



# Welcoming and Supporting New 4-H Families

The first year of 4-H is exciting for youth and their families - especially those who are new to 4-H. This is an important time to listen to their interests, ideas and questions and help them feel connected to their 4-H club, group or program.

This conversation guide is designed to support new 4-H families through their first program year. In designing this guide, we listened to first year members and their families and what they wished they would have known as they went through their 4-H year. The guide is meant to be adapted based on local programs and family needs.

In addition to these conversations, look for ways to welcome the family as they arrive at meetings and events, sit with them, and introduce them to others in the group. These simple acts are important to helping them belong.

Thank you for playing an important role in welcoming and supporting new 4-H families!

*Note: Throughout the guide, 4-H club is referenced, but it's also applicable to 4-H groups or programs. They can be used interchangeably to refer to young people gathering in the name of 4-H youth development.*

# BEFORE THE FIRST MEETING

## Conversation Outline

NOTES

### Get to know each other

- Ask the family questions to learn about their interests, what they like to do in their non-scheduled time, what they want to get out of 4-H, etc. to determine potential areas of interest and make connections to project learning and leadership
- Share your 4-H experiences, interests, etc.
- Explain you will walk with them throughout the program year as their mentor.

### Overview of 4-H club/group

#### Resources:

Club calendar (current or immediate past)

Club membership list and contact information

- Current adult volunteer(s), roles, contact information
- When, where, how long, and how frequently club meets
- Format/focus of club (e.g., business, recreation, education; project-focused)
- Club goals
- Youth leadership structure (e.g., officers)
- Decision-making process (e.g., parliamentary procedure, consensus, etc.)
- Other activities of the club
- Opportunities for parent/family involvement
- If club and/or county dues are in place, how much, what they cover, and option to not pay

### Communication

#### Resources:

Staff contact information; 4-H Website

- Club communication methods (e.g., Facebook, email, postcards, text, etc.)
- County communication methods (e.g., newsletter, email, Facebook, postcards, text, etc.) and who typically sends messages
- County 4-H website \_\_\_\_\_
- County and state information and opportunities may be communicated via email based on project(s) of interest selected during enrollment. Messages are also sent via text if that option was selected during enrollment.
- If online access is an obstacle, options for access may include local library, Extension Office, friends or family, etc.

### Set date for next conversation

#### If family has a Mini 4-H member (Kindergarten – 2<sup>nd</sup> grade)

Mini 4-H members explore and learn about the world in a non-competitive environment by doing fun activities of their own choice with the guidance of parents, other helpful adults, and teen leaders.

- Share club or county Mini 4-H activities (e.g., project day, day camp)
- Important Mini 4-H rules keep our youngest members safe in their new experiences.
  - Should not operate power driven equipment as a part of activities, (sewing machines, power drills, clippers, etc.)
  - Wear appropriate safety helmets when riding horses or bicycles
  - When animals and Mini 4-H members are together, an adult must be in control of their animal at all times if over 300 lbs
- County-specific Mini 4-H rules, such as limitations on the number of fair projects a Mini 4-H member can exhibit

#### If family has not enrolled

- The 4-H program year is October 1 – September 30. Each person MUST enroll prior to participating in any 4-H activity, including club meetings. Enroll by completing the enrollment steps through 4HOnline.com or submitting a paper enrollment form.
- Encourage youth to enroll in at least one project; a project is an area of interest. There is no maximum number of projects.

\*If this conversation/enrollment happens after May 15, have family contact program staff to discuss eligibility.

If a family is interested in livestock (beef, dairy, goat, poultry, rabbit, lama, sheep, swine), horse or dog, go to last page.

