

Helpful tips for Maine 4-H Volunteers related to COVID-19

March 13, 2020

Here are some helpful steps you can take to reduce the risk of spreading diseases at your 4-H events and meetings. We have also included some other helpful reminders for you to consider. The underlying message for most of the tips below is to reduce the touching of shared items. They might not all be reasonable, so choose which things make the most sense for your situation. We do not want to induce panic but do want to educate our youth on good hygiene habits. We encourage 4-H volunteers and members to help minimize the spread of diseases and one way to do that is for people to stay home if they are sick. The CDC recommends that people stay home if they have had a fever; they should be fever-free 24 hours (without the use of medication) before attending community events such as 4-H club meetings.

Given the rapidly evolving COVID-19 situation in Maine, UMaine Extension is making the decision to cancel indoor events of more than 20 attendees (this includes parents, members, volunteers, and staff) happening through April 6.

- Attendance policies.
 - We need to be flexible about policies on attending meetings and events. If a child or close family member of a child is sick, they should be excused from participating. This absence should not count against their qualifications for other activities such as the County Fair. Right now, we need to be as flexible as possible with attendance and avoid the situation where someone feels they need to attend a meeting or event, even if they are sick or at risk of illness.
- If you do serve snacks and beverage items during your club meeting, consider individual servings instead of shared items.
- Consider modeling proper hygiene.
 - Washing hands before and after eating/activities.
 - [When and How to Wash Your Hands | Handwashing](#)
- Consider a new greeting.
 - Do you routinely shake hands at your meeting/event? Can you invent a new greeting? The kids might enjoy coming up with a silly new way to say hello that does not involve touching!
- Consider having tissues available.
 - Bring a box of tissues so anyone sneezing or coughing has a way to catch those germs. Instruct anyone who has sneezed or coughed to immediately wash their hands.

- Consider how you open doors.
 - Door knobs are one of the worst places to touch. Can you have someone be the greeter and open the door for everyone?
 - Make sure paper towels and a garbage can are available by bathroom doors so that you can open the door with a towel, and then throw it away.

- Consider your activities.
 - Will you be doing a game that requires close physical contact? Maybe save that for your July meeting instead.
 - Choose ice breakers that do not require physical touching between participants during highly infectious seasons.

- Consider having back-up volunteers in place.
 - Oftentimes, parents will bring a sick child with them to an event when they are committed to volunteering. This is well-intentioned but should be discouraged.
 - To avoid gaps in help, be sure to add a few more volunteers to your roster for each activity to plan for absences.

- Consider moving activities outside.
 - Open-air reduces the risk of airborne illness. Can you take your meeting outside, or even just part of it?

- Consider pre- and post-meeting clean-up.
 - If hosting a project meeting in your home, how will you disinfect before and after the meeting?
 - For more information on cleaning and disinfecting visit [COVID-19: Resources for Households](#)

- Consider shared educational resources.
 - Will you be passing around something cool for the children to see? Maybe for now consider walking around with it and showing them at eye level, without the need for them to touch it.
 - Are you passing around papers? Instead of the take-one-and-pass-it-along method, try handing them out one at a time.
 - Will there be only one pair of shears, or camera, or glue bottle, etc for everyone to use? Can you use some disinfectant wipes between use or at least a few times throughout the activity?
 - Does everyone use the same pen to check-in for attendance? Can you have one person do this so not everyone is touching the same pen?

Please contact your local county extension office if you have questions.