

4STEPS POLICY MANUAL found online at www.4stepstrp.org – Program Services

Lessons take place on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays mornings and afternoons. Call the office at 410-835-8814 or email giddyup4steps@aol.com to reserve your special time with our AMAZING horses and staff.

Therapeutic Riding – Our ultimate goal is to place all students in a group-lesson atmosphere so that the participants can develop peer groups and friendships at the farm. Our program offers skill-based instruction in which students learn progressively, at their own pace, ultimately obtaining the goal of independence. **Fee** - The cost of a (6 week) therapeutic riding session is \$240. A fee of \$160 is charged for an abbreviated 4-week Late Summer Session.

Equine Assisted Learning Activities (unmounted) - Offered for those individuals who are unable or unwilling to horseback ride but still enjoy spending time with the horses and learning about horsemanship. Program includes grooming, feeding, learning natural horsemanship and spending quality time with the animals and staff. **Fee** - The cost is \$120 for a regular session and \$80 for the abbreviated Late Summer session.

- *Because we know that it is a hardship to pay for multiple participants we offer a sibling rate. Discuss this with the Program Director. Call to discuss GROUP RATES.*

MAKE ARRANGEMENT FOR PAYMENT IN ADVANCE. Riders unable to pay the session fee should fill out the registration form for assistance in obtaining scholarships or other funding to meet or defray the expense. If you are working with an agency for funding we will provide an invoice upon your request. 4STEPS board of directors make decisions on scholarship award. Please submit the request early for consideration.

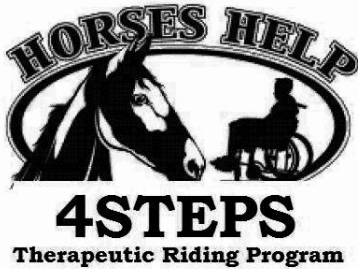
Inclement Weather and Adverse Conditions - If the weather is adverse for conducting therapeutic riding lessons on your scheduled lesson date or time the instructor may cancel the lesson. However, the weather on the Eastern Shore is often different in one place than in another. Lessons may be cancelled on account of such factors if the conditions at 4STEPS are adverse. Therefore if the weather where you are is inclement do not assume that the lesson will be cancelled. Please call us to find out whether your lesson will be held.

Make-up Lessons. Makeup classes must be scheduled during the current session. Makeup classes will be offered subject to availability of the instructor, horses and staff.

Participant Applications and health history: Updated applications must be on file in order for an individual to participate. You can find a Participant Application on file at www.4stepstrp.org under Program Services.

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4STEPS Program Policy Manual January 2024

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Welcome, Introduction and Background 4STEPS goal is to improve the minds and bodies of our riders, using our horses as partners. Our riders build strength in their bodies by learning to groom, saddle and ride. They improve their confidence by learning from our horses and receiving unconditional love that only animals can provide. 4STEPS specializes in riding instruction for special needs individuals, but provides therapeutic riding to individuals of any ability. The organization was founded in 2002 by Sandy Winter. Our Instructors are nationally *certified* Therapeutic Riding Instructors. All activities at 4STEPS are run according to PATH Intl. standards and safety is our primary goal. This policy booklet is meant to address guidelines to ensure our program continues to operate as safely as possible.

Participant Policies Attire and Safety Gear for Participants All riders must wear an ASTM / SEI approved riding helmet during mounted activities. All participants and volunteers must wear long pants (unless they are unable), closed shoes with laces or Velcro closures. The instructor or a qualified volunteer will perform safety checks on the tack and equipment at the beginning of the lesson.

Safety Stirrup Policy Safety stirrups are used on all saddles.

Acceptance of Participants into the Program Participants accepted into the riding program must have no medical contraindications that prevent them from participating that activity. In the case that they have a diagnosis that requires a physician's release, that release must be obtained before any mounted activities may occur. The PATH Intl Standards of Precautions and Contraindications will be consulted and followed. Individual medical history will be reviewed at least annually in the case of a participant with medical diagnoses. Any participant with Downs Syndrome must present a physician's clearance that includes a neurological exam of Atlantoaxial Instability. Participants must be of a height and weight that can be accommodated by the program's equines not to exceed 200 lbs.

Dismissal of a Participant from Program Activities In the case that a participant can no longer participate safely in the program's activities the Program Director will discuss other options. Situations in which this might occur include:

- Participant's health changes to the point that it prevents them from continuing
- Participant's behavior is dangerous to themselves and others including equines.
- Participants cannot follow directions to the point that they become a danger to themselves, other participants, the equines, staff, or volunteers in the program
- Participants experience a change in height, weight, or other physical condition such that the program's equines can no longer accommodate them

Guest policy Family and friends of our participants are most welcome at our facility. We ask that only the participant enter the tacking area at their designated session time. We have several areas where guests can relax and observe the riding session. NO DOGS or other pets are allowed at the facility at any time.

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Participants/ Volunteer Required Forms and Updates All participants and volunteers are required to complete Application Forms including Physician's Referral Form for all Participants. Participant and volunteer forms need to be updated annually starting in January. The updated forms will be added to the participant's or volunteer's files. These updates include physician's releases when applicable.

Policy on Confidentiality 4STEPS keeps all required forms for each participant and volunteer in the office. Access to participant information is restricted to staff and board members only. All staff, volunteers and participants of 4STEPS have signed the Confidentiality Agreement for the organization and will not discuss any information contained in the completed forms that are kept in the files. All client and volunteer information is considered confidential and must be treated as such.

