MARYLAND COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
COLLEGE PARK•EASTERN SHORE

Fact Sheet

Fact Sheet 374

The Agent and the Extension Advisor

The effectiveness of Extension outreach depends on open, two-way communication between county agents and the Extension Advisory Council. Agents rely on EAC members to provide feedback on the changing concerns of county residents. Similarly, EAC members rely on agents to provide information on programming and instruction. Only through mutual cooperation will the true needs of Maryland communities be met.

Who is the Extension Agent?

The Extension agent is the key to success in all Extension programs. The agent is:

- A local resource for helping people solve problems.
- The primary Extension educator, at the county level, charged with EXTENDing new knowledge and practical information to community residents.
- An expert with college training in either agriculture, home economics, 4-H, community development or marine science.

The Extension agent is part of a statewide team:

- All county agents are University of Maryland faculty members. (State Extension offices are headquartered at Symons Hall on the University of Maryland College Park Campus.)
- Although they are university faculty members, the agents are assigned to specific counties to conduct educational programs in their areas of expertise.
- Each Maryland county has agents specializing in different Extension program areas. Smaller, less populated counties have at least 4 agents, while larger counties are served by as many as 13.

How Does an Agent Spread Knowledge?

Agents use a range of activities and instructional methods to conduct programs. One of the most effective approaches is the home or farm visit which, while time consuming, provides one-on-one interaction. Other options include:

- Agriculture and aquaculture demonstration plots that show the results of the latest planting and production practices.
- 4-H camps for youth-oriented instruction.
- Community workshops that generate hands-on experience.
- Newsletters; an economical means of distributing timely information.
- Radio and television public service programs.

How Do the Agent and the Extension Advisory Council Work Together?

The county Extension director is the formal link between the EAC and the county Extension office. Nevertheless, each agent will work closely with the EAC to identify the changing needs of local residents. Specifically, agents will:

- Keep the EAC alerted to current programming efforts.
- Provide insights on new community trends that affect programming.
- Schedule meetings between state specialists and the EAC
- Share new research in their fields and provide written materials when requested.
- Work with the EAC finance and subcommittees.

What Role Does the EAC Play in Program Implementation?

The EAC helps establish program priorities and new program areas. The Extension agent will initiate new programs based on the priorities established by the EAC. Moreover, the agent will conduct frequent program evaluations and report to the EAC on program effectiveness.

How Can EAC Members Become Involved in Extension Programs?

Extension agents welcome all EAC members who want to participate in program activities. To gain firsthand knowledge of Extension at work, you may:

- Attend and observe Extension programs.
- Serve as a camp counselor.
- Present parts of a community or countywide program.
- Provide input on a panel.
- Provide space on a farm for research demonstrations.

Will You Be Recognized for Your Contribution?

Absolutely. Extension agents acknowledge the efforts of EAC members by:

- Making introductions at Extension events.
- Writing newspaper profiles.
- Involving members in planning, implementing and evaluating programs.

What Are the Benefits of a Close Relationship Between Agents and the EAC?

The benefits are many. Chief among them are:

- Improved Extension programs.
- Improved family life.
- Improved communities.

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