

Winning 4-H Plan Request of Club Leaders

How Can You Support Youth with Special Needs?

You may have a member(s) in your 4-H club who is differently abled. Regardless of the disability (physical, mental, developmental, etc.) It is imperative to work with the child and his or her parents/guardians to set goals and modify experiences to meet the child's needs. Being sensitive to the concerns of the parent and child is important to help them feel included.

Types of Special Needs

- Physical-Visual or hearing impaired, spinal cord injuries, trauma injuries related to an accident, certain medical conditions or illnesses.
- Mental-Conditions associated with below or above average intellectual functioning.
- Developmental-Learning disabilities and emotional disorders.

Use the Winning 4-H Plan to Ensure a Positive Experience for Youth with Disabilities

- Learn about the child and the special need. Talk to the parents or guardians and research the special need on the Internet, at the library, or through a local support group.
- Treat each child as a special child, regardless of special need. Recognize each child's skills, abilities, talents, and needs.
- Recognize positive behaviors and give lots of positive reinforcement. Make expectations realistic.
- Help the total club membership appreciate and understand the disability of its members.
- Have parents or guardians share information with your county Extension professional to help the 4-H organization better prepare for the special needs member's participation in project judging, camp, and other 4-H opportunities.
- Winning 4-H Plan resources and forms can be accessed by contacting your county Extension professional.

Your goal is to provide a positive enriching experience for every 4-H member. Encourage all parents to explain disabilities on the 4-H enrollment form. Even though this is optional, the information can assist your county Extension professional in planning a positive 4-H experience for all youth.

