

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

H.O.R.S.E. THERAPIES, INC.

Helping Others Rehabilitate through the Service of
Equines





H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc.'s mission is to create a caring therapeutic haven where people facing physical, cognitive and emotional challenges experience the healing power of horses.

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WELCOME TO H.O.R.S.E. THERAPIES, Inc.!

Volunteers are the backbone of any equestrian program for people with disabilities. We are so pleased that you want to become a volunteer at H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc.! Most of our riders cannot participate without the physical, emotional, and psychological support of their volunteers. An instructor and up to three volunteers may be needed to help each rider. The best case scenario is to provide a long-term volunteer team for each rider, so both the riders and volunteers can benefit from continuity and establish a lasting relationship of trust with one another. A professional, safety-conscious environment for the riders, volunteers and horses is a very important to H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc. Volunteers play a key role in achieving this goal.

Volunteer training is an ongoing process. We hope that what you learn in the training session will be a good foundation for you to build upon as you spend time at H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc.. This handbook is designed to serve as a reference after your orientation to the program. Volunteer duties, tips on working with horses and persons with disabilities, as well as specific information about H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc. are included within. Each rider has their individual needs and each week brings its own challenges so we consider volunteering as an on-going learning experience.

Thank you for your volunteer support!

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

Program Director: Samantha Sykes

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In adaptive riding sessions clients engage in equine- assisted activities through learning horsemanship skills on the ground and riding skills in the saddle. The goal of these sessions is to promote self-advocacy, intellectual engagement, and physical strength to individuals with physical, cognitive and emotional challenges. Our lesson plans are customized to the unique goals and needs of each rider. Riding skills are taught by certified therapeutic riding instructors and begin with the basics and follow a clear progression to create capable and well-adapted riders.

Benefits of our program:

Emotional - Participating in adaptive riding and horsemanship sessions provides a positive atmosphere for learning. New abilities, self-discipline, and improved concentration build self-confidence and emotional well-being. Participants also find that they may be able to gain trust and an emotional connection between both animals and humans alike.

Physical - The three-dimensional motion of the horse provides the rider with various benefits. The horse's movement stimulates the rider's hip, back and core muscles and simulates walking. Riding relaxes and strengthens muscles and improves body tone, posture, balance, joint mobility, and coordination. Participating in ground horsemanship lessons may help participants gain endurance and strength as they learn the skills necessary to be a knowledgeable horse person.

Social - Horsemanship nurtures a positive self-image. Participants may experience both independence and connection while in sessions. Participants learn how to build meaningful connections on and off the farm through the opportunity to engage with staff, volunteers, other riders and community members. Participants also learn how to advocate for themselves, giving them a sense of independence knowing that they can support themselves and their equine partners.





GENERAL INFORMATION VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

All individuals must complete H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc. volunteer training to be considered for any volunteer position. Additional training is required for the leader and barn volunteer positions. Please contact the volunteer coordinator if you are interested in pursuing these positions.

Sidewalker: A person who walks beside the horse and offers stability to the rider. This person must be attentive to the rider and the instructor.

Qualifications:

- Commitment to attend class each week for the duration of a session (preferred but not required)
- Able to walk, and jog periodically, for up to an hour (indoors and outdoors) on uneven surfaces
- Able to hold your arm raised and out to the side for extended periods of time
- Must have adequate vision and hearing to ensure the safety of horses and participants
- Able to work as part of a team and be flexible to changes
- Comfortable working with individuals with disabilities (including physical contact)
- Minimum age of sixteen years old
- Horse experience helpful, but not required
- Able to attend initial volunteer training and additional training throughout the year

Horse Leader: A person who is responsible for leading the horse and/or assisting the rider in controlling the horse during class.

