

Ohio 4-H Youth Development High Risk Activities & Events

The Ohio 4-H Youth Development program, like many youth organizations around the country, conduct programs and activities that may present high risk for potential injury to youth, volunteers, parents or spectators. The number one priority, when developing and conducting educational programs, is to ensure that all involved will have a positive and safe experience. Some programs, by their nature, present greater risks that leaders must give additional attention to during the planning and implementation stage.

Volunteers should look for key indicators that might present a higher risk to those involved, thus requiring them to take additional safety precautions. Those indicators might include:

- Youth unaccompanied by an adult or chaperone;
- Food service and/or preparation;
- Geographically large area or large number of people who can't all be directly supervised at once;
- Discipline or behavior management of participants;
- Location where programs are held (i.e. remote area);
- Inadequate number of adults to supervise large number of youth;
- Overnight events and activities;
- Transportation involved (car, bus, plane, train, etc.);
- Large animals are part of a program;
- Demonstration involving the use of firearms; or
- Riding all-terrain vehicles.

What can a volunteer do to minimize risks?

The key for any volunteer to remember is that they can't completely eliminate risk if they expect to continue to offer the program. Many of the above identified indicators of high risk problems or activities are addressed in other sections of this chapter. However, some common sense practices will go a long way in minimizing risks to members, volunteers, parents and community members at large.

Written by Ryan Schmiesing, OSU Extension, Associate State 4-H Leader.