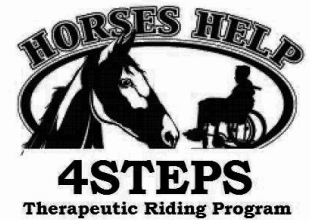


# 4STEPS Therapeutic Riding Program Volunteer Manual 2026



## 4STEPS Mission

The mission of 4STEPS is to enhance and enrich the lives of individuals with physical, emotional, and learning disabilities by providing safe, professional, ethical, therapeutic, and rehabilitative equine activities. 4STEPS is a PATH Intl. member center since 2002. 4STEPS TRP uses horses in the process of healing. Our horses provide therapy, education, pleasure, and sport in an environment of safety.

You have chosen to give some of your valuable time to volunteer to help improve the lives of the disabled children and adults at **4STEPS**. We hope that in doing so, you will find that your own life is enhanced as well. All of us at **4STEPS** are proud of the fine work we do and the extraordinary results we see. Thank you for becoming a part of our organization.

This manual has been developed to provide you with some guidelines for working with our disabled riders. **Please read it carefully.** The information it contains is important, and will improve the quality of your work. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask. We want you to know that every person you are helping at **4STEPS** is aware of and grateful for your help. Without you, this program could not exist. You are valuable to us and we appreciate all that you do.

Sandy Winter, Program Director

## BENEFITS OF THERAPEUTIC RIDING

**Physical** The three-dimensional motion of the horse provides rider hip, back, and trunk action that simulates natural walking. Riding relaxes and strengthens muscles and improves body tone, posture, balance, joint mobility and coordination.

**Psychological** Contact with horses and horsemanship training provides a noncompetitive setting for learning. New abilities, self-discipline, and improved concentration build self-confidence and self-esteem. Provides a General sense of well-being. Exercise in the fresh air away from hospitals, doctors' offices, therapy rooms or home.

**Social** Horseback riding nurtures a positive self-image. Riders may, for the first time in their lives, experience some independence and a sense of being a part of a team.

**4STEPS** TRP serves children and adults with a variety of physical and/or emotional disabilities. We encourage each rider to be the best he can be on or off the horse. At **4STEPS** our riders will find friendship and enjoyment and develop a respect and love for animals.

## WHO DO I CALL?

Who do I call if I can't come?

Who do I call if I need more information or if I have questions?

Who do I call for class cancellation for inclement weather?

**Call the office at 410-835-8814**

**Where is the phone?**

There is a land phone in the bunkhouse. The instructor has a cell phone in the arena and on the trail.



**How do I sign in?**

You will be told where the sign in book is. Please fill out one sheet for yourself. Sign in and out each time you come.

**What do I do in an emergency?**

There is information on this in the manual. Basically, follow the directions of the instructor

**What are the hours of operation?**

4STEPS operates sessions from March through August and October through December on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. (office open during Jan, Feb and Sept).

## CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

Riders, staff, volunteers and their families have a right to privacy that gives them control over the dissemination of their medical or other sensitive information. *4STEPS Therapeutic Riding Program shall preserve the right of confidentiality for all individuals in its program. The staff shall keep confidential all medical, social, referral, personal and financial information regarding a person and his/her family.* This kind of information is protected and staff/volunteers who receive this information must not disclose it to anyone else without proper authorization. Anyone who works or volunteers for, or provides services to 4STEPS Therapeutic Riding Program is bound by the policy.

A client may not be competent to give consent for disclosure of medical or sensitive information or both (including photographs and videotapes) because of age or mental incapacity. As a general rule, infants and children under age 18 do not have legal authority to consent to disclosure. Only parent(s), legal representatives, or other defined by state statute generally have this authority.

## **FARM SAFETY**

Fire is an ever-present danger. **DO NOT SMOKE WHEN YOU ARE HERE**

Alcohol and drug use do not mix with horses. If you are taking any medications that will impair your reflexes or judgment, it is better to refrain from participating until you are no longer using them.

**PLEASE DRIVE SLOWLY.** The speed limit is 5 miles per hour. Horses spook at fast cars and there are children around that you may not see.

**CHILDREN MUST BE SUPERVISED AT ALL TIMES.** Running, ball playing, or other activities that may spook a horse are NOT allowed while riding is in session.

Dogs can frighten horses. Many of our students are afraid of them. Please don't bring dogs.

## **GENERAL GUIDELINES**

**Attire:** Please dress neatly. Long pants and closed shoes are required even in hot weather. Long pants protect you from ticks, chiggers, and biting flies. Walking shoes, boots, or sneakers with a high ankle are preferred. (to prevent foot injuries, no sandals or loafers are allowed. Avoid loose clothing and jewelry as they can be obstructive and cause injury. Wear sunglasses or a hat to protect your eyes. When weather is cold cover up! Wear hat, gloves, and even long-johns.

Cell phones are NOT allowed in the arena. If you must take or make a call or text please tell instructor so that your position is covered and then step away from the arena so that your call is private. If you are expecting a call, please leave your phone with one of the volunteers or parent who is not in the arena. Answering a call takes your attention away from your most important job – the safety of our riders. If you are using the cell phone for pictures, ask the instructor if it is OK to do so. Some clients have signed NOT to have their pictures taken.

