



Helping You Help Youth



INTRODUCTION TO 4-H

What is 4-H?

4-H is the youth audience of the Cooperative Extension Service. It is the nation's largest out-of-school educational program for youth. 4-H is an integral part of the University of Illinois (Land-Grant University). The overall mission of the 4-H program is to assist youth in acquiring knowledge, developing life skills, and forming attitudes that will enable them to become self-directing, productive, and contributing members of society. 4-H utilizes hands-on methods to enhance skills through learning experiences in a wide variety of subjects. 4-H staff includes adult and youth volunteers, professionals, and para-professionals. 4-H is for all youth, rural and urban, with programs in every county that funds Extension programs. It is open to all youth regardless of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, ancestry, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, or disability.

Young people in 4-H learn about citizenship, leadership, horticulture, visual arts, agriculture, computers, cooking, and other subjects. To teach young people about these subjects, the 4-H educational program uses the learn by doing method of instruction. 4-H projects, which members select according to interest and ability, are the program's cornerstone. A 4-H project is a practical, but challenging, self-planned course of activity centered around a specific subject.

Another key learning experience for members is the 4-H meeting. In 4-H meetings, members meet together to conduct their own business using democratic processes, learn from one another and others they bring in through educational presentations, and interact socially. Clubs and groups carry out group learning experiences and projects to serve their communities.

Projects and group activities involve members in setting goals and evaluating progress, and the skills and knowledge learned help members become more productive individuals and citizens.

Who Develops Programs?

The 4-H programs and educational resources in Illinois counties are developed by local Extension employees and adult and youth volunteers. Clubs and groups, as well as county-wide activities, are conducted by volunteer leaders who are trained and supported by field and state staff members of University of Illinois Extension.

Ways to Participate in 4-H

4-H Club

Illinois 4-H policy defines a 4-H club as a group of five or more young people eight to 19 years of age who meet in a sustaining, Extension-sponsored educational program for at least six sessions a year with a planned program, officers, and one or more projects per member. A 4-H club may explore a single subject or several subjects. In addition, members of a 4-H club will participate in many other activities, such as talks, demonstrations, judging, tours, and county events.

A 4-H club may be organized on a community or neighborhood basis and use local facilities or members' homes, or it can be organized within a school using the school's facilities, time, and staff.

4-H Special-interest Group

Sometimes young people want information about a particular subject. These individuals may want to participate in a 4-H special-interest group that studies just that subject—for example, model rocketry or dog obedience. Special-interest groups pursue their subject by using workshops, meetings, simulated experiences, and other similar formats. A group consists of five or more members who meet six or more times, following a predetermined educational program under the guidance of a qualified resource person. After learning about other 4-H opportunities, participants may want to join another special-interest group or expand their participation by joining a 4-H club.

Short-term Group

Often young people want to learn about a subject that is specific or limited enough to be explored in depth in a short period of time. These young people may want to participate in a 4-H short-term group, which will inform them about the subject in an evening, an entire day, or a weekend. This short-term method is effective in informing large numbers of youth about subjects such as career choices or bike safety. If participants in short-term groups are not already members of a 4-H club or special-interest group, they should be made aware of the other, more sustaining 4-H programs.

Cloverbuds

The Illinois 4-H program gives local Extension offices the option to include 5-7 year old youth. These youth participate as “Cloverbuds.” There are several ways that this program is utilized around the state, including:

- ♦ **4-H Cloverbud Groups**—These are groups specifically for youth ages 5-7. Because of the interests and abilities of children in this age range, it is suggested that they meet at least two times per month and work on activities together at meetings, instead of as individuals on their own.
- ♦ **Community 4-H Clubs with Cloverbuds as a Project Group**—This group is similar to the Cloverbud Group, except it is affiliated with a specific community 4-H club.
- ♦ **School 4-H Cloverbud Group**—This Cloverbud group is offered to children through local schools in their classrooms.
- ♦ **School-Aged Child Care 4-H Cloverbud Group**—This Cloverbud program is organized in local day care or after school programs.

For more information about the Cloverbuds and what options are available, contact the local Extension office.

Camping

Camping is the most intensive method of working with 4-H boys and girls, since it usually brings volunteers and members into contact with each other for several days in succession. In overnight camps, living together, as well as the intensive nature of the activities involved in camping, helps members develop interpersonal skills and self confidence. Day camps also provide a setting for 4-H participation.

There are several camp sites in Illinois that offer 4-H camping options. Most local Extension programs offer planned group activities at one of the camps for one week or more each year. Many programs also offer other outdoor education and camping programs for 4-H youth. These opportunities include leadership camps, nature craft camps, bike hikes, and project camps. These opportunities are held for certain age members, or for all members and their families.

