



**SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION**



INTRODUCTION TO SOUTH DAKOTA 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM PROTEST AND GRIEVANCE POLICIES

When South Dakota 4-H members participate in events, those events have rules and protocols to ensure safety and integrity for all participants. In addition, South Dakota 4-H undergirds the overall youth development program with policies and procedures that ensure safety and integrity state-wide. Infrequently our 4-H members fail to abide by these frameworks and become subject to disciplinary action. Many members recognize their mistake and use the discipline as a teachable moment.

Sometimes the disciplined and/or affected 4-H members disagree with the disciplinary action/non-action. In such cases, the following policy provides youth members the opportunity to appeal the actions taken by event/local decision-making entities. It is important to note that some decisions cannot be appealed (e.g., judges' integrity and placing decisions or legal issues that supersede 4-H and University policy). Further, only a disciplined or affected member may initiate the appeal process.

When appropriate, a pleasant conversation initiated by the aggrieved 4-H member to the local decision-making entity is recommended to discourage grievances being filed due to miscommunication or misunderstanding. We hope that our 4-H members will have a positive youth development experience. When challenging situations arise, we trust that all parties will behave with respect and integrity. The expedited and formal appeals processes aid that goal.

Thank you in advance for your positive involvement in South Dakota 4-H.

PRIOR TO JUDGING AND IN-SHOW JUDGING PROTEST AND GRIEVANCE POLICY SOUTH DAKOTA 4-H DURING THE SOUTH DAKOTA STATE FAIR

The purpose of this procedure is to promote a prompt and fair process for resolving a prior to show and in-show applicable grievance. This policy is applicable to any protest or grievance related to the application of 4-H and State Fair rules, including by way of example but not exclusion, to State Fair rules and 4-H Code of Conduct violation allegations. This policy is not applicable to violations which fall outside the scope of 4-H policy. Further, this policy is not applicable to a challenge of judges' integrity, decisions, placements or other evaluations absent a rule violation.

The Prior to Judging and In-Show Judging Protest and Grievance Policy is designed to efficiently handle protests and grievances filed prior to and during judging of 4-H State Fair events. In the event of a grievance filing, 4-H events or activities related to the grievance may not be stopped or re-scheduled to accommodate the grievance process.

Definitions and General Provisions

A. Grievance – is defined as an alleged misinterpretation, misapplication or violation of a specific term or provision of 4-H policies affecting the rights or privileges of an individual provided by law.

B. No offer of settlement of a grievance by either party shall be admissible as evidence in later grievance proceedings or elsewhere. No settlement of a grievance shall constitute a binding precedent in the settlement of similar grievances.



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C. Failure to grieve to the next step within the specified time shall end the right to grieve. However, the parties to any grievance may, by mutual agreement, waive the time limits provided herein. Such extensions shall be in writing and approved by all parties with copies of the extension provided to all parties.

D. The Board of Regents and Board Administration, South Dakota State University Administration, SDSU Extension Administration, State 4-H Youth Development Program Office, local decision makers, or employees shall not retaliate or effect reprisals against any individual for rightful processing or participation in a grievance.

Step One: Written Protest or Grievance to Committee Co-Chair(s)

The individual(s) protesting or grieving a process or initial determination either prior to judging or in-show judging (while a show is taking place and entries are being judged) shall file a written statement of grievance or protest to the initial decision maker or the Committee Co-Chair(s). The statement must be filed no more than **ten (10) minutes** after the initial determination, action, or non-action.

The written statement shall contain the following information, at a minimum:

- 1) The date of the incident,
- 2) A complete statement of all relevant known facts,
- 3) List of names, addresses, and, if available, telephone numbers of people involved,
- 4) Any rules, regulations, policies and/or procedures allegedly violated or misapplied,
- 5) A proposed resolution, and
- 6) Name(s) and signature(s) of the individual(s) filing the protest or grievance.

The initial decision maker will allow the interested parties an opportunity to provide information (when needed), analyze the facts and provide a verbal and written response to the parties as soon as reasonably possible.