Qualifications:

- Horse experience - volunteer should be knowledgeable and comfortable around a variety of horses and have experience working directly with horses and have attended a Leader Training and Tsession at H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc..
- Able to walk, and jog periodically, for up to an hour (indoors/outdoors) on uneven surfaces
- Must have adequate vision and hearing to ensure safety of horses and participants
- Able to work as a team and be flexible to changes
- Minimum age of sixteen
- Able to attend initial volunteer training and additional leader training throughout the year

Floater/Assistant: An extra person in a class who helps the instructor and fills in for volunteers as needed.



Barn Volunteers: A person who chooses to volunteer in the barn. This person may groom, tack, warm up horses, clean equipment or do general barn maintenance (picking stalls, watering, sweeping, etc).

Qualifications:

- Horse experience preferred, (this varies; but means that volunteer should be knowledgeable and comfortable around a variety of horses, and have experience working directly with horses)
- Able to halter, lead, crosstie a horse
- Able to groom and tack (English or Western) a horse without direct supervision
- Able to work as part of a team and be flexible to changes
- Minimum age of sixteen years old
- Ability to attend initial volunteer training and additional training throughout the year

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

Volunteers must be a minimum of 14 years old for all primary volunteer roles (with the exception of those participating as the role of the “floater” or assisting with clean-up and organizational projects) and minors must have a signed consent from parents/guardians. Because working with horses can be a potentially dangerous situation, all prospective volunteers must attend volunteer training and have all required forms listed below on file at H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc.. H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc. requires background checks for all volunteers contractors and staff members at/over the age of 18. This will be at the cost of the applicant and required before the applicant may engage in any H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc. activities. Information regarding this process will be provided at orientation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc. has a high respect for all who participate in our programs. Confidentiality in regard to all personal information about participants is essential. As part of your application you are required to sign an annual Confidentiality Agreement, which obligates you not to discuss personal information about any H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc. participant. We also ask that volunteers do NOT take pictures of our riders or other volunteers without confirming with a staff member that photo releases are on file.



REQUIRED FORMS

As a potential volunteer attending training, you are required to submit proof of a completed background check as well as a completed volunteer application packet. If you have any questions regarding this process or the forms involved, please contact our program coordinator.

VOLUNTEER TERMINATION

Volunteering at H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc. is a privilege. We do appreciate all the skills, energy and commitment volunteers bring to our program. Please understand that for the safety, security, and continuation of excellence in programming, an inattentive volunteer or one who cannot safely and fully perform the functions or duties of their assigned volunteer role will either be reassigned to a different volunteer role or will be relieved of their volunteer position.

Absolutely no volunteer who is intoxicated or chemically impaired will be allowed to volunteer at H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc.. If there is a question, H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc. staff will err on the side of caution, and will not permit the individual to complete their volunteer duties.



**GENERAL REQUIREMENTS:**

- Staff members must be a minimum of 18 years old
- Because working with horses can be a potentially dangerous situation, all prospective staff members must attend volunteer training and have all required forms listed below on file at H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc.

REQUIRED FORMS:

As a potential staff member attending training, you should have submitted the following forms necessary to become staff at H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc.

Volunteer Registration Information, (also contains Liability Release and Photo Release)

Volunteer Information and Health History Authorization for Emergency Medical Treatment, and the Confidentiality Agreement

CONFIDENTIALITY:

H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc. has a high respect for all who participate in our programs.

Confidentiality in regard to all personal information about participants is essential. As part of your application you are required to sign an annual Confidentiality Agreement, which obligates you not to discuss personal information about any H.O.R.S.E. Therapies participant. We also ask that volunteers do NOT take pictures of our clients or other volunteers without confirming with a staff member that photo releases are on file.

STAFF TERMINATION:

Working at H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc. is a privilege. We do appreciate all the skills, energy and commitment a staff member can bring to our program. Please understand that for the safety, security, and continuation of excellence in programming, an inattentive staff member or one who cannot safely and fully perform the functions or duties of their assigned staff role will either be reassigned to a different staff role or will be relieved of their staff position. Absolutely no staff member who is intoxicated or chemically impaired will be allowed to work at H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc. If there is a question, H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc. staff will err on the side of caution, and H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc. will not permit the individual to complete their staff duties.



