The goal of 4-H is to support youth in their growth and development; to provide the opportunities youth need to develop the critical life and work skills they will need to transition into successful adulthood. A caring and supportive parent is one essential component of a positive youth development program. The following tips for parents will help them maximize their effectiveness as a caring and supportive 4-H parent.

The Do's and Don'ts of Being a 4-H Parent:

DO'S:

! DO take time to learn about 4-H, what it stands for, and how it operates.

! DO advise your son or daughter 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 show your interest and enthusiasm for the 4-H projects selected. Find out what is suggested for members to do and learn. Encourage your child to work on the project and record keeping all year long and not to wait until the last minute.

! DO encourage your child to participate in county and state events, such as public presentations, camp, fair, workshops and other activities.

! DO keep the purpose of the 4-H project in perspective. Realize that a project is simply a teaching tool, a method for involving boys and girls in a worthwhile activity, and for building life skills. Above all, remember that your child is more important than the 4-H project.

! DO keep in mind that the most important goal of 4-H is personal growth of the individual.

! DO give encouragement when your 4-H'er succeeds and even more when he/she fails. Judging and awards are not final exams. Whatever ratings are given or scores received, help your child to see progress made, things that have been learned, goals that have been reached and areas to focus on in the future.

! DO remember that 4-H members learn from their mistakes as well as their successes.

! DO offer your home for 4-H meetings; volunteer your hobbies and talents to 4-H leaders.

! DO be tactful - with 4-H leaders, educators, judges, your child.

! DO remember that 4-H leaders and judges are often volunteering their own time for the benefit of your
child; don't forget to show them appreciation.

! DO ASK QUESTIONS!

DON'TS

! 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 schedule family outings which constantly conflict with your child's 4-H schedule.

! DON'T re-live your childhood experiences through your child.

! 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 your child is always right.

Parent’s 4-H Pledge

I pledge my HEAD to give information to help my child see things clearly and to make wise decisions.

I pledge my HEART to encourage and support my child, whether he has successes or disappointments.

I pledge my HANDS to help my child's club; if I cannot be a leader, I can help in many equally important ways.

I pledge my HEALTH to keep my child strong and well for a better world through 4-H, for my child's club, our community, our country, and our world.

Making the Best Better

Ask yourself why you want your child to join 4-H. If it is to win, you will be disappointed. If it is so your child can learn and become involved in a worthwhile activity that helps build life skills, you will be satisfied. Recognition comes with doing the best your child can do. Be a supportive parent and help your child and 4-H leader to "Make the Best Better!"

Adapted From: Rutgers Cooperative Extension, New Jersey 4-H Leader Training Series, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 1994

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