



Important Things Every 4-H Parent Should Know

A booklet to help parents better
understand the 4-H program.

This manual was written by:

Evelyn Conklin-Ginop
4-H Youth Development Advisor, Retired
Sonoma County Cooperative Extension

This manual was reviewed for Mendocino County by:

Linda Edgington
4-H Program Representative
Mendocino County Cooperative Extension

References

Graphic of Life Skills Model (Iowa State)

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Revised January 6, 2012

S:\4-H Stuff

There are many things a 4-H parent will want to know about 4-H. We've identified the most important things that 4-H Leaders, Junior/Teen Leaders, and Extension Staff think a 4-H parent needs to know to help their child be successful in the 4-H program.

1. What is 4-H?

- a) 4-H is the largest non-formal youth-serving organization in the country.
- b) 4-H is a volunteer organization that reaches youth through a variety of programs in rural, suburban and urban areas.
- c) 4-H provides fun, educational opportunities at the local, state, national, and international levels.
- d) 4-H Programs are hands-on, age-appropriate, and university based. 4-H focuses on learning-by-doing. Our projects and activities help members have real-life experiences.

2. 4-H Mission Statement in California

The University of California 4-H Youth Development Program engages youth in reaching their full potential while advancing the field of youth development.

3. The Most Common Questions

- a) What do the four H's stand for? They stand for Head, Heart, Hands, and Health.
- b) 4-H Colors: Green (symbolizes growth), white (symbolizes purity)
- c) What is the 4-H emblem? A four-leaf clover with an "H" in each leaf. The 4-H name and emblem are federally-protected with protection equal to the Presidential Seal and the Olympic emblem. There are very specific regulations on the use of the emblem.
- d) What grade or age youth can participate?

Grades K-3-primary - non-competitive (Must be 5 years old or in Kindergarten)

Grades 4-12 Standard program (until their 19th birthday or end of the year of their 19th birthday)



e) When did the 4-H program begin and why?

The 4-H program began in Ohio in 1902 and in Indiana in 1904. The 4-H Program was designed to teach better agricultural and food preservation practices to youth who would in turn teach the information to their parents. This proved to be a very effective model.

f) Our motto is “to make the best better.”

4. How Does 4-H Operate?

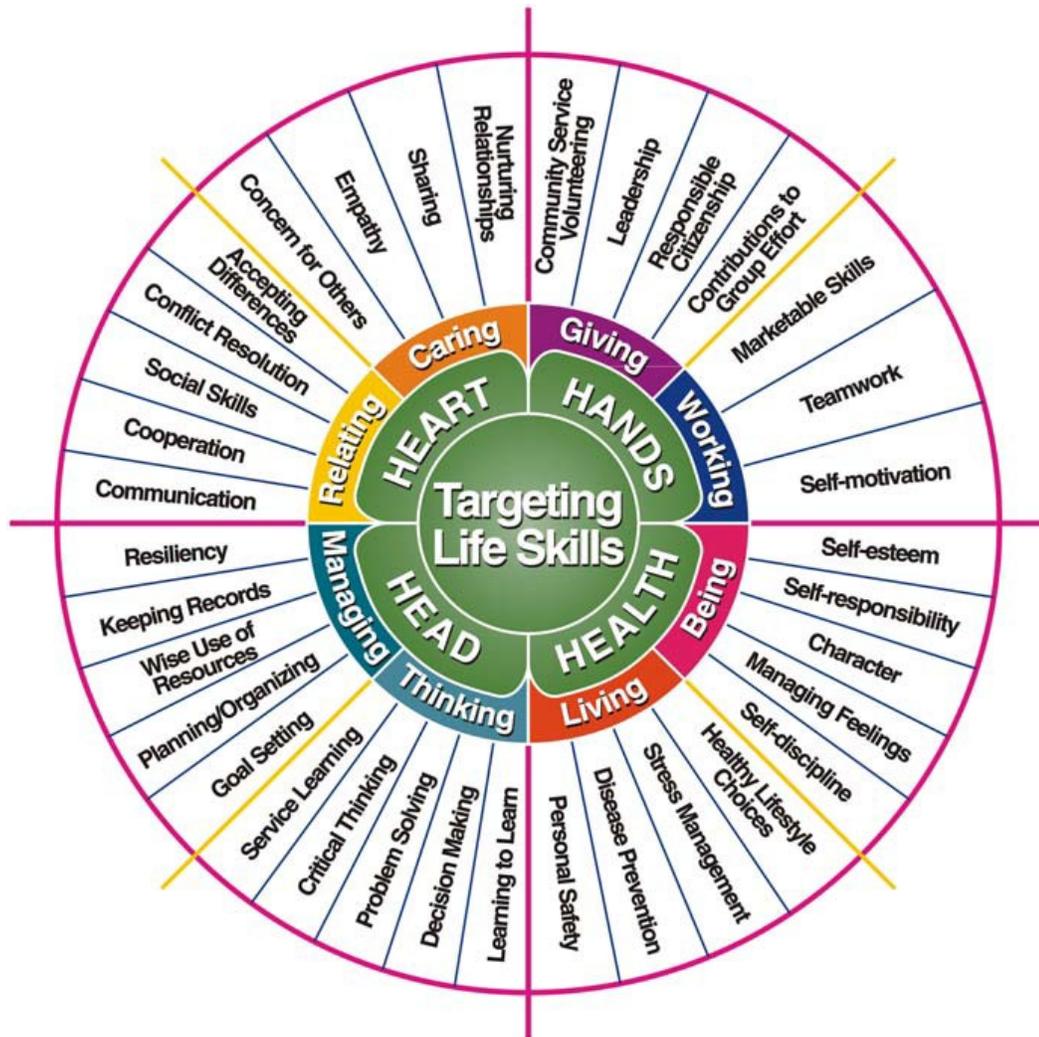
4-H partners with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the University of California (UCCE), and local county government. Federal and state 4-H programs and policies are extended to County Extension Staff and Volunteer Leader Councils. Extension Educators work with 4-H Councils or other governing bodies to establish the specifics of the county-based 4-H program. The Council works with the staff to create the county-wide program. Each program is responsible for fundraising, recruiting volunteers and extending the program to youth within the county. Clubs are established locally to meet the youth needs in each area. The clubs each send adult and teen youth representatives to the council meetings.