EMERGENCY PROCEDURES:

All Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructors (CTRI) are certified in techniques of immediate first aid and CPR. All volunteers should follow instructions given by the certified emergency personnel. The human first aid kit and major medical supplies are located in the following location: in the tack office



A. Major Injury:

1. The CTRI appoints someone to: Phone emergency number and read directions (these directions can be found by the emergency medical kits).

*Remain in area to direct emergency vehicle and reassure people in the work area.

*Get the injured person's file from the office and give it to the CTRI.

2. The CTRI appoints a volunteer to:

*Go to the road and wait for the emergency vehicle to arrive.

*Stop driver and have lights and sirens turned off so the horses and participants will not be frightened.

*Tell the driver where the accident is and how to get there.

3. The CTRI will decide who will remain with the injured person and who will take the group to the safest confined area away from the accident.

4. The group will continue in an orderly manner or return to the barn.

5. An incident report needs to be completed by those involved

B. Minor Injury:

1. The needs of the individual should be met as guided by the CTRI

2. If the injured person is a client, have the horse taken back to the barn and properly attended to.

3. If the person in need can't or shouldn't walk, a car may be driven to the area if possible.

4. The rest of the group should continue in an orderly manner.





PRE-EXISTING WEATHER CONDITIONS:

Sessions will be canceled in advance in cases where current or approaching weather conditions may impact the safety of our clients, staff or horses. Some instances may be: tornado warnings, hurricanes, high heat index, extreme cold temperatures and wind conditions. If sessions are canceled, text and phone notification will occur as early as possible to all affected persons.

INCLEMENT WEATHER CONDITIONS:

H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc. shall monitor weather conditions via smartphones, computers and laptops as well as a weather radio when inclement weather is forecasted. If severe storm or tornado warnings develop during session times, classes will be delayed until conditions are safe. In the event of a sudden emergency or eminent danger, horse leaders or staff members will hold the horses while clients are moved to safety.

TORNADO WARNING:

1. If no sessions are being held, staff will move to the barn and await the all-clear.

2. If sessions are being held:

•*CTRI will designate a volunteer to direct participants, other staff to assist participants and families to the tornado shelter. Tornado shelter will be the hallway in the barn.

CTRI will tend to horses. Return to Barn, strip tack and release into a pasture with shelter.

CTRI will then proceed to a tornado shelter area

*Everyone will remain in shelters until an all-clear signal has been given and it is safe to leave. No one shall leave premises until all have been accounted for.

HURRICANE WARNING:

All sessions will be cancelled in the event of a Hurricane Warning in our immediate area. Sessions will resume when no remaining bands are in the area and when major debris clean-up is complete. If advance notice is given and you would like to assist H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc. with tagging or evacuating horses, preparing the properties for impact, or if you would like to assist with clean-up after the storm has passed, please contact our Program Director.

FIRE:

In case of fire within the learning facility during sessions at the CTRI's direction, the procedures below will be followed:

*A call will be made to 911 by a designated person.

*If the fire is small, Staff members may choose to use fire extinguishers located in barns, or office.

*A Director will designate one staff member to guide clients, families and other volunteers to vacate the area immediately and proceed to a safe outdoor gathering point.

*No one shall leave premises until all have been accounted for.

*CTRI will tend to horses: Horses will be taken out to a safe pasture.

*When all horses are out, the CTRI will join others in outdoor arena. *Gates to lots closer to barn will be closed once horses are in pastures.

*Horses will be separated as needed from there.



