4-H Membership Across County Lines

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 family participates in the county 4-H program that is supported with taxes where they reside. However, there are circumstances in which membership in a county other than where one lives is a practical and reasonable request.

POLICY

Youth are expected to affiliate with the 4-H program in their county of residence. However, in some circumstances, it is acceptable 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 when a fully funded 4-H program is present in both counties and the youth maintains membership in good standing. If county financial support for Ohio State University Extension ceases to exist, 4-H membership status already established in that county will end on the date the funding ends (established by Extension Administration). 4-H membership of youth, residing in a county that has lost funding, who have pre-established cross-county line 4-H membership agreements in place will be permitted to continue participation in their non-resident county through December 31 of that 4-H membership year.

PROCEDURES

Ohio State University Extension administers our 4-H Youth Development program. Our mission is to empower young people with the skills to lead for a lifetime. We help youth thrive so that they are supported in reaching their fullest potential as capable, competent, caring, and contributing citizens. To affirm Ohio State University Extension's position concerning 4-H cross county lines (or cross state lines) membership, we provide the following philosophy and process:

1. 4-H membership in two counties (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/state lines memberships are revoked.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. In situations where membership in a county other than the county of residence is desired, the 4-H professionals in both counties will review the request application. The determination made by the county 4-H professionals in the county of request and the county of residence will be fully supported by the state organization.
    a. If they believe it falls into one of the listed acceptable reasons, they can make a determination to approve the request.
    b. If they determine the reason listed is not one listed as acceptable, or cannot agree on whether the request is considered acceptable or not, the request will move to the state review team. County professionals will NOT disapprove a request.

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences
Ohio 4-H Youth Development
ohio4h.org

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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 request for cross county membership form should be completed and submitted by the parents/guardians as soon as possible but preferably at least 30 days prior to the 4-H membership enrollment deadline in the county being requested. Late submissions will not be considered for the current program year.

CIRCUMSTANCES AND CONSIDERATIONS

County Level Review - Common circumstances and considerations generally considered **acceptable** for cross county/state lines membership include:

- The school district, including homeschool co-op meeting location, in which the child attends (not just lives in) is located across multiple 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 county lines to participate in a program not available in the county of residence.
- The parents of a child are separated or 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.
- The older sibling of a youth is an established 4-H member in the county of request.
- Extended family members play a main role in the youth's support system for having a successful 4-H experience (ex: family assist with transportation for meetings, family is a volunteer and will be providing support for the project).
- If an individual began 4-H in one county and moves to another county but wishes to finish their career in the county they started.

If the reason is one of the acceptable reasons listed above as determined by both the county of request and county of residence, across county/state line membership may be granted and counties can process the application without further consultation from the state office.

State Level Review – If county of residence and county of request cannot accept the request based on the acceptable reasons listed above, they will forward the membership application to the state level for review. Common circumstances and considerations that **may or may not** be considered acceptable for cross county/state lines membership include:

- The parents/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 or preferred schedule.
- The county fair schedule in the other county better fits the youth's school schedule. If animal projects are involved, the animal is housed 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.
- County of residence and county of request forward the membership application when any other situation or condition not described in this guidance is included.

If the circumstances are not considered one or more of the 'acceptable' reasons listed under the County Level Review, the county of request will forward it to the state level (emailed to 4hinformation@osu.edu). A subcommittee of county 4-H professionals may be convened to review requests that are forwarded to the state to make a recommendation to the Assistant Director/Associate State 4-H Leader. The state 4-H office will then notify the county professionals of the final determination. The county office of request will send the final determination letter to the family.

Reasons that are **not acceptable** for granting a transfer of membership and will be denied if submitted include, but are not limited to:

- The Junior Fair Livestock auction prices are typically higher in the other county or the county fair is better or more competitive than another fair.
- 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.

If the request is considered to be 'not acceptable,' the county of request will forward it to the state level (emailed to 4hinformation@osu.edu). The Assistant Director/Associate State 4-H Leader will review the request and make the determination that the request will be denied. The state office will then notify the county professionals of the decision, who will then send the final determination letter to the family.

HOW TO REQUEST CROSS COUNTY LINES MEMBERSHIP

Parents seeking 4-H membership for their child in a county in which they do not reside must complete the ***Request for 4-H Membership Across County Lines*** form. It should be submitted to the county OSU Extension 4-H professional in the county of request as soon as possible, and preferably no later than 30 days prior to the 4-H membership enrollment deadline of the county being requested. That professional then contacts the 4-H professional in the county of residence, discusses the circumstances and context of the request and then takes appropriate action given their determination. Please allow at least 30 days from submission for final notification.

September 2025

Request for 4-H Membership Across County Lines

This form must be completed for each youth requesting 4-H membership in a county other than their primary residence. The policy and procedures are found in ***4-H Membership Across County Lines***. Permission for 4-H membership across county lines should not be assumed to be automatically granted. Responses to requests come from the county of request approximately 30 days after submission. Please follow these steps:

1. Provide all requested information on this form. Do not leave anything blank.
2. Take the completed request form to the county OSU Extension office in which 4-H membership is being sought (the "county of request"). The request should be made as soon as possible, but preferred submission at least 30 days prior to the county of request's 4-H membership enrollment deadline. The 4-H professionals in the county of request AND in the county of residence will discuss your request and take appropriate next steps given the circumstances and considerations.
3. The decision is final and not subject to appeal.
4. The 4-H professional in the county of request will provide written notification to you regarding the determination status and will send a copy to the county of residence.

County of Request _____ County of Residence _____

Will market animals, other livestock, horses, or dogs be taken as 4-H projects? (circle one) YES NO

Which project(s) are being taken? _____

Why are you seeking 4-H membership outside of your county of residence? *(add additional pages, if needed)*

_____

_____

_____

Name of club you would like to join _____

Member's name _____ Date of birth ____/____/____ Age (as of Jan. 1) _____

Address _____ City, State, Zip _____

Phone Number _____ _____ Email Address _____

Residential School District _____ Current School Grade _____
Do you attend school in this district? YES NO If no, list school attending _____

Have you been or are you a current 4-H member? (circle one) NO YES, list county(ies) _____
Total years in 4-H_____ Projects taken _____

If accepted for cross-county lines membership, we understand it is our responsibility as a 4-H family to review and understand all 4-H rules, policies, and guidelines, including those of the jr. fair, of the county we wish to join and to ask questions when we do not understand. We also understand this is intended to be for the duration of the 4-H member's experience, unless circumstances change and/or you submit a request to terminate the cross county membership in favor of returning to the residential county.

Youth name (print) _____ Youth signature _____

Parent/Guardian name (print) _____ Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Date of request _____

For Office Use Only: Date received _____

❑ Approved by county professionals

4-H Professional in County of Residence _____ Date _____
4-H Professional in County of Request _____ Date _____

❑ Request sent to state level review (no signature of county 4-H professionals required)

State level review determination:
❑ Not Approved ❑ Approved *Conditions and restrictions* _____ Date notification sent _____