

## **What are the benefits of Equine Assisted**

### **Therapy/Learning ?**

1. Create opportunities for practicing new skills. Transfer these back to life.
2. Assists clients to identify their own inner capabilities of healing and change.
4. Provides non-threatening, motivating learning environment.
5. Empowers clients with a sense of control. (The ability to succeed in the face of frustration)
6. Breaks down defense barriers. (Success with horses gives genuine and consistent actions)
7. Enhances problem solving skills and builds trust by providing immediate cause and effect situations.
8. Decreases feelings of hopelessness.
9. Promotes changes from dysfunctional patterns to successful ones.

**Thank you for reading this guide on choosing a facility that best meets your needs. If you have further questions, please contact us:**

**Susan Jung, Ed.S., Licensed Professional Counselor**

susanjung@earthlink.net www.winningstrides.net

770-776-8446

Offices in Conyers and Dublin, Georgia

*Happy Trails!*

# **The Consumer's Guide to Choosing an Equine Assisted Counseling and Learning Facility**

**This is an educational service provided by  
Susan Jung, Ed.S.  
Licensed Professional Counselor**



## What you will learn by reading this guide:

1. What EAC/EAL *is* and what it is *not*.
2. What questions you should ask the professionals you talk with about starting therapy.
3. Observations you need to make about the facility and the animals.
4. The importance of the facility's business practices.



## What are the business practices of the facility?

1. Make sure that the model advertised is actually practiced. For example, if it the EAGALA model is used, it should be with an EAGALA certified mental health professional and equine specialist, using a team approach, 100% on the ground. It's OK to ask about the model, then do some research on your own about the benefits.
2. Regarding insurance—most mental health professionals carry liability insurance. But, be sure to ask about equine liability insurance. While most states protect equine owners from liability, additional insurance is a professional standard for equine assisted therapy and learning.
3. For mental health treatment, standard forms such as consent to treatment, HIPPA forms, release forms, client information forms, media release for pictures, etc. should be used. Treatment plans should also be developed with the client. ***Remember—this is not recreational, this is mental health treatment and/or educational opportunities. The same rules that apply to medical practice also apply to equine assisted psychotherapy.***
4. Medical insurance for clients is an individual decision by the therapist. Although EAP is not specifically covered under health insurance, therapy is. EAP is a tool used like any other accepted counseling approach such as play therapy or cognitive behavioral therapy. The same therapy codes apply for insurance.

## What observations should I make about the facility?

1. Cleanliness of the facility—of course, horses are not the cleanest animals! However, a well-kept barn indicates a desired level of professionalism. Clean stalls, swept and uncluttered barn aisles, overall maintenance is important.
2. Remember, just like people, animals in good health are more likely to do their job well. Horses who have shiny coats, feet trimmed, good weight and alertness generally indicate a level of fitness and care.
3. Ask to see where sessions are conducted. If it is outside, is there a weather alternative? Does the space allow for privacy and confidentiality? Are the restroom facilities clean and adequate?



## Congratulations! You have made the decision to add Equine Assisted Therapy/Learning to your mental health improvement!

Whether it is for mental health treatment, personal growth, or educational opportunity, horses will provide a unique experience to reaching your goals.

Because this is such a new and up and coming modality, many “centers” are popping up all over the country. Many of these facilities are run by people who believe that since they have horses, why not? Many other facilities are operated by well trained, professionals who have “done their time” getting certified, participating regularly in continuing education to further their learning, and following all the “correct procedures” of operating a private practice or mental health agency.

This guide was written to help you decide on a quality program. It will give you questions to ask, resources to check, and answers to your questions.

May you have much success in your endeavors. Using horses as co-facilitators in therapy or education can produce significant positive changes in your life!

## What EAP/L is and what it is not!

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy and Learning is not horsemanship, riding lessons, or learning about horses.

It is a mental health treatment tool or educational process using horses as “co-facilitators.” Why horses, some may ask? Because horses are honest and powerful messengers, with distinct personalities, attitudes and moods. They are social animals and have roles in their herds like humans do in their groups and families. They have the power to bring up issues quickly, mirroring what the client is feeling. They speak a universal language in helping people by living in the “here and now.” They don’t make judgments or hold grudges and they like to have fun! They provide immediate, honest, observable feedback.

There are several different models and approaches that are accepted as “best practices” throughout the industry. Some models are 100% on the ground with no riding, other models implement some riding as part of the therapy. If you as consumer have a preference, that is an important question to ask when talking with the mental health professional.

## What questions should I ask the professionals at the facility?

1. First and foremost, you need to know how the mental health professional is licensed. They may be an LPC (Licensed Professional Counselor), LCSW (Licensed Clinical Social Worker), MFT (Marriage and Family Therapist), etc. You may find information at your State Licensing Board.
2. You will want to know what certifications the professionals have—what are the requirements of the certifying organization, what ethical standards are they required to uphold, and how often is continuing education required for re-certification.
3. What model of EAP/L is used and do the professionals consistently practice the model? For example, Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA) has strict ethical principles and rigorous training standards that members agree to use in their practices.
4. How much experience do the professionals have in conducting equine assisted activities and what are their qualifications? Do they have a specialty in the type of clients they serve?