The Volunteer Team is what makes this program possible, consequently the quality of the volunteers directly affects the quality of the lesson. We are thankful for all of our volunteer teams and the opportunities they provide for our riders. Following are a few important things all volunteers need to be aware of:

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD EQUINE SPECIALIST IN MENTAL HEALTH AND LEARNING

- > Reliability -Regular attendance and/or advanced notice of absences is a must.
- > Punctuality – Our sessions are scheduled tightly. It is important to start on time.
- > Physical Fitness - Within reason!! Please know your physical limitations and stay within them. Notify staff if they affect your staff duties.
- > Alertness – Despite your outward relaxation, always anticipate an unexpected emergency.
- > Empathy – Avoid false sentimentality. It is important to have genuine empathy and regard toward clients.
- > Patience – Endless patience is necessary to adjust to the slow movements and reactions of clients with severe disabilities, as well as to delayed learning and challenging behaviors. Remember, we are here for them! It's ok if it takes the whole session, it's THEIR SESSION!





SCHEDULING:

When you attend Staff Training your available times will be confirmed and you will be assigned volunteer duties based on your schedule and our needs. Continuity is very important with our clients and we hope that you will fulfill your assigned staff duties consistently once the session begins.

We do understand that there will be times when you will have to miss your volunteer duties. If you know in advance, please inform staff as soon as you know you will be missing your assigned session time. In the event you are unable to come at the last minute due to illness or family emergency, please call our Program Director as soon as possible so that we can try to find someone to fill in for you. If there is no answer, please leave a detailed voice mail. If any or all sessions at H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc. must be canceled for any reason, a staff member will attempt to contact you as soon as possible.

ARRIVAL, SIGN-IN PROCEDURES & RECORDING HOURS:

Upon arrival please do the following:

- Put on your name tag
- Check the posted volunteer schedule (this will be sent out via text) to confirm your assignment for the day. On occasion, such as if a client cancels or another staff member is sick, you may be assigned to do something different than your usual duties.

Recording your hours:

Be sure to record your hours each time you come in the volunteer sign-in binder. It is your responsibility to record your volunteer hours.

If you need verification of the total number of volunteer hours please make a request to the program director. Verification of your total ESMHL in training hours are only as accurate as the hours you log in. You must log in ALL of your volunteer hours to receive proper credit for total hours served.



WHAT TO WEAR:

Working at a barn is dirty work so dress accordingly. You will get dirty! Also, what you choose to wear can affect the way you move. Be sensible and remember that you will need to bend and stretch to be able to lead the horse or work in the barn. Dress in layers that you can shed as you exercise, especially during cooler months. During the summer, be sure you dress coolly. If you do wear a hat, make sure that it fits well and will not fly off while in the arena. Sunglasses are a big plus in the sunny months and sunscreen and bug spray are recommended. Also, avoid dangly earrings, necklaces and bracelets that can hamper your movements, get pulled by a horse or client, or distract the horse. You will be doing a lot of walking and possibly some jogging on uneven terrain, so comfortable shoes are important. Choose sturdy, closed toe and heel shoes, hiking boots or sturdy running shoes are a good choice. High-heeled shoes, sandals and open heel shoes such as “Crocs” or clogs are not safe footwear for working at H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc. and will not be allowed.





GENERAL VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES AND SAFETY REGULATIONS

As with any program we have a few guidelines and safety regulations to be followed by all staff members:

- Listen to the H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc. Staff at all times.
- Keep all gates closed all the time.
- Teasing, taunting, harassing, or purposely annoying, scaring, chasing, or irritating the animals at the farm is strictly prohibited.
- Treat animals with respect. Use kind, even if direct, words with the animals. Anyone not being kind will be removed from them.
- Do not go into fields, barns, or stalls without permission of a H.O.R.S.E. Therapies staff member.
- Family members and guests must stay in designated area only. If you wish to go anywhere other than designated visitor areas, please check with a staff member first.
- Smoking, vaping, drugs and alcohol are not allowed anywhere on H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc. property during operating hours.
- Please leave pets at home unless it is a service animal or has been approved in advance.
- Cell phone usage is not permitted during session time.
- Please do not feed the horses without permission from designated staff.
- Staff should aid the client only if needed or as directed by the CTRI. If they are capable of accomplishing even a small part of a task, let the client do it.
- Clients need to develop independence, but not at the expense of an accident. Always assess the safety of a situation before making a decision. When in doubt, ask the Program Director or another staff member. Always err on the side of caution!
- During the session, please keep conversation very minimal so that the client can listen to the CTRI. Please limit unnecessary conversation with client during session. If they attempt to engage you in conversation politely direct their attention back to the CTRI. Be attentive to the CTRI at all time as to maintain the highest standards of safety. If you have any suggestions, questions or concerns about any aspect of the program or your assigned duties, please discuss with H.O.R.S.E. Therapies staff. Please do not discuss concerns with other other volunteers or clients.



