



Missouri 4-H
University of Missouri
4-H Center for Youth Development

Missouri 4-H Key Award
Tips for Mentors

Purpose of Missouri 4-H Youth Development Programs

- **Quality** educational programs for ALL members.
- A **safe** environment where ALL youth feel like they belong.
- An environment where youth have opportunities to connect with **caring adults**.
- An environment where youth are actively **engaged** in **exploring** and **learning** about their **interests**.
- Opportunities for youth to strive for **mastery** in subject matter of **interest**.
- Opportunities for youth to **set goals** and **be actively involved** in planning, implementing and evaluating the group's program.
- Opportunities to **experience** and **value service** to others and community.
- A **vibrant** environment where youth **want** to participate.

The Missouri 4-H Key Award

The Missouri 4-H Key Award is an opportunity to recognize 4-H Youth for reaching criteria for Missouri 4-H Standards of Excellence. It is expected that achieving the Missouri 4-H Standards of Excellence will take two or more years.

Mentors

A mentor is a guide or coach. Mentoring programs have well established the benefits for youth. Such benefits include:

- Having a caring adult friend outside the family;
(Developmental psychologists stress the point that teens need relationships with caring adults outside the family to help them grow and develop.)
- Having someone to talk to who will listen;
- Receiving guidance, friendship, and helpful advice;
- Receiving help in decision making and reaching goals;
- Providing fun and helpful activities.

A caring guide and coach help parents by providing:

- Additional emotional support for teens;
- Another avenue to encourage positive behavior and reinforce family values;
- An additional positive caring adult role model.

Who Should Be Mentors

Mentors for 4-H members working on the Key Award should enjoy working with teens, have the interest and time to invest in being a coach and help the member complete either a section of the award or the entire award. The purpose of the mentor is to help the member reflect upon their experience and apply what they learn to other portions of their lives, such as school, church and other community settings. Working on the key award should be viewed as a journey and not just a means to an award.

Being familiar with 4-H may be helpful but is not a requirement to be a mentor. 4-H members may select a favorite project leader, a teacher from school or someone from the community. Again, an ideal mentor will help teens think through what they are doing without the temptation to tell them what and how to do things. Qualities of a good mentor will be someone who listens, can ask questions and genuinely likes working with teens.

What the Mentor Will Do

Mentors will meet periodically with the 4-H member to:

- Help member set goals for the coming year;
- Help member determine how they will document their progress;
- Meet with the member to determine progress towards goals;
- Help member gain from the experience by reflecting.
 - **Sharing** - Have the member describe what happened.
 - **Processing** - Help the member, by asking questions, determine what was important, what they learned, and what they would do differently, in addition to listening and providing constructive feedback to the member.
 - **Generalizing** - Help the member relate what they learn to their daily lives.
 - **Applying** - Help the member relate what they learn to a new situation.

By generalizing and applying what they have learned from the experience, a 4-H member gains life skills. As you help the member reflect, generalize and apply their experiences, your questions will often relate to these life skills.

As they pledge **“My HEAD to clearer thinking”** we hope they are learning to:

- Think, plan and reason
- Gain new and valuable knowledge
- Understand the “whys”

As they pledge **“My HEART to greater loyalty”** we hope they are learning to:

- Be concerned about the welfare of others
- Accept the responsibilities of citizenship
- Determine the values and attitudes by which we live
- Learn how to live and work with others
- Develop positive attitudes

As they pledge **“My HANDS to larger service”**

- Learn skills
- Improve skills already known
- Be useful, helpful and skillful
- Develop respect for work and pride in accomplishment

As they pledge **“My HEALTH to better living”**

- Practice healthful living
- Enjoy life
- Use leisure time wisely
- Protect the well-being of self and others

The goal of 4-H is to help youth be capable, caring, competent and contributing young people as their circle of life becomes larger progressing from the club, community, country and world.

Don'ts for Mentors

Here are things to avoid as a mentor:

- Don't tell the member what to do or how to do their work
- Don't do the work for the member. You can help, but this is the member's opportunity to shine.
- Don't agree to be a mentor and then not follow through. If something comes up to prevent you from helping the member, communicate this as soon as possible.
- Don't hound the member. Gentle reminders to meet and discuss are always the best course.