

Positive Youth Development Guidelines
Behavior & Rule Management for the Polk County Fair

Sometimes our exhibiting youth and/or families fail to abide by the Iowa Exhibitor Youth Code of Ethics, the Polk County 4-H and FFA Fair Association Code of Conduct for Youth and Families, and/or event rules, which may lead to disciplinary action. To ensure consistency and fairness, this written process is necessary to respond to and resolve Polk County Fair issues and complaints in a manner that teaches good character, life skills, and positive youth development. Depending on the degree of infraction, whether it's a first offense versus repeated offense, or factors that involve the safety of youth/families or welfare of animals, could impact the severity and length of action if one is taken.

On-the-Spot Decisions

At times, difficult decisions may need to be made quickly and seemingly on the spot. Staff and volunteers prepare for these situations by becoming familiar with 4-H/FFA policies and procedures as well as fair premium book rules. There are times when a committee meeting is needed and times when it is appropriate for staff or volunteer(s) responsible for the event to make this decision quickly. The decision of the staff or volunteer regarding whether committee meeting is necessary or if an on the spot decision should be made are absolutely binding. However, staff and volunteers should consider the following factors in making such determination:

- Safety – A quick decision is needed when someone's safety or well-being is involved.
- Positive Youth Development – Always keep the best interest of the youth and the integrity of the Youth Development Program in the forefront when making quick decisions.
- Confidentiality – Be respectful of situations that may need to remain confidential.
- Time Sensitive – Does this situation truly need an "on the spot" decision? Although it may appear that a decision must be made on the spot, many times a decision can wait until you have the time to gather the necessary information to make an informed decision. Take the time to make the best decision you can.
- Gather as much information as you are able. Read the fair book or contest rules carefully.
- Use your committees whenever possible. Designate event or fair committees and use their expertise when making decisions.
- Use the situation as a teaching opportunity for the youth or person(s) involve

Protests & Appeals

It is important to note that some decisions cannot be protested/appealed. These include:

- Decisions made by judges, which are absolutely final
- Issues related to deadlines for 4-H or FFA enrollment, livestock identification, and/or county/state fair entry deadlines
- Code of Conduct-related violations which are addressed in a separate document

Process for filing an appeal of disciplinary action

- Once a decision has been made regarding disciplinary action, the individual(s) shall have fourteen (14) calendar days from receiving notification to appeal any disciplinary action
- The written appeal must include:
 - Names of persons involved AND cause for appeal
 - Date of incident
 - Specific action, rule, etc., in question
 - Situation and documentation
 - Additional persons the committee may contact for further clarification
 - Signature of exhibitor and their parent/guardian filing the appeal

- The written appeal is then submitted to Polk County Fair Board President and/or official event staff via certified mail.

Who may submit an appeal?

- Any Iowa 4-H or FFA member and his/her/their parent or guardian who has been subject to a disciplinary action
- In the case of fairs, only participants entered in the same department can file a protest or appeal of disciplinary action

Process for staff or event officials dealing with protest, complaint, or disagreement

- Once an official protest or complaint is filed, the designated committee shall meet to discuss the situation
- The party(ies) against whom the complaint or protest has been filed will be notified and given the opportunity to attend the next regular Polk County Fair Board meeting. They will be allowed to speak for five minutes, and, at the discretion of the Board, may be allowed to speak for a longer period
- It is the choice of the individual(s) filing the protest or complaint whether or not they are present at the meeting
- Participants in the meeting are expected to act in a civil manner
- All parties are expected to provide written documentation/evidence/witness statements at the hearing, submitted to the Fair Board by certified mail postmarked no less than four weeks before the meeting at which the matter will be discussed. The Board reserves the right to question, in person, any individual who provides a witness statement to either party, and any person filing a grievance. If requested information is not provided, the committee may terminate the process.
- After all relevant information is presented, the committee will meet to discuss the issue and come to a written decision within (7) days
- Once a decision has been determined, the individual(s) filing the protest/complaint as well as those individuals impacted will be notified of the decision by committee representatives

Who Responds?

- A committee established by the Polk County Fair Board under the direction of the President of the Board or the Board itself
 - If committee is formed it is established in accordance with Memorandum of Understanding – this committee may include members from various groups such as Extension Council, Fair Board, 4-H staff, and FFA advisors

Process for staff or event officials dealing with appeals of disciplinary action

- Once an appeal of disciplinary action has been filed, the initial decision-making committee shall respond to the individual within seven (7) calendar days
- Staff and/or event officials can consult with other local committees and/or other regional/state ISUEO staff for guidance on appropriate disciplinary action
- All determinations made by the Board or any committee shall be effective immediately and binding on the parties.