

Brevard County 4-H Grievance Policy

Adapted from University of Minnesota/Extension, Clay County 4-H Grievance Policy and Florida 4-H Policies and Best Management Practices

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Purpose

The Brevard County grievance/appeal process provides a vehicle to respond to 4-H member's concerns relating to Brevard County 4-H rules/decisions. This process provides a means for members /parents /guardian's concerns to be heard.

What May be Appealed

All 4-H issues may be appealed with the exception of judge's decisions. This may include eligibility, deadline violations, rule violations, accusations made by other 4-H members, etc.

Who May Appeal

Brevard County 4-H members and parents/guardians have the right to file an appeal.

Rights of Those That File an Appeal:

- The right to be informed of the offense which he/she is charged
- The right to meet face to face with the accuser and to ask questions of the accuser
- The right to have the opportunity to respond to the charges and to present evidence in his/her own behalf

Who Reviews the Appeal

The Appeal Committee consists of 3-5 individuals (a combination of 4-H youth members and adult volunteers). The Appeals Committee is asked to reside in situations where an appeal has been filed based on their knowledge of 4-H policies and procedures, their experience in 4-H, and their maturity to reside over the situation.

Process for Filing an Appeal

Appeals must be filed through the 4-H Agent within 7 days of the County decision. This must be done in writing.

At the Appeal Hearing

- Prior to the start of the hearing, the Florida 4-H Code of Conduct will be reviewed. This document can be found at: <http://florida4h.org/staff/volunteering/screening/forms/code-of-conduct.pdf>.

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- Only those individuals involved with the appeal may appear at the hearing. Those with knowledge regarding the appeal will be asked to speak at the hearing either by the Extension Agent or those filing the appeal. 4-H members are strongly encouraged to voice their own views at the appeal hearing. Parents/guardians are encouraged to allow the 4-H members to represent themselves.
- Participants in the appeal hearing are expected to act in a civil manner. Use of profanity or other inappropriate behavior by either party will not be accepted and may result in terminating the hearing.
- The individual(s) filing the appeal will have the opportunity to express their view to the committee.
- If the appeal is against another party, the named party will be invited to attend a meeting with 4-H faculty to provide an opportunity to defend their position.
- All parties are expected to provide appropriate documentation/evidence upon request. If individuals are uncooperative and refuse to provide/bring requested information, the Appeals Committee may terminate the appeal process or the appeal may not be determined in the favor of the uncooperative party.
- After all information is presented, the committee will meet privately to discuss the issue and come to a decision. Decisions will be based on majority rule. Committee members are expected to keep discussions confidential.
- Once a decision is determined the involved parties will be notified of the decisions of the committee. Decisions made by the committee will be final.
- The resolution of the issue will be filed in writing and kept as a permanent record of the hearing at the Extension Office.

What is the Role of the 4-H Extension Agent

The 4-H Extension Agent will call the Appeals Committee together and present them with the facts of the case before they arrive at the meeting. Only the facts will be presented to the Appeals Committee so they are prepared to ask questions during the hearing. An Extension Agent will sit in on the hearing to assist in facilitating the meeting but they will not have a vote in the final decision. The Extension Agent will:

- Chair the Board and is responsible for maintaining an atmosphere of order, objectivity, and fairness. The fact that all direct participants already subscribe to the 4-H Pledge should clearly eliminate any need for swearing in witnesses
- Inform the panel and the accused of the Purposes set out above
- Advise the Board members and the accused of the offense charged
- Insure that persons not essential to the proceedings are excluded.
- Direct everyone present to treat the matter as confidential
- Insure that sufficient questions are asked to give the Board members enough information to make findings and recommendations which are responsive to the charge

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Committee Responsibilities

This position is of great importance to the County 4-H program. Committee members possess the following skills to carry out these duties:

- The ability to remain impartial and open
- The ability to keep matters confidential
- The ability to be consistent

Committee Members will allow the person filling the appeal to do the following:

- Permit the accused to make an opening statement
- Permit the accuser to make an opening statement (if applicable)
- Permit either party to present testimony of witnesses and to subject each other's witnesses to cross examination
- Permit the Board members to question the parties and to call for additional information from the parties

Reaching a Determination

When the parties have completed their cases and the Board has no further questions, the Board should excuse all others so that deliberations can begin. The Board then determines by discussion and vote on each of the following points separately;

- Whether the accused actually committed the offense(s) charged
- What is the appropriate disciplinary measure based on the offense and Code of Conduct violation
- The Board then calls in the accused and the Extension member of the Board announces the Board's decision
- If the decision is not favorable to the accused, he/she should be advised if there are any next steps of action