



WASHINGTON STATE
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION
Kitsap County



4-H Youth Development

2024

THE ISSUE

The challenges faced by youth today are multifaceted. They are increasingly disconnected from safe and supportive adult relationships, which are crucial for learning life skills and fostering emotional resilience. According to the Washington State 2023 Healthy Youth Survey, Kitsap County youth are grappling with mental health concerns exacerbated by the lingering effects of COVID-19.

- 19% of 8th and 12th graders have seriously considered suicide in the past year.
- Over 5% of 6th, 8th, and 12th graders reported attempting suicide in the same period.
- 20% of 12th graders reported feeling nervous or anxious almost daily in the past two weeks.
- 11% of 12th graders said they lack adults in their lives to turn to for help, while over 30% felt unsupported by adults in their community.
- More than 50% of 12th graders reported not feeling encouraged by people in their community.
- 18-24% of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders indicated being physically hurt on purpose by an adult in their life.

These alarming statistics underscore the urgent need for programs that foster positive youth development and provide young people with the tools to navigate these challenges.

BY THE NUMBERS

- 288 4-H Kitsap Club Members
- 342 Total youth participating in 4-H Activities
- 118 Adult Volunteers
- 46 Youth participating in a Leadership project
- 52 Youth participating in Archery

4-H Vision: A world in which youth and adults learn, grown and work together as catalysts for positive change.





THE RESPONSE

Kitsap County 4-H empowers youth through hands-on learning, mentorship, and skill-building activities that address these pressing issues. While 4-H originated as an agriculturally focused program in 1902, it has evolved to include science, technology, arts, and leadership, providing a comprehensive approach to youth development.

The foundation of 4-H lies in connecting youth with certified adult volunteers who serve as positive role models. These volunteers offer programming tailored to the interests of the participants, allowing youth to take ownership of their projects. Whether the focus is on animal science, arts, coding, or public speaking, participants gain practical skills such as goal setting, budgeting, record keeping, and teamwork.

4-H creates an environment where youth feel supported, valued, and encouraged to excel. By fostering these connections, 4-H helps youth overcome barriers to social and emotional growth, ensuring they develop into confident, capable members of their community.

THE IMPACTS

The 4-H program in Kitsap County delivers transformative results for youth and volunteers alike:

- **Youth Development:** Participants acquire lifelong skills in leadership, communication, and collaboration. They build confidence and resilience through hands-on projects and community involvement.
- **Community Engagement:** Youth engage in community service and educational outreach, sharing their knowledge and accomplishments at events like the Kitsap Fair. This public engagement strengthens ties between youth and their community.
- **Leadership Opportunities:** Older youth mentor younger members, reinforcing their own skills while fostering a culture of peer support and encouragement.
- **Volunteer Empowerment:** 4-H adult volunteers are equipped with best practices for positive youth development, enabling them to make a lasting impact on the children they mentor.

4-H exemplifies how a single supportive adult can change the trajectory of a young person's life. By bridging the gap between youth and their community, 4-H fosters a future generation of confident, skilled, and community-minded individuals.