Riding (mounted) Sessions General Information Lessons are an hour long. Grooming and tacking will take place both before and after riding for an hour long session. The physical and emotional capabilities of the participant may influence the riding time in each lesson. Riding sessions generally have one to four participants in them. We will only allow one participant per horse. Our normal riding lessons are group sessions, mostly having between two and four participants per lesson. We believe that riding sessions are more fun, engaging and educational when there is more than one participant in the arena. If individual sessions are desired, they may be arranged with the instructor at certain times.

Riding (mounted) Session Fee Payment Session fees are as follows:
6 weekly riding lessons) \$240; Payment may be made at the barn by cash or check or by credit card on the 4STEPS website. If the participant provides billing information, a billing statement will be sent electronically. Scholarships are available

Ground (unmounted) Sessions Unmounted equine services are for those who are unable to ride or who choose not to ride. These lessons include such topics as tack and equipment, horse behaviors, feed and health, natural horsemanship or just plain fun and bonding with the horse and coach. All ground lessons will be conducted under the direct supervision of a certified equine specialist or therapeutic riding instructor.

Scheduling Our program is very busy and we will do our very best to schedule your session when it is convenient for you. When registering for a session please send the registration form in early so we can accommodate your request for time and day. Please make every effort to come on your scheduled ride time. Our volunteers work hard to attend sessions regularly. Please consider your volunteer's time.

Cancellations Cancellations must be made at least 24 hours in advance except in the case of emergency or illness. (If you feel contagious, please stay home!) We may be able to schedule alternate participants in the case of known cancellations and appreciate the ability to rearrange our staff and volunteers when we know that you are not able to make it. Cancellations made less than 24 hours prior to the lesson or no-shows may result in forfeit of the lesson.

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In the case that weather or an emergency causes us to cancel riding sessions, we will give you as much advance notice as possible. Please make sure that 4STEPS staff has a correct phone number and email address to reach you in case of weather or other emergent cancellations. Please be considerate when cancelling your lesson

Choosing Equines and Tack for Participants

We have a variety of horses in our program and a wide range of saddles and tack. The therapeutic riding instructors will choose horse and tack for the riding lesson. Decisions are made based on safety, physical ability, goals for the session and volunteer and horse availability. The instructor will also assign volunteer leaders or sidewalkers as needed. The tack and equipment are inspected by an instructor before each use to make sure it is safe and in good repair. The tack must be an appropriate fit for both the equine and the participant. The instructor will also be responsible for ensuring the correct fit of the participant's helmet prior to mounting. Equines have different personalities and ways of moving, and they each react differently to people. They are able to teach participants different things. We will do our best to choose the most appropriate horse for each participant, but be aware that we will frequently change horses as goals and abilities change. Requests for a particular horse will be taken into consideration.

Documentation of Occurrences In the case where there is an incident that results or nearly results in injury or danger to any individual an Occurrence Report will be completed and submitted to the program director. These occurrences may be falls, behavior of a participant, volunteer or a guest, a natural disaster, or documentation of a "near miss".

Volunteer Policies

Ability of Volunteers to Perform Activities Volunteering with 4STEPS can be a very wonderful experience, however it is a physically and mentally challenging job. Volunteer duties must be performed in a safe and competent manner. Volunteers must be able to perform to a certain standard to participate in the following activities:

Leading a horse Volunteers must be capable of walking and jogging for an hour while maintaining vigilance and control of the equine in the lesson. They must be able to participate for the duration of a lesson without water or bathroom breaks. They must be able to exercise safe control of the equine in the case of unexpected behavior from either the equine or the participant. They must be able to follow directions of the instructor in control of the lesson at all times. They must be able to lead the equine in a manner that maintains the training of the equine and exhibits good ground manners.

Sidewalking Volunteers must be capable of walking and jogging for an hour while maintaining vigilance and often using upper body strength to assist the participant. They must be able to assist the participant with the activities and follow the directions of the instructor in control of the lesson. They must be able to participate in this activity for the duration of a lesson with no

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water or bathroom breaks. They must be able to maintain safe control of the participant in all situations, including incidence of unexpected behavior of the equine or participant.

Volunteer Conduct Volunteers of 4STEPS Therapeutic Riding Program will conduct themselves at all times as role models and good citizens. The mission of our program is to improve the lives of our participants and they must be treated with respect at all times. Some of our participants may look differently or act differently however, it is never acceptable to treat them in a manner that could be viewed as inappropriate or rude. We expect our volunteers to be honest, helpful, friendly and mature.

Volunteer Attire Volunteers must wear covered shoes at all times and avoid flapping clothing such as jackets tied around the waist or loose jackets that are not zipped or buttoned. Sunscreen and hats are advisable. Please avoid shirts with inappropriate wording or logos. In the summer, light weight long pants are preferable due to the heat and humidity. Volunteers are encouraged to drink lots of water during breaks and have snacks handy.

Equine Health Records are kept on the health of our equines including worming, shoeing and health issues. Our herd maintenance program includes active assessment of feed and behavior, a regular worming and shoeing schedule and vet visits for annual vaccinations and in case of injury or illness. All equines are evaluated at the start of the work day by the instructor on duty. Any horse that appears to be unsound in mind or body will be excused from sessions for the day and appropriate actions taken to rectify the issue. No equine in the program will be used for more than six hour of lessons or more than three continuously. Horses with age or soundness issues may have lower time limits.

Equine Conditioning and Training Program 4STEPS staff will provide conditioning and training specific to the needs of our equines. Every week, horses will be scheduled for appropriate riding or turn out.

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