responsibilities:

**The following process is to be followed when youth request to participate in a project which potentially involves competition.**

- If a family approaches an agent about the participating in a 4-H project in another county, the agent needs to assess the motive behind the request. If it appears that personal gain or competitive edge is behind it, it would be appropriate to deny the request. If motives align with 4-H values, then the policy allows agents/councils to work toward accommodating youth.
- Determine whether it is appropriate to pursue sharing of resources ("cooperating") or "transfer" of membership.
- If the project of interest does not involve competition, no paperwork is needed.
- If the project of interest involves an opportunity for competition, give the family the Cross County Lines handout (see “tools”) and the request form (Form A).
- Accept completed Form A's.

- Alert and send a copy of the request to the other involved agent. To complete the process in a timely manner, counties may start the process simultaneously rather than waiting for approval by one county before the other county starts on the process.
- Take requests (Form A) to the County 4-H Council for action. If approved, the authorization and approval section of Form A is to be signed by the 4-H agents and the 4-H council Presidents in both counties. These can be faxed back and forth.
- Inform families when request is approved or denied. Give a photocopy of the form with all signatures to the member. Member needs to take this to competitive events as evidence of membership transfer.
- Keep a copy of Form A on file at each of the two County Extension Service offices. (It doesn't matter which county has the original.)
- By July 1, prepare a Summary (Form B) of all youth accepted and released throughout the year.
  - For each 4-H'er leaving the county because a program is not offered in the county of residence, an explanation must be given, stating why the program/project is not being offered in the county.
  - The term "grandparent" may be used as a "Reason for Release" when a young person was granted a release the previous year in the same project.
- Send Form B to your District Director and the Assistant Director of Extension for 4-H Youth Development's designee as an attachment to an email message. Do NOT send as a hard copy.

#### **Verification responsibilities:**

As registration forms for various 4-H events are prepared throughout the year, be sure to check Form A's to make sure that all is in order for youth involved.

#### **Reporting responsibilities:**

For purposes of ES-237/ACCESS data reporting, youth are to be reported by the county in which the membership lies. If a portion of the membership is "transferred," then for that portion, the member is counted in the accepting county's data; The rest of their participation would remain and be reported in the county of residence or where member goes to school. If the counties "cooperate," the member is counted in the county where he/she lives or goes to school.

## **Tools You can Use**

- **Form A: Request for 4-H Participation across County Lines/Authorization and Agreement** ([doc](#))  
This form is for youth and parents of youth who want to request a transfer of membership. The request is to be made at the beginning of project work for the year. Some competitive events will require that a copy of the signed form be attached to registration forms.
- **Handout: Participation across County Lines Policy Handout** ([doc](#))  
This handout may be distributed to interested families as an explanation of the policy.
- **Form B: 4-H Participation across County Lines Participation Annual Report** ([doc](#))  
Complete by July 1, annually. Send as attachment to an email to your District Director

AND the Assistant Director of Extension for 4-H Youth Development's designee. (send to [Martha.welch@uky.edu](mailto:Martha.welch@uky.edu).) Do not submit as a hardcopy.

- **Sample Letters for Communicating Results**  
Agents may use these samples to create a letter notifying families of the results of their request.
  - **Sample Letter: When a request is Denied** ([doc](#))
  - **Sample Letter: When a request is Approved** ([doc](#))
  - **Sample Letter: When counties Cooperate rather than transfer** ([doc](#))
- **State Summary of All Youth Who Transferred Membership**
  - **All years, including PY 2011-12 by Name of Youth updated on 7-30-12** ([spreadsheet](#))  
Note: PY 2011-12 appears in red type.
    - Same as above but sorted by County Releasing Youth updated on 7-30-12 ([spreadsheet](#))
    - Same as above but sorted by County Accepting Youth Updated on 7-30-12 ([spreadsheet](#))

## Related Topics

- N/A

## References

- N/A

## Additional People to Contact for More Information

District Directors for the counties involved.

Mark Mains, Assistant Director of Extension for 4-H Youth Development, 859-257-5961;  
[mmains@uky.edu](mailto:mmains@uky.edu).

