

Accommodation Guidelines for Persons with Disabilities

This document provides guidelines for Texas 4-H events and activities in determining and implementing reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities.

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

“If you need any type of accommodation to participate in this program or have questions about the physical access provided, please contact _____ (list name and phone number of the local Extension office and program contact) by _____” (at registration or at least 2 weeks prior to the program or event).

Requests for accommodations should be made to the Extension Office. The contact for requests should be the most direct program contact such as the event or activity organizer or class instructor.

2. Extension faculty should follow these steps when exploring the potential for reasonable accommodations for participants with disabilities:

Situation:

Through the registration process, Extension becomes aware of a participant with 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;
- information on the medical release form or registration states the person has a disability and requests an accommodation.

The Extension program organizer should then do the following:

1. Ask the person if she/he has any functional limitations as a result of the disability. Examples of functional limitations might include blindness, inability to walk, inability to use hands or other limbs, 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 to 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 County Extension faculty question whether the accommodations are reasonable or if accessibility should be provided, contact Darlene Locke, Extension Specialist, Youth Development (dlocke@ag.tamu.edu) who will consult with appropriate system contact to determine if the suggested accommodations are reasonable and safe and if accessibility should be provided.

Points to Consider:

Accommodations are considered reasonable if they do not change the fundamental nature of the program/activity or alter the essential criteria for participation.

If the accommodations do not alter the fundamental nature of the program, then a reasonable accommodation should be provided. Allowing or refusing accommodations is done on a case-by-case basis in consultation with supervisors and other appropriate system personnel.

For example:

A 4-H'er who has a visual impairment wants to attend the District Teen Leadership Lab which is an overnight retreat. The parent contacts the District 4-H Specialist with a request for an accommodation so the child can participate. The District Specialist discusses the situation with the parent, describes the types of activities that will be taking place and asks what would be reasonable to assure that the teen is comfortable and successful? The parent states the teen is pretty functional with some needed assistance.

*Together, they determine that a reasonable accommodation would be to allow a caregiver (parent/guardian or older sibling) who is familiar with the teen to attend at no additional cost. They discuss and agree that the caregiver will be there to assist the teen and be responsible for facilitating successful involvement with the support of the Extension staff and leaders. **Please note: Any caregiver over the age of 18, participating in an overnight activity, must successfully complete the volunteer screening process.***

The program/activity organizer is not expected to make reasonable accommodations for individuals with functional limitations that could pose a “direct safety threat” to the participant with a disability or to other participants and bystanders.

If the local Extension organizer of the program or activity feels the suggested accommodations are not reasonable, or even with reasonable accommodations the health and safety of the individual or others are at stake, she or he should discuss these concerns with the Extension Specialist, Youth Development.

Extension faculty should NOT make the final decision to refuse accommodations without consulting the Extension Specialist, Youth Development or Supervisors at least 10 days prior to the event.

Before contacting the appropriate Extension Specialist, Youth Development, the Extension program organizer should obtain necessary information and complete the “Texas 4-H Program Accessibility Checklist” on the following page in this document.

* Adapted for Texas 4-H with permission from Wyoming 4-H Program Accessibility Guidelines for Persons with Disabilities in 4-H Events by Randolph R. Weigel, Professor and Human Development Specialist, UW Cooperative Extension Service.

Texas 4-H Program Accessibility Checklist

Complete this checklist when exploring possibilities for reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities in 4-H programs or activities BEFORE contacting the appropriate Extension Specialist, Youth Development. 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. Describe the activity/event the 4-H'er would like to participate in?
4. When will this activity be held?
5. Describe the facility where this event is scheduled to be held.
6. Do functional limitations limit or prevent participation of the 4-H member in the 4-H activity as it is currently designed?
7. 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, 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 Extension Specialist, Youth Development (dlocke@ag.tamu.edu)

Extension faculty and volunteers should remember:

They do not have to alter the fundamental nature of a program or essential criteria for participation.

In competitive events, participants with a disability should be judged by the same criteria as other participants.

Functional limitations with or without reasonable accommodations should not pose a direct threat to a person with a disability or others.

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"

Person Submitting _____

Contact Information _____

Date Submitted _____