

DISTANCE SUPERVISION

Supervision of volunteers is easier when they are in the same place. Unfortunately, they're seldom in the same place! In 4-H, they're seldom in the same town! What are the strategies to supervise volunteers spread across a geographic area? The following are tips to supervision over distance.

1. Knowing that contact is critical, plan your communication flow to these volunteers carefully.
2. Get current experienced volunteers trained to assist in the communication process.
3. Trained volunteers can call and say "How's it going?" Help them develop specific questions to find out how the volunteer is doing.
4. Newsletters can be an effective communication tool, but only if it speaks directly to the volunteer being supervised at a distance.
5. Volunteers at a distance can be put off by formal communications. Find a way to let your humor and sense of fun show in your communication.
6. Meet volunteers in their communities. That is where they are most comfortable and you need to show interest by going to them.
7. Send personalized notes.
8. Find out if volunteers in the neighborhood can help plan training for others like them. Ask them to serve. They are the best source of information to prepare the future volunteers.
9. Organize volunteers into self-supporting teams. Train them to function as a group. Make sure there is a team leader who has training to be cheerleader not generalissimo.
10. Ask for and follow-up on SHORT written reports that outline progress, areas needing assistance, and current activities. Get volunteers who hate forms to help you design them. Include information from the reports in your newsletters and reports to the field.
11. Write a plan for distance supervision. Don't let it just happen! Plan it and then follow it. Show **your** supervisor how seriously you take this part of the job. It may help you when requesting additional funding or staff.

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Volunteerism for the Next Generation

