

Information for Adult Mentors of Independent 4-H Members

Thanks for expressing an interest in becoming an adult mentor of an Independent 4-H Member. The following information should answer many of your questions about this role. If you have further questions, please contact the extension staff member listed at the end of the adult mentor position description which is included in this information.

Kansas 4-H recognizes that small group learning in 4-H clubs is the optimal learning environment for youth, however, clubs may not be available to all youth because of meeting times, travel expectations, etc. Therefore, youth may join the 4-H program as an Independent 4-H Member.

In order to guide the Independent 4-H experience with the same concern for quality youth development that we have for club experiences, an Adult Mentor Position Description and Independent 4-H Member Plan is included 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 Adult Mentor is critical to the success of those youth choosing to enroll as Independent 4-H Members.

About Mentoring

Mentoring is a committed relationship between an adult and a youth focused on developing the character and capabilities of the young person through intentional, positive youth development experiences. By definition, a mentor means a wise and trusted friend and guide. Mentoring is a wonderful way for caring adults to make a positive difference in a young person's life.

Parents or guardians of Independent 4-H members are responsible for finding an adult mentor. Adult mentors assist the youth in goal setting, planning, completing and reflecting on their experience and in fulfilling the Independent 4-H Member Plan. Adult mentors may be teachers, skilled community members (mechanic, seamstress, carpenter, etc.), senior citizens, relative or any adult with an interest in youth.

Roles a Mentor May Play: * Friend * Listener * Cheerleader * Coach
* Tutor * Confidant * Teacher

Characteristics of Successful Mentors

* Caring nature	* Knowledgeable, experienced	* Respectful	* Guides, rather than leads
* Good communicator	* Meets others more than half way	* Outgoing	* Sense of humor
* Continuously learning	* Offers frequent encouragement	* Broad range of interests	
* Good listener	* Supportive manner	* Encourages independence and skill transfer	
* Patient	* Creative	* Honest	* Well organized, yet flexible

What Mentors Do

* Set high expectations of project work	* Help the 4-H member think through options
* Offer challenging ideas	* Encourage positive behavior
* Offer friendship	* Help member become aware of his/her own skills
* Inspire by example	* Teach by example; Listen to problems and give advice
* Provide growth experiences	* Offer encouragement and support
* Be unselfish	* Teach mastery of skills
* Identify possible learning opportunities and resources	

Adult Mentor Position Description

Title: Independent 4-H Member Adult Mentor

Time Required: October through September 30 of current 4-H year

Purpose:

- * Mentor, coach and guide Independent 4-H member in the completion of Independent 4-H Member Plan.
- * Promote positive youth development experiences.
- * Inform and encourage member and parents/guardians to actively participate in appropriate 4-H opportunities.

Responsibilities:

- * Attain approval of parent/guardian to serve as mentor.
- * Complete Kansas 4-H Volunteer Application, Screening and Approval process.
- * Commit to young people and their growth in all areas; being sensitive to their individual abilities and needs.
- * Advise 4-H member regarding their contributions and participation in 4-H events/activities.
- * Welcome parent/guardian ideas, activity and project assistance, cooperation, support and attendance at 4-H activities
- * Communicate what the 4-H member can expect from you, as a mentor.
- * Support the 4-H youth in taking an active role in the mentoring process; being available to coach as needed.
- * Meet with the 4-H member at least six times a year, face-to-face.
- * Answer/research questions from the member related to 4-H Youth Development.
- * Follow all 4-H guidelines and policies of K-State Research and Extension, the Kansas 4-H Youth Development program and the local 4-H Youth Development program.
- * Participate in volunteer development opportunities to stay current with information, learn new skills and maintain the 4-H standard of providing quality experiences for youth.

Qualifications:

- * Enjoy working with young people.
- * The ability to guide, coach and motivate while nurturing positive youth development, decision making, responsibilities, and leadership in youth.
- * A sincere interest in mentoring and sharing knowledge and skills with youth in an educational setting.
- * The ability to effectively support the 4-H member in taking responsibility for their Independent study status.
- * Be geographically accessible to the youth.
- * The ability to work and communicative effectively in both verbal and written form.
- * A willingness to become familiar with, support and work within the philosophy and guidelines of K-State Research & Extension, the Kansas 4-H Youth Development program and the local Extension Unit 4-H.

Resources Available:

The local Extension Unit 4-H youth development program agrees to:

- * Provide training opportunities – county, district, regional or state.
- * Provide appropriate curriculum, newsletters and other Kansas supported resource materials.
- * Provide the local 4-H Program Orientation for volunteers.
- * Listen to ideas to help improve the 4-H program.
- * Provide appropriate recognition and awards to leaders.

Contact:

List Extension Agent with 4-H Responsibility:

County/District Name:

Phone:

E-mail: