



State and National 4-H Opportunities for Youth

A variety of opportunities at the state and national levels are available to 4-H participants. Several events are designed to enhance the 4-H experience, while others provide opportunities for recognizing the accomplishments of outstanding 4-H members. More specific information about each of these events is available by contacting your county 4-H office.

Eligibility for participation in state and national opportunities varies by event. All events have a designated grade level for participation. Some events require the participants to take part in county-level events to qualify, while others may have specific quotas. All participants in state and national events must be approved as eligible for participation by their county 4-H staff. Youth must be enrolled as a registered 4-H member by January 1 of the current year to enter any NJ state or national 4-H competition—including the selection process for the National 4-H Conference, National 4-H Congress, and Citizenship Washington Focus. Information and registration packets for these events are received by the county 4-H staff from the event chairperson and are forwarded as appropriate to 4-H leaders and members.

Regional 4-H Teen Conferences

Regional 4-H Teen Conferences, North Jersey 4-H Teen Conference (NJTC) and South Jersey 4-H Teen Conference (SJTC), are held each year in February-April at a hotel within the region. Planned and implemented by teen delegates working together with 4-H professionals, the conference is open to all 4-H youth, grades 8 through 13, within that region. Members of the State Teen Action Council (STAC) are also invited to attend. The conference consists of workshops, field trips and social activities designed to assist in the development of skills and knowledge in leadership, communication, personal development, citizenship, and decision-making.

There are no delegate quotas; all eligible youth who submit application forms may attend. Individual delegates are responsible for the cost of attending the program; counties often provide sponsorship through county teen councils or leaders' associations.

State 4-H Project Events

There are a variety of state 4-H events held each year with the goal of enhancing the 4-H member's experience in 4-H project areas. Check the New Jersey 4-H website for current events.

National 4-H Congress

Each year, over 1000 youth from all 50 states as well as the U.S. territories, join together to participate in National 4-H Congress. This educational event focuses on social and cultural programs and activities, leadership development, and community service. The selection process in New Jersey begins about one year before the event. Eligible youth (grades 10 through 12 at time of application) complete a New Jersey 4-H National Congress Application and participate in an interview in the spring. Those selected as delegates to attend the event must also attend an orientation session prior to the event.

Sponsorship of delegates' trips comes from a variety of sources and varies each year, as does the number of delegates attending from New Jersey. Donors include county and state foundations, associations, and other groups interested in the 4-H program. Delegates may also be required to pay for a small portion of their trip.



National 4-H Conference

National 4-H Conference is a week-long conference, sponsored by USDA and National 4-H Headquarters, which brings together approximately 300 teen delegates from throughout the United States as well as the U.S. territories. The conference is designed to involve 4-H members and adults in program development. Generally held late March or early April at the National 4-H Youth Center in Chevy Chase, Maryland, the conference gives teens the opportunity to work in "advisory groups." These groups discuss current issues and make recommendations. Participants visit the United States Department of Agriculture as well as members of Congress from their home state.

Delegate selection in New Jersey begins in the preceding fall, when county 4-H staff distribute application forms to potential delegates in grades 10 through 12. In late fall, applicants must attend an interview session consisting of group and individual interviews. The 4-H'ers who are chosen to represent New Jersey are required to attend an orientation and to participate in a few preconference activities. The New Jersey delegation is made up of approximately six youth and two adult advisors.

Sponsorship for this event comes from a variety of sources, including Rutgers Cooperative Extension, New Jersey State 4-H Association, county support, and additional outside funding.

Citizenship Washington Focus

Citizenship Washington Focus (CWF) is a week-long educational experience that teaches teen delegates to be active, responsible citizens and leaders. Through workshops and committees, field trips, and visits with members of Congress 4-H'ers learn about the democratic process. The conference is one week long and takes place at the National 4-H Youth Center in Chevy Chase, Maryland. New Jersey usually schedules their trip in July.

Each county in New Jersey may send at least two delegates, grades 9-12, to CWF and delegate selection procedures are determined at the county level. The process usually begins in the preceding fall. All selected delegates must complete application forms that are forwarded to the state 4-H office in mid-March. All selected delegates, and at least one parent, must attend a mandatory orientation meeting held in June.

Partial sponsorship is often received from the New Jersey State 4-H Association. However, most of the cost of the trip must be covered by the individual delegate, county leaders' association, or teen council. Some counties solicit sponsorship from local organizations and community-based businesses or service clubs.

New Jersey 4-H State Teen Action Council (STAC)

4-H members in the 9th-13th grade are eligible to participate. In the fall, each county selects representatives to STAC. (There is no county quota.) County representatives complete a STAC application form and send it to the State 4-H Office. There are usually six meetings held during the year. Four of the meetings take place on Cook Campus, and the other two meetings are either activities or special events. The purpose of the group is to provide input to the 4-H Youth Development Department; actively participate in planning and implementing state 4-H events; plan, conduct and promote community service activities; and develop and practice leadership skills. All STAC members are eligible to participate in the NJTC as well as the SJTC events.

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For more information on New Jersey 4-H, please visit www.nj4h.rutgers.edu.

Cooperating Agencies: Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and County Boards of Chosen Freeholders. Rutgers Cooperative Extension, a unit of the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, is an equal opportunity program provider and employer.