



Guide for 4-H Club and Project Meetings: COVID-19 Mitigation

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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 COVID-19 virus pandemic requires social distancing and other mitigation efforts for youth and families. This guide introduces best practices for preventing contamination between participants.

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, as we establish the new normal and begin in-person programming mitigation efforts are required to ensure the 4-H program does not contribute to spreading the disease. In these instances, increasing your sanitary practices is necessary. As the adage says, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

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 close contact between participants and the use of shared items that many people touch. Select the steps from the list below that make the most sense for your situation. Many of these steps suggest changes that no one will notice and will reduce the risk of transmission significantly.

- **All participants must wear masks while participating in 4-H in-person programming.**
 - If masks cannot be worn or a participant chooses not to then they cannot be at the meeting. Alternatives can be explored for virtual engagement.

- **Move activities outside.**
 - Open air reduces the risk of airborne illness. Do all or part of the meeting outside.
 - If you can't move outside, find a fun way to have those attending spread out as much as possible.
- **Make time for proper hygiene.**
 - Include time in the meeting/event schedule for everyone to wash their hands before eating. Take the opportunity to teach about proper handwashing.
- **Start a new greeting.**
 - Instead of shaking hands or hugging, can you invent a new greeting that can be done from a distance? 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 them. If it is not possible to prop open doors, assign one person to serve as a 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.
- **Choose activities where participants are able to stay six feet apart.**
 - 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. E.g. A name game or Simon says.
- **Use single serving beverage containers.**
 - If you traditionally serve juice from a large container or push-button cooler that multiple people touch, switch to individual juice boxes or water bottles.
- **Serve individually wrapped food.**
 - Instead of serving a buffet with a shared serving utensil, offer individual food items such as individually wrapped sandwiches, muffins or cookies.
 - Instead of serving foods like chips or cookies from large bags or boxes where people reach in and touch the contents, use a food glove to serve individual portions in individual cups or on napkins, or serve individually wrapped single servings, e.g. small bags of chips.
 - Make sure you have enough garbage containers for any increase in packaging. This way items that have been touched and licked are not spilling out of receptacles.
- **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 and flexibility in attendance is expected to ensure the health and wellness of the 4-H community.).
 - To avoid gaps in help, be sure to add a few more volunteers to your roster for each activity to cover unplanned absences.
- **Use no-touch educational resources.**
 - Instead of passing around something cool for members to see, consider walking around with it and showing them at eye level. This eliminates the need for them to touch it.
 - Instead of the take-one-and-pass-it-along method of paper distribution, hand out papers one at a time.
- If participants must share items (e.g. scissors, a camera, a glue bottle), use disinfectant wipes to clean the item at the beginning and end of the event and between each use.
- **Don't share pens and pencils.**
 - Instead of having everyone use the same pen to check in for attendance, have one person take attendance to avoid sharing one pen.
- **Carefully clean and disinfect after the meeting.**
 - 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.

- **Carefully consider attendance at County Fairs and other large events.**
 - It is up to each of us to decide if and how we will participate in large events. 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/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>

For up-to-date information, refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for information on disease, who is at risk, and how to prevent the spread of disease. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html#Resources>

For updates on Arizona 4-H program recommendations visit the Arizona 4-H Youth Development website: <https://extension.arizona.edu/az-4-h-covid-19-response>



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