

2018 Indiana 4-H Leadership Summit
Case Studies in Navigating Difficult Conversations
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No. 1: The Case of the Despicable Deadline

You make a habit of checking your phone messages before you leave for the day. You have a message from a 4-H parent, Cathy, whom you've met but don't know well. Cathy is noticeably distraught that her child is not being allowed to display her project at the Pleasant County Fair due to a missed deadline. The parent insists she was never informed of the deadline and thinks it's terribly unfair to take this out on her child. She sees no reason that an allowance cannot be made in this case. She left the message at 4:30 and it's now 5:30 p.m. What will you do?

No. 2: The Case of the Posting Parent

As you are starting your Monday, a colleague pops her head into your office. She suggests you check your Facebook (or other social media) account as soon as possible. When you do, you see an angry post from a parent, Mr. Allison, alleging that a judge was overly harsh on his child's 4-H project over the weekend. After questioning the judge's qualifications and impartiality, Mr. Allison writes that he is considering removing his child from the 4-H program altogether. Several people have now left comments on the post, asking questions and expressing disappointment. You have not yet even had your morning coffee. What will you do?

No. 3: The Case of the Mangled Mailing

At the end of a long week, you are looking over promotional materials that were recently mailed and distributed electronically to 4-H parents and supporters for an upcoming event. You're relieved that the job is complete when you realize the version that was sent out was not the latest version you provided to your assistant, Pat. The distributed version contains misspelled names and other errors you know you corrected. Pat is always polite but tries to get things done quickly. You believe the lack of attention to details may have led to this bungled job. Pat is in a nearby cubicle, and you are upset. What will you do?

No. 4: The Case of the Hostile Hire

Kay is the new staff member in the county office. Her high level of energy and can-do attitude are major reasons you supported her hiring. While she is a good worker, she also has little patience for what she considers outmoded or "old school" ways of doing things. She wants the office to move to more paperless procedures and strongly advocates for staff being trained in new technologies, including social media. You are starting to hear complaints from staff that she is a little too forceful in her views, particularly for someone who has been here less than a year. To avoid the situation getting even more contentious, what will you do?

No. 5: The Case of the Conflicting Colleagues

Volunteers are indispensable to your efforts. Unfortunately, two of your valuable volunteers are increasingly in conflict with each other about their roles. X often complains that Z is not doing her part on projects, and he is tired of having to pick up the slack. Z feels that X is constantly looking over her shoulder. She is resentful because, as she sees it, she is volunteering to work with youth, not to answer to Z. It seems that communication has broken down between the two and you are increasingly in the middle of the fray. What will you do?

No. 6: The Case of the Aloof Advisory Board

You're an experienced staff member in Pleasant County who's built a solid working relationship with your volunteer advisory board. The group has been generally supportive of your efforts through the years. Recently, however, you are getting pushback on some of your new initiatives to ensure that youth programs comply with state and federal guidelines. Despite your best efforts to gain support, most members are satisfied with things as they are and see no reason "to fix what isn't broken." You value relationships you have developed over the years, but you now find yourself in a difficult position – after all, it is your legal responsibility to keep youth programs in compliance. What will you do?