**Agricultural Education (Ag Ed) Program**

**Guidance for Illinois Schools and Districts**

**During COVID-19 State Emergency**

**Last updated: May 1, 2020**

**What hours count for the Three Circles Grant? Will the 400-hours requirement be adjusted?**

We understand that the “school day” currently looks different from normal circumstances. Any hours logged for ag ed purposes outside of contractual obligations for your district are allowable for Three Circles.

Ultimately, it is up to district administrators to decide what hours are approvable (as long as they relate to agricultural education). ISBE recommends that district administrators and teachers collaboratively identify those duties that will count as beyond the normal contract to prevent miscommunications and misunderstandings. Districts should be mindful of the three categories of approved activities outlined in Section 75.540(c) of the *Illinois Administrative Code*: work-based learning (SAE), career and technical student organization, and curricular/intra-curricular related activities. In reporting the hours and activities, the district should identify and describe any adjustments to or departure from an approved activity category due to the statewide school closures.

Per the *Illinois School Code*, an agriculture education teacher needs to log no less than 400 total hours to be in compliance with program requirements and ensure continued eligibility in subsequent years.  We recognize that it may not be possible for agriculture education teachers to log 400 hours or more during fiscal year 2020 due to the mandatory suspension of in-person instruction. Section 75.560(e)(3) of the *Illinois Administrative Code* provides ISBE with the authority to waive a district’s ineligibility due to insufficient hours due to extenuating circumstances. While districts should make a good faith effort to complete and report all approved hours, ISBE has the authority to determine that funding in FY 2021 will not be impacted based on insufficient hours logged in FY 2020.  Please note that funding for FY 2022 will be contingent upon successful completion of the 400-hour requirement in FY 2021.  If your district faces challenges in meeting the obligations of the Three Circles Grant due to the school closures, please email ag\_ed@isbe.net.