What 4-H Does for Youth

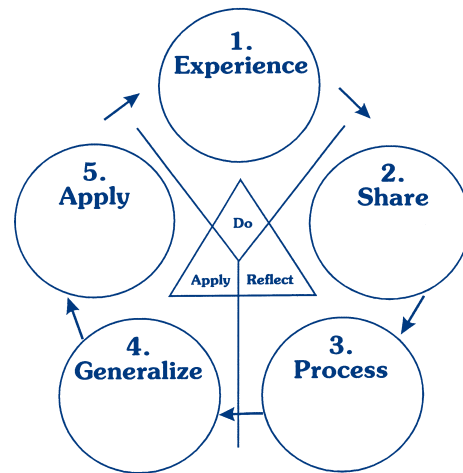
Illinois 4-H involves youth in positive youth development experiences that provide opportunities for mental, physical, and social growth. The informal education offered by the program supplements the training received in the home, at school, and from other youth-serving organizations. Based upon recognized, effective educational concepts, the 4-H program teaches 4-H members skills for living.

Learning How to Learn

The learn-by-doing teaching technique is used in 4-H to help young people learn about practical and technical

subjects. This technique requires youth to set their own goals and to plan and conduct programs that will help them accomplish their goals. In planning and conducting a program of activity, 4-H members learn how to obtain information and assistance on a subject and how to manage their time. 4-H leaders help young people learn lasting and transferable skills from their experience by following the Experiential Learning Process. This process emphasizes that learning from experience requires more than doing an activity. The youth must also reflect on it and explore opportunities to apply their observations and conclusions in other situations.

Experiential Learning Process



Relating to Other Individuals

Relating well with others is a skill useful to most people throughout their lives. Youth involved in 4-H develop these skills through participating in group activities, serving on committees, working as a club officer, and through carrying out their project group work. These youth are more able to interact comfortably, accept responsibility, respect diversity, trust themselves and others, resolve conflict, and understand their own likes, dislikes, strengths, and limitations.

Communicating with Others

Communicating effectively with others is an important skill in society. Youth who have learned to communicate well are able to exchange ideas and information clearly and minimize confusion for themselves and for others. The ability to communicate opens the door to more satisfying relationships, as they are able to share feelings and resolve conflict in healthy ways.

Planning and Organizing

Through their project and group work in 4-H, youth can learn how to manage a series of activities and coordinate the work of others. This experience helps them to set goals, create timetables, build teams with others, assign tasks, and work efficiently without supervision.

Leading Self and Others

As young people grow with the 4-H program, they begin to develop leadership skills. These are skills they can use while in 4-H and in the future. They enable youth to lead and build a team, develop motivation, set group goals, gain respect, and accommodate different styles and motivations.

Making Decisions

Youth learn to make better, more informed decisions through their involvement in 4-H. They learn to recognize how personal values influence their own decisions and those of others, to find and use accurate information, to identify and weigh alternatives, to select and follow through on a course of action, and to evaluate those decisions.

4-H—A Family Affair

4-H encourages family involvement whenever it is practical and possible. What can the 4-H program do for families? Reports from 4-H families indicate that it can:

- ♦ educate the whole family.
- ♦ help family members communicate better as they solve problems working together toward common goals.
- ♦ help families develop a feeling of unity.
- ♦ provide opportunities to discuss goal-setting, decision-making, and service to others.
- ♦ promote activities the family can do together, such as camping, exchange trips, and service activities.
- ♦ provide settings in which family members can share rewards for success and be encouraged during times of disappointment.

Notes on Origins of 4-H in Illinois

Early Beginnings

In 1898, a young man in Macoupin County, Illinois, William B. Otwell, was elected secretary of the newly-formed County Farmer's Institute. The first institute meeting was a complete flop; no one came. Otwell felt that the institute needed an activity to capture the interest of farmers, so he decided to work with the boys in the county. He wrote to leading corn growers in Illinois, Indiana, and Iowa to secure high-quality corn seed. He then advertised in local papers for boys younger than 18 years old to send in for a packet of seed corn. The boys were to raise the corn and exhibit a sample of their produce for prizes at the second institute meeting that fall. Five hundred boys sent for seeds, and the fall meeting was a great success. More than 500 people came to see the results of the boys' work.

Over the next few years, Otwell's program continued to grow. By 1901, more than 1,500 boys were enrolled in his program. In 1903, the Governor of Illinois appointed Otwell to be superintendent of the Illinois agricultural

exhibit at the St. Louis World's Fair. That fall, Otwell and his assistants received 1,250 corn exhibits, and the Illinois agricultural exhibit stole the show from the other states' exhibits. In later years, Otwell had annual county meetings for boys participating in his program. Otwell's program was not 4-H as we know it (or even a club), but it was the first organized program for farm youth in Illinois, and many youth were inspired by their participation in it.

Otwell's activities were similar to those being organized in other states about the same time. Educators in rural areas throughout the country were becoming concerned that rural children were not receiving an education that related to rural life and rural living. Liberty Hyde Bailey, an educator at Cornell University, acted on his concern. In the 1890's, he prepared leaflets on nature study. These become widely used by rural school teachers. Other colleges of agriculture prepared similar literature.

Public school educators in rural areas thought boys and girls needed practical experience in agricultural work and homemaking. In Clark County, Ohio, Albert B. Graham was superintendent of the Springfield township schools. He had seen the success of manual training courses in one of the schools in the township; so, he decided to apply the same idea to agricultural topics. On January 15, 1902, he met with a group of 85 boys and girls. He had them test soil, select corn, and cultivate experimental plant plots. Many claim he is the originator of agricultural experiment clubs for boys and girls.

