

What do I need to know about the new 4-H Youth Protection policies?



All of us understand the importance of keeping youth safe from harm. Rutgers University recently adopted a Protection of Minors policy that mandates criminal background checks and youth protection training for all employees and volunteers supervising minors in Rutgers programs, including the Rutgers Cooperative Extension 4-H Youth Development programs. Effective Fall 2014, all employees and volunteers of Rutgers University who work directly with youth (with the exception of episodic volunteers like judges and guest speakers) must complete training in youth protection and undergo criminal background checks. These requirements bring 4-H to the same level of our peer programs in youth development. Information about the policy is available online at <http://nj4h.rutgers.edu/volunteering/screening.asp> and is summarized below.

Rationale

The volunteer appointment process has been designed for the purpose of protecting the young people served by the New Jersey 4-H Youth Development Program as well as volunteers, employees and Rutgers Cooperative Extension. The information obtained in the application and screening process will be utilized for that purpose. This process has been developed in consultation with the Rutgers University Office of the General Counsel.

Training

All 4-H staff and volunteers must complete the free *Rutgers Working with Minors Training* online or in a group session facilitated by your County Extension personnel. The training takes approximately one hour to complete.

Online training- To take the training online, register through the above website. You will receive a unique link for the training module within 24 hours. At the conclusion of the training, you must print the completion certificate you receive and submit it to the 4-H Office for recordkeeping.

In-person training- If you attend an in-person training a certificate will be provided. See the box for information on group training.

Background checks

All 4-H staff and volunteers must undergo criminal background checks. The 4-H volunteer appointment process includes screening of every 4-H volunteer applicant to determine if the applicant has any substantiated charges of child abuse or neglect or criminal convictions relevant to his or her service as a 4-H volunteer. Screening decisions are made at the university level. Only background checks completed by Rutgers' two approved vendors for this purpose are accepted. There are two tiers of background checks. Both kinds of background checks need to be updated every 3 years.

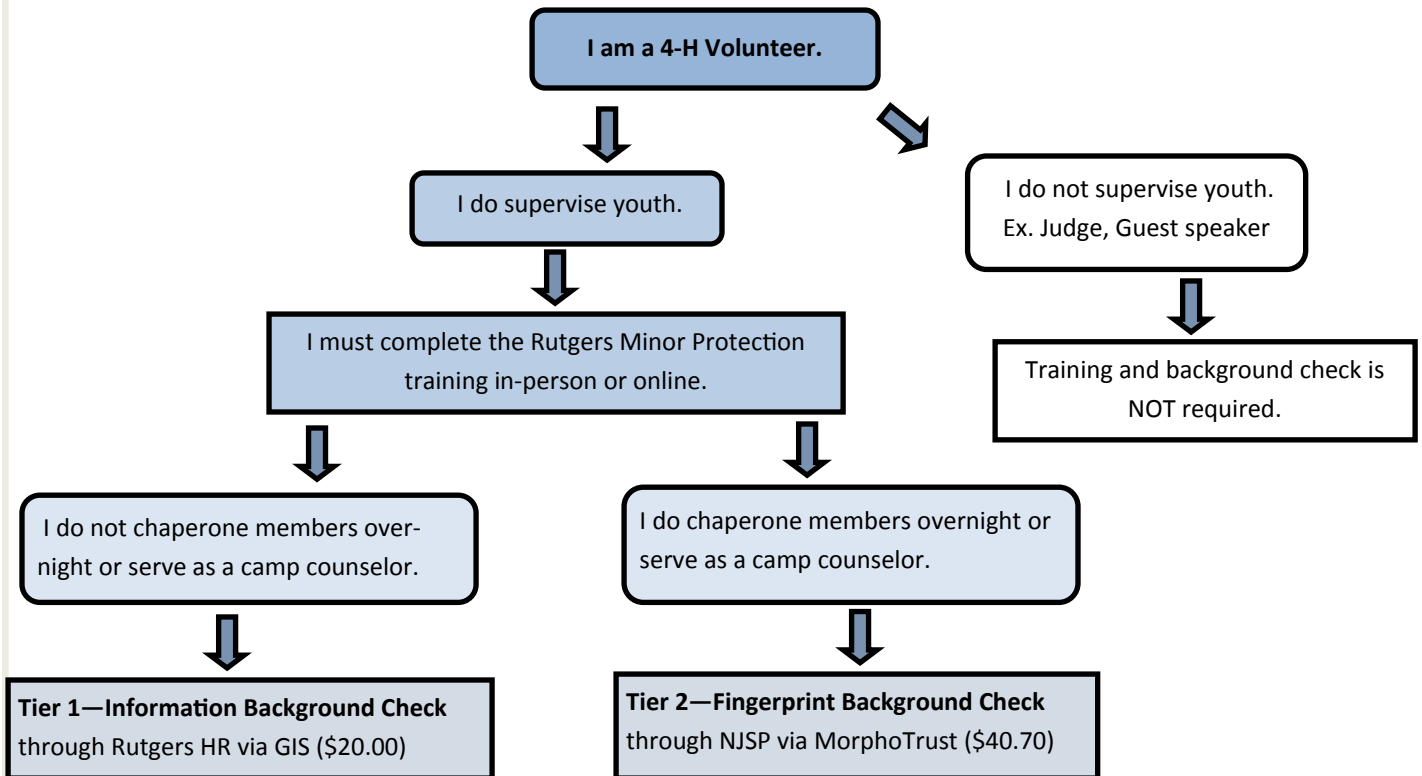
- **Tier 1—Informational Background Check** is for volunteers who work regularly with youth in a leadership capacity, but do not serve as a camp counselor or overnight chaperone. Tier 1 checks are conducted online by GIS, a secure provider contracted by the University using an individual's social security number and their recent addresses. The cost for Tier 1 checks is \$20.00 and is completed online through a secure website.
- **Tier 2—Fingerprint Background Check** is for those volunteers who are camp counselors or overnight chaperones. Overnight chaperones, for example, serve at lock-ins, regional conference (NJTC/SJTC), as

IN-PERSON TRAININGS

November 10th 6:30 pm
December 1st 6:30 pm
Cumberland 4-H Center
291 Morton Avenue
Millville, NJ
RSVP : (856)451-2800 x3
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well as state and national events. Tier 2 checks consist of in-person fingerprint scan conducted by MorphoTrust, through the NJ State Police. The cost for Tier 2 checks is \$40.70. If you undergo a Tier 2 check, you do not need a Tier 1 check.

Which Tier should I choose? Choose a Tier based on not only your current responsibilities but also any you anticipate in the next three years. If you undergo a Tier 1 background check now, but in 2 years decide to chaperone an overnight event, you will need to pay an additional \$40.70 at that time. If you think you will have overnight chaperone duties in the next 3 years, a Tier 2 background check is a good idea.



Cost

Volunteers are responsible for payment for criminal background checks. Clubs can vote to cover to the fees for their leaders/volunteers with club dues.

Completion of Requirements

In order to be a 4-H volunteer, one must:

1. Complete the application process currently in place (interview, personal references, and Leader Training);
2. Complete the *Working with Minors* training;
3. Pass the appropriate criminal background check.

If you are currently a leader, the first part is already taken care of. The new requirements (#2 and #3) should be fulfilled by January 2015 to continue your volunteer role with 4-H.

Questions?

If you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact your County 4-H staff. We hope you agree with the importance of protecting not only our 4-H youth, but also our volunteers through the new Protection of Minors policies. We appreciate your patience and open-mindedness during this time of change.

[Questions?]

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