## Frequently Asked Questions

1. **In the event that parents or guardians who have joint custody live in different counties, which county is considered the “county of residence?”**

Each situation will be unique. Most likely the county of residence is the county in which the child attends school but other factors may enter into the decision. Discuss the situation with the parents/guardians. The youth must declare the county of which they

will become a 4-H member. Participation in a county outside of their county of membership must follow the established guidelines and procedures above.

**2. If a disagreement occurs, will a decision by the County Extension Council override a decision by the County 4-H Council?**

No. There must be a unanimous agreement between both of the Agents and 4-H Councils involved. If one party is unwilling to accept/release a youth, there is no agreement.

**3. If a disagreement occurs, is there an appeals process?**

The decision made by the Agents and the 4-H Councils involved is the final response. This is a county, not a state, decision. The focus should remain on what is best for the child.

**4. At what point should a county have its own project/program rather than send youth to another county?**

Kentucky defines a club as a minimum of 5 members with an approved volunteer leader. (All 5 members cannot be from one family.) That's a good rule of thumb.

**5. How do we handle requests to participate across state lines?**

As with any young person in Kentucky, the desire is for youth to participate in the county where he/she lives or goes to school. However, if there are reasons which make participation in Kentucky rather than the home state reasonable then counties may consider allowing youth to cross state lines. It is a county decision. The procedure for allowing a young person from another state to participate in Kentucky is the same as when dealing with two Kentucky counties; the two agents and two county councils must be in agreement and take care of the paperwork. If any one of the four parties disagrees, then there is no agreement and the young person cannot participate in Kentucky. The county's decision will be supported at the state level.

**6. Who enforces the cross county policy at an event?**

Enforcement takes place back in the county before events even occur. The agent who submits the registration forms for the event is the one responsible for making sure that all youth entered in the event are legitimately involved from his/her county. That means that the child a) lives/goes to school in the county through which the child is registered OR b) the child has been approved for transfer and has been given a copy of the approved Form A to take to all competitive events. If the county of membership is questioned, the person in charge of the event will ask the member/family to show the copy of Form A to those in charge of the event. If a young person is found to live in one county but be registered from another, he/she must be able to show the approved Form A or be disqualified for the event. See the following sections in the policy's explanation: "Questions about Membership that Arise at an Event" and "Verification Responsibilities."

**7. When a child or parent has issues in a county and wants to move to another county this puts the agent in a bad spot.**

Yes, the agent is in an awkward position but this is precisely one of the reasons the cross county policy is needed. The desired situation is that youth participate in the home county. If a family has issues in the home county and wants to go to another county, it is only possible if both agents and both councils agree and put that agreement in writing on the Form A. If agreement is not reached, then the family basically has two choices: 1) learn to get along in the home county or 2) stop participating in all or portions of the home county's 4-H program.

**8. How do Clover Buds fit into the cross county lines policy? Are they grandparented in later at age 9?**

Clover Buds are generally expected to participate in the home county. When the policy is followed, grandparenting of the child at age 9 is a non-issue. Grandparenting based on location of participation during Clover Bud years should not be considered in determining where a member age 9 and above participates in 4-H. Our membership policy states that youth are to participate in the county in which they reside or go to school.

9. (Added 9-11-2012)

**For programs such as Livestock, Horse and Shooting Sports, when two counties "cooperate," can the educational hours count toward the required 6 hours of education?**

That is a decision to be made and agreed upon by the agents and certified volunteers in the two counties involved. It should not become standard operating procedure for youth who fail to attend his/her own county's educational sessions.

**10. If a member participates in the livestock club and horse club in the county where he/she lives, but transfers membership to another county for Livestock Judging and Horse Bowl because the home county does not offer these experiences, how many hours of education are required?**

6 hours of education in the home county as part of the livestock club; 6 hours of education in the accepting county for livestock judging; 6 hours of education in the home county as part of the horse club; 6 hours of education in the accepting county for horse bowl.

## **Tricks of the Trade from Colleagues**

- Steve Kelly: Here's a letter Steve used to notify youth "grandfathered" into his county program when the cross county policy started. ([doc](#))

Last Date of Revision: 09-12-2012