



## **HOW TO...**

### **Work with Special Needs Youth**

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**Involving special needs youth in 4-H can be a rewarding experience for all involved. It does take some special considerations to accommodate youth with disabilities.**

**Be aware of the types of disabilities:**

- **Physical – includes visual or hearing impairments.**
- **Mental – below normal intellectual functioning.**
- **Developmental – includes learning disabilities and emotional impairments.**

**Learn about the youth's specific disability.**

- **Talk with the youth's parents.**
- **Research the disability at the library.**
- **Contact local support groups.**

**Remember that each youth with a disability is a unique individual.**

- **Discuss the youth's special challenges and talents with the parents.**
- **If behavioral disorders are involved, determine appropriate forms of discipline if necessary.**
- **Maintain open communication with the youth's parents.**

**Adapt or modify activities to match the youth's ability level.**

- **Involve the youth in modifying the activity and setting goals.**
- **Promote cooperation instead of competition.**
- **Provide plenty of positive reinforcement and recognition.**

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## **THE BOTTOM LINE**

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**4-H members with special needs can develop self confidence and self reliance through interaction and participation in 4-H activities.**

**Other 4-H members can learn to appreciate others as individuals with unique abilities, strengths and weaknesses.**

**4-H leaders can learn new skills for working with special needs youth.**

**4-H is all about personal growth and learning life skills...for everyone involved!**