



UNIVERSITY
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New Thinking

Program Accessibility Guidelines for Persons with Disabilities in 4-H Events*

When exploring reasonable accommodations for 4-H participants with disabilities, one needs to consider several factors. This article will provide guidelines for determining the possibility of reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities in 4-H events and activities.

1. The following accommodation statement should be used on all announcements for 4-H events and activities:

The University of Wyoming encourages persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation or have questions about the physical access provided, please contact (list name and phone number of the local Extension office or Extension educator). **Requests for accommodation should be made to the Extension office and educator at least three weeks in advance of an event.**

2. Extension educators should use the following sequence when exploring possible reasonable accommodations for participants with disabilities:

Situation:

A person registers for a 4-H event and the Extension staff becomes aware that the person has a disability by one of the following ways: the person tells the staff that she or he has a disability; the person has a visible disability; or the staff becomes aware that the person has a disability by information that has been provided on the medical release form or entry forms.

The Extension educator should then do the following:

1. Ask the person if she or he has any functional limitations as a result of the disability. Examples of functional limitations might be blindness, inability to walk, inability to use hands, inability to stand for long periods of time, inability to hear, etc. Once information is gathered:
2. Ask the person if the functional limitations would interfere with or prevent participation in the program. If the answer is no, then the usual registration process would continue. If the answer is yes, then...

3. Ask the person if there are any accommodations that could be considered which would enable the individual to participate. Examples of *possible* accommodations are modifications to rules and policies, elimination of architectural barriers, providing interpreters, modifying equipment, etc. After this information is gathered then:

4. Determine if any of the suggested accommodations are reasonable. If the educator wonders if the accommodations are reasonable or if accessibility should be provided, contact the appropriate Wyoming 4-H youth specialist or the Wyoming 4-H program coordinator. One of these people will then consult with UW's Office of Risk Management to determine if any of the suggested accommodations are reasonable, safe, and if accessibility should be provided.

Accommodations are considered reasonable if they do not change the fundamental nature of the program or alter the essential criteria for participation. If the accommodations do not alter the fundamental nature of the program, then reasonable accommodation should be provided.

For example, a person with a disability participating in a horse event may modify the reins as needed but will still be expected to perform the requirements of the class.

Altering the *essential criteria* of the event for persons with disabilities is not required.

Participants with disabilities will be judged by the same criteria as other participants in the event.

Functional limitations with or without reasonable accommodations that pose a "direct safety threat" to the exhibitor with a disability or to other exhibitors do **not** have to be made. If it is felt that the suggested accommodations are not reasonable, or even with reasonable accommodations the health and safety of the individual or others are at stake, please discuss these concerns with the State 4-H Office.

3. A volunteer or Extension educator should NOT make the final decision to refuse accommodations without consulting the State 4-H Office. Allowing or refusing accommodations is done on a case-by-case basis.

4. If a volunteer or Extension educator is considering refusing accommodation, the educator should contact the appropriate 4-H youth specialist or 4-H program coordinator at least three weeks prior to the event.

5. Before contacting the appropriate Extension 4-H youth specialist, the extension educator should obtain necessary information and complete the attached "Program Accessibility Checklist."

(Checklist on next page)

* Adapted for Wyoming by Randolph R. Weigel, professor and human development specialist, UW Cooperative Extension Service, from material by Pennsylvania 4-H/Penn State Cooperative Extension.

Persons seeking admission, employment, or access to programs of the University of Wyoming shall be considered without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, political belief, veteran status, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication or program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact their local UW CES Office.

Program Accessibility Checklist

This checklist should be used when exploring possibilities for reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities in 4-H events or activities:

Please complete this checklist BEFORE contacting the appropriate 4-H youth specialist or 4-H program coordinator.

Please provide answers to the following questions:

1. What is the disability of the 4-H member? (Describe disability.)

2. What are his or her functional limitations?

3. Do functional limitations limit or prevent participation of the 4-H member in the 4-H activity?

4. If functional limitations limit or prevent the 4-H member's participation, are there any reasonable accommodations that will allow the 4-H member to participate?
 - a) If yes, please describe the accommodations that are requested.
(ask parent or guardian and leaders to suggest accommodations.)

 - b) If no, or if there are questions, contact the appropriate 4-H youth specialist or 4-H program coordinator.

Educators and leaders should remember:

- They do not have to alter the fundamental nature of a program or essential criteria for participation.
- That participants with a disability will be judged by the same criteria as other participants.
- That functional limitations with or without reasonable accommodations should not pose a direct threat to a person with a disability or others.
- That a direct safety threat means **significant risk** of substantial harm.
- They must consider whether a direct threat can be eliminated or reduced below the level of a “direct safety threat” by “reasonable accommodation”.