

What is a Caring Adult?

4-H Volunteers' Orientation, Lessons, and Training

Talking Points:

What do you think are the Essential Elements of 4-H?

Think of a caring adult in your past, what were their characteristics?

What does a caring adult in 4-H look like?

What are some group activities where both youth and adults can learn more about each other?

What are some challenges that keep adults from being as caring as they need to be?

How can we support the caring adult in 4-H?

If you allow teens to play the role of caring adults in your programs, how do they develop their skills?



4-H VOLT

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The Essential Elements of 4-H

The 4-H program has adopted 8 Essential Elements that are critical to positive youth development. These Essential Elements are distilled into 4 categories, or Concepts, that enable the youth development professional and volunteer to gain new skills and knowledge that will enhance their program efforts. [Essential Elements Caring Adults Guide](#)

<p>Belonging Caring adult Inclusive environment Safe environment</p>	<p>Mastery Engagement in learning Opportunity for mastery</p>
<p>Independence See oneself in the future Opportunity for self-determination</p>	<p>Generosity Values & practices service to others</p>

Defining the Caring Adult

- A caring adult acts as an advisor, guide, and mentor. The adult helps set boundaries and expectations for young people. The caring adult could be called supporter, friend, and advocate.
- This Element is present when: adults address youth members by first names, adults know the interests of youth members, adults pay attention to the activities of individual youth members outside the meetings.
- Ways to support the Element: train adult leaders in listening skills, use name tags to help everyone be on a first name basis, structure group activities so that both youth and adults have time to learn about one another, encourage adults to interact with youth not merely act as chaperones/supervisors.
- Use the checklist below to see how you are including the **Caring Adult** Essential Element in your 4-H program.

Caring Adult Program Checklist

Almost Always Sometimes Hardly Ever

Do I exhibit a positive attitude toward youth?			
Do I act as an advisor as well as a guide?			
Do the youth respond positively to me?			
Do I listen to them?			

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