Chewing gum, eating and drinking are not allowed in the arena. This is both for your safety and the safety of the riders. If you need to drink water tell the instructor so that your position is secure.

Don't forget to sign in. If you are getting school credit for volunteering we need proof that you were here. We also use it to make us eligible for certain kinds of funding. Your hours are also noted for use in volunteer recognition and volunteer rewards.

We depend on you to be here. If you can't come, please let us know ahead of time so that we can arrange for a substitute. We really appreciate your consideration.

We treat our horses GENTLY. Never kick or hit a horse. Let the instructor know about the problematic behavior.

We treat our students with RESPECT. Talk to them appropriately for their age, and never yell. Use positive rather than negative reinforcement. Be patient. Count to 30 before repeating a request, especially if the student is learning disabled. He or she might need extra time to process what you asked. Be understanding of fear, but if you can't handle a problem with a student, ask the instructor for help.

Keep what happens at **4STEPS** confidential. We know you are excited about what you do here, and want to share it with others. Please do so in a way that does not identify the riders. They have a right to privacy.

Keep busy. If you have a long break, there are plenty of things you can do to help out. Clean up the tack room or office, wash out buckets, groom a horse that isn't being used, muck the paddock, or just ask us how you can help.

The tack room is the building where we store saddles, bridles, reins and other horse related equipment. A well-organized tack room makes the job of the volunteers easier. Knowing your way around the tack room and keeping things in order is vital to the smooth running of the program. Thank you for keeping our tack room neat and clean!

**Do NOT** engage in personal conversation when working with horses and participants. There will be plenty of time outside of the arena and lesson time to share stories with others.

**Have fun!** laugh, and enjoy yourself. Your enthusiasm is contagious!

### **SAFETY AROUND HORSES**

1. **BIG WIDE SAFETY CIRCLE** Think of a horse as having a 6-foot "danger zone" surrounding it. Within 6 feet, the horse can kick, buck, cow kick (kick to the side), bite, or rear – and you or a student can be seriously injured. Always make a **BIG WIDE SAFETY CIRCLE WHEN GOING AROUND THE BACK OF THE HORSE.**

3. Warn a horse that you are approaching. Use your voice and a gentle touch. Approach from the side, NEVER from the rear.

4. When standing next to a horse, stand close. If the horse kicks, he can't kick very hard if you are close.

5. Keep your feet away from the horse's hooves. You might get stepped on.

6. Never walk under a horse's neck when tied (it might rear from fright). Never walk under a horse. You might not be that short, but some children are.

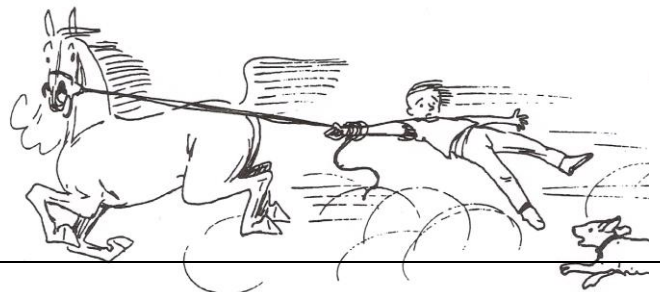
7 Never stand directly in front of a horse, especially when the horse is tied. hold the horse for a rider. Never stand behind a horse!!! There are occasions in unmounted liberty work where the instructor will instruct and coach the participants.

8. Do NOT hand feed a horse. It is an invitation to have your fingers bitten. After the food is gone, your fingers still carry the smell. A horse can't tell the difference between a carrot and a finger that smells like a carrot. Keep your hands away from the horse's mouth. ALL horses bite! *Always use the buckets to give treats to the horses.*

9. Don't yell, run or make sudden movements near a horse. Be slow and gentle.

10. Keep horses well away from each other at all times. Fighting horses are a danger to everyone nearby. Keep an eye on their heads and rear ends. If the ears are flattened, the horse is about to fight. If he lifts his leg, he is getting ready to kick. **DO NOT ALLOW HORSES TO SNIFF EACH OTHER.**

11. Always use a halter to tie a horse. NEVER tie a horse by his reins.



12. Never wrap or tie anything attached to your horse around your body in anyway. Being tied may result in your being dragged by your horse.
13. Always lead a horse by his lead rope.
14. If a tied horse rears or pulls back, or otherwise acts upset, STAY AWAY. Let the instructor handle the problem. A panicked horse is very dangerous.

### **GATE ETIQUETTE**

**Gates and ropes are DANGEROUS around horses!!!! Please follow these rules!**

Never enter a paddock alone. Have a buddy!

If there are other horses near the gate, ask for help from a senior volunteer or instructor. k.

Open the gate wide to accommodate the horse.

One horse at a time through the gate.

Make sure the horse is completely through the gate before closing.

When putting horse back in paddock walk away from gate and other horses before releasing

### **SAFETY KNOT (DEMONSTRATION and YOUTUBE Video)**

It's fast and easy to tie, but the true value of the quick release knot lies in its ability to be quickly and easily untied in the event of an emergency. If a tied horse panics and pulls back on the rope, a single tug on the end of the lead will free him.

The quick release knot's ability to provide an "emergency exit" is the reason it is valued as the knot of choice for safely tying horses.

