

4-H Cultural Awareness Fact Sheet

4-H has a unique culture that can be quite confusing for adults and youth who are new to the program. We can take steps, however, to break down cultural barriers that may be present so that the 4-H Youth Development Program is seen as a more welcoming, inclusive organization.

Culture

Includes "what everybody knows that everybody else knows."

- Expectations for member's behavior (spoken or unspoken)
- Rules, rituals, and language
- Set of commonly held beliefs and attitudes

Culture helps define who we are and creates a sense of belonging for those who understand and are familiar with it. However, culture can also be a barrier to expanding the program. People unfamiliar with the rules and rituals of the group appear as outsiders ... and feel like outsiders.

4-H Culture

- Underlying concepts include a positive relationship with a caring adult; a warm, friendly environment; opportunities to master skills; opportunities for youth to fully participate; and chances to provide service to others.
- Components of the 4-H culture include the fair, projects, competition, officers, parliamentary procedure, and meeting rituals.

Techniques to Overcome Cultural Barriers

- During 4-H Club meetings, post words to the 4-H Pledge, distribute agendas, cover 4-H basics, and seek new member input.
- Share information such as a schedule of the year's activities, 4-H policies and procedures, and volunteer and officer contact information.
- Utilize experienced 4-H members and families to mentor and guide new members and families.
- Welcome new members and parents at a special meeting and provide a 4-H resource guide.

The 4-H culture provides a unique bonding opportunity. We need to remember that the unity we feel may keep others from feeling welcome. Bringing new members to our shared experience should always be a goal.