5. What does 4-H teach?

4-H teaches Life Skills. “Youth Development is a process of mental, physical, social and emotional growth during which young people prepare to live a productive and satisfying life within the customs and regulations of their society (Iowa State).” The model below outlines the life skills we hope to incorporate when working with youth in the 4-H program. Our program goal is to provide developmentally appropriate opportunities for young people to experience life skills, to practice them until they are learned, and be able to use them as necessary throughout a lifetime.

These skills are taught using experiential education (hands-on and learn-by doing) in the form of educational projects, club meetings, activities, events, after school programs, school enrichment, summer and day camps and special interest groups. These life skills are divided into four areas which represents each section of the clover in the 4-H emblem.



6. What is a 4-H Project?

A 4-H project is an activity that members complete from start to finish based on specific subject matter. Most projects have a manual or set of guidelines that provide information related to how the project should be completed. These are available through the 4-H Mall (www.4-hmall.org) and in the library at the 4-H Office. Each project also has a record sheet that allows members to describe their experiences and what they have learned through the project. Most projects in Mendocino County also have a proficiencies program that list activities which members can complete and earn a pin for their hat.

7. What is a 4-H Club?

A 4-H Club is usually defined by an area such as a school or small town. At a minimum, there must be two adult leaders and five youth from three different families to be considered a club. Families join a club and members enroll in the projects within the club. This club unit provides activities for the youth and families centered around Citizenship, Leadership and Community Service. Youth have the opportunity to serve as officers and learn about parliamentary procedure, and be involved in activity planning through local club committees.

8. What should parents expect from 4-H Club Leaders?

- a) Leaders may not always know the answer to your question immediately, but they can help you find the answer. Don't hesitate to ask.
- b) Leaders help distribute 4-H project manuals and record sheets and share information relevant to the local county, sectional, regional, state and national 4-H programs.
- c) Leaders are interested in the success of all youth in their 4-H Club.
- d) Near the beginning of the club year, the leaders will meet with the 4-H Club officers and perhaps an advisory committee to plan the program of activities for the year.
- e) Leaders will set up a list of activities for the year. This information may be shared by email, online, written form or other methods. It is the parent's responsibility to ask questions if they are unclear in any areas.
- f) Project Leaders set their own meeting dates, times, and locations.
- g) Community Club Leaders serve as advisors to the club officers and Junior/Teen Leaders as they plan and conduct meetings and activities.