Horses should be secured at withers-level or slightly higher to a sturdy, fixed object, such as a fence post (never a fence rail), tree, hitching rail, or tie-ring screwed into the wall. The lead rope should be tied to allow just enough slack that the horse can hold his head normally, but not so loose that he is able to lower his head to the point that he could potentially get his leg over the rope. Two to three feet of lead rope is about right for most horses, and ponies should be tied shorter. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fG6LiX10hIU>)

### **GROOMING ETIQUETTE (with client)**

Ground activities are the most reported incidents in horse activities. Be prudent, limit grooming time to activity. The volunteer will stand at the horse's rump to supervise the activity. The volunteer will model the grooming activities. Do not carry on idle conversation! Use the time for the rider to bond with his horse. Grooming time serves many purposes including exercises for upper body, fine and gross motor skills, intake of client's mood and ability to speak and count, learn horsemanship...the volunteer has an opportunity to model.

The horse is tied.

- Introduce the client to the horse. Pet on neck and say hello! Make big wide safety circle and pet other side on neck.
- With the curry comb make 10 or 20 circles on the horse's neck, shoulder, back, and belly (front armpit) on each side of the horse. Wake up!

- Make 10 or 20 strokes with the dandy brush on the horse's neck, shoulder, back, and belly (under the front leg) on each side of the horse. Relax!
- Brush the horse's mane (and optionally, tail).
- Options: If horse is disagreeable to above, option to butt and withers scratch, hands-on grounding, as trained. Do not groom if horse continues to be disagreeable. See instructor

#### **4STEPS saddling protocol**

- Saddle pads are assigned by instructor. Place pad on horse's back up over the withers onto the nape of the horse's neck.
- Pick up saddle so that horn is in front. Offside stirrup and other straps over the back of the saddle so that they do not interfere with placing the saddle on the horse's back.
- The saddle is placed gently on top of the pad(s). Do not push the offside stirrup over to the other side...make a big wide safety circle and bring the stirrup down so it doesn't bang against the offside of the horse. Place the bridle on the saddle horn.
- **DO NOT GIRTH *Girthing (only those trained by instructor)***
- Announce to instructor that you are done saddling and accompany rider to get helmet on and wait for mounting instruction.

#### ***Girthing (only instructor girths or those trained and assigned by instructor)***

#### **4STEPS Bridling protocol (*only those who have been trained by instructor*)**

Each horse has its own bridle. Some are mechanical hackamores, some bitless side pull and some are bitted.

#### **SAFETY CHECK (*only certified instructors do safety checks*)**

##### **Helmet Check**

Helmets must be ASTM/SEI certified. Long hair should be in a ponytail. Make sure a helmet liner in the helmet. Place the helmet on the rider's head. If it is wobbly or uncomfortably tight, try a new size. The helmet should sit straight on the rider's head, with the brim level and about 1 inch — or two fingers — above the eyebrows. If it sits higher than this, it is too small and won't protect your head. Too low and it will block your eyes.



Before you buckle the chin strap, ask the rider to shake his head like they are saying "no." Then try to pull the helmet up and down. In both cases, if the helmet slides around, it is too big. If it seems okay buckle the chin strap. Make sure the helmet isn't tilted. The chin strap should not be loose at all, but not so tight that you cannot move your head up and down comfortably. Ask the rider to shake her head side to side and up and down. The helmet shouldn't wobble at all. You may be able to make some adjustments by adding another

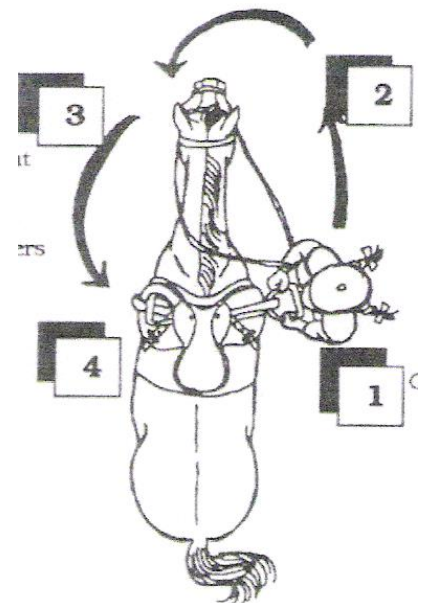
helmet liner to correct an imperfect fit, but any major sliding or wobbling means you need to go down a size or try a different model. Your helmet should feel snug enough that it won't move. Adjust the chin strap so that it fits snugly but comfortably under the rider's chin. The rider should be able to chew or yawn easily.

***How to hold a horse during an instructor's safety check (volunteer trained by instructor).***

Handler is always on the same side of the horse as the instructor. To assist instructor, handler holds the left side buckle on the halter with her right hand, left hand on rope, arm extended so that the horse's head is lined up with its tail, calming the horse, paying attention to the girthing. If the horse attempts to move the handler will adjust the horse.

