

Parent Involvement in 4-H

Adapted from New Jersey 4-H Leader Training Series

4-H is a family affair! Or it should be, and this means that parents or guardians of your 4-H members should be an important part of your program. Parent involvement is one of the keys to a successful 4-H club. It provides an ongoing base for club support and expands the potential for interesting and exciting 4-H club programs. Active parents mean active members!

Why should parents participate in 4-H?

- Parent/guardian participation in 4-H results in the following benefits:
- Family involvement in 4-H offers opportunities where both child and parent participate with common interest, strengthening family ties.
- Active parent participation can strengthen and broaden the 4-H program in any local club or in any county.
- When parental support is positive, the club is likely to become stronger, larger, and more active.
- In clubs where parental support is evident, individual members receive more personal attention and guidance from leaders and parents.
- Club activities and events will develop and expand with the additional support of parents. 4-H can have a positive influence on the lives of thousands of boys and girls. This happens when parents care enough to share their time, efforts, and talents.

Ideas to help transform and interest parents and gain their cooperation:

- Involve members and parents in setting goals and planning your club's program each year.
- Become familiar with the interests and special talents of your members' parents. Ask for advice in areas where they can contribute, then make good use of good ideas. Be specific with requests. Use the Parent Interest Inventory on the last page of this information sheet.
- When parents volunteer to help, make sure they are involved in something worthwhile. Make a mental note of their offer and return their call within a few days with some specific task in which they can help.
- Involve parents in sharing leadership as project leaders. Emphasize that they can teach a skill or project that may require only a few 4-H meetings for the entire year. If the parent enjoys this role, encourage them to become a registered/appointed 4-H volunteer.
- Keep parents informed. Help them understand the 4-H objectives. Send notes and letters directly to parents about the club program. Allow time for discussion before or after meetings with parents. Emails are a great tool for keeping families informed. Be sure your club has a phone chain or group text system for emergency cancellations and important messages.
- Invite parents to club meetings. For new members and parents, you might want to have a special meeting explaining the 4-H program and your club's activities. Let parents know what is expected of them and of their child.
- Recognize both members and their parents. Thanks parents for their support both personally and in public. Compliment parents on their contributions to the club.
- Maintain parent interest. Arrange a special social event for the club and invite parents. Ask county 4-H staff to attend a special parent night program. Introduce parents to 4-H staff so they can become better acquainted.
- Encourage members to make their 4-H work a topic of family conversation.
- Solicit parent involvement at the fair and other activities and events where 4-H club work is showcased.



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