I Pledge...
My Head to clearer thinking,
My Heart to greater loyalty,
My Hands to larger service,
And my Health to better living,
for my club, my community,
my country, and my world.

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“Teens are not problems to be fixed,
but resources to be developed.”

Richard Lerner, Ph.D.
Introduction

4-H is a community of young people across America learning life, leadership and citizenship skills. The responsibilities and activities associated with being involved as a 4-H county ambassador teach all three skills in a variety of ways and provide older members with an outlet for using their skills.

Research has shown that high-quality youth programs, those proven most effective and rated highly by young people, make an intentional effort to engage youth at the highest level in planning, making choices and reflecting on their learning (Zeldin, Larson, Camino and O’Connor, 2005). Attention to making youth programs fun, interesting, welcoming and encouraging to young people in our 4-H youth development programs is crucial to their continued vitality.

The “Big 3” program characteristics that influence positive youth development and encourage community contributions are:

- Youth leadership development
- Sustained youth-adult partnerships
- Skill-building activities

(Roth and Brooks-Gunn, 2003)

Involvement in 4-H programs provides experiences in all three of these areas. Ensuring the Big 3 are present in your 4-H programming efforts attract youth and keep them engaged in 4-H programming long term (Lerner, 2013).

Being part of a North Dakota 4-H county ambassadors program provides an excellent opportunity for leadership development. These members have the opportunity to represent their 4-H clubs, share the knowledge they have gained through their 4-H experience with a wider audience and bring new skills they have gained back to their 4-H clubs. The program acknowledges the leadership qualities and potential that each person possesses.

In addition to the regular 4-H projects and activities, the county ambassadors will participate in county events, develop action plans and engage in service learning. A county ambassadors program provides older youth something to strive for and keeps them involved in 4-H. In turn, younger members are provided with role models to relate to and emulate. Finally, working as an ambassador group with adult leaders and community mentors provides high-quality youth-adult partnership experiences.

The following handbook provides a basic guideline and examples of how the 4-H county ambassadors program can provide a leadership program that is unique to 4-H youth development.

The purpose of this guide is to provide an outline and suggestions for creating and maintaining a 4-H county ambassador program, as well as to provide resources for advisers and youth members.

This guide can be modified and adapted to fit the needs of each county.
What is a 4-H County Ambassador Program?
Counties in North Dakota have the opportunity to provide a 4-H county ambassador program for older youth who are interested in participating in county events and gaining new leadership responsibilities. These ambassadors should meet as a group at least once a month to plan group and county 4-H events, engage in service learning and take part in leadership development activities. This group also provides a positive social opportunity for older 4-H youth.

What Do the Ambassadors Do?
County ambassadors are leaders in the 4-H program in each county. The responsibilities of county ambassadors may include:

- Visiting other 4-H clubs and teaching 4-H’ers in areas of their choice
- Reaching out to other community organizations
- Attending and assisting with 4-H county meetings and events
- Participating as a member of Extension advisory boards
- Serving as youth representatives at 4-H council meetings
- Teaching or presenting at or helping coordinate 4-H Project Activity days
- Volunteering, planning and attending youth retreats
- Assisting with 4-H achievement days/county fair
- Being involved in other activities as selected by each county Extension agent

The Role of the Adviser
4-H county ambassador advisers have the opportunity to work with the 4-H youth leaders in their county.

4-H county ambassadors need an adult adviser who will work with them, advise them and help them accomplish their goals. The following are essential functions of the 4-H county ambassador adviser:

Be
- Prepared
- On time
- Flexible
- Available to review each discussion/meeting and discuss roles and expectations

Follow up!
- Do your homework and follow up on leads.
- Keep in touch: email, text, phone call, act as administrator to a Facebook page to post updates.
- Put several articles in the county 4-H newsletter and/or other county communications to the ambassadors’ 4-H community.

Show appreciation
- Remind the 4-H county ambassadors regularly of the good work they are doing and how much they are valued and appreciated.
- Create an award for the county ambassadors at your 4-H awards/recognition program.
Sample Adviser Duties

Be a positive role model using professional behavior.

