

Achievement Centers for Children's Camp Cheerful's

Therapeutic Horsemanship Program

Rider Handbook

Welcome to the Achievement Centers for Children Camp Cheerful Therapeutic Riding Program. We are proud to be a PATH International Premier Accredited Center (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship)!! Our facility, instructors and horses are monitored for compliance to international standards. Every five years, a PATH team does an on-site certification to insure that these standards are upheld. All of the instructors are certified by this association, and are required to complete continuing education hours annually to maintain their certification. In addition many of our instructors are also CHA certified (Certified Horsemanship Association) and Equine Specialists through PATH and/or EAGALA (Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association).

Therapeutic Horsemanship Eligibility Guidelines

In accordance with industry standards for equines and participants, the Achievement Center's for Children has established the following guidelines. In addition our program will adhere to the Precaution and Contraindication standards set for by PATH Int'l. To minimize risk and determine if mounted activities are beneficial each applicant will be individually screened during an initial intake process as well as throughout the session.

The minimum age for therapeutic riding is 4 years (48 months). There is no maximum age. The participant maximum weight is 180lbs for independent riders and 60lbs for riders who cannot stand up, bear weight or sit up on their own. Upon completion of health history and physical reports the family will be advised if therapeutic riding is a recommended form of recreation. Under certain conditions a rider's condition may change and a re-evaluation becomes necessary. The program staff will evaluate all participants on an as needed basis in accordance with these guidelines. Weight evaluations will be conducted at the beginning of each session. This evaluation will include a weigh in on our scale and/or an assessment on our stretching barrel. Participant behavior that is inappropriate, unsafe, disruptive or harmful to him/herself or others is a contraindication to therapeutic horseback riding.



Policies and Procedures

SESSION and ASSIGNMENTS

There are five 10 week sessions in each calendar year. Our program is ability based allowing us to group riders of similar skill levels and goals together. This determination is made after the initial intake. Classes offered include typical beginner, independent with a horse leader and classes with the full support of volunteer sidewalkers. As the rider progresses and achieves goals the instructor may ask to move the rider to another appropriate level class. Riders reserve their spot for the year in a particular time slot on a specific day. If a rider declines to ride in a session, their spot will be given to the next person on the waiting list. Re-entering the program will be on a space available basis, and may require an intake.

DRESS CODE

All riders are required to wear long pants, closed toe shoes with a heel and a riding helmet. Helmets are available for riders to borrow from the barn or may be purchased at a local tack shop. All helmets must be ASTM/ SEI certified.

ARRIVAL, PREPARATION and LATE ARRIVALS

Riders may arrive 10 minutes before class begins. Helmets should be fitted before class. Volunteers and staff can assist you. Riders will not be mounted if arrival is more than 15 minutes after class has started. Riders may not be left unattended. A family member or a caretaker 18 yrs or older must remain on site during the lesson.

CANCELLING A SCHEDULED LESSON

Since each rider has an assigned horse and volunteers, it is essential that we are notified of planned absences as soon as possible. CALL **440.238.6200 Ext: 255** and leave a message including: name, date, time of class and reason for absence, **as soon as you are aware the rider will be absent.** Cancellations made less than 2 hours prior are not eligible for a make-up.

MAKE-UPS

Make-up lessons are scheduled through the Manager of Equine Programs. It is your responsibility to attend the lesson. Outside of a documented medical issue, students are allowed one make up lesson per 10 week session. Additional missed classes will be forfeited and are the family's financial responsibility. If the agency cancels a lesson, a make-up lesson or a refund will be provided.

HOLIDAYS

The Agency recognizes the following holidays and will be closed. No riding lessons will be conducted on the following days - New Year's Day, MLK Day, President's Day, Memorial Day, July 4, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and day after, Christmas Day through New Year's Day. Credits and refunds will be assessed to rider accounts.

PAPERWORK, FEES AND PAYMENTS

The calendar year is followed for all scheduling. Riders must update all forms and pay the \$35.00 registration fee annually. The session fee is \$350.00 for 10 weeks and is due on or prior to the first day of class. Riders may split the payment in 2 by paying half \$175.00 by week 1 and \$175.00 by week 5. Riders that are not paid in full by the end of the session will not be permitted to continue to ride in the next session until the account is current. It is the rider's responsibility to secure outside funding approvals from providers. Riders are financially responsible for fees not covered by outside funders including missed classes and failure to secure funds from providers.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is covered in a riding lesson?

A one hour riding lesson includes mounting, dismounting, and group instruction, conducted by a PATH certified instructor. Group instruction may include stretching, skill practice, obstacle courses, mounted games, trail rides, or a ground lesson, depending on weather. The lessons are designed to enhance life goals and learning objectives, as well as physical strength and coordination. Riders may have a volunteer horse leader and one or two side walkers/coaches, who assist the instructor in delivering more personalized teaching and provide safety for the rider.

