

DO'S AND DONT'S

of being a 4-H parent



Thank you for enrolling your youth in the nation's largest youth development organization! 4-H is a very rewarding program for your whole family and is what is referred to as a family affair organization. This means the youth and the adults learn from each other by trying new things, meeting new friends, and having fun together. The greater the parent/guardian involvement, the greater and stronger the 4-H program will be. The following lists of Do's and Don'ts of Being a 4-H Parent/Guardian is adapted from the 4-H Leader Training Series from New Jersey, to help maximize your effectiveness as a caring and supportive 4-H adult.

Do's

- **DO** take time to learn about 4-H, what it stands for, and how it operates.
- **DO** advise your child in selecting 4-H projects. Help them select a project they are interested in, have the ability to accomplish, and one for which you can help furnish needed materials, facilities, financing, and guidance.
- **DO** keep in mind that the most important goal of 4-H is personal growth of the individual.
- **DO** help your youth see the progress they have made and knowledge they have gained and not just focus only on the end result. Give them encouragement when they succeed and even more when they fail. Judging events are all about learning, not the awards. Whatever ribbons are given or scores received, help your child to see progress made, things learned, goals that have been reached and areas to focus on in the future.
- **DO** volunteer your hobbies and talents to 4-H leaders and 4-H youth.
- **DO** keep informed of 4-H deadlines, activities, and events by taking the time to read the e-newsletters, emails, and facebook posts.
- **DO** help youth by guiding and supporting them, not by doing their project for them so they can develop their own life skills.
- **DO ASK QUESTIONS!** 4-H has its own culture and language, so don't be afraid to ask questions.

Dont's

- **DON'T** do your child's projects for them, even though you may be able to do it faster, better, simpler, and with much less mess. Remember 4-H is Learning By Doing.
- **DON'T** discourage a child's enthusiasm by providing too much corrective influence or criticism.
- **DON'T** let the desire to win overpower your child's ability to learn. Do keep in mind that the 4-H experience should be an educational one.
- **DON'T** assume your child is always right.
- **DON'T** schedule family outings which constantly conflict with your child's 4-H schedule.
- **DON'T** view your child as an extension of yourself. Don't view his/her success or failure as a reflection of your ability or worth.
- **DON'T** assume volunteers are animal trainers or experts in every single project area. Our volunteers are very knowledgeable but are not experts at everything.
- **DON'T** be disrespectful to the judges when your child didn't get the award or color of ribbon you thought they should have received. Remember, the judge's opinion is just one person's opinion.
- **DON'T** be disrespectful to 4-H volunteers and Extension staff if things don't go the way you or your child thinks they should.

Remember that 4-H is learning by doing. The most important thing for a parent or guardian to do for a 4-H youth is support and encouragement. There is no failure in 4-H just learning from mistakes. Be a supportive parent and help your child and 4-H leader to "Make the Best Better!"