- h) Leaders will not be the ones who run the meetings - this role belongs to the club officers as they develop their own leadership skills.
- i) Each volunteer has successfully completed a screening process to ensure their safety and the safety of youth. As part of this screening, the volunteers have agreed to a set of behavioral expectations that are reasonable for all adults to abide by. This is known as the "Code of Conduct." We ask parents to also follow this code so everyone is treated with respect, and the focus is on helping all youth.
- j) We also require that at least two adults be at each project and club meetings.
- k) One adult must be a certified leader. Leaders may ask you to attend a meeting occasionally to meet this safety requirement.
- l) A number of opportunities are available to 4-H members, including 4-H Camp, trips, conferences and county awards. Leaders will help you and your child decide what opportunities are the best for your youth to apply for and when.



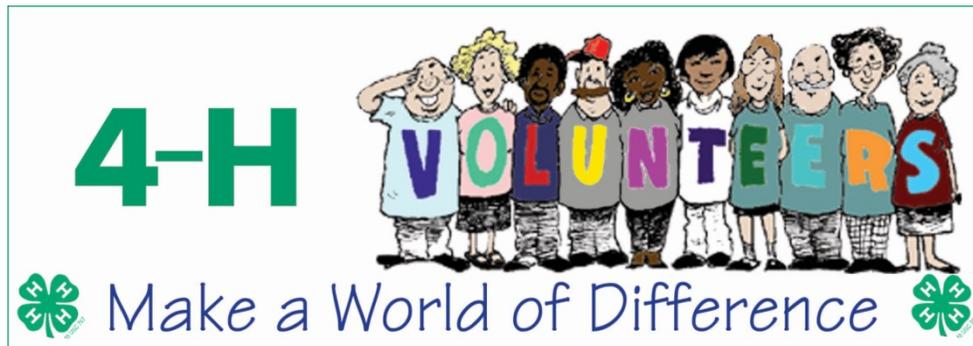
9. What should parents and youth expect from a 4-H Project Leader?

- a) Have regular project meetings.
- b) Work with junior and teen members to organize and conduct project meetings.
- c) Help youth with entry forms for fairs and activities.
- d) Encourage project members to participate in the Project Proficiencies Program where available.
- e) Help their project member with fair forms and other activities when needed.

10. Parents *should not* expect 4-H Club and Project Leaders to:

- a) Do the work for the members. The members must do their own work with some assistance from the leader.
- b) Be babysitters for their children.
- c) Track down 4-H members to deliver needed information or to sign their 4-H record sheets, fair forms and entry forms.
- d) Have extra copies of every record sheet/entry forms etc. that members have lost.

- e) With the large number of projects offered in the 4-H program, it is not realistic to expect that each individual volunteer will have expertise in all areas. If you have specific project questions, your leader may be able to direct you to another volunteer in the county or to other references where you can get your questions answered.
- f) Be perfect. 4-H leaders are human too. We all make mistakes. Patience, understanding and clear communications go a long way to developing a positive relationship with your 4-H club and project leaders.



11. Member Expectations

Youth will get much more out of the 4-H program if s/he is able to interact with the other members and leaders, learn from the educational programs and receive the information shared first hand. We realize that in many cases it is up to you, the parent, to see that the members are able to attend. 4-H can be a great way for parents and children to work together through interest in mutual activities.

- a) Members should plan to attend at least 80% of all club and project meetings. This is a requirement to be allowed to show at the fair.
- b) Turn in required forms and entries on time.
- c) Notify the Project Leader or Club Leader when unable to attend a meeting.
- d) Treat everyone with respect.
- e) Complete their projects and other 4-H responsibilities (such as community service and club and county committees).
- f) Exhibit projects.
- g) Keep records of project work.

- h) Plan to show up to meetings on time.
- i) Participate in committee assignment in their clubs.
- j) Members are responsible for the cost of their projects. Some projects have fundraisers to purchase items that all project members may use like sewing machines, blocking stands, electric sheers, etc. These items are the property of the project and the club in which the project is offered.
- k) Abide by the Code-of-Conduct and your club by-laws.
- l) Help with club fundraisers.
- m) Have fun whenever possible!



12. Parent Expectations

There are a number of ways that parents can be involved.