What should my rider wear?

For safety reasons, all riders are required to wear long pants, closed toe shoes with a heel and a riding helmet. Helmets are available for riders to borrow from the barn or may be purchased at a local tack shop. All helmets must be ASTM/ SEI certified.

Do parents need to help in the lessons?

It has been our experience that most riders stay more attentive and focused when the parent is not interacting with the rider during their lesson. For this reason, we ask that parents watch their rider from the observation room in the barn. Our goal for lessons is that the instructor always has the correct ratio of volunteer help for each lesson. In the interest of safety, if the instructor is short on volunteer help, they may ask if you are willing to sidewalk (tennis shoes or boots may be borrowed in the barn). If we are unable to conduct the lesson with ratios which meet the instructor's requirements, a ground lesson will be substituted. While the riders are participating in mounted riding lessons, we ask that parents refrain from talking, waving, coaching and distracting the rider from the area that they are auditing the lesson.

What is a ground lesson?

A ground lesson allows the riders to explore a whole new world with their horse. This is an opportunity to interact and bond with the horse by participating in grooming, feeding, and being hands on with their horse in animated ground activities. It fosters curiosity, responsibility and compassion. Ground lessons will be conducted at the instructor's discretion and in the event mounted lessons are not able to be conducted due to weather conditions.

Why is it that sometimes my rider has a horse leader & side walkers and sometimes he does not?

There could be several answers. We may have changed the rider's horse. If it is an older, experienced horse which knows his job well, we can lighten up on volunteer support. If it is a new horse to the rider, we want to be sure they are comforted by support staff nearby. If it is a less experienced horse, we want to have support in place for horse and rider. If the activity planned for the day is more challenging, we may add support staff. We also train new volunteers side by side with experienced volunteers, so you may see extra "hands" that day.

Why do you do similar activities weekly?

Horseback riding like any other sport activity, is a series of skills which become increasingly challenging as they are perfected, and build on each other for technique and confidence. Our instructors have a skills encyclopedia which they use to build lesson plans for each student. Repetition builds learning and confidence. It helps in learning discipline, sequencing and decision-making. As riders advance these skills become second nature, as they seek more challenging pursuits. Repetition allows the instructor to evaluate growth in each skill area during throughout a session, and observe consistency.

Why is my rider's horse changed?

As the skill level of a rider changes adaptations will be made to obtain the most suitable match of horse and riders. It is also a goal of the program to have each rider learn to ride more than one horse. This is important in case of an unexpected change, and is vitally important to building trust and confidence as part of the rider's skills. We try to talk to parents and riders beforehand, but it is not always possible. If you have a concern, please speak with the instructor.

Why do you change equipment for the rider or the horse?

In the initial evaluation, decisions are made for horse and equipment (tack). Instructors watch carefully to see that posture, balance, and comfort are supported by the choice of equipment. To enhance skill development, specialized equipment may be used, and changed to watch for desired progress. As rider the rider progresses, more challenging equipment may be used to foster strength and confidence.

Dismissal from Program

Participants may be dismissed from the program for a number of reasons, including, but not limited to:

1. Incomplete annual forms including:
 - Application/ Health History/ Equine Waiver
 - Authorization for Emergency/ Medical Treatment/ Photo Release
 - Program Policies & Procedures
 - Consent for Release of Information
 - Participant's Medical History, Medical Statement and/or physician signed physical
 - Payment Policies & Procedures
2. Fees are not paid on time or as agreed.
3. Excessive tardiness or frequently missed lessons (3 or more) without advance notification.
4. The development of a contraindicated condition or the deterioration of a condition that demonstrates therapeutic riding is no longer beneficial or could be harmful to the participant or where safety for the rider or others has become a concern, including active seizures, inability to maintain head and neck control while riding, change in condition that poses a risk to mounting and/or dismounting of rider.
5. Behavior that is disruptive or unsafe for the normal functioning of the program on the part of the rider. The rider exhibits inappropriate behavior that constitutes a safety risk to other riders, him/herself, staff and/or horse(s). Inability to follow directions is interfering with progress toward goals of rider or other participants.
6. Refusal to wear a helmet, boots or required equipment.
7. The rider exceeds weight that can safely be managed by staff, volunteers, and/or horses or exceeds maximum weight of 180lbs.
8. Any change in the rider's medical, physical, cognitive, or emotional condition that makes therapeutic riding unsafe or inappropriate to the participant, instructor, volunteers and/or equine.
9. A history of fire-starting, threatening behavior, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, animal abuse, the abuse of children or adults, verbal abuse of volunteers or others, including the expressing of vulgar language, inappropriate jokes, or disrespectful language.
10. Mainstreaming of an advanced independent rider whose riding has progressed beyond the ability of our program mission and/or equine abilities.
11. Use of or being under the influence of alcohol or drugs while on the property.
12. Breach of confidentiality and/or HIPPA violation.