SIDEWALKER GUIDELINES

The sidewalker(s) help the rider with balance and reinforce instructions in the lesson. If there are two sidewalkers, the inside sidewalker (one closest to the center of the ring) or the person designated by the instructor will clarify instructions. Too many people talking to the rider can be confusing.

- The sidewalker is responsible for greeting the rider, helping them with their helmet and any other personal equipment.
- Check daily lesson schedules prior to each class as there may be changes in your volunteer assignment. If you are uncomfortable with any assignment you are given, please notify staff immediately.
- Confirm the emergency dismount procedure for all new riders prior to the start of the session.
- Different methods are used with individual riders, depending on their needs. Always listen to the instructor for the type of assistance your rider requires. If you are unsure, ASK!!!

The four basic methods of support are:

1. Walking at Attention: Walk beside rider's leg to assist when needed. The pictures below show riders with sidewalkers using thigh holds with an additional sidewalker walking at attention.

2. Thigh hold: Place your arm closest to the rider across the rider's thigh and grasp the front edge of the saddle or saddle pad. Do NOT stick fingers into saddle parts.

3. Ankle/heel block: One hand is placed between the rider's ankle and the horse. This is done to keep a rider from digging their heels into the horse's side and encourages the rider to keep their heels down. The picture below shows a thigh hold with an additional heel block.



4. Stirrup safety for dismount: When it is time to dismount the rider. The Instructor (Or Volunteer specifically trained in these procedures) will instruct the team to confirm that the rider has taken both feet out of the stirrups. At this time, the stirrup on the left side of the horse should be moved in front of the knee role so that the rider does not get caught on the stirrup during the dismount.

Sidewalker Guidelines Continued:

- Always introduce yourself to new riders
- Always ask rider if it is okay to touch him/her.
- Always introduce yourself to new riders.
- Do not offer any more support than the rider needs.
- If a rider only has one sidewalker, ask the instructor which side to walk on. Usually it will be the right, opposite side of the leader, but if a rider has a specific weakness you may be needed on the left.
- Observe the rider with your front or side vision at all times. Never become so relaxed that you are not totally aware of the rider, horse, leader, instructor and environment around you.
- Be sure not to lean on the horse or rider since this pressure may unbalance the rider or horse.
- When the rider is using body and leg aids and does not need to be supported, do not touch the horse, saddle or pad since this may interfere with the aid applied by the rider.
- You may need to reinforce the instructor's directions, assist the rider in carrying out instructions or direct the rider's attention to the task.
- Allow the rider plenty of time to process the information before you begin to assist. For example, if the instructor says, "Pull the right rein towards me", and the rider seems confused, gently tap the right hand and say "right".
- Refrain from talking to the other sidewalker or leader during the lesson unless it has to do with the rider's position, balance, or horse.

ASK THE LEADER TO STOP THE HORSE IF:

1. The rider is off balance and cannot regain it while the horse is moving.
2. The saddle pad has slipped or the girth is loose.
3. The stirrups need adjusting.
4. The rider's helmet needs to be adjusted.
5. The rider is fatigued, in pain, or needs to stop for other reasons.
6. Your sidewalkers need to change sides, tie a shoelaces or are having some
7. difficulty and cannot carry out their job in comfort or efficiency.

Get the instructor's help when changing sides and never leave the rider unsupported.



