

Welcoming New 4-H Members

4-H clubs need to develop a plan to welcome and support new members when they become interested in 4-H youth development, arrive at their first 4-H club meeting, and learn about different project areas. Making a great first impression is important because it is the first step in the essential element of creating a sense of belonging.

Essential Element — Belonging

Youth need to know they are cared about by others and feel a sense of connection to others in the group. As the 4-H Club, it is important to provide youth the opportunity to feel physically and emotionally safe while actively partic-



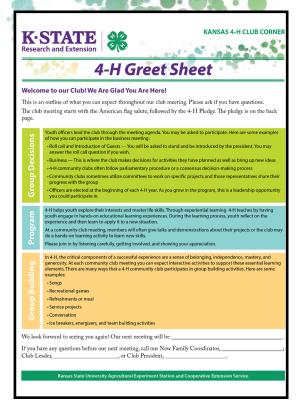
ipating in your group. A club should create an environment that supports and encourages its members.

Suggestions for how to cultivate a sense of belonging:

- Delegate a New Family Coordinator to contact members before the meeting to learn about cultural, linguistic, and/or disability accommodations to be considered.
- The New Family Coordinator and Club Leader should work with the local K-State Research and Extension office to provide necessary accommodations.
- Identify a specific person to be the greeter at each 4-H meeting to welcome everyone attending.
- All officers should be prepared to engage with members, guests, and adults before the start of the meeting.
- During the meeting, use discussion questions that encourage youth to learn from each other, synthesize, and use ideas collaboratively.
- Use discussion questions during role call (consider being sensitive towards different dimensions of diversity for new members such as socio-economic status, religion, disability status, inclusive family systems, language, etc.).
- Organize an opening recreational activity or serve refreshments before beginning club business.

Welcome and Explain to the New Family the Meeting Agenda

- After they arrive and before the meeting begins, the New Family Coordinator takes the initiative of introducing him/ herself, giving the new family a "4-H Greet Sheet," welcoming the new family to the club, and introducing them to other club members on an informal basis.
- The New Family Coordinator finds a spot for them to sit, children with the current members and the parents with the New Family Coordinator. If parents have questions during the meeting, the New Family Coordinator is close at hand to answer them. If a current family has invited the new family to the meeting, have the children sit with current 4-H members and the parents with those that invited them.
- The New Family Coordinator should let the club president and secretary know there are guests present so that they can be introduced during the meeting after roll call has been taken.
- Developing a buddy system between a new member and a current member helps the relationship with the new member and creates a sense of belonging for all. The New Family Coordinator should recruit current members to be "buddies" with the new member.



• Keep the lines of communication open, so that the new family feels comfortable asking questions. 4-H seems to have a language of its own and may need to be interpreted for the new family. The New Family Coordinator should provide a New Family Handbook to the new family and review it with them.

Adapted from Strengthening 4-H Club Resources, Kansas 4-H Youth Development

Local Contact Information

Kansas4-H.org



Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

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