**For Instructors** No matter how carefully we check when we saddle the horse or how many times we have done it before, there is always the possibility that we overlooked something. An incorrectly fitted saddle or saddle pad can irritate or hurt the horse and an unhappy horse may hurt the rider. A loose girth will cause the saddle to slip when mounting or riding. If the bridle is not properly fitted and buckled it may distract the horse or come off while riding. An extra minute is all it takes to do a safety check by walking around the horse before mounting as shown

1. Check: Saddle fits properly, Saddle pad is straight. Girth is properly buckled. Girth is tight enough.
2. Check: All parts of the bridle are straight and buckled properly. Bit and bridle fit correctly. Strap ends are in their keepers.
3. Check: All Parts of the saddle are straight and buckled properly, Bit and bridle fit correctly. Strap ends are in their keepers
4. Check: Saddle pad is straight. Girth is properly buckled; girth is tight enough.



***All riders will be mounted by the instructor or under the instructor's supervision***

Never mount a horse while the horse is tied. If the horse pulls back the rider and the horse could be injured. Never mount next to a fence, car, another horse or any solid object that the rider could be thrown into. Never mount on pavement. Always check the girth for tightness before mounting.

Check that the saddle and bridle are placed properly on the horse, the stirrups are the correct length. Check that nothing is broken or worn. MAKE SURE THE RIDER HAS HELMET ON SECURELY. Don't assume that someone else will do this. Check twice!!!

When mounting one volunteer stands at the head of the horse and holds the lead rope. A second volunteer stands on the off-side of the horse and puts weight into the stirrup to counter-balance the rider. The instructor assists the rider to mount as appropriate. If the saddle starts to slip or the horse starts to walk forward during mounting, stop the mounting

and remedy the situation before continuing. ASSISTED MOUNTING FROM THE MOUNTING RAMP IS ALWAYS DONE BY THE INSTRUCTOR and an offside wall.

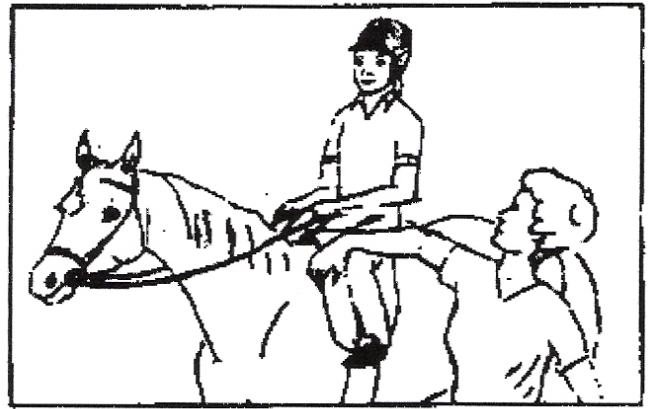
## SIDEWALKING

The responsibility of the sidewalker is the safety of the rider. Sidewalkers assist the riders to the degree necessary. Riders on taller horses should, if possible, have tall sidewalkers. Riders on ponies should have short sidewalkers.

### *How to sidewalk:*

1. The sidewalker walks next to the rider's leg, helping to support the rider's balance if necessary. The Instructor will inform you if you need to use a support hold. There are three support holds, as follows:

a. **Arm-Over-Leg support:** This position provides support for the rider without interfering with the rider's trunk control, allowing the rider to build up strong trunk support. Facing toward the rider's head, the hand closest to the horse holds the front of the saddle, with the arm resting lightly across the rider's thigh. In the event that the rider slips, a gentle downward pressure with that arm will support the rider in place.



b. **Crutch support:** This is used for riders who have no upper body control. Facing the front of the horse, the hand closest to the horse forms a crutch under the armpit of the rider, with the thumb in front of the shoulder and the fingers behind it. Resting the elbow on the saddle will increase the support and help prevent fatigue on the volunteer's part.

c. **Ankle support:** This is the least restrictive form of support, allowing the rider to use all muscles to provide his or her own support. Facing the front of the horse, the hand closest to the horse encircles the rider's ankle lightly. In the event that the rider slips, a light tug will bring the rider back into alignment with the saddle. DO NOT yank on the ankle. DO NOT keep constant pressure downward on the ankle. If the rider loses balance forward, gently moving the leg forward will counterbalance the rider. If the rider loses balance backward, gently moving the leg backward will also counterbalance the rider.

2. Be aware that it may be necessary to change sides frequently if your arm gets tired. If this happens, ask the leader to stop, and tell the other sidewalker that you need to change sides. Ask the other sidewalker to support the rider as you move around to the other side. Take the support position on the new side and support the rider while the other sidewalker moves to the opposite side. When the other sidewalker has indicated he or she is ready, inform the leader that you can resume walking.

3. At the trot, the sidewalkers must trot alongside the rider at the rider's leg. If providing support, use the arm-over-leg position, do not hold saddle as it taxes the horse's ability to

move freely. Additional support may be provided by gentle downward pressure on the rider's ankle with your free hand. Riders using the crutch support should not trot.

4. If a rider starts to fall, try to push the rider back into the saddle. If this is not possible, the next best thing to do is to try and break the fall. To do this the sidewalker on the side of the horse that the rider is falling toward turns and puts his back against the rider and goes down to the ground with the rider. This not only slows the fall it prevents the sidewalker from being injured in an attempt to save the rider.

5. Once a rider has fallen, sidewalkers stay with the rider while the horse leader moves the horse out of the way. DO NOT attempt to help the rider – this is the responsibility of the instructor. Be prepared to go for help at the direction of the instructor. Know where the first aid kit is, where the phone is, and where the emergency numbers are.

