

# Making 4-H Accessible for Participants with Disabilities: Developing An Accommodation Plan

## OSU Extension Disability Services & 4-H Resource Sheet

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### What is an accommodation?

An accommodation is an adjustment or change that makes the site, project, and/or event accessible to a person with a disability. OSU Extension is responsible for providing access and accommodations to all program participants with disabilities under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which prevent discrimination based on disability and protect the rights of people with disabilities. Both laws require employers, local and state governments, and providers of public services to provide reasonable accommodations to people with disabilities.

The Winning 4-H Plan (W4HP) is the method Ohio 4-H uses for families to request accommodations for 4-H participants. Details about the W4HP are addressed in the *Inclusion, Accommodations, & Using the Winning 4-H Plan* resource sheet.

### Reasonable Accommodations

OSU Extension is responsible for providing reasonable accommodations. The law defines what is reasonable by determining what is not reasonable.

A request is *not* reasonable and does not have to be granted if it:

- Requires a substantial change or alteration in the curriculum.
- Requires a substantial change to an essential element of a course or program.
- Fundamentally alters the nature of the service provided.
- Poses an undue financial hardship or administrative burden. This consideration looks at OSU resources and not just Extension or county resources.
- Poses a direct threat to the health and safety of self or others.

Public schools may need to alter requirements to ensure that students can be successful, as they must follow different laws than those that apply to universities. In 4-H, unlike what is done in the K-12 school setting, if the requested accommodation changes the program so much that it is no longer the program, it is not reasonable and does not have to be approved. However, with creativity and consulting others, most requests can be accommodated in a way that meets the overall goal for participation.

In 4-H, some programs have essential elements that are required, regardless of the child's abilities. Quality Assurance (QA) is an example of a program that is mandated by the Ohio Revised Code. Any accommodation offered must be within the laws that dictate successful completion of the QA program.

Consider each request on a case-by-case basis; providing an accommodation to one does not set a precedent that the same accommodation is guaranteed for another. Determining the accommodation takes thoughtful consideration of the entire situation, including the objective of the task or skill that needs to be accommodated, the impact on the participant with the disability, and the impact on other participants. For activities that are competitive, the goal is to provide an accommodation that levels the playing field, without an inherent competitive advantage due to the accommodation.

It is important to know that a request for accommodations cannot be denied without going through consideration by the Extension Disabilities Coordinator. Also, be sure to keep the Associate State 4-H Leader apprised when the decision is made to deny an accommodation.

### Managing Accommodations Requests

Accommodation requests can be submitted at anytime throughout the year. We are required to consider requests made with reasonable notice. Some requests can be accommodated very quickly and can be done on the spur of the moment. Other requests take planning and preparation. Examples of those requiring advance planning include hiring an interpreter for someone with a hearing impairment or using lime as a show ring surface to accommodate someone who uses a wheelchair.

## Determining Specific Accommodations for a 4-H Participant

When considering accommodations, look at what the 4-H participant can do, as well as what they can do with a modification to aid them. A meeting with the parent or guardian and the child is necessary to discuss needs and possible support strategies. Finding out what accommodations they receive in other settings, such as school, can help, but that is not the only consideration. 4-H is a unique environment. It is beneficial to look at accommodation strategies from resources that address academic accommodations as well as resources that address workplace accommodations.

Many accommodations are common and easy to implement. This list includes some strategies and accommodations that are more common. This list is not exhaustive and is not a checklist of options.

- Typed responses or use of a scribe for written passages in a project book
- Extra time for performing a task (e.g., reading, writing, answering questions, judging, taking a test)
- Rephrase or reword questions as needed for understanding
- Break down tasks or questions into simple instructions
- Provide directions or questions orally
- Reduce the number of questions or items performed
- Change of location to a quieter setting for performing an interview, judging, or task
- Use of interpreter (e.g. sign language)
- Project books/materials provided in pdf, enlarged print, or another format. *Pease contact Extension Publications to request project books in alternate/electronic format.*
- Use of a service animal or seeing eye person when deemed safe (including in the show ring)
- Use of device or tool that helps to perform the task
- Use of hand over hand to perform a skill or task (i.e., a helper's hand over the participant's hand to perform a movement)

Some accommodations take a little more thought and brainstorming, especially when judging, competition, and safety at the event are considered. There are several resources that provide ideas to find the most effective support strategies. The Job Accommodation Network (<https://askjan.org>) is an online resource that provides ideas for workplace accommodations and includes search functions by disability, limitations, topics, work-related functions, and accommodations. The ideas from this site can be used to brainstorm strategies that may be effective for 4-H participants. Additionally, the National AgrAbility Project has an online Toolbox database with many agricultural Assistive Tech items, and is searchable by task at <http://www.agrability.org/toolbox>.