Just as the county ambassadors serve as role models for other 4-H members, the adviser is a role model for the county ambassadors. The actions, attitudes and behavior of the advisers will be observed closely by the youth while representing your 4-H county ambassador program. Advisers and participants in the program should follow the 4-H Code of Conduct and Expectations for youth and adults and represent the 4-H program in a positive and professional way. See the resource list for the North Dakota 4-H Code of Conduct and Expectations.

The North Dakota 4-H program uses CHARACTER COUNTS! and the 6 Pillars of Character (trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship) as guides to ethical conduct. Advisers must model positive and appropriate behaviors and attitudes and encourage their county ambassadors to do the same. Use the TEAM model as a guide:

TEAM: Teach, Enforce, Advocate, Model (Six Pillars of Character*)

♦ Teach
Tell adolescents that their character, not their personal appearance or what they have, is what counts and will help them achieve success. Explain the meaning of each pillar (trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and good citizenship).

♦ Enforce
Teach the Six Pillars of Character by rewarding good behavior and discouraging all instances of bad behavior. This is done by imposing fair, consistent consequences that prove you are serious about character.

♦ Advocate
Continuously encourage adolescents to live up to the Six Pillars of Character in all their thoughts and actions. Be an advocate for character. Be clear and uncompromising to show that you want and expect the county ambassadors to be trustworthy, respectful, responsible, fair, caring and good citizens.

♦ Model
Be careful and self-conscious about setting a good example in everything you say and do. Hold yourself to the highest standards of character by honoring the Six Pillars of Character at all times. Everything you do, and don’t do, sends a message about your values. Be sure your messages reinforce your lessons about doing the right thing even when doing so is hard. When you slip (and most of us do), act the way you want the county ambassadors to behave when they act improperly: be accountable, apologize sincerely and resolve to do better. (Josephson Institute Center for Youth Ethics).

Support your 4-H county ambassadors.

Whether youth need assistance in accomplishing a task/goal or simply need some moral support in a difficult situation, advisers need to be supportive of all 4-H county ambassadors and coach them as needed. (However, this does not mean take over. Check out the resource section on youth engagement for more information.)

Be knowledgeable about 4-H and its policies.

You need to be aware of the 4-H policies so they are followed. You should be able to answer questions regarding the 4-H program when speaking with people in the general public so you can help market 4-H to those outside of the organization.

Ensure the safety and protection of all participants in youth programs.

The following guidelines help establish positive environments and program barriers that promote safety and well-being for all program participants. For more information, check out the resource section for a link to the North Dakota 4-H Youth Protection Policy.

- To protect all individuals, volunteers and staff need to work with young people in reasonably open places where others are welcome to enter (not behind closed doors).
- Be aware that while spending time alone with a single child can be positive and helpful, it also can be a reason for concern for everyone involved.
• Parents and guardians always are welcomed and encouraged to attend Extension youth program meetings and events.

• Respect privacy. Adults need to respect the privacy of youth. The privacy issue is especially relevant in situations where changing clothes or taking showers may be in facilities lacking privacy. In these situations, staff (volunteer and paid) should intrude only to the extent that health and safety requires.

• Any NDSU Extension Service youth-related activities involving an overnight stay will have a minimum of one responsible adult (at least 18 years old) for every eight to 10 youth, as consistent with national 4-H guidelines.

• Paid staff and volunteers should be alert to the physical and emotional well-being of youth under their supervision. Signs of injury or suspected child abuse or neglect should be reported.

• Extension paid staff and volunteers are reminded that adult behavior can have an impact on youth in many situations and environments during Extension programming and outside of those responsibilities.

• Extension staff and volunteers will not, under any circumstances, discipline youth by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care, such as food and shelter.

• An adult should not share a room with one minor child who is not his/her child. Youth should room with other youth. If the situation dictates that an adult and a youth must share a room, several youth should be present with a single adult.

I Keep youth informed of expectations and information.

The county ambassadors should have a clear plan for what they need to accomplish. They cannot fulfill expectations if they are not aware of them. Reminders of their responsibilities may be necessary throughout the year to keep them on track and avoid frustration and confusion. Be sure to keep them well informed of anything that happens or has been discussed that affects them or their responsibilities.