6. Other responsibilities of the sidewalkers include encouraging the rider to pay attention to the instructor, helping the rider to follow directions, showing the rider which side is right and left, assisting in games, demonstrating to the rider where to place the legs and how to keep heels down, encouraging the horse to keep moving and providing encouragement and enthusiasm for the rider's efforts.

7. It is important that the sidewalkers pay attention to the instructor at all times. Conversations should be non-existent when instruction is taking place. Sidewalkers reinforce, but do not teach, so restrain the urge to tell the rider what to do and how to do it unless the instructor tells you to do so.



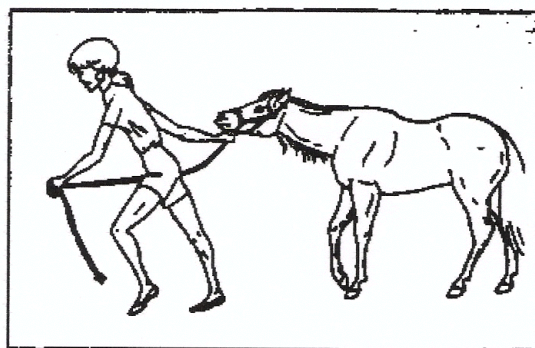
### **LEADING A HORSE**

The responsibility of a horse leader is to control the horse. For this reason, a horse leader should be someone with some experience in horsemanship. The rider has a leader because he is unable, at this time, to control the horse fully. The goal is to allow the rider to be independent as possible. Although the leader is responsible for guiding the horse and stopping and starting, the leader should allow the rider to do as much of this as possible, assisting only when necessary.

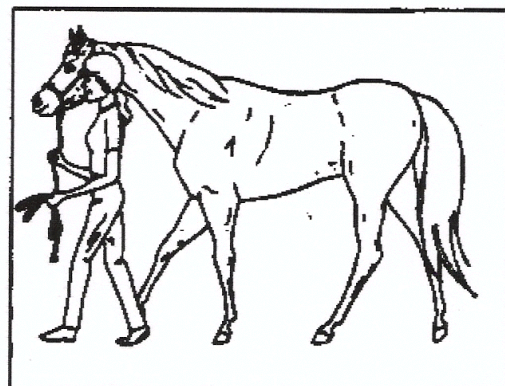


## How to lead a horse

1. The leader usually stands on the side of the horse closest to the center of the arena, next to the horse's neck (between the head and the shoulder).
2. The leader holds the lead rope, six to eight inches from the horse's head, in the hand that is closest to the horse. The remaining rope is folded, not looped, and held in the free hand. Be careful not to allow the lead rope to drag on the ground.
3. When the horse is stopped for more than a second or two, the leader should stand in front of the horse. The lead rope is held folded in one hand, and the sides of the bit or halter are held gently with both hands to prevent the horse from moving forward. Do not hold the bit or halter too strongly, or the horse will resist and start to move around or pull its head back. You can calm the horse by holding the halter with one hand and stroking the horse below the forelock (on the forehead) with the other hand.
4. When a rider is mounting at the mounting ramp or block, lead the horse to the start of the ramp, then move to the front of the horse and walk backward into the ramp corridor, leading the horse as close to the ramp as possible. Remain standing in front of the horse and keep him as still as possible during the mount.
5. Walking the horse: Walk next to the horse's neck, between the horse's head and shoulder. **DO NOT** drag the horse or walk ahead of it. Use short tugs on the lead rope to encourage horse to move faster. If necessary, slow your speed to that of the horse. If the horse is walking too fast, slow your speed and gently tug on the lead rope to slow it down.
6. *Trotting the horse:* After the rider cues the horse to trot, gently tug the lead rope and move into a gentle trot (not a run) next to the horse. Remain alongside the horse's neck during the trot. Control the speed with a tug backwards on the rope if the horse goes too fast.
7. Pay attention to the instructor at all times. It is important that you not engage in conversation. The instructor will tell the riders to walk, trot, turn right or left or halt. The leader needs to hear these commands so as not to interfere with the rider's efforts.
8. Be aware of other horses in the arena, and do not let the horse you are leading approach another horse too closely. There should be a two-horse distance between riders at all times. Horses must **NEVER** be allowed to put their noses together.
9. If a rider should fall the leader is responsible for the horse **ONLY**. Stay with the horse and keep it calm. Move the horse away from the fallen rider. The instructor will care for rider.



*There is a wrong way.....*



*...and a right way to lead a horse.*

10. Use short tugs rather than a steady pull to keep a lazy horse moving. The horse can set himself against a steady pull, but tugs keep him awake. Move out, about 1000 steps per 15 minutes, to provide the most therapeutic benefit.

11. When you halt for more than a few seconds, stand in front of the horse with your hands on the halter's cheek pieces or loosely hold the lead or reins. Standing in front is a psychological barrier for the horse and he will stand more quietly. If you like your thumbs, don't put them through the snaffle or halter rings!

12. These suggestions can help you control our horses, be a good aid to a rider and be a valuable assistant to an instructor. You will provide real therapeutic input to your rider, as well as make it safe for him to have fun riding.

## **IN THE ARENA**

***The arena gates must be closed and latched at all times when there are riders in the arena.***

If you are leading a horse, walk between his head and shoulder NOT in front of the horse.