Weather

Weather can adversely affect riders and horses. The information below outlines our policies. However, all cancelled classes will be identified on our call in line. You will not be contacted individually. **If you are unsure if class has been cancelled, please call our cancellation line 2 hours prior to class start time 440-238-6200 x255.**

SUMMER/HEAT

Riders – If riders are unable to wear a helmet for mounted activities due to the heat, a ground lesson will be offered.

Horse Usage - Periodically, due to heat and humidity elevation, it is necessary to monitor and limit the workload on program horses. The Program Manager will keep instructors advised using the following guidelines:

If the ambient temperature is over 80 degrees the following formula will be utilized:

Ambient temperature + humidity = **n** OR

If the ambient temperature is over 80 degrees and if the dew point is over 70 = **n**

When **n** is between 115 – 149 riding will be kept at a walk, there will be no trotting. When **n** is between 150 - 180 there is to be no riding, however ground lessons will be conducted. During ground lessons horses may be groomed and or worked in hand for short periods at the walk. When **n** is greater than 180 both riding and ground lessons will be cancelled.

WINTER/COLD

Per our cancellation policy if it's 15 degrees or below or if a driving ban has been issued classes are cancelled. If it's 16 or above, classes proceed as scheduled. This is based on information found on accuweather.com zip code 44136. If classes are cancelled we will update the cancellation line 440-238-6200 x255 two (2) hours prior to class start time so if you are unsure please check the line before driving out to camp. Since the majority of our classes are in the evening, we are **not** automatically closed when Strongsville schools are closed. Our heated arena temperature is set at 40-45 degrees, so dress in layers. Although it is cold in the barn, it is very comfortable in the arena when the heaters are turned on.

THUNDERSTORM/ LIGHTENING

When Thunderstorms are occurring during lessons the Instructor will assess the horse's reactions and make a determination if the lesson can proceed in a safe manner. If lightening occurs during outdoor lessons, all riders are to be dismounted and riders are to be taken to indoor shelter for safety.

Outside of instances of immediate danger, all weather cancellations will be discussed with the Manager of Equine Programs prior to formally cancelling. Make-up classes will be offered based on availability.

Safety

Horsemanship Spectator Code of Conduct

Parents, volunteers and spectators are welcome to audit the lessons. If you are watching near the rail where the lesson is being conducted we ask that you remain quiet, refrain from distracting behavior such as calling the rider's name, waving, taking photos, coaching from the sidelines and loud conversations. These actions are detrimental to the safety of all riders and horses and are disruptive to the class. Visitors should be supervised at all times and refrain from loud, abrupt noises, movement and actions which may startle the horses. Please do not run in the area, as that can frighten a horse. Families and visitors are not permitted to enter the barn or the arena without prior arrangements made with staff.

Trail Rides

Families and spectators are not permitted to follow the class on trail or camp rides. Walking behind or alongside the horses, talking, running, jogging, pushing strollers and children running may startle the horses and compromise the safety of all riders. Trail rides are an important opportunity for riders to gain confidence, bond with their horse and gain natural sensory input by taking a walk through nature, listening to the rhythm of the horse's hooves, etc. This is best accomplished when riders are free of distraction and given processing time to take it in.

Pictures/Photos

Our agency follows the guidelines set forth by HIPPA to protect your rider's privacy as well as that of other riders. If you would like to take pictures of your rider, please notify the instructor so they can make time. Pictures are best taken at the conclusion of the lesson or when returning from a trail ride when the horses have been warmed up and relaxed and the riders focus is no longer demanded by the instructor. No one is permitted to photograph the class/other participants or post on social media.

Pet/Animal Policy

No dogs or pets are permitted on the camp property. Service dogs that are working are permitted, however they must be supervised at all times and should not be left barking or unattended in cars.

Smoking Policy

Achievement Centers for Children's properties are smoke-free facilities. There is absolutely no smoking permitted anywhere on the property including in cars, outside the barn, the woods, etc.

Emergencies/incident reports

In the event of an accident or an emergency during a lesson, the instructor will indicate to all riders, volunteers and families what is to be done to provide for the safety of all participants and visitors. If needed, emergency services of Police and Fire/Rescue will be summoned by the instructor. It is the policy of the Achievement Centers for Children that all incidents be reported on an incident report form which will be completed by the instructor and involved parties. This is essential for proper documentation of any situation, and is used to monitor safety procedures, horse behavior and training needs. For more information please see posted the safety & evacuation information posted on the corkboards in all buildings. An annual safety review & drill will be conducted in each class during the month of April.

If you have questions regarding any policies or procedures please contact Cory Ramsey, Manager of Equine Programs Cory.Ramsey@achievementctrs.org or 440-238-6200 x225.

Thank you and welcome to the Therapeutic Horsemanship Program!