## Implementing the Accommodation

Informing those who need to know about the approved accommodations is a shared responsibility between 4-H participants, parent/guardian, and staff. The *Project and Exhibition Accommodations* form is used by the 4-H participant and parents to inform club advisors, judges, skillathon facilitators, and others who need to know what accommodations have been approved for the child. Extension staff may need to advocate for approved accommodations in situations where the parent/guardian or child are not present, such as at fair board or committee meetings when for planning events in which the child is participating. OSU Disability Services provides a list of strategies that have been used within the academic setting, which can help guide 4-H professionals on shared responsibilities ([https://slds.osu.edu/faculty-staff/managing-accommodation-requests/#\\_shared](https://slds.osu.edu/faculty-staff/managing-accommodation-requests/#_shared)).

## Working With Our Partners for Project Judging and Exhibition

4-H participants often are part of county fairs and other events that are beyond the scope of 4-H-sponsored events. As a result, coordination of planning and communication about accommodation needs must happen so that Federal disability laws are followed in these settings. Those who oversee show management at fairs are responsible for making sure their facilities and event rules comply. Some expectations of show management are:

- to follow procedure(s) for the approved accommodations
- to allow modification of regular judging procedures to accommodate requests
- to determine if modification(s) will or will not inhibit ability of other exhibitors and/or animals in the show
- to allow the use of a personal aide in the show ring for mobility and stability support
- to consider facility changes when appropriate (such as height of show tables, surface of show ring, location of animal pen or cage – e.g., locating pens or cages on the end of the aisle, assign cage that is at a higher or lower level)

FFA and other organizations that are involved with fairs are responsible for communicating the needs of their student to show management. Extension professionals are not responsible for implementation of accommodations for other youth organizations. However, sometimes Extension personnel also function as show management for events. In that case, those personnel are representing the interests of both Extension and the event sponsor.

Accommodations that require coordination with partner organizations can take time to plan for implementation. Advance notice gives show management the best opportunity to plan and implement accommodations prior to the event.

## Service Animals and Support Animals

Dogs and mini horses are the only service animals protected by the ADA. There are only two questions **you can legally ask** about a service animal:

- (1) Is the service animal required because of a disability?
- (2) What work or task has the animal been trained to perform?

You **cannot** ask that the animal demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task or require a special identification card or training documentation for the animal.

The handler must have control over the animal at all times, must clean up after the animal, and is responsible for the dog's behavior. The handler/owner of a bad-tempered or misbehaving service animal is responsible if the animal bites, kicks, or harms someone.

Emotional support or therapy animals are not protected under the ADA; however, they may be appropriate in 4-H settings. For more information about support animals, refer to *Guidelines for Working Animals at Ohio 4-H Camps and Events* at <https://ohio4h.org/intranet/camping>, under the Guidelines/Policy heading.

### Resources:

Service Animals

[ADA 2010 Revised Requirements: Service Animals](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions about Service Animals and the ADA](#)

Managing Accommodation Requests: <https://slds.osu.edu/faculty-staff/managing-accommodation-requests/>

### Resources and Assistance

The development of a plan for accommodations is not a cookie-cutter process. Additional information specific to management of accommodations from OSU Disability Services is available at <https://slds.osu.edu/faculty-staff/managing-accommodation-requests/>. Often it is beneficial to brainstorm with others. Below are staff members who can help you through the process.

#### Accommodating Disabilities 4-H Team

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Jessica Runkel, Williams County	<a href="mailto:runkel.8@osu.edu">runkel.8@osu.edu</a>	419-636-5608

#### OSU Disability Services

Laura Akgerman, Extension Disability Service Coordinator	<a href="mailto:akgerman.4@osu.edu">akgerman.4@osu.edu</a>	614-292-0622
OSU ADA Coordinators Office	<a href="mailto:ada-osu@osu.edu">ada-osu@osu.edu</a>	614-292-6207

#### OSU ADA Website

<https://ada.osu.edu>

OSU Disability Services Best Practices and Resources <https://slds.osu.edu/faculty-staff/best-practices-and-resources>

#### OSU University Policy on Access for Individuals with Disabilities

OSU Office of Institutional Equity	<a href="https://equity.osu.edu">https://equity.osu.edu</a>	614-247-4113
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