**When** leading or holding a horse with a mounted rider, always inform the rider BEFORE moving or changing directions. Avoid sharp turns or sudden stops. Allow the rider to initiate all movement if possible. Give the rider time to give commands to the horse. ALWAYS let the rider do as much as possible.

**Help** your rider if he or she needs it but first allow plenty of time for the rider to perform independently AS explained BY THE INSTRUCTOR. Responses often take longer than we expect. Allow the rider to perform at his or her own pace making sure the rider understands the instructor.

**Riders** should always stay at least 2 horse lengths apart from each other, whether moving or standing still. If your rider's horse gets too close to another horse, ask the rider to circle or cross to the other side of the arena.

**When** passing another horse, always announce that you are passing and pass on the inside (the side closest to the center of the arena) at least 6 feet away from the horse being passed.

**Do not** circle a horse near another horse. Watch that no other horses are in the way.

**All** horses should be going in the same direction. If one rider reverses, all riders must reverse. A reverse is always made by turning in toward the center of the arena (unless otherwise instructed).

**Never** trot horse up to or past a walking horse. Never canter past a walking or trotting horse. It is very important to pay attention to the rider and instructor. Don't chat with riders or other volunteers while the class is in session. Be friendly, answer direct questions from the rider briefly, but keep your ears on the instructor and your eyes on the rider.

**You** may reinforce what the instructor is saying by showing the rider or touching the appropriate area.

**Never** yank on the reins or lead rope to stop the horse. Pull slowly and steadily on the lead rope or reins. Yanking frightens the horse and can cause rearing or backing up. If a horse pulls back, do not resist. Move with him, holding the lead rope. The harder you pull a horse, the harder he will resist you.

**NEVER HIT OR KICK A HORSE.** If a horse is misbehaving, call the instructor for help.

If the horse or rider you are working with is nervous or upset, walk the horse to the center of the arena and ask the instructor for help. Horses should be calm and riders should be alert. If this is not the case, bring it to the instructor's attention immediately.

**IF YOU AREN'T COMFORTABLE FOR ANY REASON WITH YOUR HORSE OR RIDER, TELL THE INSTRUCTOR IMMEDIATELY.** You are often the first person to be aware of a potential problem. Trust your instincts.

**During classes, horses should not stand at the rail (fence) except under the instructor's directions.** If your rider needs to stop, come off the rail and move to the center of the arena so you don't block the movement of other riders.

If a horse is running away, (with or without a rider) **STAY CALM.** Do not yell and do not run. Other horses should stop and stay with the rider. Wait for instructions from the instructor. If you are not with a client, but are spotting, walk slowly toward where the horse is running to and wait for instructions.

If another rider has a problem or a fall, **DON'T** rush to assist. Stay with your rider and listen for instructions. The instructor will handle the problem and ask for assistance if needed. The rider you are assisting is **YOUR FIRST RESPONSIBILITY.**

If your rider falls, the horse leader or leader/sidewalker is responsible for the horse, not the rider. A loose horse is a danger to every rider in the arena. Stop the horse, get it away from the rider and call for the instructor. The sidewalker stays with the rider until the instructor arrives and then follows the directions of the instructor.

**When dismounting to the ground unassisted, make sure the rider takes BOTH feet out of the stirrups before lowering himself to the ground.** Assisted dismounts should always be done by the instructor.

**After a session you should fill out the Horse Soundness and Temperament Form regarding the performance of your assigned horse.**

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

### **What to Do if a Horseback Rider Falls Off the Horse**

If a rider falls off their horse, the priority is to ensure the rider's safety and to maintain order for other riders. The instructor will determine if 911 should be called.

#### **1. Halt all horses immediately**

When a fall occurs, all riders should stop their horses to avoid further accidents. This is a standard rule in most horse programs. **Inform the instructor or emergency services**

#### **2. Check on the Rider**

Is there an injury? Does the rider need CPR or First Aid? Did the rider hit their head, Follow the instructors direction?

#### **3. Keep the area clear**

If the situation is serious, all horses should be away from the fallen rider.

#### **4. Stay calm and avoid panic**

Panicking can cause other riders to make unsafe moves. Speak calmly and reassure others

By halting all activity, checking on the rider, and following the barn's rules, you help ensure the safety of everyone in the arena while minimizing further risk.

Spontaneous, unexpected events that pose a risk to the rider and or team constitute an emergency. Safety of the rider in most cases is the result of a safe emergency dismount. To ensure the smooth execution, the team must be familiar with emergency procedures and practice it on a regular basis.

### **Examples of Emergencies:**

- Therapy horse spooks violently
- Sudden violent weather change
- Patient feels nauseous or dizzy
- Unexpected grand mal seizure
- Major disruption outside the arena such as a loose horse
- Severe temper tantrum or violent behavior by client
- Horse colics or suddenly becomes ill

### **Procedures for an emergency dismount:**

Horse handler or instructor signals the need for an emergency dismount. Handler immediately stops horse and stays close to the horse's head to calm the horse. If stirrups are being used, sidewalker must immediately free the rider's feet. Sidewalker grasps the patient firmly around the waist and pulls the rider off and away from the horse and eases the rider to the ground. If there are two sidewalkers, simultaneously assist in safe dismount. Handler turns the horse's head toward the side to which the rider is dismounting. Although dismounts are usually made to the left, the type and nature of the emergency may dictate otherwise. It is crucial that the team is familiar with and well practiced in the procedures so that decisions can be made instantly regarding what side the rider will be dismounted.