- a) Parents are encouraged to be involved in 4-H activities by volunteering to be an advisor for a club committee, represent their club to the County Council, meeting or others activities as needed. Remember, your role is to support your member and encourage them to take the leadership in the program.
- b) Provide transportation for their youth and pick them up from 4-H club and project meetings on time.
- c) Advise your youth to pick projects that are appropriate for them. Make sure they can handle what they select.
- d) Participate in county and club fundraisers.
- e) Pay enrollment fees.
- f) Set a good example and encourage good sportsmanship.
- g) Encourage them to participate in club, county, regional, sectional, state and national events where appropriate.
- h) Read the monthly newsletter to keep informed on countywide and state activities.
- i) Emphasize the importance of carefully reading any applications so they are filled out neatly, completely and correctly. Honor deadlines and get applications in on time.
- j) Encourage them to fill out a Record Book of their experiences.
- k) Encourage them to apply for scholarships in their senior year.
- l) Give your child information to help him/her see things clearly and make wise decisions.
- m) To encourage and support your youth no matter whether s/he has successes or disappointments. Help youth obtain their goals.



13 . What is the County Council?

The council is made up of all leaders and youth 14 years and older. Parents are also encouraged to attend. Members of the council help to plan and carry out our county 4-H program. This includes county events, scholarships, awards, training materials and so forth. The meetings are held on Saturday from 9 a.m. to noon five times a year. County Committees are under the supervision and direction of the 4-H County Council. Each club has four votes: 2 adults, 2 youth. However, all interested parties are welcome to attend.

15. What are the Mendocino County Events and Activities?

Each club has their own community activities. Our county activities are opportunities for youth to participate in larger activities. Many are offered each year. Some of events will change, drop or new ones offered as needs arise. The Mendocino County 4-H Leaders Council organizes and puts on these events. The events listed below are what Mendocino County currently offers.

- a) **WHY Conference** (Fall) - Sectional Leadership conference geared for teens in multiple counties focused on Leadership, Citizenship and Community Service.
- b) **Extravaganza** (Spring) – This is really three events in one, Fashion Revue, Favorite Foods and Still Exhibits.
 - **Fashion Revue** is an event to highlight clothing construction, selection, embellished wearables, and special challenges (which change yearly). Members do not need to be enrolled to enter at the County level. To continue past County, members must be enrolled in a Clothing Project. This event emphasizes selecting, constructing, accessorizing, and modeling a garment or outfit which complements the member and his/her wardrobe. Winners go on to compete at the Sectional and State Fashion Revues in May.
 - **Favorite Foods** is open to any 4-H member. They prepare their favorite food plus create a menu and table setting for their food. On the day of the event, they bring a card table and an appropriate table setting for the food they have entered. The member will present their food to the judges who taste it and ask them questions on food preparation, food safety and on the



“Choose My Plate” (where does their favorite food fit).

- **Still Exhibits** are items that 4-H members make/create during the 4-H year. Members do not need to be enrolled in a project to enter a finished product. There are many categories to choose from including, but not limited to, knitting, photography, fly-tying, scrapbooking, jewelry, quilting plus arts and crafts.
- c) **Quality Assurance and Ethics Training** is mandatory every five years for members entering animals in the Redwood Empire Fair. The Hands-on Livestock Expo, which is scheduled every three years, provides this training as well as many other animal science learning opportunities. It is a full day of fun and learning at the fairgrounds.
- d) **Officers Training** (Fall) - Countywide training for club officers conducted by the 4-H office and the Mendocino County All Stars. All club officers are invited to participate.
- e) **Presentation Day** (Winter) - A county event that involves members being judged while giving demonstrations, illustrated talks, interviews, public speaking, Share the Fun skits, radio spots, displays and slide/videos/movies. Gold award winners participate at a Sectional Presentation Day. Sectional gold award winners compete at the State level in May.
- f) **State Leadership Conference** (Summer) - This is for 8th grade graduates and higher. Youth participate in a 3 to 4-day conference at one of the UC campuses. Classes and activities are provided. Great leadership training and team building.
- g) **Summer Camp** (Summer) - 4-H camp is held at Camp Masonite Navarro in Navarro (45 minutes from Ukiah). The camp culminates a year of planning by our teen 4-H leaders with the assistance of adult advisors and chaperones. The teen leaders also direct the activities at camp. Campers sleep in 3-sided cabins with the boys separated from the girls. Each sleeping area has bathrooms and showers with hot and cold running water. Hiking, arts/crafts, and campfires are just some of the activities offered.



