
4-H LEADS FOR LEADERS

PARENT SUPPORT

90501P

Leader's Guide



Parents are vital to a successful 4-H club.

- Parents can give their own children a feeling of security and confidence by showing their children how to obtain the equipment and materials they need for their projects as well as encouragement and support to complete their 4-H work.
- Parents can help the leader when the leader asks for and accepts assistance. Parents often have skills or other resources needed in the club that the leader may not have. They can save a leader much time and effort if their skills are used.
- The parents gain satisfaction when they can make a meaningful contribution to a program their children participate in.
- Parents gain the opportunity to become acquainted with their children's friends, interests and concerns and to share important experiences. Parents also gain new friends, become acquainted with other families and learn or develop new skills and knowledge.
- Parents usually welcome the opportunity to become involved in a program that offers benefits to their children.
- Over 45 million 4-H alumni have benefitted through their 4-H participation in the United States. One in six Americans are 4-H alumni and many seek out a similar 4-H experience for their own children.
- 4-H members will value their experience and achieve more if their parents demonstrate an interest and become involved in the 4-H program.
- Parents usually provide support or cooperation for those things they best understand. Understanding usually is achieved through significant involvement. Remember to start new parents out slowly. Too much involvement, too soon, may cause parents of new members to conclude that 4-H takes too much time.
- Parents must feel that their help is needed and wanted.

How to Gain Parent Support

4-H leaders might keep the following simple formula in mind to achieve maximum parental involvement for 4-H members and your 4-H club:

$$\begin{aligned} & \textit{Informed Parents} + \textit{Asked Parents} \\ & = \textit{Cooperation \& Support} \end{aligned}$$

General Guides for Gaining Parental Support

- Remember, informed parents are interested and willing to help.
- Believe that parents who participate make a better and stronger 4-H club.
- Always give parents opportunities to help in all phases of 4-H work.

Specific Ideas That Work

- Hold a special meeting for parents at the beginning of the year to get acquainted and explain 4-H. Or, get parents to attend the club organizational meeting. At this meeting:
 - explain the purpose and objectives of 4-H;
 - explain what is expected of a 4-H member; attendance at meetings, project requirements, participation in activities and events, record keeping, responsibility on committees, and how they develop lifeskills; and
 - explain how the parent can help and be clear about expectations.
- Invite parents to attend and help with regular 4-H meetings and activities. Both leaders and members should invite the parents to attend. Some parents may feel that the leader does not welcome parents, while others may feel their children are sensitive to their attending.

- Provide families with current 4-H information through home visits, telephone calls, letters and club calendars.
- When you ask parents to help, describe clearly what is needed. Outline meaningful and challenging aspects of the responsibility. Some questions to consider when asking for parental help might include: Does the task present a challenge? Have I asked parents to perform an easier job before helping with a larger job? Will the parent receive satisfaction? What recognition can be received?
- Match people with tasks that utilize that person's special talents, skills and interests. Some may have musical ability, or special talents in arts and crafts, sewing, specialty cooking, modeling, backpacking, public speaking, fund raising or any number of other skills. Whatever the skills, you can probably find challenging opportunities for them.
- Some parents are more willing to work with the planning and organizing of the program while others prefer to assist members with completing projects or specific activities.
- Recognize parent support at club meetings, parents' meetings or special parents' dinners. Help 4-H members remember to say thank you.

What Parents Can Do

Parents sometimes state that the requests made of them are for transportation and meeting places. Think of other ways to involve parents and add to the following list.

Assist members select, finance and manage their projects. A parent with special mechanical ability may help members with the automotive project, while others may loan money, encourage their child to borrow from a bank, or provide project materials for them.

Encourage record keeping. Help members recognize the importance of keeping records.

Help club members get to club meetings and events. Parents working together can share transportation needs without undue hardship on anyone. Parents can attend club meetings and events.

Hold club meetings in their home. Parents will have the opportunity to observe the teaching of youth and see how their child participates.

Help plan the club program. Parents may participate on the program planning committee or leaders may visit with parents to get their ideas for the program.

Serve on committees to help plan and conduct events. When parents help plan the 4-H program, they are willing to serve on committees with members to achieve their goals. It is not necessary for leaders to attend every committee meeting when parents are involved and provide adult leadership. Share special talents, such as piano playing, song leading, photography, leadership or crafts.

Help leaders conduct project work. Most project leaders are parents of members. The challenge is to enlist other parents to help with the members interested in a particular project.

Assist Cooperative Extension staff by volunteering for county-wide events, activities or committees.

Families

Remember, not all youth come from families with two parents. 4-H leaders should be sensitive to the special needs of youth from “nontraditional families,” i.e., single-parent and blended families. Flexible, understanding leaders and older youth can become significant helpers to these youth.

Holding Parent Interest

It is one thing to get the parent's interest, but another to keep it. Specific ideas are:

- parent achievement nights;
- kick-off meetings with parents;
- fun nights;
- special club programs; and
- regular club meetings (parents invited by both leader and member).

Talk With Parents

- Personally ask for help.
- Take advantage of chance meetings to talk 4-H.
- Make telephone calls.
- Ask for advice and use it when you can.
- Take 4-H project tours to member's home.

Recognize and Thank Parents

- Ask for specific help and be sure it is meaningful.
- Call on special abilities parents may have.
- Use notes, newspaper articles and telephone calls to say thanks and to show appreciation.
- Include recognition of parents in achievement programs.

A Parent Willingness Questionnaire may be used to help inform parents of opportunities while identifying potential helpers for you.

Parent Willingness Questionnaire

Parent's Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Child's Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Please check the areas with which you are willing to help your child and his/her 4-H club. Keep a copy as a reference.

G I will make every effort to know and understand the 4-H program so my child will complete a project.

G I will see that my child has transportation to and from the meeting when necessary.

G I will attend the parents' night, club tours, local club achievement programs and/or other special events that have been planned by the club members.

G I will set the example to help my child learn to be a good winner and loser and appreciate the success of others.

G I have been a 4-H leader or member (underline words which apply).

G I will help chaperon a trip.

G I will be a leader for a project area (e.g., foods, dogs, electric), activity or event, and so forth.

G I will take care of the children of 4-H leaders or helpers during the time of the meeting.

G I will help the 4-H club with its money-earning or special activities.

G I will help the club leader with duties such as telephoning.

G I will furnish transportation for occasional tours, picnics or county events.

G I will help plan tours for the club.

G I will help with simple refreshments when needed.

G I will share the following hobbies or skills with the group:

G I will lend kitchen _____, living room _____, backyard _____, basement _____, for an occasional meeting.