### ***Two teams in the arena:***

The team not involved in the emergency will immediately come to a halt. Additional action will depend on the nature and severity of the emergency.

### **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

Several opportunities are available for those volunteers wishing to do more than (or instead of) volunteering as groomers, leaders and sidewalkers. If you want to volunteer to promote our cause, consider one of the "non-horsey" projects. All volunteers are encouraged to spread the word about 4STEPS TRP to friends, clubs and organizations who would be interested in providing financial support, volunteers, or riders. If you have a contact you would like us to follow up on, please tell us.

## **HORSE RELATED OPPORTUNITIES**

**Senior Volunteer (Wrangler)** Senior volunteers train new volunteers at orientation and mentor new volunteers during their initial sessions, help coordinate volunteers and meet with instructors to evaluate the program from the volunteer's point of view. Requirements include at least 100 volunteer hours at 4STEPS (or recommendation from another PATH center), good working knowledge of tacking, grooming, leading, sidewalking and how to help with the riders.

**Buckaroo Volunteers:** Volunteer completed 30 hours to 99 hours. A Buckaroo should be proficient in handling, grooming, tacking, leading, sidewalking, and helping with the riders.

**Greenhorn Volunteers:** Volunteers with less than 30 hours. A Greenhorn will be mentored by a senior volunteer and will be trained in all aspects of rider support except leading.

**Schooling:** Our horses need periodic "tune ups" to keep them interested and responsive in the therapeutic setting. Riding our horses on the trail offers volunteers and horses recreational experiences outside the arena. A volunteer is trained in schooling when they have completed 30 volunteer hours.

**Assorted Service Projects:** Tack cleaning and repair, carpentry (building shelves and ramps, etc.), painting, electrical or plumbing services, poster design, videotaping and photography are just some of the opportunities currently available. Cleanup and workdays are held periodically, generally prior to a special event, to give the property a major "sprucing up".

**Certified Riding Instructor:** 4STEPS encourages its volunteers to seek certification.

Requirements are outlined in the PATH and CHA standards and accreditation manuals. Go to the websites for further information (PATH Intl or CHA).

## **"NON-HORSEY" OPPORTUNITIES**

If you have a special interest or ability in any of the following, please let us know.

**Fundraising:** Interested individuals are welcome to join the fundraising committee and help 4STEPS TRP to meet their financial needs. The fundraising committee plans and executes our annual fundraising drive, contacts clubs and organizations interested in offering financial assistance, helps with getting donations for special events, and contacts vendors to donate needed items, thereby reducing 4STEPS TRP expenses.

**Grant Writing:** grant writers are needed to help identify foundations or grants with a potential for donating to 4STEPS TRP and to write these grants.

**Public Relations/Marketing:** periodic press releases, media coverage, striving for higher community visibility. Assist in writing proposals and other written material and social media.

**Volunteer Coordinator:** Arrange and oversee volunteer support for the riding program, special events and office needs. Ensure that each session has sufficient volunteers. Act as liaison for volunteers needing to cancel or reschedule their volunteer hours. The VC solicits new volunteers, notify colleges, universities, schools and organizations of our need for volunteers.

**Office Help:** Filing, bookkeeping, answering phones and answering questions or referring them to the appropriate person.

## GLOSSARY OF DISABILITIES

The following are brief, non-medical descriptions of disabilities and conditions one might encounter in therapeutic riding. This is not intended as a comprehensive explanation of a specific disability. It is a general overview of how therapeutic riding can be beneficial.

**Angelman Syndrome** - Neurological disorder caused by deletion on the fifteenth chromosome. **Characteristics:** Developmental delay, lack of speech, movement/balance disorder. Happy demeanor, seizures, sensitivity to heat. **Benefits:** socialization skills, listening skills, communication skills. Balance and movement, calming

**Arthritis** - Inflammatory disease of the joints. **Types:** Osteo, rheumatoid and juvenile rheumatoid. **Characteristics:** Pain, lack of mobility, deformity, loss of strength. **Benefits:** Gentle rhythmic movement promotes joint mobility and relieves pain.

**Autism Spectrum** - a neurological and developmental disorder that affects how people interact with others, communicate, learn, and behave. **Characteristics:** People with ASD often have problems with social communication and interaction, and restricted or repetitive behaviors or interests. People with ASD may also have different ways of learning, moving, or paying attention. **Benefits:** Interactions in a group setting stimulates interest away from self and toward others and the horses. Postural and verbal stimulation.

**Cerebral Palsy** - Brain damage occurring before, at, or shortly after birth. non-progressive motor disorder. **Spastic** – hypertonicity with hyperactive stretch reflexes, muscle imbalances and equilibrium. Increased startle reflex and other pathological reflexes. **Low tone** – poor balance, difficulty with quick, fine movements and are often described as having a “rag doll” appearance. **Benefits:** Normalize tone, stimulation of postural and balance mechanisms, muscle strengthening and perceptual motor coordination. **Associated Problems:** Seizures; hearing and visual defects; general sensory impairment; perceptual and communication problems; mental retardation; emotional disturbance; learning disabilities.

