



# SUPPORTING NEW MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

**Intended Audience:**

- Adults and youth providing 4-H Club leadership

**Learning Objectives:**

Club leaders will:

- Identify the feelings and needs of new members and their families
- Implement actions to welcome and orient new 4-H members and their families
- Discuss why youth leave 4-H
- Explore ideas that the club can use to create a positive experience for youth

**Target Essential Elements:**

A sense of *belonging* is the basis for new members and their families to feel comfortable and become active participants.

**Time:** 20-30 minutes

**Supplies Needed:**

What Do New 4-H Members/Families Experience? Activity

- Paper and pen/pencil for participants
- “What Do New 4-H Members/Families Experience in Our Club?” handout

**BACKGROUND**

Have you ever joined a new group? Think about those first meetings and what you experienced. How was it a positive or a challenging experience?

**WHAT TO DO**

Share your feelings about joining a new group. It would be best to share a more challenging or frustrating experience you’ve had to help your participants recognize some of the things that can happen. For example, share if you didn’t know anyone, if people didn’t talk to you, how the group acknowledged your presence, what information you needed and didn’t have, and your early perceptions of how the group functioned.

**Activity: What Do New 4-H Members/Families Experience?**

(Hand out “What Do New Members/Families Experience in Our Club?”) Please answer the questions on the handout related to new members and their families. (Use this as a discussion guide. Briefly, have members share their thoughts.)



We might not know what new members and their parents are thinking. You may want to use these questions as you visit with new members in the club to find out what they are experiencing.

*Some Ways of Helping New Members and Their Families Feel Welcome*

Welcoming new members and families is a universal need for 4-H clubs. Cooperative Extension staff across the country shared ideas on what they and people in their counties are doing to help new participants. Let’s look at a list of some approaches in the handout, “Welcoming New Members and Families.” Would any of these ideas work for your club? What other ideas do you have?

County UW-Extension offices have resources for you to use to help new members and their families. The four-page brochure, “Welcome to Wisconsin 4-H,” can be part of the orientation meeting or materials you give new members. Can you think of other resources available in county offices?

*Who Should Welcome and Orient New Participants?*

All current members, volunteers and their families have a role in welcoming new participants. The officers should discuss how they can welcome and support new members. They need to serve as role models.

Introduce the new members and parents to the volunteers who will be their project leaders. Ask the project leader to tell them the plans for the coming year. If there is not an available project leader, be sure that they understand this at enrollment time.

Consider establishing a role for a New Family Coordinator or Club Welcoming Committee who will be active throughout the year in welcoming and supporting new members.

### Handouts

- What Do New Members/Families Experience in Our Club?
- Welcoming New Members and Families
- Welcome to Wisconsin 4-H family brochure (BRO42)
- 4-H DD's Dynamic Duos
- Evaluation
- County orientation and general 4-H information

### **Do Ahead:**

- Have supplies and handouts ready.
- Recruit someone to record the reflection discussion to use as an evaluation (optional).

### **Sources:**

- Created by Linda Kustka, Professor Emeritus, Department of Youth Development, UW-Extension.
- Trisha Day and Greg Lampe, "Communication Activities for 4-H Clubs and other Youth Groups," COMMO7, *4-H Youth Development Building Bridges Curriculum*, Department of 4-H Youth Development, UW-Extension:  
<http://cecommerce.uwex.edu/showcat.asp?id=5152&cto=1>.

We'll know we are succeeding in providing a great experience for new participants when they enroll and continue to develop through new 4-H experiences.

### *Closing*

It takes a team to welcome and orient new participants. Your UW-Extension staff members are part of that team in providing orientation materials, new volunteer orientation, and responding to questions and concerns throughout the year.

4-H Youth Development Extension staff will benefit from your reactions to this session. We appreciate your completing the evaluation.

### **TALK IT OVER**

#### **Reflect:**

- How might youth and their parents feel when joining a 4-H group?
- What's important to new 4-H members?

#### **Apply:**

- What might your club do better or differently to welcome new participants?
- How might your 4-H club use the Feedback Form?

### **ENHANCE/SIMPLIFY**

#### **Enhance:**

- This lesson can be combined with the "Keeping Youth in 4-H: Why Do Some Leave?" and "Keeping Youth in 4-H: Retaining Older Members" lessons.
- Have participants write down their thoughts on the activity handout before the discussion.
- If time allows, involve some 2nd year members and parents to share their experiences, including what helpful things others had done for them during their first year and what they wish had been done differently. Recruit these resource people from a strong club or group where the organization leaders will feel comfortable about being an example.
- Ask if those present would like to go into more depth on member retention approaches used in other places.

#### **Simplify:**

- Use the activity handout as a quick discussion guide without time for the audience to record their thoughts first. Consider asking groups of 2-3 to each take one question and then share their thoughts with the group.