I Provide encouragement and motivation.

While 4-H county ambassadors tend to be very dedicated and determined youth, encouragement and motivation go a long way in helping them succeed. You can change attitudes significantly with encouragement and motivation. One activity that may accomplish this is “What Motivates You” (National 4-H Council, 2009).

I Help facilitate meetings and keep meetings productive.

One of your responsibilities as adviser is to help the group set up meeting dates. Scheduling may be difficult, but do your best to accommodate as many people as possible to have the best representation at meetings. Make sure meetings are not scheduled in a way that consistently excludes a member from attending. Try to set up a regular time each month/week, but you may need to be flexible throughout the year. Be sure to offer a variety of channels of communication for group members (email, Facebook, texting, etc.) and encourage frequent communication among group members.

Make sure you establish ground rules from the very beginning when holding meetings. Try to let youth facilitate meetings as much as possible, rotating the members responsible for leading the meeting each time so that each member gains leadership experience. You may need to assist the facilitators in keeping the meetings on track and productive, but those members should be expected to do most of the work (Gorski, 2013).

Ground rules should be developed and adapted for every context. Appropriate ground rules may depend partially on age, region and other contextual factors.
The following is a list of general ground rules and should serve only as a starting point for your process of creating a similar list suitable for your situation:

1. Listen actively. Respect others when they are talking.
2. Speak from your own experience instead of generalizing (“I” instead of “they,” “we” and “you”).
3. Do not be afraid to challenge one another respectfully by asking questions, but refrain from personal attacks. Focus on ideas.
4. Participate to the extent of your ability.
5. Instead of invalidating somebody else’s story with your own spin on her or his experience, share your own story and experience.
6. The goal is not to agree; it is to gain a deeper understanding.
7. Be conscious of body language and nonverbal responses; they can be as disrespectful as words (Gorski, 2013).

Setting a ground rule for how participation will be managed also is important. Should participants raise their hands and be called on or speak freely? Remember that some people, especially those who tend to be introverted, need more time to process thoughts and speak, so the latter option may exclude them from the discussion. Still, the formal process of raising hands to be recognized may detract from the collective atmosphere needed to discuss sometimes-controversial issues (Gorski, 2013).

Posting the ground rules somewhere visible during the entire class or workshop is helpful. Be sure to challenge the participants on the ground rules early and often. If you are using more than two or three ground rules, try focusing on particular items during appropriate activities or discussions. For example, if you are facilitating a discussion in a large group, state before the discussion starts that you would like to focus on active listening.

Challenge participants to refrain from any side discussions. You must model these ground rules in your own participation. This is especially true for an item such as No. 2 (speak from your own experience). Be sure that your own language reflects ownership and responsibility by using as many “I” and “me” statements as possible.

If a particular ground rule is broken routinely, bounce it back to the participants. A fruitful discussion often can arise from a close examination of why the participants are not adhering to particular items. Revisit the ground rules occasionally and ask whether the participants would like to add any new items (Gorski, 2013).

Serve as a mediator.

Advisers may need to act as a mediator while serving as a 4-H county ambassador adviser. This may be between youth members or possibly between youth members and adults. Either way, you must be prepared to help members work through difficult situations and resolve problems while performing their duties.

For more mediation resources, check out the resources section of this handbook.

Act as a guide to community resources.

You can help your members connect with resources in the community. You probably are aware of resources that are available or know how to access them to assist your team. Help the youth find and contact the resources available in your community to help achieve their goals.

Act as a chaperone.

Advisers have the responsibility to chaperone 4-H events. Chaperones should accompany youth to events and be aware of their location at these events. Keeping the youth safe during travel and at events is extremely important. As the adviser, you will need to guide members, establish rules/guidelines and set a good example. You also are responsible for arranging and supervising activities for your group should you arrive before or leave later than the scheduled activities at an event.

Select a co-adviser (optional).

