BASIC INSTRUCTOR QUALIFICATIONS

To be an effective instructor for the AgHOs training programs, an individual should have: a) a good knowledge of current agricultural production practices; b) familiarity with agricultural tractors and machinery; c) awareness of general agricultural hazards; and d) good communication skills.

PROGRAM LEADERSHIP QUALIFICATIONS

Based upon the present requirements of the AgHOs, training of youth to meet the certification requirements should be conducted under the supervision of either Extension agents (educators) or vocational agricultural (agricultural education) teachers. These individuals are generally referred to as the Program Leaders. Historically, however, many others have been recruited from within the community to provide all or part of the required instruction. These instructors, volunteers in most cases, have been recruited, trained and equipped to conduct youth training in the same manner as volunteers used to lead projects in many other areas of 4-H and agricultural education. Upon successful completion of the training, the Extension agent (educator) or agricultural education instructor, as the Program Leader, confirms that the student met the required criteria and maintains the required records.

If you are interested in being an instructor, the first step is to contact either your local Extension office or agricultural education instructor. If you already have: a) a good knowledge of agricultural production practices; b) familiarity with agricultural tractors and machinery; c) awareness of general agricultural hazards; and d) good communication skills you could serve as an instructor. Individuals who have successfully served in the past as volunteer instructors, in addition to Extension staff and agricultural education teachers, have included:

- Farmers (active and retired)
- Implement dealers, service technicians, and sales staff
- Retired Extension agents (educators) and agricultural education instructors
- Agricultural chemical dealers
- Private farm managers and consultants
When considering to be a volunteer instructor for the AgHOs training, certain personal qualities should also be helpful. These include:

- Passion to work with youth
- Desire to help reduce the potential of injury to youth engaged in agricultural production work
- Ability to effectively work with others and communicate
- Commitment to follow through on covering the required instruction contained in the curriculum
- Willingness to maintain the required records
- Demonstrated personal commitment to safety

In many cases, several volunteer instructors have been successfully recruited to form a team that is responsible for planning, organizing, and conducting the training. This approach utilizes the strengths and experiences of each team member, spreads out the responsibilities and provides diversity for the student.

Many local schools and Extension programs also require completion of volunteer agreement forms or background checks of all volunteers. These policies should be reviewed prior to inviting anyone to participate as a volunteer.

**LIABILITY ISSUES**

No one is immune from potential liability claims that may result from involvement in an activity involving people and potential hazards. As our society has become more litigious, the potential for being identified as a defendant in a liability claim increases.

The National Project is not aware, however, of any individual or organization that has been named as a defendant in a legal action resulting from the teaching of or hosting of a 4-H Tractor Program, vocational agriculture (agricultural education) based tractor and machinery safety program or training program designed specifically to assist youth in meeting the certification training requirements of the Agricultural Hazardous Occupations Orders (AgHOs).
As mentioned in the DISCLAIMER, you as the program leader or instructor are **not** certifying or affirming that any youth participating in the training will perform any specific task in a safe manner or that all potential hazards that youth may confront or perform in an agricultural workplace have been discussed or mastered. As a program leader or instructor, you can only confirm at the completion of the training that the student attended all of the required classes, passed a written exam on safe work practices, and demonstrated his or her ability to conduct a pre-operation safety inspection of a typical agricultural tractor and operate a tractor safely with a two-wheeled trailed implement on a standard obstacle course as prescribed by the AgHOs.

With these responsibilities in mind, the curriculum you select should contain the necessary tools to help you fulfill and document the completion of your responsibilities as program leader or instructor. These might include:

- Information on required student prerequisites
- Parental consent form
- Detailed curriculum contents including desired core competencies that students should master
- Recommended lesson plans and student activity sheets
- Supporting graphics for presenting each lesson
- Validated test questions to assess students’ mastery of core competencies
- Recommended pre-operational skills test reporting form
- Recommended tractor operator skills testing procedures and course layouts
- Tractor operator skills scoring instrument
- Student participation record form
- Certificate of completion

Your best protection from potential liability claims is to ensure that you cover the course contents as prescribed by the AgHOs, evaluate all students consistently, and maintain your records, especially attendance records, for at least three years or until the participants reach
their 16th birthday. (Currently there are no restrictions preventing youth over the age of 16 from performing work on farms and ranches.)

It is recommended that the operational or driving portion of the course takes place at a public, versus a private, facility such as county fairgrounds or school that has general insurance coverage for 4-H, FFA, or similar public events held there on a routine basis. If the event is held at a privately owned site, the owner should have proof of insurance coverage for protection in the event of any injury or property damage. The property owner may need to check with his or her insurance carrier to confirm coverage for such activities.

As with all public education programs, such as those conducted by 4-H, FFA, or agricultural education instructors, any injuries, regardless of severity, must be documented and reported to the responsible authority. In the case of a 4-H program this would be the local Extension Educator or university risk manager and for a FFA or agricultural education program, the school administrator. In no case should an individual injured during their participation in the program be allowed to leave without receiving appropriate medical attention and notification of parents or guardians.

Another liability issue relates to ensuring full access to the program activities by all those eligible to participate. There are assumed prerequisites for youth wanting to participate in the program. These prerequisites include a general knowledge of agricultural production hazards, enrollment in 4-H or agricultural education programs, and having reached the age of 14. Other characteristics such as race, sex, economic background, or religion should never be used as a prerequisite for participation.

Since each organization may have its own risk management policies, it is recommended that discussions be held with those responsible for risk management, including insurance issues, to lay out the contents of the curriculum and the planned activities. They need to be especially aware of the operator skills evaluation component of the program.
DISCLAIMER

It should be noted that completion of any of the AgHOs safety training programs, or any other safety program, does not guarantee the safety of those who have participated or successfully passed the testing requirements. Knowing the safe way to complete a task or recognizing a hazard does not mean that the safe practice will always be selected or the hazard avoided. The information presented in the AgHOs training cannot be substituted for ongoing supervision, instruction, correction, evaluation, or an employer’s commitment to providing a safe and healthy workplace. In fact, the AgHOs regulations require that employers provide regular visual supervision of youth working under the exemption provisions of the regulations.

Furthermore, the National Center does not imply that the contents of any of the program identified in fact cover all potential hazards that may be encountered while performing farm or ranch-related work. The topics included have been selected to reflect the most serious and common hazards in agricultural production as identified through analysis of recent injury data. Hazards that are unique to individual agricultural enterprises or related to geographic regions should be identified and incorporated into the curriculum where appropriate.

As program leader or instructor, you are not certifying or affirming by use of any safety material that any student who completes the training will perform any specific task safely, on every occasion. At the completion of the training you can only confirm that the student attended each of the classes, passed a written exam on safe work practices, and has demonstrated his or her ability to conduct a pre-operational safety inspection and operate a tractor safely with a two-wheeled trailed implement on a standard course as prescribed by federal regulations.

There is a student prerequisite contained in the federal regulations, and assumed by all AgHOs training programs that youth participating in the training should have at least a basic familiarity with the normal working hazards in agriculture and agricultural production methods,
and have had prior exposure to agricultural tractors and equipment. It is inconceivable to believe that 12 lessons taught over approximately a 24-hour period will provide the necessary safety training for a person who has no prior familiarity with agricultural production practices and hazards.