

The 4-H Parents Committee: A vital part of the 4-H Club Leadership Team

Why a Parents Committee?

Healthy, thriving 4-H clubs usually have a strong 4-H Parents Committee. This committee can relieve some of the responsibilities typically taken on by the club's leader. It helps to keep parents involved in all aspects of the club, as well as providing advice and counsel to the 4-H club leader. Parents Committees have long been recommended as a means of maintaining and improving the quality of the 4-H club.

Your Purpose

Your primary purpose as a member of the 4-H Parents Committee is to identify and recruit volunteer leaders. Your committee functions as a team, ensuring that the club has the necessary leadership to provide positive learning experiences. You and the club leaders should meet regularly to decide how your efforts can complement each other. In this way, each adult leader can contribute to the program without placing too great of a burden on any one individual. In addition, as a member of the committee, you can assist the club by giving advice, making recommendations, providing support, and assuming some of the important adult leadership roles. Thus, the Parents Committee functions like a school board or board of directors, representing parents in club decisions and providing leadership for the 4-H club.

Your Responsibilities

The 4-H Parents Committee can serve and support the club in many ways. This group should identify and recruit the club's leader each year. Thus, being a club leader does not become a "life sentence" without possibility for parole. After conferring with the club leader about what 4-H club members want to do, your most important job is to identify and recruit project leaders for the coming year. To aid in matching the right individual to the job, ask your club leader for the Volunteer Information Profile (Pages 3-6), for each registered volunteer. If you want last year's club leader and project leaders to continue, ask them in person as soon as possible. Then, look for new leaders to fill the remaining positions. Look first among parents of club members, but don't forget to search out other adults in your community who have talents to share and an interest in working with young people — even on a short-term basis. Sometimes it helps to get two people to work together as a project leader team. When recruiting leaders for various club roles, you should find people who:

- are willing to complete the VIP form,
- are willing to attend a VIP Orientation,
- like to work with youth,
- are able to work with young people,
- are willing to participate in training to be more effective, and
- have the time to continue as a leader throughout the year.

You should try to complete your roster of leaders for the club before the beginning of the new 4-H year in October, and certainly before any project leader training is offered in the fall. This makes it possible to present your list of project leaders to the entire club and encourage members to sign up for a project that has an active leader. You may even want to conduct a Project Enrollment Fair so

that members can actually see what they will be doing and learning. The 4-H Parents Committee should send its list of club and project leaders to the county/district extension office as soon as the lists are complete.

What Else?

As a member of the 4-H Parents Committee, you can support the club in many other ways.

For example, by:

- promoting membership expansion,
- promoting 4-H to the public in your community,
- attending club meetings,
- representing parents in club activities,
- assisting with problem-solving and decision-making within the club,
- providing orientation to new 4-H families,
- providing orientation and training to new project leaders,
- helping evaluate record book evaluations, or
- serving as a liaison for the club's parents.

Parents Committee members may want to involve others with some of these tasks. Sharing responsibilities will strengthen the total 4-H program.

Selecting the Best Possible People

Most Parents Committees consist of three to five adults, depending on the number of members in the club and the complexity of the program.

The most logical people to involve on the 4-H Parents Committee are the 4-H parents. However, it is permissible and often encouraged to involve other people in the community. Consider adults who have an interest in youth. They should be individuals who are respected, have time and interests to share, and believe in the value of 4-H as a youth development program.

In addition to parents of 4-H'ers, other Parents Committee members could include:

- teachers
- other youth group leaders
- church leaders
- former 4-H leaders, parents, or members
- retired citizens or disabled individuals
- young parents or parents of non-

4-H members

- commissioner district 4-H representatives

Organizing the Committee

Parents Committees are organized each spring. Members can be elected, selected, or appointed by 4-H members, club officers, parents, Parents Committee members, club leaders, or by any combination of these groups. Use the method best suited to your club. Parents Committee members should have staggered terms so that only one or two people are replaced each year, ensuring some continuity. The senior member of the committee each year becomes the chairperson.

Become Involved

The success of the 4-H program is determined by your involvement and dedication as a volunteer team member. Working with youth is a privilege and a responsibility. Get involved ... really involved ... and you will experience great satisfaction. In addition, the 4-H program and your community will be stronger because of your efforts.

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