



INFORMATION SHEET FOR ADULT MENTORS

4-H Independent Membership Responsibilities

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for expressing an interest in becoming an adult mentor of an Independent 4-H member. We hope that the following information will answer many of the questions about this role.

The Minnesota Youth Development Program is an opportunity for Minnesota 4-H to provide an educational environment for positive development of diverse youth to enable them to reach their full potential. The 4-H club is the foundation for this environment, and potential members are strongly encouraged to use all of their resources to find a club compatible with their educational needs, life-skill development and family situation. However, this may not always be possible.

Minnesota 4-H recognizes that small groups (clubs) are not the optimal learning environment for every youth. Nor may a club be available to every youth because of meeting times, travel, expectations, etc. Minnesota 4-H recognizes independent 4-H member(s) as a form of program membership/delivery. Individuals sixth grade and older who have had at least two years of club experience are eligible for independent membership. Procedures are in place to guide independent membership to ensure that there is a quality learning experience for the young person.

For many youth, their exposure to 4-H experiences and learning materials comes through activities conducted either within their family or as independent members. While 4-H encourages participation in club settings to promote friendships and interaction with other youth and adults, for some youth, this is not always possible. Families and Independent Members are welcome to participate fully as part of the 4-H experience.

In order to guide this independent learning experience with the same concern for quality youth development that we have for club experiences, a set of guidelines has been created and is included later in this information.

As in quality club settings, adult volunteers play a critical role in providing leadership for creating positive youth development experiences for all youth. This role of Independent 4-H Member Mentor is critical to the success of those youth choosing to enroll as Independent Members.

ABOUT MENTORING

Mentoring as it applies to 4-H Independent Membership is a committed relationship between an adult (age 21 or over in accordance with Minnesota 4-H Risk Management policies as they take a more active role in working directly with the youth) and a youth focused on developing the

character and capabilities of the young person through intentional, positive youth development experiences. Mentoring is a wonderful way for caring adults to make a positive difference in a young person's life.

Independent 4-H members are responsible for finding an adult mentor, aged 21 years or older, okayed by parents and the county Extension office, and who has successfully completed

- Minnesota 4-H Volunteer Screening Process and Orientation
- Appropriate volunteer training

This person assists the youth in goal-setting, planning, completing and reflecting on his or her experience and in fulfilling the annual guidelines for Independent Membership. Adult mentors may be teachers, parents/relatives, skilled people in the area (mechanic, seamstress, carpenter, etc.), senior citizens or any adult with an interest in helping youth.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL MENTORS

- Caring Nature
- Respectful
- Good communicator
- Outgoing/at ease
- Sense of humor
- Broad range of interests
- Supportive manner
- Patient, yet motivating
- Well organized, yet flexible
- Honest, candid
- Continuously learning
- Encourages independence
- Creative
- Encourages skill transfer

WHAT MENTORS DO

- Set high expectations of project work.
- Offer challenging ideas.
- Help build self-confidence.
- Offer friendship.
- Listens to problems and offers encouragement and support.
- Share knowledge and experience.
- Guide, rather than lead.
- Meet others more than half-way.
- Offer frequent encouragement.
- Teach & inspire by example.
- Provide growth experiences
- Encourage positive behavior
- Help member become aware of his/her skills
- Share critical knowledge
- Identify possible learning opportunities and resources

EXPECTATIONS OF INDEPENDENT 4-H MENTORS

While the 4-H club provides a wonderful small group learning environment for the positive development of young people, it is not the only way to become a 4-H member. Independent membership is another option. Independent 4-H Members participate in planned learning outside of a club setting. Their work is self-directed with the guidance and support of parents and

mentors. Self-study, home study, mentoring or shadowing with an “expert,” and whole families learning together are examples of 4-H independent membership.

Just as the four essential elements: Belonging, Mastery, Independence and Generosity provide the foundation for a quality 4-H club experience, they are central to 4-H independent membership as well. To ensure that young people choosing independent membership have a 4-H experience of the highest quality they are asked to sign an agreement indicating they will:

1. Complete yearly enrollment/re-enrollment materials available online at mn.4honline.com, including payment of dues/fees if applicable in their county.
2. Complete Independent 4-H Member Agreement Form and Progress Form.
3. Submit to local Extension office upon enrollment, a completed plan/calendar outlining their goals and objectives for the upcoming 4-H year.
4. Meet with mentor a minimum of six times throughout the year to discuss progress toward their goals and celebrate achievements.
5. Complete one or more community service-learning projects during the year.
6. Publicly demonstrate their learning by giving a presentation before a group and/or exhibiting at county fair.
7. Reflect on their learning experiences with their mentor.
8. Abide by all county, state and national 4-H policies and recognize the authority of University of Minnesota Extension Center for Youth Development staff.
9. Understand that participation in county, regional, state and national events is encouraged and supported.
10. Contribute to the larger 4-H program by
 - participating in county and state fundraising efforts
 - volunteering to lead or assist with 4-H committees, programs and activities
 - reading and responding to Extension office correspondence
 - remaining informed on current 4-H opportunities, procedures, and guidelines

If you have further questions, please contact

Name _____

Title _____

County _____

Email _____

Phone _____

