

Keeping Kids Safe!
Overview of the Process Used
for Developing the Youth-Adult Housing Policy

The Youth-Adult Housing Policy for 4-H Overnight Events was generated through the efforts of the 4-H Youth Overnight Safe Housing Policy Task Force, which included the following people:

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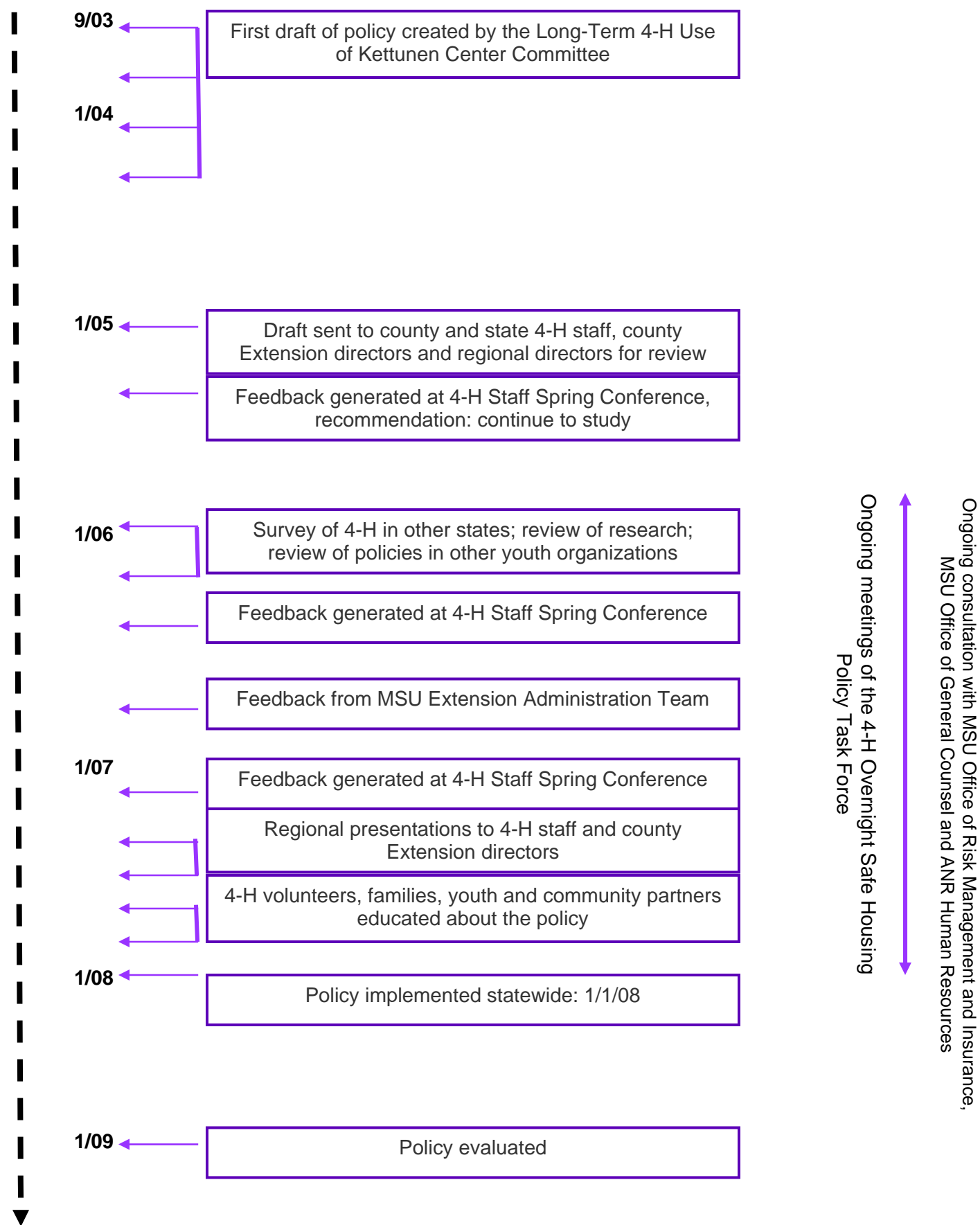
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The policy reflects input from Sandra Guerin, assistant director, MSU Office of Risk Management and Insurance; Michael Kiley, associate general counsel, MSU Office of General Counsel, and Joseph Lessard, manager, Agriculture and Natural Resources Office of Human Resources. It also reflects input from MSU Extension 4-H county and state staff members, county Extension directors and regional directors.

Steps in the Policy Development Process:



Considerations and Rationale:

Following are key considerations and other information used by the members of the 4-H Youth Overnight Safe Housing Policy Task Force in developing this policy:

- **Adult status in Michigan:** Michigan gives legal adult status to anyone 18 years of age or older. Those serving as chaperones must be legal adults and must be older than the oldest 4-H members (who could possibly be 20 years old). Hence, the policy indicates that unrelated chaperones must be aged 21 and over.
- **Age of participation in Michigan 4-H:** Programs are open to youth aged 5 to 19 (“4-H age” defined as January 1 of the current year).
- **Adult 4-H volunteers:** Adults aged 19 and over can be 4-H volunteers; a 19-year-old cannot be both a 4-H’er and a 4-H volunteer. The MSU Extension 4-H Child Well-Being Volunteer Selection Process must be completed by volunteers aged 19 and over who have ongoing, unsupervised access to children aged 19 and under.
- **National 4-H Youth Conference Center Housing Policy:** Adults (18 and over) may not room with youth (except for immediate family members).
- **State of Michigan Camp Licensing Policy:** The policy for 4-H overnight (residential) camps licensed by the Michigan Department of Human Services needed to reflect camp license guidelines.
- **Security and safety are foremost:** An adult should be present for security reasons, to help ensure that inappropriate behaviors do not occur and to prevent destructive behavior such as bullying.
- **Sexual predation factors:** Sexual predation most often takes place in one-on-one adult/youth situations. The policy prohibits one-on-one housing of unrelated adults and youth, unless a parental exception is provided under very special circumstances.
- **2006 survey with 4-H in other states:** As of March 2006, 24 states had responded to a survey regarding their overnight housing policy for youth and unrelated adults. Eighteen states indicated they have such a policy. Six of these “yes” responses were limited (for example, no policy was given, a policy was only for camps or fairgrounds, a policy was “being developed,” or the policy did not address the issue of housing youth with unrelated adults). States vary in how they define adult status (the definitions range from 18 to 21 years of age).
- **2006 query to other youth organizations:** Policies vary across other youth organizations (such as Boys Scouts, Girls Scouts, Big Brothers/Big Sisters). Some national organizations have guidelines and require state or local chapters to develop their own policies.

References Used to Support the Development of the Policy:

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