GETTING TO KNOW PEOPLE WITH COGNITIVE, PHYSICAL OR EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES

GENERAL APPROACH AND INTERACTION

It is important to remember that every child or adult is an individual and wants to be treated with understanding, dignity and respect, regardless of having a disability or not. Each has his own unique learning rate, style of learning, personality, and temperament. One must always look beyond the disability to the person and provide them an enriched experience with a favorable environment in which to learn and grow. Being around people with disabilities may be a new experience for you. You may be overwhelmed at first with things you have never seen or do not understand. This is natural for most people. Just remember to be yourself but with a little more patience! Here are a few suggestions to assist your relationship with your rider:

- Be yourself. Our riders are just people!
- Relax. Let the rider put you at ease if you do not know what to say.
- Explore mutual interests in a friendly way. For starters, talk about the horse and whether the person has ridden before.
- Speak directly to the person with the disability. Your attention should be to them and not to someone with them.
- Use conversation and social behavior that you might use in any new situation.
- Offer assistance when asked or when the situation obviously requires it. Do not overwhelm the person with help or insist upon helping when they are managing alone. Do not hinder the rider's ability to expand their skills and independence, even when their movements may appear awkward to you.
- Respect the person's right to independence and their request for the kind of assistance they want.
- Appreciate what the rider can do. Remember that the difficulties the person may be facing could stem from society's attitudes and barriers rather than from the disability itself.
- Be considerate of the extra time it might take a person with a disability to accomplish or respond to something. Be patient.
- Let the person set the pace in walking and communicating.
- Realize that some individuals with disabilities are not able to communicate with words. Instead they will have alternative means of communication, which may be as elaborate as sign language or a picture system or as basic as various vocalizations, facial expressions and body movements.
- Do not be afraid to say, "I'm sorry I cannot understand you. Please say it again."
- Be sensitive to separating a rider from his wheelchair, crutches, or braces.



CHOOSING WORDS WITH DIGNITY

When talking about a person with a disability, make reference to the person first, not the disability.

AVOID: “afflicted with blindness” or “the blind person”

USE: “person who is blind” (or vision impaired)

AVOID: “crippled”

USE: “person who has a physical disability” or “person who has a physical challenge”

AVOID: “stricken with mental retardation” or a “mentally retarded, handicapped or disabled person”

USE: “person who has a developmental disability”

AVOID: “stricken with Down’s Syndrome” or “a Down’s child/adult”

USE: “person who has Down Syndrome”

AVOID: “stricken with autism” or “autistic child/adult”

USE: “person who has autism”

AVOID: “confined” or “restricted to a wheelchair” (or crutches, etc.)

USE: “person who uses a wheelchair” (or crutches, etc.)

The preferred terms focus attention on the uniqueness and worth of the individual first and foremost rather than emphasizing the disabling condition. The connotation of “dis-ability” is very important to avoid. Words such as defective, deformed, invalid, lame, maimed, spastic, and crippled imply pity, infirmity, and a general lack of competence.

People are neither invalid nor defective. People aren’t spastic, muscles are. By choosing words carefully, positive images can be conveyed about persons with disabilities.



DESCRIPTIONS OF DISABILITIES

H.O.R.S.E. Therapies, Inc. can support a wide range of clientele. The following is a general overview of some (but not all) of the common disabilities of individuals seen in our program along with an explanation of how adaptive riding and EAA are beneficial to a variety of clients.

Autism: a brain development disorder characterized by impaired social interaction and communication, and by restricted and repetitive behavior. Autism affects many parts of the brain; how this occurs is not understood. The autism spectrum disorders (ASD) also include related conditions of Asperger syndrome and PDD-NOS, which have fewer signs and symptoms.

Riding Benefits: Riding addresses several key symptoms affiliated with autism. Recent research continues to show benefits including improved communication and social skills, increased sensory skills, improved motor skills and improved response to verbal cues and external stimuli.