You may choose to select a co-adviser to help lead the 4-H county ambassador program in your county. You can ask the Extension agent in your county, 4-H council members, 4-H leaders, county commissioners, etc. The role, duties and expectations are the same for co-advisers as advisers.
Program Ideas/Options

When setting up your 4-H county ambassador program, you have several options for the overall structure of the program. Each county should select the program that best suits its needs and the desires of its youth.

For example, the group could be led with traditional officers, yearly elections and traditional roles. Perhaps the group would better be suited to follow a shared leadership model that does not include officers. The benefits of each system are outlined below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Officers</th>
<th>Shared Leadership/No Officers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Can establish officer guidelines, expectations (president, vice president, communications director [like secretary but includes Facebook and/or website updates, texting, emailing, etc.] and treasury officer)</td>
<td>• Can give each member an opportunity to assist with running meetings, agendas, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Can run meetings, create agendas, manage communication with group members and help 4-H county ambassadors understand their duties</td>
<td>• Still can use on a resume as a leadership opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Having a 4-H ambassador group with officers may be motivation for 4-H’ers who would like to place these leadership positions on resumes or college applications</td>
<td>• Adviser still could write a positive letter of recommendation for a job/college application if he/she deems the 4-H ambassador is a worthy candidate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some ways to encourage positive participation and provide motivation for your members are listed below. These are suggestions. Your 4-H county ambassadors may have more ideas on what motivates them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present an award</th>
<th>Provide feedback</th>
<th>Offer incentives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Mention it in the local newspaper or newsletter with a photo.</td>
<td>• Let each 4-H county ambassador know what he or she is doing well.</td>
<td>• Remember, this group is a great place to meet new friends from across the county.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Recognition is effective in the recruitment of new 4-H members, county ambassadors, volunteers, etc.</td>
<td>• Highlight the ambassadors’ leadership strengths.</td>
<td>• Create a 4-H county ambassador T-shirt specifically for your county to be worn at each meeting and event. It could include officer position held (ex. [year] [County] Ambassador, President). Don’t forget the 4-H clover for photo opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The award may be given for the best program idea or successful program.</td>
<td>• Give constructive criticism and suggest areas for further skill development.</td>
<td>• Offer gift cards, gas cards or movie tickets, or have the ambassadors suggest what would motivate them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consider a Character Counts! award for the ambassador who best exemplifies the Six Pillars of Character.</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Remind the youth that this program is a great resume builder for a job or college application.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Remind them that this is an opportunity to demonstrate their character and ability to be a leader.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recruitment Suggestions

For the Extension agent:
- Pull the list of older 4-H youth, including past participants, from the 4-H enrollment system and contact them about the program.
- Identify key youth/families/clubs, etc.
- Offer a mixer with possible prizes to gain interest.
- Put out a call for ambassadors in the local school newsletter/announcements and your county 4-H communication.
- Market the program on a Facebook page and mention the page in your recruitment efforts.
- Create a recruitment event for friends to join.

Possible places to market:
- Hang posters around town, such as the gas stations, gyms and schools.
- Place posters on pizza boxes.
- Place table tents in local coffee shops.
(Hassebroek, 2012).

Selection Process Suggestions

The Extension agent in each county should determine the ambassador selection process. Here are some possible criteria:
- Applicant must be a certain age (14 to 18)
- Applicant must have the potential to make a difference in 4-H
- Applicant must be a positive role model
- Applicant must be willing to uphold the North Dakota 4-H Code of Conduct and be an example of the Six Pillars of Character

A good leader inspires others with confidence in him; a great leader inspires them with confidence in themselves.
— Unknown

Orientation

After the 4-H county ambassadors are selected, orientation meeting(s) should be held to further discuss expectations and protocol. The following agenda may be better suited as a long weekend meeting or broken into the first several meetings of the group.