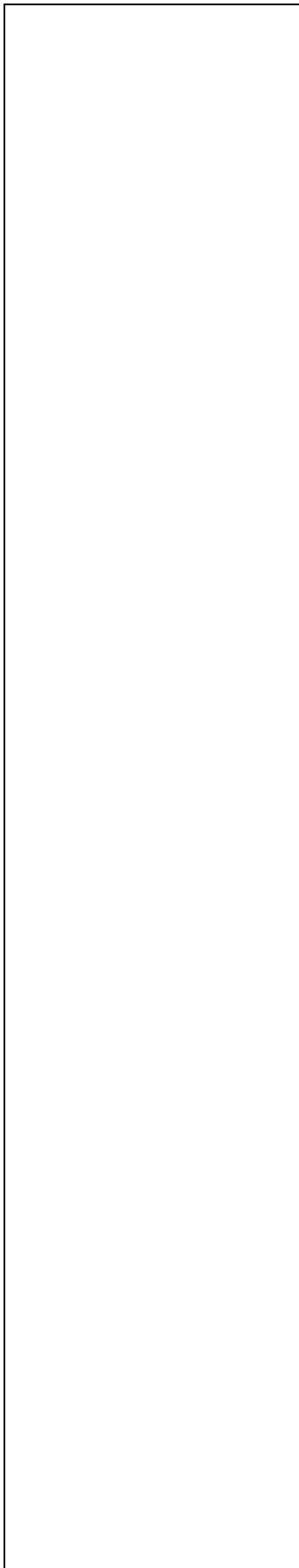
### **EVALUATION**

It is important to use an evaluation that is consistent with your teaching objectives. The short evaluation in the handouts can be modified to meet your needs. An alternative to a written evaluation is to record the Reflection discussion under "Talk It Over." Recruit someone ahead of time to take notes while you are leading the discussion. Remember to share the evaluation results with 4-H Youth Development Extension staff in your county.

### **ADDITIONAL WEB LINKS**

- "Welcome to Wisconsin 4-H" family brochure (BRO42) can be found in English and Spanish at [www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/pubs/pubdetails.cfm?publicationid=33](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/pubs/pubdetails.cfm?publicationid=33).
- "Improving 4-H Operations: Sagging Membership," an idea sheet on member drop out from North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, can be found at [www.nc4h.org/extension/clubs/Lessons/prob04.html](http://www.nc4h.org/extension/clubs/Lessons/prob04.html).
- See resources and web links from the two related lessons "Keeping Youth in 4-H: Why Do Some Leave?" and "Keeping Youth in 4-H: Retaining Older Members."

***Finalized by the Strengthening 4-H Club Leadership Work Team on September 2005.***



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## **What Do New Members/Families Experience in Our 4-H Club?**

1. How welcome did you and your family feel at your first 4-H club meeting(s)?
2. Did you or your family know anyone in the 4-H Club who helped you understand what was happening?
3. Were there words used or events/activities talked about that you or your family did not understand? What was confusing? How did you find out the answers to your questions?
4. What did you and your family expect to happen in 4-H soon after joining?
5. What ideas do you have for helping new members and families feel welcome to the 4-H club?

## Welcoming New Members and Families

1. Hold a new member and family orientation before or after one of your regular meetings. Tell them about member and parent involvement opportunities and what the club expects of them. Briefly describe activities coming up. Ask them questions to determine their interests. You will get ideas on how they might help the 4-H club, too. Ask them about their 4-H knowledge and experiences.
2. Provide a list of club contacts with phone numbers, e-mail addresses and residence addresses. Provide a copy of the Club Calendar which has 4-H club meeting and activities listed with dates and times. See the sample “4-H Club Calendar Planner” at: [www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/clubs/documents/4HClubCalendarPlanner.pdf](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/clubs/documents/4HClubCalendarPlanner.pdf).
3. Give them a 4-H or UW-Extension folder with information on how to contact your UW-Extension office. Suggest they use this folder as a place to keep their club information.
4. Do get-acquainted activities frequently at your 4-H club meetings. This helps members and families get to know each other. Even members that know each other benefit from this interaction.
5. Establish a standing committee or appointed position to serve as the “Welcoming Committee.” Their job is to make sure that new members and family members are greeted at meetings, answer their questions, and get involved in the 4-H club meeting and activities. This should be someone other than the 4-H club leadership team.
6. Establish “Dynamic Duos” that pair up newer members with more experienced members who will actively involve the newcomer in the group. For lots of great ideas, see 4-H DD’s (Dynamic Duos) in “Communication Activities for 4-H Clubs and other Youth Groups,” COMMO7, part of the 4-H Youth Development Building Bridges Curriculum from UW-Extension: <http://cecommerce.uwex.edu/showcat.asp?id=5152&cto=1>.
7. At the end of each meeting, check with the new participants to see if they have any questions or concerns.
8. Let the new 4-H parents know that they need to support their children’s involvement in the club. Give them some volunteer options to help the 4-H club that will also help them learn more about 4-H. Consider teaming them with a more experienced volunteer.

## Supporting New Members and Their Families

### Evaluation

1. How useful will this information be in helping your 4-H club welcome and orient new members and families? (Circle one response.)

Very Useful      Somewhat Useful      Not Sure      Not Useful

2. Do you feel better prepared to welcome new participants in your 4-H club?

Yes                      No

3. What will you do as a result of this program?