Cerebral Palsy: "CP" – a non-progressive disorder, thought to be due in part to loss of oxygen to the brain. Speech, hearing, vision, learning and/or memory deficits may be present; however, normal intelligence is generally not affected unless further brain damage has occurred. There are three main types of cerebral palsy:

1. **Spastic:** Occurs in approximately 70% of all cases. It may affect motor function in one or more limbs. The muscles stay flexed and tense and the facial muscle involvement may affect speech.
2. **Athetoid:** Occurs in approximately 20% of all cases. There is constant movement in a disorganized, uncontrolled manner. The use of arms and hands for support, grasp, and holding on are inadequate. It appears more obvious during periods of emotional tension. Speech functions are usually involved.
3. **Ataxic:** Occurs in approximately 10% of all cases. Weakness, poor coordination, and difficulty with quick and fine motor movements result in loose, "rag-doll" appearance.

Riding Benefits: Riding may improve balance, posture and the ability to relax. It also strengthens weakened muscles.

Down Syndrome: Also called Trisomy 21, Trisomy G. It is one of the more easily and widely identified hereditary disabilities. These individuals have often have a mean IQ of about 50 and experience both physical and cognitive delays.

Riding Benefits: Riding improves expressive and receptive language skills, gross and fine-motor skills, balance, posture, and coordination.

Learning Disabilities: "LD" – "Learning disabled" is a catch-all phrase for individuals who have problems processing, sequencing, and problem-solving, but who appear to have otherwise normal intelligence skills. New learning takes time to be integrated and may need to be reviewed frequently to insure retention.

Riding Benefits: Riding may increase attention span, group activity skills, cooperation, receptive and expressive language skills, posture, and coordination.



DESCRIPTIONS OF DISABILITIES CONT.

Multiple Sclerosis: "MS" - A slowly progressive central nervous system disease usually occurring in adults between 20-40 years of age and more frequently in women than men. Symptoms and manifestations include weakness in one or more limbs, visual impairment, minor gait disturbances, weakness on one or both sides of the body, emotional highs and lows, and inattention. MS runs a course of progression with periods of remission. There is no known cure for MS.

Riding Benefits: Riding maintains and strengthens weak muscles and provides highly recommended opportunities for emotional therapy.

Muscular Dystrophy: "MD" - A hereditary disorder usually appearing in infancy or early childhood. It is characterized by progressive skeletal and muscle deterioration. There is no known cure for this disease, which often severely shortens life span. People with MD are easily fatigued, especially when it is cold or hot.

Riding Benefits: Riding may slow muscle tone degeneration and maintain muscle function. Riding provides appropriate opportunities for social interactions and elevates emotional depressions.

Spina Bifida: - A congenital defect where, at birth, there is incomplete closure of the spinal column. There are usually varying degrees of paralysis of the lower limbs; however, life expectancies are not usually affected.

Riding Benefits: Riding improves balance, posture, and muscle strength in the affected limbs.

Traumatic Brain Injury: "TBI" - Head injuries cause more disabilities in people under the age of 50 than any other neurologic cause. Defects may include gross and fine motor skills, cognitive disabilities such as long and short term memory functions, visual limitations, speech, balance, and psychological alterations.

Riding Benefits: Riding improves balance, posture, gross and fine motor skills and cognitive deficits such as sequencing and processing.

Visual Impairment: Visual deficits may range from severely limited to total blindness, and may be caused by a congenital defect, traumatic illness, or injury. If onset is from birth to five years, the person affected has no visual memory. Impairments occurring after five years are accompanied by visual memories of people, places and things. A person is considered to be "blind" only if he has total loss of vision. If some vision is present, then the person is "visually impaired."

Riding Benefits: Riding helps orient the body in space and improves balance, posture, coordination and self-awareness. The voice of the instruction is a point of orientation in space for the rider; therefore, unnecessary sounds should be avoided as they are a distraction.



If you have any questions or concerns regarding the information found in the Staff Handbook please reach out to our Program Director . We look forward to seeing you soon!

Welcome to the herd!