1. Adviser should introduce him/herself and discuss his/her role in the organization

2. Each county ambassador should introduce him/herself
   a. State name, 4-H club, years in 4-H
   b. Use icebreakers (see resources section)

3. Discuss
   a. 4-H county ambassador responsibilities
      i. Choose officers (if you decide to have officers)
      ii. Go through events and activities that are predetermined (for example, representative on 4-H council, number of visits to county 4-H clubs, assistance with 4-H awards banquets or county 4-H achievement day/fair)
   b. Discuss what adviser’s role and responsibilities are so ambassadors know what to expect from you
   c. Participation expectations/requirements/attendance policy (the required number of meetings they should attend)
   d. Communication – discuss:
      i. Who will take notes at meetings
      ii. Who will update group Facebook page (if you have one)
      iii. Who keeps track of email addresses, phone numbers for texting, etc.
   e. Develop group ground rules (see resource section)
   f. Meeting agendas (see sample agenda templates in the resource section)
   g. Other questions/discussion
   h. Discuss when next meeting will be and where (if necessary)
The following meetings should start to include action planning and brainstorming for events and activities for your 4-H county ambassadors. See the resources section for more information.

Training
Training for county ambassadors should be ongoing. Take a section of each meeting to provide leadership development education and opportunities. Training could include, but is not limited to, information on:

- What is leadership?
- Understanding and teaching younger 4-H members
- How to be a leader in your 4-H club

Promoting Opportunities for Teen 4-H Members

- North Dakota 4-H scholarships:  
  www.ndsu.edu/4h/4_h.Foundation/scholarships

- North Dakota 4-H Communication Arts Program:  
  www.ndsu.edu/4h/programs_events/state_4_h_contests/other_contests/#c197868

- Extension Youth Conference (EYC) in North Dakota:  
  www.ndsu.edu/4h/programs_events/overnight_tripscamps/extension_youth_conference

- North Dakota 4-H Citizenship in Action:  
  www.ndsu.edu/4h/programs_events/overnight_tripscamps/citizenship_in_action

- North Dakota 4-H Aerospace Camp:  
  www.ndsu.edu/4h/programs_events/overnight_tripscamps/aerospace_event

- Local or regional 4-H Project Activity Day
- North Dakota 4-H judging teams
- North Dakota 4-H junior camp counselor opportunities:  
  www.ndsu.edu/4h/camp/junior_camp_counselor

- Apply to be a 4-H State Ambassador:  
  www.ndsu.edu/4h/programs_events/4_h_ambassadors

- National 4-H Congress:  
  www.ndsu.edu/4h/programs_events/national_trip_opportunities/national_4_h_congress/

- National 4-H Conference:  
  www.ndsu.edu/4h/programs_events/national_trip_opportunities/national_4_h_conference

- Citizenship Washington Focus:  
  www.ndsu.edu/4h/programs_events/national_trip_opportunities/citizenship_washington_focus_cwf
Resources for 4-H County Ambassador Advisers

4-H Code of Conduct and Behavior Expectations (North Dakota)
• 4-H Participant Code of Conduct:
• Adult Behavior Expectations:
  www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/4h/YPP/VolBehavExpec_PB400.pdf
• University of Illinois: Helping You Help Youth Build Character:
  http://my.extension.uiuc.edu/documents/8091303090309/L90501p.pdf

Conflict Resolution and Mediation Resources
• North Dakota State University Extension: Managing Conflict:
  www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/yffamsci/fs1563.pdf
• University of Missouri Extension: Helping Kids Resolve Conflict:
  http://4h.missouri.edu/getinvolved/volunteer/trainingmodule/secure/lesson4/resolve_conflict.htm
• Conflict Resolution Worksheet:

Experiential Learning Resources
• National 4-H Essential Elements Curriculum: Experiential Learning Model (Pages 8-10):
  www.4-h.org/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=7544
• University of California Extension: Experiential Learning:
  www.experientiallearning.ucdavis.edu/default.shtml
• Experiential Learning Games:
  www.experiential-learning-games.com
• Journal of Extension: The Development and Evaluation of Experiential Learning Workshops for 4-H Volunteers:

Facilitation Techniques and Resources
• How to Manage Parking Lots and Wrap-up Meetings:
• The Role of a Facilitator:
  www.mindtools.com/pages/article/RoleofAFacilitator.htm
• Six Thinking Hats:
• University of Wisconsin-Madison: Facilitator Tool Kit:
Ground Rules Resources

