



## **MONTANA 4-H CENTER FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT** *COVID-19 BEST PRACTICES*

### **Guidelines for 4-H Club and Project Meetings to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19**

Volunteers serving youth through the 4-H program take on a large, but rewarding responsibility in educating tomorrow's leaders. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this responsibility is extended to include the health and wellness of the members, parents, and other volunteers who participate in your club or project. This guide outlines best practices for preventing the spread of the virus.

As a first step, please assess the risk factors for the individuals in your 4-H community. Postponing or not holding events where physical distancing is difficult is the best way to prevent contamination and transmission of the disease. Most club and project activities can take place, however, by simply increasing your sanitary practices, reducing close contact between participants, and eliminate or disinfect shared items that many people touch.

The guidance below will help you reduce the risk of spreading disease at your 4-H events and meetings. Most cause very little inconvenience.



**Following the Governor's mandate, all participants must wear masks while participating in 4-H in-person programming while indoors or closer than six feet apart.**

- Extension events or gatherings of groups of more than 50 people in circumstances that do not readily allow for appropriate physical distancing should not be held. It is recommended to continue to social distance in gatherings of any size.
- If you are planning an event with more than 50 people you should consult with your local public health office on a plan to implement adequate physical distancing.
  - Consistent with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) guidelines, event cutoff threshold is at the discretion of community leadership based on current circumstances in your community.
- If masks cannot be worn, or a participant chooses not to, work to find virtual alternatives for engagement.



**Move activities outside.**

- Open air reduces the risk of airborne illness. Meet outside as much as possible.
- If you can't move outside, find a fun way to have those attending spread out while inside.



### **Schedule time for hand washing.**

- Take the opportunity to teach about proper hand washing and include hand washing in your program; particularly before eating.



### **Start a new greeting.**

- Involve the youth in inventing a new way to greet one another from a distance? The 4-H members will enjoy coming up with something out of the ordinary to say hello that does not involve touching.



### **Have tissues available.**

- Bring a box of tissues for use by anyone sneezing or coughing to catch those germs. Teach how to cough into the side of the elbow and distance any coughing youth from the rest of the group.
- Send individuals home with their parent or guardian if they show signs of an illness.



### **Change how you open doors.**

- Due to all the touching, doorknobs are one of the worst places for germs. Study the facility to see if any doors can be propped open so not everyone needs to touch them. If it is not possible to prop open doors, assign a greeter and open the door for everyone. ▫
- Make sure paper towels and garbage cans are available by bathroom doors, so people can open the door with a towel and then throw it away.



### **Choose activities where participants are able to stay six feet apart.**

- Do not engage in activities requiring close physical contact. If you planned a game or icebreaker that requires close physical contact, save it for another time or modify the procedures.



### **Use single serving beverage containers.**

- Offer individual juice boxes, water bottles, etc. instead of serving beverages from a large container or push-button cooler that multiple people touch.



### **Serve individually wrapped food.**

- Do not serve food in a potluck or buffet style. Offer individual food items such as individually wrapped sandwiches, muffins, or cookies.
- Ask a single server with proper hygiene to place bulk items like chips or cookies in individual cups or bags or serve prepackaged individually wrapped single servings.
- The increased volume of individual packaging may overflow garbage containers. Empty the trash as needed so that items having been touched and licked are not spilling out



### **Use no-touch educational resources.**

- Instead of passing around something cool for members to see, consider walking around with it and showing them at eye level. This eliminates the need for them to touch it.
- Instead of the take-one-and-pass-it-along method of paper distribution, hand out papers one at a time.
- If participants must share items (e.g. scissors, a camera, a glue bottle), use disinfectant wipes to clean the item at the beginning and end of the event and between each use.



### **Don't share pens and pencils.**

- Have one person take attendance to avoid sharing one pen.



### **Carefully clean and disinfect after the meeting.**

- Disinfect after hosting a project meeting. Plan to take fifteen minutes after everyone has left to wipe down all frequently touched surfaces with a disinfectant spray or bleach solution. The CDC and EPA provide the following guidance :
  - **Cleaning** removes germs and dirt from surfaces. You can use soap and water to clean surfaces. This doesn't always kill germs but removing them lowers their numbers. It's suggested to clean surfaces before you disinfect them.
  - **Disinfecting** kills germs on surfaces. Disinfectant chemicals are stronger than soap but do not necessarily clean visibly dirty surfaces or remove germs. Killing germs lowers the risk of infection. To properly disinfect, products need to remain on a surface for a specific amount of time -- usually 3 to 5 minutes.
  - **Sanitizing** also kills germs, but disinfecting kills more of them. Still, sanitizers effectively lower the risk of infection.



### **Manage your risk while getting supplies.**

- Germs are picked up everywhere. When shopping, use a tissue on your fingertip so you don't need to touch the PIN pad when paying.
- Wipe down the handle on your shopping cart or basket, and if a plastic produce bag is available use that as an added layer between you and the handle.
- Pumping gas? Grab a paper towel from the window cleaning station and use that to hold the gas handle.
- Grabbing something to eat while you run these errands? Remember that tables are not disinfected between customers, so don't let your food or utensils touch the table. Put them on napkins or plates.



### **Schedule back-up volunteers.**

- Parents inclined to bring a sick child with them to an event at which they are volunteering should be discouraged from doing so. Flexibility in attendance is expected to ensure the health and wellness of the 4-H community.
- To avoid gaps in help, try to add a few more volunteers to your roster for each activity to cover unplanned absences.



### **Carefully consider attendance at large events.**

- It is up to each of us to decide if and how we will participate in large events. For example, you might decide it's okay to participate in an outdoor event, but not to participate in an activity with a lot of people in a small enclosed area.
- Also be sure to consider not only your personal risk factors, but those of others living in your household and whether your activity would increase exposure for others at higher risk.
- The CDC has information about who is at higher risk: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>

*This document has been adapted from a University of Arizona Cooperative Extension publication (az1830) created by Jeremy Elliot Engel and Cathy L. Martinez.*