**Cerebral Vascular Accident (CVA or Stroke)** - Hemorrhage in brain, which causes varying degrees of functional impairment. **Characteristics:** Flaccid or spastic paralysis of arm and leg on same side of body. May cause mental impairment, impaired speech, sight, balance, coordination and strength. **Benefits:** Promotes symmetry, stimulates balance, posture, motor planning, speech and socialization.

**Developmental Disabilities (DD)** A general term applied to children functioning two or more years below grade level. **Characteristics:** Varied, but can include slow physical, motor and social development. **Benefits:** Provides for success, opportunity for sport and recreation, stimulates body-awareness.

**Down Syndrome** - Condition in which a person is born with an extra chromosome resulting in developmental delays. **Characteristics:** Usually Hypotonic, have hypermobile joints. Prone to respiratory infections. **Benefits:** Riding improves expressive and receptive language skills, gross and fine motor skills, balance, muscle tone, and coordination.

**Emotional Disabilities** - A congenital or acquired syndrome often compounded by learning and/or physical disabilities incorporating numerous other pathologies. **Characteristics:**

Trouble coping with life situations and interpersonal relations. Behaviors such as short attention span, avoidance, aggression, autism, paranoia and schizophrenia may be exhibited.

**Benefits:** Increases feelings of self-confidence and self-awareness and provides social outlet.

**Epilepsy** - Abnormal electrical activity of the brain marked by seizures with altered consciousness. **Types and Characteristics:** **Petit Mal:** Loss of consciousness with loss of postural tone. May have jerky movements, blank expression. **Grand Mal:** Loss of consciousness and postural control. Usually preceded by an aura. (Note: an active seizure disorder is a contraindication for horseback riding.)

**Fragile X Syndrome** - Caused by a change or mutation in a gene on the X chromosome. More prevalent in males. **Characteristics:** Intellectual disability, Autistic behavior, Hyperactivity, ADD, Speech disturbances, Hand biting/flapping, Poor eye contact, Sensory issues. **Benefits:** Socialization skills, Listening skills, Communication skills, balance/movement, Calming.

**Hearing Impairment** - Congenital or acquired hearing loss varying from mild to profound. **Characteristics:** Communication difficulties—may use lip reading, finger spelling or sign language. Often phase out and have attention deficits. **Benefits:** Stimulates self-confidence, balance, posture and coordination. Provides social outlets and interactions.

**Learning Disabilities (LD)** - Catch-all phrase for individuals who have problems processing, sequencing and problem solving, but who appear to have otherwise normal intelligence skills. **Characteristics:** Short attention span, easily frustrated, immature. **Benefits:** Stimulates attention span, group skills, cooperation, language skills, posture and coordination.

**Multiple Sclerosis (MS)** - Progressive neurological disease with degeneration of spinal column tracts, resulting in scar formation. **Characteristics:** Progressive with periods of exacerbation and remissions. Symptoms include weakness, visual impairment, fatigue, loss of coordination and emotional sensitivity. **Benefits:** Strengthens weak muscles and provides opportunities for emotional therapy. **Associated Problems:** Visual impairment, emotional liability, impaired bowel and bladder function.

**Muscular Dystrophy (MD)** - Deficiency in muscle nutrition with degeneration of skeletal muscle. Hereditary disease that mainly affects males. **Characteristics:** Progressive muscular weakness, fatigues easily, sensitive to temperature extremes. **Benefits:** Provides opportunity for group activity, may slow progressive loss of strength, stimulates postural and trunk alignment, and allows movement free of assistive devices. **Associated Problems:** Lordosis, respiratory infection.

**Scoliosis** - Lateral curve of the spine with C or S curve with rotary component.

**Characteristics:** Postural asymmetry. May wear scoliosis jacket or have had stabilization surgery. **Benefits:** Stimulates postural symmetry. Strengthens trunk muscles. (Note: Severe scoliosis is a contraindication for therapeutic riding.)

**Spina Bifida** - Congenital failure of vertebral arch closure with resultant damage to spinal cord. **Characteristics:** Varying degrees of paralysis of the lower limbs coupled with sensory loss. **Benefits:** Stimulates posture and balance, improves muscle strength and self-image.

**Associated Problems:** Hydrocephalus, incontinence, urinary tract infection, lordosis, scoliosis, and hip dislocations.

**Spinal Cord Injury (SCI)** - Trauma to the spinal cord resulting in a loss of neurological function. **Characteristics:** Paralysis of muscles below the level of injury – can be flaccid or spastic. Fatigue, sensory loss and pressure sores. **Benefits:** Stimulates posture and balance, strengthens trunk muscles, is an option for sports participation and recreation.

**Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)** - Accidental injury to the head resulting in intra-cranial bleeding with death of brain cells. **Characteristics:** Gross and fine motor skills deficits. Often have impaired memory, speech and/or vision. May have psychological effects. **Benefits:** Stimulates balance, posture, gross and fine motor skills, speech and perceptual skills.

**Visual Impairment** - Moderate to total loss of sight. **Characteristics:** Insecure posture, lack of visual memory, anterior center of gravity, fearfulness and developmental delay. **Benefits:** Stimulates spatial awareness, proprioception, posture and coordination. Provides social outlet, structured risk taking and freedom of movement.