



4-H Organizational Skills

Parent Recruitment & Involvement

VRKC: Volunteer Research Knowledge Competency Taxonomy

Intended Audience:

4-H volunteers

Learning Outcomes:

- Volunteers will describe key elements that parents want in a youth program.
- Volunteers will identify ways to get parents involved.
- Volunteers will describe how 4-H can provide a venue for family involvement.

Time:

20 – 30 minutes

Supplies Needed:

- Pencils, Markers and Flip Chart
- Power Point, Computer and LCD Projector
- Handouts and Evaluations

Do Ahead:

Copy handouts

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Volunteerism for the Next Generation:

<http://nextgeneration.4-h.org/volunteerism/>

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INTRODUCTION

Have you ever heard the phrase: “Feed them and they will come”? Preparing and serving an effective 4-H program will entice parents to not only enroll their children but support their children’s involvement through volunteering their time. A well-developed 4-H program is your best recruitment tool. (Power Point Slide 1)

Parent volunteers are an integral component of youth development organizations. Although volunteering for educational and youth development programs is a high priority with the American public, a common challenge is lack of adult leadership to mentor and work with youth who would like the opportunity to be involved. The number one reason people volunteer is because someone asked them. Do not limit your potential audiences by doing everything yourself; ASK others to serve! You may be surprised at the number of people who accept your offer. You might open doors to additional volunteers as new recruits share their experiences with friends and family.

Activity 1: Why do families get involved?

Ask the group to brainstorm why parents enroll their children in the 4-H program. Record answers on a flip chart. Have the group review the responses and group them into similar categories. Let’s see if the categories identified match what the research states.

(Power Point Slide 2) Those who commit their time and talents must be satisfied with the organization and their role within it. Parent volunteers have reported four key elements they need to see in a program in order to consider volunteer service to it. Once these elements are evident, they are more apt to volunteer their time in support of their child’s involvement:

1. A safe place where youth learn while having fun.
2. Relationships with and support from other adults who care about youth.
3. A youth group which has organization, structure, and communication.
4. Being able to do things together as a family.

A Safe, Fun Learning Environment

(Power Point Slide 3) A safe learning environment where kids have fun while learning is a key factor for parents not only in selecting a youth organization for their kids, but also when considering volunteering. Therefore, a screening process and appropriate risk management education should be elements of the program. It can be conveyed in program literature and by word of mouth that these procedures are followed. It’s important to find a balance of hands-on, fun, experiential



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VRKC: Volunteer Research Knowledge Competency Taxonomy for 4-H Youth Development:

<http://www.national4-h.org/headquarters.gov/comm/vrkc.pdf>

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References for this lesson:

- Dorsch, K., Riemer, H., Sluth, V., Paskevich, D., & Chelladurai, P. (2002). *What affects a volunteer's commitment?* Volunteer Canada. Retrieved January 9, 2008 at <http://new.volunteer.ca/en/node/1655>.
- Jones, D., Skogrand, L., Carter, D., & Black, P. (2008). Increasing parent volunteer participation in 4-H. *International Journal of Volunteer Administration, Volunteerism and Youth Development* Special Issue, XXV (1), 17-25.
- McCurley, S., & Lynch, R. (1996). *Volunteer Management: Mobilizing All the Resources of the Community*. Downers Grove, IL: Heritage Arts Publishing.

activities. It's also important to model, within the club or other programs, that kids are having fun, making friends, being involved, and learning skills in the process. The program must keep the interest of the youth in order for the parents to devote time to supporting their child's involvement.

Parents want to know that youth have a voice in determining the program. The club or group environment does make a difference. Youth need opportunities to hold an office, experience leadership, learn to make group decisions, excel for themselves, and feel good when others excel.

Relationships with and Support from Other Adults

(Power Point Slide 4) Building relationships and sharing responsibilities of club leadership are important aspects of volunteering. Get parents involved quickly by asking them what they would like to see happen and what they would like to help with. If they have special interests around specific project areas, let them know of any training or resources available to get them started.

Be sure that once parents begin to volunteer their time, they have support of others rather than being expected to take on club leadership by on their own. The responsibility for youth success is shared by families and club leadership. It's nice to work with others and not feel that you have to do it all yourself. Invite parents to county and statewide volunteer trainings, leader luncheons, committee work, leaders' councils, workshops, and other related events. Some parents may feel that they are not "club leaders" and therefore may not respond to notices of "leader" trainings. Perhaps we need to think about changing the language we use in marketing these activities so everyone feels welcome to participate?

