



4 - H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



Guidelines for Working with Youth

Do

- Act as a role model
- Speak and act with respect and regard for the value and uniqueness of each youth.
- Maintain ongoing communication with your 4-H Extension staff regarding interaction you have with youth
- Have another adult present when working with children or to work with the children in a group with two or more children present. AVOID being alone with a single child.
- Know to whom you report and let them know if something strange, embarrassing or possibly compromising happens to you in your program. They can best help begin investigative or remedial action before a youth reports something to his/her parents.
- Be a good listener
- Get parent/guardian permission slips signed for any event involving transportation.
- Meet with a child in an office with a window, an open door or another adult present.
- Use discretion with physical displays of emotions, such as hugging children. A hug can have different connotations for an elementary student than for a junior or senior high student.

Points to Consider:

- Is it youth initiated?
 - Did you ask the youth if he/she would like a hug?
 - Is it your need or the youth's need you are considering in offering a hug?
 - Is it appropriate for the "culture," situation or setting.
 - Touching should avoid breasts, buttocks and groin
 - Touching should be open and not secretive
 - Touching or other physical contact should be governed by the age and developmental stage of the child.
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- Only participate in trips sponsored by your school or the 4-H program
 - Use discretion with electronic media: i.e., email for any personal correspondence with youth
 - Be alert to the physical and emotional state of all children each time they participate in a program.
 - Encourage parents/other responsible adults to visit Extension programs at any time
 - Be sensitive to the confidentiality in the handling of information related to a suspected and

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Do Not

- Become their “buddy.” As an adult, it is not appropriate to build a social life around/with youth.
- . . . under any circumstances discipline children by use of physical punishment, demeaning or sarcastic language or by failing to provide the necessities of care, such as food, water, or shelter.
- Use suggestive jokes, stories or language with youth. While youth may hear jokes and off color stories from peers, it has a different impact if they’re coming from a role model such as leader or teacher.
- Drive alone with a child. If you are involved with transportation for a field trip or some other event make sure you are transporting more than one student. (Note: an obvious exception to the rule of not being alone with children is where there is a relationship to the child; i.e. niece, nephew, etc.)
- Consume alcohol or illegal controlled substances in the presence of children or prior to being with children
- Participate in overnight trips with youth without at least two adults present, and make sure that it is an official 4-H related event.
- Accompany children into restrooms or changing rooms. If you do, try to have another adult present. Adults also need to protect their own privacy in similar situations.
- Visit a child’s home without at least one other adult present if a parent is not home.
- Attempt counseling unless you are trained as a counselor.
- Discipline using physical contact or demeaning or sarcastic language.
- Share inappropriate personal information with youth.
- Allow any physical and/or mental hazing and “secret” initiations that are not part of the 4-H Youth Development program.

Volunteers are expected to follow the above recommendations on those occasions when socializing with 4-H members or participants under the age of 18 outside of Extension program activities.



If you have any questions or concerns, or if you are unsure what to do about something, please do not suffer in silence. Talk to one your local 4-H Extension Staff. As we work with youth, common sense and the well-being of those we work with should help guide the decisions we make. These guidelines help establish program barriers that make it less likely an abusive situation will occur. Have Fun: Laugh, enjoy your work with youth and use this time to build relationships with the young people.

In the event of an unusual incident it is to be reported to the person in charge of the event. Information about the incident is to be shared only with individuals who are impacted by the incident. with the young people.