If the grievant fails to state a grievance as defined herein, in any filing under the procedure there will be no obligation to process the filing beyond providing notice to the grievant that they failed to meet the definition of a grievance and the filing will be dismissed.

If the aggrieved party is dissatisfied by the response, the individual can immediately following receipt proceed to Step Two.

Step Two: Appeal to the State 4-H Program Director

A grievant may immediately submit a protest or grievance of the Step One determination to the State 4-H Program Director. The grievance should include copies of the original grievance and decision maker's response.

The State 4-H Program Director will then issue a verbal and written response as soon as reasonably possible.

The decision shall be provided to the aggrieved party and pertinent personnel.



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If the aggrieved party is dissatisfied by the response, the individual can immediately following receipt proceed to Step Three.

Step Three: Appeal to Appointed Grievance Committee

An individual may grieve the Step Two decision to an Appointed Grievance Committee. The grievance should include copies of the original grievance (generated in Step One), and the State 4-H Program Director’s response (generated in Step Two).

The Appointed Grievance Committee shall consist of the following:

1. An Administrator from South Dakota State University or the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences or Extension.
2. An Extension Specialist or Field Specialist, preferably, if possible, in the field of expertise of the exhibit being aggrieved.
3. A third member to be determined following grievant’s filing of Step 3.
4. No member of the Appointed Grievance Committee shall have any conflict of interest with the grievant.

If a Committee Member has a conflict of interest, they shall recuse themselves from the process and replacement will be named.

The Appointed Grievance Committee shall render a decision as soon as reasonably possible. This decision shall include a statement of findings and conclusions supporting the decision and **will be considered the final step of this Prior to Judging and In-Show Judging Protest and Grievance Policy.**

This written response will be delivered as soon as reasonably possible.

A copy of the decision shall be provided to the grievant, pertinent personnel, State 4-H Program Director, and SDSU Extension Director.

An aggrieved party may choose to file a formal grievance outside of the event, via the following South Dakota 4-H Youth Development Program Protest and Grievance and Policies. The event will continue with or without the exhibit, during the pendency of any formal Protest and Grievance under those provisions.

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4-H is a result of the collaborative efforts of South Dakota State University, the nationwide Cooperative Extension network, United States Department of Agriculture, corporate and other sponsorships, and an extensive volunteer network to provide unparalleled non-credit research, knowledge and educational programs for youth.

The purpose of these procedures is to promote a prompt and fair process for resolving an applicable grievance. This policy is applicable to any protest or grievance related to application of 4-H rules, including by way of example but not exclusion, to State Fair protest and 4-H Code of

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Conduct violation allegations. **This policy is not applicable to the challenge of judges' integrity, decisions, placements or other evaluations absent a rule violation.**

Definitions and General Provisions

- A. Grievance - Grievance is defined as an alleged misinterpretation, misapplication or violation of a specific term or provision of 4-H rules or policies affecting the rights or privileges of an individual provided by law.
- B. No offer of settlement of a grievance by either party shall be admissible as evidence in later grievance proceedings or elsewhere. No settlement of a grievance shall constitute a binding precedent in the settlement of similar grievances.
- C. Failure to grieve to the next step within the specified time shall end the right to grieve. However, the parties to any grievance may, by mutual agreement, waive the time limits provided herein. Such extensions shall be in writing and approved by all parties with copies of the extension provided to all parties.
- D. The Board of Regents and Board Administration, University Administration, SDSU Extension Office, State 4-H Youth Development Program Office, local decision makers, or agents and employees shall not retaliate or effect reprisals against any individual for rightful processing or participating in a grievance.

Local Determinations

4-H personnel, State 4-H Office, current county committee and/or program leader or designees are responsible for initial rule interpretations and decisions. An individual should first notify the appropriate entity of the grievance of a decision, protest of a rule, or policy infraction within seven (7) calendar days of notice of the incident. If the concern is not satisfied by local initial action or non-action within seven (7) calendar days of notification to the local decision maker, a written request is needed to initiate a formal protest or grievance.

Step One - Written Protest or Grievance to Local Decision Maker

The individual(s) protesting or grieving a process or initial local determination shall file a formal written statement of grievance or protest to the initial local decision maker. The statement must be filed no more than fourteen (14) days after the initial local determination, action or non-action.

The written statement shall contain the following information, at a minimum:

- 1) The date of the incident,
- 2) A complete statement of all relevant known facts,
- 3) List of names, addresses, and, if available, telephone numbers of people who were involved,
- 4) Any rules, regulations, policies and/or procedures allegedly violated or misapplied,
- 5) A proposed resolution,
- 6) Name(s) and signature(s) of the individual(s) filing the protest or grievance.

The initial decision maker will allow the interested parties an opportunity to provide information, analyze the facts and provide a written response to the parties within seven (7) calendar days. If the parties fail to receive a response within that time limit from the initial decision maker, the parties have seven (7) calendar days to proceed to Step Two. If an individual is dissatisfied by the response, the individual has seven (7) calendar days following receipt to proceed to Step Two.

If the grievant fails to state a grievance as defined herein, in any filing under the procedure there will be no obligation to process the filing beyond providing notice to the grievant that they failed to meet the definition of a grievance and the filing will be dismissed.



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Step Two - Submission of Decision Rendered in Step One to SDSU Extension Office or State 4-H Youth Development Program Office

A grievant may submit a protest or grievance of the determination to the local SDSU Extension Office or State 4-H Youth Development Program Office as appropriate. The grievance should include copies of the original grievance and decision maker's response. The administrator will review facts from the interested parties through an appointed committee. The appointed grievance committee will be comprised of representatives from 4-H program areas similar to the situation involved with the grievance and will include volunteers and University staff. The committee will not include representation from the entity involved in Step One determination or anyone with a potential conflict of interest with the grievant. One of the following will serve as the non-voting chairperson of the committee: SDSU Extension 4-H Youth Development Program Director, SDSU Associate Dean and Director of Extension, or SDSU Dean of the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources. The committee will issue a response within fourteen (14) calendar days following receipt of the grievance. If the individual fails to receive a response within that time limit, the individual has seven (7) calendar days to proceed to Step Two. If the grievant is dissatisfied with the response, the individual has seven (7) calendar days following receipt to proceed to Step Three.

Step Three - Submission of Decision Rendered in Step Two to the President

An individual may grieve the decision arrived at in Step Two to the President of South Dakota State University. The grievance should include copies of the original grievance and the decision maker's response and the decision arrived at in Step Two. The President will investigate the matter either personally or through an appointed designee or committee. A written decision, after review of the information from the interested parties, will be delivered within fourteen (14) calendar days of the date the grievance was received. A copy of the decision shall be provided to the grievant, initial decision maker, and the Board of Regents Executive Director and shall include a statement of findings and conclusions supporting the decision. If the grievant fails to receive a response within that time limit, the grievant has seven (7) calendar days to proceed to Step Four. If the grievant is dissatisfied with the response rendered, the individual has seven (7) calendar days following receipt to proceed to Step Four.

Step Four-Submission of the Decision Rendered in Step Three to the Board of Regents:

The grievance will include copies of the original grievance and the responses received in Steps One, Two and Three. The Board's Executive Director may attempt to achieve an informal resolution of the grievance or determine the matter is not appropriate for hearing. If the Executive Director determines the matter is appropriate for hearing, the Executive Director may select a hearing examiner. The hearing examiner will hold investigative hearings with all parties involved in the grievance and prepare proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law for the Board's consideration. If required by law, this process will conform to the South Dakota Administrative Procedures Act with regard to Contested Cases, as applicable. The Board's decision should be issued to the grievant within fourteen (14) calendar days from the date the grievance is considered by the Board. If the individual is not satisfied with the decision and if the individual has a statutory right to judicial review then the individual may appeal in accordance with South Dakota Codified Law.



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Acknowledged by: _____ 2/18/2026 | 10:53 PST
Date
Alexander "Sandy" Smart, Ph.D.
Interim Director of SDSU Extension

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