



MICHIGAN 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Michigan 4-H Advisory Groups

By-Laws: Insuring Cross Representation

When forming a committee, club or council a strong set of by-laws is a great way to keep the group on target and focused on the mission. The first part of the by-laws should start out with Article I: Name, Article II: Purpose, Article III: Membership.

Membership should clearly define who qualifies to be a member and how to become one. The rules of membership is also very helpful to place in by-laws so it is clearly defined what the expectations of the organizations members are.

When a committee or board holds an election to determine who will represent the greater organization there are some items to consider. Groups should refrain from having more than one adult and one youth from any one family on the board. When forming a board you want to get the most diverse and best cross representation of the entire organization. Although family members may have different opinions they most likely have similar values and believes and too many from the same family will deter the cross representation.

This same thought process can be said for multiple members from one club or from one area of the county. The best practice would be to outline these parameters right in the by-laws under membership. However, if it is not in the by-laws the nominating committee should consider that if multiple members from a larger club are put on the ballot it is only natural that they would receive more votes since they have a larger membership backing them and would take the majority of the positions. Therefore limiting the number of members per club on the ballot will alleviate this problem.

Placing such a rule in the bylaws could come under Rules of Membership as seen in the sample below, item F. It may also fall in the Election Procedures under the nominating committee rules as the example Section 5, B shows.

Sample of membership:

III. Membership

Section 4. Rules of the Membership

- A. All adult 4-H Council members are limited to two consecutive 2-year terms. Members may then be re-elected or come back as an Ex Officio member after being off the 4-H Council for one year.
- B. All Ex Officio members are limited to two consecutive 2- year terms. Members may represent their committee again or be elected to 4-H Council after being off the 4-H Council for one year.
- C. No term limits for teen representatives.

- D. Ex Officio members cannot hold simultaneously a regular membership on council.
- E. All adult 4-H Council members must have been a registered volunteer for at least two (2) years prior to being an elected member of the 4-H Council.
- F. *No more than one adult and one youth from the same immediate family may serve on council at the same time.*

Section 5. Election Procedures

- A. Six (6) adult representatives and six (6) teen representatives shall be elected to 4-H Council annually in October. New members will begin their term at the 4-H Council meeting in November of the year they are elected or re-elected.
- B. Representatives shall be selected by being placed on a ballot by a nominating committee. There shall be at least eight (8) adults, and eight (8) teens on the ballot each year in order for an election to take place. Ballots will be mailed to each registered 4-H volunteer (both youth and adult). *No more than one adult and one youth from the same immediate family may serve on council at the same time. Therefore the nominating committee will take that in consideration when placing names on the ballot.*

If you have by-law questions please contact the Leadership Civic Engagement Team at [4-HLeadership@anr.msu.edu](mailto:4HLeadership@anr.msu.edu). You may also find other valuable resources at http://msue.anr.msu.edu/topic/info/leadership_citizenship.