Talk to Extension staff about rewards and recognition of 4-H volunteers. This should not occur only during an annual recognition event; recognition should happen on a regular basis. This can be as simple as a thank you note and special treats to make people feel valued and appreciated for their time and efforts.

Organization, Structure, and Communication

(Power Point Slide 5) Be sure that parents are informed in a timely manner of upcoming activities and events. Involve them in the development of an annual calendar, and let them know not only when and where events will take place, but who among them is involved in providing leadership and support for each event. Time is a precious commodity. Education sessions need to be on target with what volunteers need to know in order to carry out their roles. Be clear in explaining what they are doing and *why* they are doing it. There should be a connection between a fun activity and the learning or benefit behind it.



A volunteer handbook and policy manual should be readily available resources so volunteers know where to go if they have a question. A mentoring model is a valuable tool in connecting new volunteers with more experienced volunteers. A website has become a must in today's society, providing an instant link to information, training, resources, and online discussion groups. It is imperative that information is current and reflects the involvement of parents as volunteers.

Doing Things as a Family

(Power Point Slide 6) Volunteering shouldn't take people away from their family but be something they can enjoy with their family. Parents should know that they are an important part of their child's experience with 4-H. Activities such as family nights, family camps, or family community service activities can serve to enhance the connection between youth and parents. Having a child in the program is a strong motivation for parents to volunteer.

Activity 2: Parent Recruitment and Involvement Inventory

Ask participants to complete the Parent Recruitment and Involvement Inventory (Handout 1).

Conclusion:

(Power Point Slide 7) Parents look for a program which offers a safe, fun, learning environment and is organized and welcoming to family involvement. Once these elements are found, parents are more apt to volunteer their time in support of their child's involvement. Prospective volunteers need to feel a sense of shared responsibility within the program. They need to feel their involvement is appreciated, and to know there is ongoing support and communication between fellow volunteers and paid staff. At all levels of involvement, it is important for volunteers to know they can call upon others in support of their volunteer roles.

TALK IT OVER

Reflect:

- What elements do parents look for in a program for their children and to volunteer their time?
- How do 4-H clubs and groups provide these elements?

Apply:

- How can your 4-H club or group provide these elements and improve parent participation?

EVALUATION

Ask each participant to complete the evaluation tool (Handout 2).

ENHANCE or SIMPLIFY

Create a list of parent volunteers. Next to their names list their skills, hobbies, interests, and careers. Are there areas where volunteers might be able to help your club accomplish its goals? If so, make a commitment to approach that person or persons about helping your club in that specific area. Are there big gaps in your knowledge of your volunteers? If so, make a commitment to get to know your volunteers better.

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Handout 1

Parent Recruitment and Involvement Inventory

Element in 4-H club or group	Definition	How does your 4-H club or group include this element?
Provide a Safe Environment	A screening process and risk management education are in place. Policies are conveyed in literature, by word of mouth, and action.	
Provide a Fun Environment	Kids have fun, make friends, and learn skills. The program keeps the interest of the youth and parents devote their time volunteering.	
Provide a Learning Environment	Youth have a voice in the program, hold offices, experience leadership and followership, make group decisions, and have opportunities to excel.	
Promote Relationships among Parents	Promote relationships among parents and volunteers.	
Involve Parents	Involve parents by asking them what they would like to see happen.	
Provide Support	Let volunteers know about available resources. Support volunteers rather than expecting them to take things on by themselves.	
Keep Parents Informed	Keep parents informed of activities and events.	
Involve Parents in Calendaring	Involve parents in developing an annual calendar.	
Provide Resources to Volunteers	Provide volunteers with a mentor, a handbook, and up to date information via the internet.	
Provide Educational Workshops for Volunteers	Invite parents to volunteer workshops, leader luncheons, committee meetings, and leader councils.	
Promote Family Activities	Provide activities such as family nights, family camps, or family service activities.	



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Evaluation

Please complete the following evaluation. The results of the evaluation will be shared with those who work with the program. Your participation in this evaluation is voluntary. Your responses will be combined with the responses of all other participants and you will not be individually identified on any report prepared.

Please answer the questions by circling the number that indicates your level of understanding of the topics listed before and after the training.

1 = Very little understanding 2 = Understand somewhat 3 = Clear understanding

	NOW – After the training			THEN – Before the training		
1. I can describe key elements that parents want in a youth program.	1	2	3	1	2	3
2. I can identify ways to get parents involved.	1	2	3	1	2	3
3. I can describe how 4-H can provide opportunities for family involvement.	1	2	3	1	2	3

- Please list at least two ideas or skills that you learned as a result of this presentation.

- How will you use what you learned in this presentation?