One month later, on February 22, 1902, O.J. Kern, superintendent of schools in Winnebago County, Rockford, Illinois, assembled 37 boys from the rural schools to hear professors from the College of Agriculture, University of Illinois, talk about corn production. From this group Kern formed a boys experiment club. The members raised corn and sugar beets and took trips to the University's College of Agriculture. So a program similar to Graham's was born, and the new concept quickly spread. The idea of agricultural experiment clubs was alive and growing rapidly around the U.S.

Origins of the Emblem and Continued Growth

Around 1906, Oscar H. Benson, of Wright County, Iowa, was one of many county superintendents who cooperated with the College of Agriculture at Iowa State University in the development of "Boys' and Girls' Corn Clubs." Benson soon became an enthusiastic backer of the program and made some sketches of a cloverleaf pin with an "H" in each of the three leaves. The three "H's" stood for "heart, head, and hands." He had a jewelry company make some of these pins, and they were used to recognize excellence in agricultural and domestic science work.

In 1912, Benson, then working in Washington, D.C., at the Farmer's Cooperative Demonstration Work office, sent a circular to various states that described the clover emblem, which by now had a fourth leaf standing for

“health.” The circular also showed how the emblem was to be used in connection with the clubs then existing—corn, canning, poultry, and cotton. Although the emblem began appearing on canned products produced by the canning clubs, it wasn’t until 1924 that the various agricultural clubs in the nation were organized under the name “4-H.” Until that date, the name used to encompass all the clubs was “Boys’ and Girls’ Club Work.”

Soon after Benson’s circular was issued, other projects were added to the growing program of club work. Members were asked by the Washington office to keep records on their projects. Demonstrations were given in numerous states on improved methods of canning or growing pigs. However, the basic element in the program remained the learning-by-doing project.

Youth Work—Part of Cooperative Extension

In 1914, the Smith-Lever Act was passed in Congress authorizing a Cooperative Extension Service in each state’s land-grant college of agriculture. The Extension Service was provided with funds for disseminating useful and practical information on agriculture, home economics and related subjects to persons not attending college. Extension personnel soon found that one effective way to reach rural men and women was through work with their children. Thus, “Boys’ and Girls’ Club Work” soon became an integral part of Extension’s programming.

The first state leader of “Boys’ and Girls’ Club Work” in Illinois, Dr. James H. Greene, was employed by the University of Illinois, College of Agriculture, on June 1, 1915. The first club organized after Dr. Greene began was Union Pig Club at Palmyra in Macoupin County. The club was led by C.C. Coots and had 14 members, all of whom exhibited their projects, kept records, and received recognition certificates. In 1915, more than 6,000 Illinois boys and girls worked independently or in group projects, and 487 clubs were organized. The need for volunteers in each community to serve as leaders was emphasized. Clubs were asked to de-emphasize “the scramble for large cash prizes.”

During World War I, it became important to grow food, and the government made a great effort to get people everywhere to grow their own vegetables. As a result, “Boys’ and Girls’ Club Work” was expanded into towns and cities to encourage young people to have garden clubs. The expansion was a great success, and in 1918 Illinois’ enrollment reached 15,290 members. It would be many years before the 1918 enrollment would be surpassed since, with the coming of peace, emphasis was again placed on work with the rural boys and girls.

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Illinois 4-H Today

Because of the educational concepts and methods developed by these pioneers, the 4-H program has stood the test of time. Four-H continues to grow in Illinois, expanding into villages, towns, cities, and suburbs. The Illinois 4-H program now reaches approximately 285,000 boys and girls, with 25,000 volunteers helping 7,500 clubs and groups. Four-H has a great history and a great future.

4-H Symbols and Traditions

The 4-H pledge, motto, and other symbols and traditions have helped identify 4-H work for many years.

Pledge:

I pledge—

My Head to clearer thinking,
My Heart to greater loyalty,
My Hands to larger service, and
My Health to better living,
For my club, my community, my country,
and my world.

Motto: *To make the best better.*

Colors: *Green and white.*

Emblem: A four-leaf clover with the letter “H” on each leaf. The leaves of the clover are green and the letters are white.

Use of the 4-H Name and Emblem

An act of Congress in 1948 made the Secretary of Agriculture the final authority in authorizing the use of the 4-H name and emblem. State, county, and local 4-H groups must operate within that authorization. The great popularity of 4-H work and the growing tendency to exploit the name and emblem made this legislation necessary. A general rule to follow in determining the proper use of 4-H symbols is to make sure all uses of the 4-H name and emblem are consistent with the educational purposes, character-building objective, and dignity of the 4-H organization. Particular care must be observed in money-raising activities where sale of a commercial article is promoted by the use of the 4-H name or emblem. Use is forbidden if it exploits 4-H or implies endorsement of a firm, product, or service. Group leaders should consult with their local Extension office regarding the use of the 4-H name and emblem.



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