- Guide for Setting Ground Rules:
  www.edchange.org/multicultural/activities/groundrules.html

- Example workshop Ground Rules:

Icebreakers, Recreation and Service Resources

- Purdue University Extension: Community Service Ideas:
  www.four-h.purdue.edu/volunteer/community.cfm

- eSource: Games and Activities for 4-h Events:

- North Dakota State University Extension: ND 4-H Recreation: Games and Activities:

- Shoe ID game:
  www.group-games.com/ice-breakers/shoe-id-game.html

- Superlative Game:
  www.icebreakers.ws/medium-group/superlative-game.html

- Would You Rather Questions:
  www.buzzle.com/articles/would-you-rather-questions.html

Motivation Activities and Resources

- National 4-H Council: Volunteerism for the Next Generation Fact Sheet Series “What Motivates You” Activity:
  http://nextgeneration.4-h.org/volunteerism/fact-sheets (Click on Motivation link)

- University of Minnesota Extension: Quality Matters Toolkit: Voice and Engagement:

North Dakota 4-H Youth Protection Policy

- North Dakota State University Extension: Youth Protection Policy:
  www.ndsu.edu/4h/staff_resources/youth_protection_policy
Sample Meeting Agenda and Meeting Minutes

4-H County Ambassador Meeting Agenda Template

Date ________/________/________

Member leading meeting ____________________________________________________

Member taking minutes ____________________________________________________

7:00 p.m. Roll call icebreakers (rotate leadership/planning for this among members for each meeting)
7:10 p.m. Old business
7:20 p.m. New business
7:30 p.m. Present material on meeting’s topic (service learning, leadership area, citizenship, upcoming 4-H event planning, etc.)
7:50 p.m. Discuss/plan upcoming events, activities, etc.
8:15 p.m. Reminders of upcoming events
8:25 p.m. Next meeting (date, time, who is responsible for leading, minutes)
8:30 p.m. Recreation and snacks (have recreation leader plan this or rotate this responsibility each time)
9:00 p.m. Adjourn

Meeting Minutes

Date ________/________/________   Time______________________

Member leading meeting ____________________________________________________

Member taking minutes ____________________________________________________

List roll call icebreakers
List old business
List new business
Write about meeting’s topic
Write about upcoming events, activities, etc., and plans made
List information about next meeting (date, time, who is responsible for leading, minutes)

Recreation and snack summary (so they are not repeated in the near future and to remind the group of activities they liked from the past.)
Youth Development and Group Development Resources

- 4-H Essential Elements:
  www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/4h/EssentialElements.pdf

- Everyone Ready:
  http://nextgeneration.4-h.org/volunteerism/everyoneready.aspx

- Group Decision Making:
  www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTED_86.htm

- North Dakota State University Extension:
  4-H Club Management Materials: www.ndsu.edu/4h/staff_resources/4_h_club_management_materials

- North Dakota State University Extension: Understanding and Working with Youth:
  www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/yf/youthdev/yd1470.pdf

- University of Illinois Extension: Helping You Help Youth Understand Their Own Culture and Appreciate Other Cultures:
  http://my.extension.uiuc.edu/documents/257071911071107/L90501k.pdf

- University of Missouri Extension: Making Group Decisions:
  http://4h.missouri.edu/resources/materials/docs/LG776.pdf

Youth Engagement Resources

- University of Minnesota: Quality Matters Toolkit Voice and Engagement:
References


Hassebroek, J. (2012). Rocket Science 101: Engaging 4-H County Ambassadors. Symposium conducted at the North Dakota 4-H Fall Youth Development Training, Washburn, N.D.


Lerner, R. (2013). Positive youth development (PYD) and youth mentoring: Evidence from the 4-H study of PYD. Symposium conducted at the Meeting of National 4-H Council Mentoring Grant Conference, Chevy Chase, Md.


Shoe ID Game. (2008).


   Retrieved from http://4h.missouri.edu/resources/materials/docs/LG776.pdf


Visit North Dakota 4-H on-line at www.ndsu.edu/4h

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