Virtual Connections

Engagement Opportunities and Expectations

Virtual connections can help us all stay engaged in 4-H during this time of social distancing and may be a way to strengthen networking and sharing in the months and years to come. Below are options and guidance for you to connect with your 4-H clubs and groups, continue your annual club plans, work and share 4-H project progress, conduct demonstrations and continue learning.

VIRTUAL CONNECTION BEST PRACTICES

When conducting any virtual connection (club meeting, project workshop, etc.) be sure to follow these best practice guidelines.

- Only UConn 4-H Volunteers of Record and/or UConn faculty/staff are authorized to host a 4-H virtual connection.
- Ensure a minimum of two adults, preferably a combination of UConn 4-H Volunteers of Record and/or UConn faculty/staff. If another UConn 4-H Volunteer of Record or UConn faculty/staff cannot attend, a parent/guardian can serve as the second adult present.
- This two adult minimum is for all meetings and breakout sessions, within meetings.
- Minimum of two adults must be present the entire time.
  - It is recommended they join prior to the start of the meeting.
  - It is recommended they wait until all youth have signed off before they exit the virtual connection.

PREPARING TO CONNECT

- Consider connection options
  - UConn recommends using WebEx
  - Zoom
  - Google Hangouts
  - All of the above offer video and/or phone conferencing options. Please check any platform you choose for ADA compliance.

- Personal options
  - If you choose to use a personal virtual connection:
    - Be sure to have it approved by your county 4-H office prior to sending to youth and families.
  - It is recommended you invite one of your county 4-H faculty/staff to attend if available.

- Setting up your virtual connection
  - Contact your county 4-H office to assist in setting up a virtual connection.
  - Consider log in, password and other control measures to monitor/manage attendance.
  - Use only “group chat” and turn off “private chat” in any virtual connection.
  - Turn off “screen sharing” for participants unless the content has been approved.
• Consider audience and attendance options
  • Allow for the greatest flexibility to fit the greatest number of needs.
    • It is recommended that you offer phone and video conferencing whenever possible.
    • Determine the target audience and how to control participation.
    • Limit connection to one hour or less. Anything longer would require taking a break during the session.
  • Communicating connection information and time:
    • Send connection information to parents and youth via email.
    • When posting meeting notices on social media, post to a private group with at least two adult moderators, and not a public post, which can be seen by anyone.
    • Send connection information to the county 4-H faculty/staff.

CONDUCTING THE CONNECTION
• UConn 4-H Volunteers of Record, UConn faculty/staff or parent/guardian should join prior to the start of the virtual connection.
• It is illegal to record anyone in Connecticut without their consent. Those being recorded have to be notified in writing, and if they are under 18 years old, a parent/guardian needs to acknowledge.
  • Therefore, if recording the meeting, you must alert all participants that it is being recorded before the start of any meeting/event.
  • Best practice: Alert them of your intent to record in meeting notices ahead of time too, and allow for alternate arrangements to be made if necessary,
• Mute upon entry or have participants mute their microphones unless speaking.
• Turn computer cameras off unless needed for visual aid.
• Keep track of virtual connections and participation for your club records.
• 4-H members should identify themselves with their first names only.
• Designate someone (club secretary, etc.) to take minutes.
• If an adult directly contacts youth, a second adult should be included in all communications.
• UConn 4-H Volunteers of Record, UConn faculty/staff or parent/guardian should remain in the virtual connection until all youth have signed off before they exit.