University of Nevada, Reno Extension
4-H Youth Development
Club Guidance for COVID-19

Adapted from University of Arizona 4-H Youth Development
and University of California, Agriculture & Natural Resources
4-H Youth Development Program, Yolo County
4-H Club Guidance for COVID-19

As a 4-H Volunteer, you are responsible for the health and wellness of the members, parents, and other volunteers who participate in your program. The Coronavirus (COVID-19) situation is rapidly developing, we want to provide some guidance to support your efforts. The University of Nevada, Reno Extension 4-H Youth Development leadership recognizes that each community has a different context, and thus, current decisions about county-level program cancellation is being made in partnership between the County Extension Educator and the 4-H Staff. The University of Nevada, Reno Extension will continue to monitor the situation and may modify guidance as conditions change.

First and foremost, it is important to assess the risk factors for the individuals in your 4-H community. Postponing or not holding events is the best way to prevent contamination and transmission of the disease. However, there may be events that are not feasible to postpone or cancel. In these instances, increasing your sanitary practices is necessary. As the adage says, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

We do not want to induce panic, yet we do want to educate our youth on good hygiene habits. This is also an opportunity to teach our youth about microbiology, epidemiology, and social responsibility. If you need additional information to share with your clubs, please let us know.

Below are actionable steps you can take to reduce the risk of spreading disease at your 4-H events and meetings. The underlying message is to reduce the touching of shared items and reduce close contact between participants. Select those things which make the most sense for your situation. With many of these items, no one would even notice you had made a change.

- **Relax attendance policies**
  - We need to be as flexible as possible with attendance, and avoid the situation where someone feels they need to attend a meeting or event, especially if they are sick or at risk of illness. Relax policies about attending meetings and events. If a child or close family member of a child is sick, they should be excused from participating. This absence should not count against their qualifications for other activities such as the county fair.

- **Consider moving activities outside.**
  - Open air reduces the risk of airborne illness. Can you take your meeting outside, or even just part of it?
  - If you can’t move outside, find a fun way to have those attending spread out as much as possible.
• **Consider the beverage items**
  - If you traditionally serve juice from a gallon container where multiple people touch the bottle or giant push-button cooler, switch to individual juice boxes.

• **Consider the food items**
  - Instead of serving a buffet with a shared serving utensil, offer individual food items instead such as individually wrapped muffins or cookies.
  - Instead of serving foods from a single large bag or box, like chips or crackers, where people are reaching in and touching, use a food glove to serve individual portions in individual cups or on napkins.
  - Make sure you have enough garbage containers for any increase in packaging, so that items that have been touched and licked are not spilling out of receptacles.

• **Make time for proper hygiene**
  - Include time in the meeting/event schedule for everyone to wash their hands before eating. Take the opportunity now to teach about proper handwashing.

• **Start a new greeting**
  - Instead of shaking hands, can you invent a new greeting? The youth will enjoy coming up with a silly new way to say hello that does not involve touching (and the adults will too)!

• **Have tissues available**
  - Bring a box of tissues for use by anyone sneezing or coughing to catch those germs.
  - Send individuals home if they show signs of an illness.

• **Change how you open doors**
  - Doorknobs are one of the worst places to touch. Scan the space and think about which doors can be propped open so not everyone needs to touch it. Or if it's too cold, too hot, or no doorstop is available, have one person assigned to serve as the greeter and open the door for everyone.
  - Make sure paper towels and garbage cans are available by bathroom doors, so people can open the door with a towel and then throw it away.

• **Consider your activities**
  - We need to ensure that activities do not require close physical contact. If you planned a game that requires close physical contact, save that for another time. As an example, choose ice breakers that do not require physical touch between participants during highly infectious seasons.
• **Schedule back-up volunteers**
  * Parents could be inclined to bring a sick child with them to an event when they are committed to volunteering. This is well-intentioned but should be discouraged (see attendance policies above). To avoid gaps in help, be sure to add a few more certified volunteers to your roster for each activity to cover unplanned absences.

• **No-touch educational resources**
  * Instead of passing around something cool for the children to see, consider walking around with it and showing them at eye-level eliminating the need for them to touch it.
  * Instead of the take-one-and-pass-it-along method of paper distribution, hand them out one at a time.
  * Will there be only one pair of shears, or camera, or glue bottle, etc. for everyone to use? Use some disinfectant wipes between each use throughout the activity.

• **Don’t share pens and pencils**
  * If everyone usually uses the same pen to check-in for attendance, instead have one person do this so not everyone is touching the same pen.

• **Consider post-meeting clean-up**
  * If hosting a project meeting in your home, disinfect afterwards. Plan to take fifteen minutes after everyone has left to wipe down all frequently touched surfaces with a disinfectant spray or bleach solution. The CDC and EPA provide the following guidance:
    - **Cleaning** removes germs and dirt from surfaces. You can use soap and water to clean surfaces. This doesn't always kill germs but removing them lowers their numbers. It's suggested to clean surfaces before you disinfect them.
    - **Disinfecting** kills germs on surfaces. Disinfectant chemicals are stronger than soap but do not necessarily clean visibly dirty surfaces or remove germs. Killing germs lowers the risk of infection. To properly disinfect, products need to remain on a surface for a specific amount of time -- usually 3 to 5 minutes.
    - **Sanitizing** also kills germs, but disinfecting kills more of them. Some products are capable of doing both, but disinfecting requires a bit more work. Still, sanitizers effectively lower the risk of infection.
Manage your risk outside of meetings

- Germs are picked up everywhere. When shopping, use a tissue on your fingertip so you don’t need to touch the PIN pad when paying.
- Wipe down the handle on your shopping cart or basket, and if a plastic produce bag is available use that as an added layer between you and the handle.
- Pumping gas? Grab a paper towel from the window cleaning station and use that to hold the gas handle.
- Grabbing something to eat while you run these errands? Remember that tables are not disinfected between customers, so don’t let your food or utensils touch the table. Put them on napkins or plates.

County Fairs and other large events

- The Fair season is upon us and decisions about whether these events will go forward will be made by local fair boards and health departments.
- That said, given the guidance above, it is up to each of us to decide if and how we will participate. For example, you might decide it’s OK to show your animal in an outdoor show ring but not to participate in an activity with a lot of people in a small enclosed area.
- Also be sure to consider not only your personal risk factors but those of others living in your household and whether your activity would increase exposure for others at higher risk. The CDC has information about who is at higher risk: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specificgroups/high-risk-complications.html