16. What about the fairs?

Mendocino County has two county-wide fairs. They are the Redwood Empire Fair and the Mendocino County Fair and Apple Show. Each have 4-H sections. Fairs are independent of 4-H and have their own set of rules which 4-H members are required to follow. Official 4-H Uniforms are required to show

both small and large animals. **All animal adult volunteer leaders and livestock members must be enrolled in 4-H by October 15 of each year to show as part of our program.**



17. Awards

Listed below are some awards that are available. To receive additional information look in the newsletter for due dates and applications or go to our web site. All applications have detailed instructions.

- a) **All Star**-Highest Award offered at the county level. Must be 15 by January 1 of each year. The Award is based on leadership, community service and citizenship. The All Star program is a working award. All Stars coordinate events, serve as emcees and serve other various leadership requests.
 - b) **Record Books**- Keeping records is a life skill members will use throughout their lives. Many of our various award processes are tied to a member's Record Book. The Record Book gives youth a chance to record their 4-H experiences. Many youth use this information in applying for colleges and trade schools. The Incentives & Recognition Committee provides training. All members are welcome. (Please note: these trainings are not set up for young members.) Record Books can also be done on line in a fun way that youth will enjoy and appreciate.
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- c) **Project Proficiencies** - Project Proficiencies are voluntary. They are a checklist of skills for a project. To receive a medal for completing a Project Proficiency, members must at least be 9 years old, be enrolled in the project (currently or previously), and complete 80% of the tasks on the checklist. Each task must be signed by a leader and can be done throughout a project or at the end of the year. Applicants will start with the beginning level proficiency. They may complete two proficiencies per year-either multiple levels of the same project or for two different projects. Medals will be awarded at your club's awards night.
 - d) **Presentation Proficiencies**— Any youth who has given a demonstration or a prepared speech at County Presentation Day is eligible to participate in this program. Youth must give a presentation at Presentation Day and then at least 5 more times -- two to non-4-H groups and three to 4-H groups. A form must be signed by the club leader. Medals will be awarded at you club's awards night.
 - e) **Council Scholarships** - Up to three \$1000 scholarships are offered each year through an application processes. Applications are available on the web

and the 4-H office. Each application has a specific set of directions, guidelines and scoring.

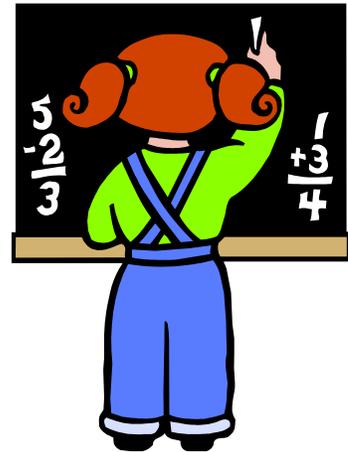
- f) **Event scholarships** - are available by filling out an Event Scholarship Request form.
- g) **Other Awards**- Other awards are offered by the state. As they become available we update the information in our newsletter and online at our web site.

18. What are county-wide projects?

A County-Wide Project is a project that has a leader willing to lead youth from all over the county in a project. Sometimes the project is a common one, and the county wide project serves to focus on a specific aspect of the project. For example, many clubs have rabbit projects, so the county-wide project could focus on the showing of rabbits. In other cases, the project leader may have very specialized knowledge that they wish to share with all the youth in the county, so s/he creates a county-wide project to reach as many youth possible (i.e. veterinary science).

19. Other Delivery Methods

4-H may participate in Ag in the Classroom, school enrichment, after school programs and day and summer camps. 4-H may also participate in partnership with other youth serving agencies in one day events or conferences. Information about these programs can be obtained from the 4-H office or the 4-H website.



20. Conflict Management

We encourage people to communicate and to work things out through open communication. Remember, we model good communication skills to the youth. We do have a conflict management protocol to use. Copies are available in the office. We encourage people to ask questions and to communicate positively with each other. It is better to spend time working on improving the program and not on conflicts between adults. 4-H is for everyone, and learning to work together for our youth is really what our program is all about.

21. Where Can You Find Answers To Your Questions?

You will most likely have questions as you learn more about the 4-H Program. There are several possible sources of information that you can consult to find the answer.

- a) Your local club leader
- b) Your club or county project leader
- c) Other members and parents
- d) Our County Newsletter
- e) Mendocino County web site located at <http://cemendocino.ucdavis.edu>
- f) 4-H office at (707) 463-4495
- g) County Council Executive Board members
- h) County Event Chairs
- i) California State 4-H website @ <http://www.ca4h.org>



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