## NEXT CONVERSATION

### Conversation Outline

NOTES

*Resource:*

Club and County calendars

Information sheet "Projects and Project-based Learning"

- Ask for general questions
- Ask "Do you feel like your ideas are being heard and considered? What else can we do to help your family feel like you belong here?"
- Terms: **Enroll** to sign up as a 4-H member. **Register** for events, such as county fair
- Share planned activities for the year outside of club meetings
- Process to sign up for activities (e.g., individual responsible for registering); available club/county financial support
- Share information sheet "Projects and Project-based Learning"
- **Set date for next conversation**

## REGULAR CHECK-INS

### Conversation Outline

NOTES

- Ask for general questions
- Ask "Do you feel like your ideas are being heard and considered? What else can we do to help your family feel like you belong here?"
- Share upcoming events, activities, opportunities (club, county, region, state); note any deadlines, policies, rules, etc.
- Check-in on project learning
- **Set date for next conversation**

## PRIOR TO THE FAIR

### Conversation Outline

NOTES

*Resources:*

County fairground information (e.g., location, 4-H building phone number)

County 4-H Handbook

Tablet/laptop or screen shots to show FairEntry.com home page

County-specific resources on fair registration and/or animal ID

- At the fair, 4-H members exhibit, or showcase, what they've learned through their project. Share examples of projects/fair experiences.
- County fair dates, location
- Register for individual county fair projects by (deadline \_\_\_\_\_) on FairEntry.com; same ID and password used in 4HOnline.com
- County Fair 4-H Handbook (online/available in the 4-H office/mailed out to members); guide provides project ideas and information on specific project areas
- Other fair opportunities and needs (food stand, fair clean up, etc.)
- Building projects - Youth who have been awarded State Fair may advance to State Fair
- Animal projects and garden- any youth may advance to State Fair

Suggestion: Provide mock conference judging experience at the club level to demonstrate the judging process, especially for first-time 4-H families.

# AUGUST

## Conversation Outline

## NOTES

**Re-Enrollment** is an annual process to indicate 4-H members want to continue the 4-H program. Re-enrollment begins October 1<sup>st</sup> and must be completed prior to participating in any 4-H program, including 4-H club meetings. Members who wish to re-enroll must complete the re-enrollment steps at 4HOnline.com.

This is the final conversation provided in this guide. Determine if and how you will continue your mentor relationship with the family.

## \*LIVESTOCK/ANIMALS

### Conversation Outline

### NOTES

4-H provides opportunities to learn about animals, including dog, horse and livestock (beef, dairy, goat, poultry, rabbit, lama, sheep, swine). There is no prior training or experience required. 4-H members may own or lease animals from others as part of their learning.

Note: If livestock/horse/companion animals are not your strength, provide them with contact information of someone in the club/county to talk further about their animal interests.

*Are you interested in getting involved in livestock, dog or horse projects?*

*What species are you interested in?*

Cat

1. 4-H members can bring cats of all ages, sizes and breeds.
2. Overview of Cat program in county, if in place, including key contact people.
3. All cats must be identified with up to date health papers to participate in trainings and/or exhibitions.
4. There are county, regional and state opportunities for 4-H members to participate in as they choose.

Dog

1. 4-H members can bring dogs of all ages, sizes and breeds.
2. Obedience, Rally and Agility are all options in 4-H Dog.
3. Overview of Dog program in county, if in place, including key contact people.
4. All dogs must be identified with up to date health papers to participate in trainings and/or exhibitions.
5. There are county, regional and state opportunities for 4-H members to participate in as they choose.

Horse and Pony

1. 4-H members can exhibit horses/ponies of all ages, sizes and breeds.
2. Overview of Horse program in county, if in place, including key contact people.
3. All horse and pony entries must be identified with up to date health papers to participate in trainings and/or exhibitions.
4. Western, English, Hunt Seat, Contesting, Safety and Etiquette, Pleasure Driving, Trail and even Drill Team are all opportunities for horse participants in 4-H.
5. There are county, regional and state opportunities for 4-H members to participate in as they choose.

Livestock

1. Overview of Livestock program in county, if in place, including key contact people.
2. There are county, regional and state opportunities for 4-H members to participate in as they choose.

*Are you interested in exhibiting animal projects at the county fair?*

- Animals need to be identified on your 4HOnline.com account
  - Market Beef and Market Dairy identification is due April 1
  - All others are due May 15
- Reminder to read 4-H Handbook for specific species rules and ID requirements