



# A Guide for Staying Connected to 4-H Groups while Physically Apart

*for 4-H volunteers leading 4-H groups and programs - Spring 2020*

Even when face-to-face 4-H meetings and events are not possible, there are many options for you, the 4-H leader, to stay connected with your 4-H group. Consider creative ways to engage youth, support learning and leading opportunities, and keep your group connected!

## 1. Communicate information in familiar ways

Continue to share local, statewide and project updates with your 4-H group through your usual communication tools.

- Many groups do this through email, texting and/or social media (i.e. Facebook, Instagram).
- Encourage youth and adults to participate in 4-H sponsored local and state online resources and webinars that are shared with you.

Also, remember that you need to communicate your schedule changes with local staff to ensure they are reflected on the public calendar.

## 2. Be creative with engaging activities

It is important that you provide ways for your group to continue interacting with each other. The examples below offer a range of ideas. Select options that are comfortable for you and work the best for your group.

### Low-tech is back in style!

- Send notes through the mail to 4-H'ers and other club leaders.
  - Include something fun with the note, such as stickers, gum, or bookmarks.
- Suggest pen pal connections between group youth members.
- Encourage youth to keep a journal and take pictures; this might stimulate ideas and content to include in their future 4-H exhibits and records.

## Create virtual connections

There are many ways to connect virtually that *do not require* getting together at the same time. **Engage youth leaders** and take advantage of their technical skills to get creative!

- Use social media (Facebook, Instagram), email or tools such as [Flipgrid](#) or [VoiceThread](#) to share pictures or videos of youths' projects, activities and everyday life.
  - Try our [Social Media Weekly Challenge for 4-H Groups](#)

## Lead LIVE meetings through video conferencing

While it is okay to postpone remaining 4-H meetings during this time, your 4-H group may want to meet through a video conferencing tool. Local 4-H staff will not provide technical support for groups. **Use a tool that the people leading the meeting are most familiar with.** Zoom, Skype, Google Hangout, or Facetime are examples. Let youth take the lead and apply their technical skills!

- **Keep young people safe.**  
4-H groups must follow our Safety of Minors policy, which requires a minimum of 2 Minnesota 4-H volunteers to be present with youth. If 2 Minnesota 4-H volunteers are not available, video conferencing is NOT an option.
- **Size of group.**  
Consider the size of the group you invite. We recommend limiting the number of participants to 50, as video conferencing calls are meant to be interactive for all participants. If you have a larger group, find ways to meet in smaller groups, for example by age or project interest.
- **Internet bandwidth.**  
Be aware of members' Internet connections and mindful of families who might not be able to participate.
- **First meeting consideration.**  
If this is the first time your group is meeting with a video conferencing tool, try a "check-in" format and answer everyone's technical questions. Prioritize connecting and supporting each other, have a roll call, and save business items for your next meeting.
- **Be creative, be flexible, don't worry about being perfect.**  
If your group is ready to hold a formal meeting, let all of the members know that this is a new, temporary meeting format and that you are all learning together. It is most important that you are connecting, everyone is active and all feel like they contributed.

- **Resources for video conferencing.**

Use resources that support best practices for meeting in video conferencing spaces.

- Read the [Plugged In: For UMaine Extension Staff & Volunteers](#) website to learn how to have virtual 4-H club meetings through video and tip sheets.
- Check out the [Facilitating distance meetings with youth - 4-H Leadership, Citizenship & Service](#) from Michigan State University Extension.

Together we will get through this! Thank you for leading 4-H groups. You are so important to the positive youth development of youth in our communities [Contact your 4-H Extension educator](#) with any questions you may have.

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