Are We All Inclusive?: Working with Kids with Special Needs in 4-H Programs

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What are the top 5 challenges that 4-H agents identified as being the top challenges for working with children with special needs?

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Prevalence in New Mexico

New Mexico has a total of 334,419 students enrolled K – 12 and of those, almost 14% are students with special needs.
How are we identifying them?

- How do we identify Children with Special Needs in 4-H? 44% say we don’t!
- 37% say we do BUT only if:
  - Parents include that info on enrollment form
  - What is wrong with this system?
Types of Disabilities
Physical Disabilities

Amputations or Missing Limbs

Spinal Cord Injuries
- Paraplegia
- Quadriplegia
- Hemiplegia

Visual Impairments

Hearing Impairments

Speech Impairments
Mental Disabilities

- Intellectual Disabilities
  - Mild
  - Moderate
  - Severe
  - Profound
- Learning Disabilities
- ADHD
Reflection

1. What was it like having your disability?

2. How could you modify activities based on your disability?
Many of our 4-H activities require basic skills such as measuring, using fine motor skills, following directions, etc.

How can these be impacted by having a disability?
Strategies

- Physical Disabilities
  - Talk with the kids about possible strategies
  - Consider barriers such as aisles, stairs, uneven surfaces, severe heat, etc.
  - Wheelchairs are an extension of the person
Strategies

- For blindness, consider keeping the room the same, leaving doors closed, make areas easily accessible
- If a child is walking with a cane, follow on the opposite side of the hand that is holding the cane
- Provide alternative printed materials
- Use visuals and hand signals when possible and face children when speaking
Strategies

Mental Disabilities

- Concrete hands-on activities
- Use strategies such as modeling, step by step instruction, pictures and visual cues, peer teaching
- Develop memory aides
- Allow extra time and practice
Mental Disabilities

- Encourage social interaction and provide help to teach social skills
- Break down activities into small steps
- Stress areas of strength
- Chronological age vs mental age emotional age
- For LD – May be advanced in some areas and severely lacking in others
Strategies

- Emotional Impairments
  - Be aware of any medications the child may be on
  - Provide a structured environment
  - Reinforce positive behavior immediately
  - Provide choice for activities when possible
Strategies

- Set clear and concise rules for behavior for the group before starting an activity
- Correct the behavior not the individual
- Stress cooperation rather than competition