

# Achievement Centers for Children Camp Cheerful Therapeutic Horsemanship Program Handbook

Welcome to the Achievement Centers for Children Therapeutic Horsemanship Program! Our program is recognized as a Premier Accredited Center through the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH International). Our facility, instructors and horses are monitored and audited for compliance based on PATH International's standards. In addition some of our instructors are also certified Equine Specialists through PATH and/or EAGALA (Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association).

## **Mission Statement**

The Therapeutic Horsemanship Program strives to maximize the potential of individuals with and without disabilities, through equine assisted activities in an outdoor, natural environment.

## **Adaptive Horseback Riding Program**

The Adapted Horseback Riding Program offers recreation based mounted riding lessons with an emphasis on proper riding position and reining skills. Riders are taught horsemanship and riding skills in an environment that's tailored to their specific needs, goals and learning styles. In accordance with the precautions and contraindications identified by PATH Int'l, our Adaptive Riding Program has established eligibility criteria and guidelines that adhere to the industry standards for staff, volunteers, equines and participants.

## **Eligibility Criteria**

- Applicants must meet all eligibility criteria listed below in order to be considered for participation.
- All forms and paperwork must be completed and updated on an annual basis
- Fees must be paid as agreed prior to the start of each session
- Must be a minimum age of 4 years or older at the start the session
- Wear an approved helmet, footwear and any other necessary safety equipment
- Weigh under 180lbs for independent riders, weigh under 50lbs for riders who cannot bear weight
- Be of a weight and height ratio that can safely be managed by staff, volunteers, and/or the equine
- Mount and dismount safely with assistance
- Sit up on their own with minimal assistance
- Maintain head and neck control at all times
- Maintain a centered position while horse is in motion
- Sit quietly in the saddle without excessive movement
- Understand and comply with verbal instructions
- Actively engage in a positive manner with the horse, other riders, instructors, and volunteers
- Ability to participate meaningfully
- Demonstrate safety awareness
- Ability to tolerate extreme temperatures
- Ability to progress as evidenced throughout each session

## **Application Process**

Registration is not a guarantee for participation. If a candidate meets the eligibility criteria, application can be made through our online registration system. All required forms and payments must be received in order to complete your application, including the non-refundable application fee. Upon completion of registration, a telephone intake will be conducted at which time a determination will be made as to whether or not we will proceed with an on-site intake which includes a barn tour and riding assessment. Upon completion of an on-site intake and a staff review of the participant's registration, a determination will be made as to whether or not our Adapted Riding Program is recommended. Participants who are accepted into the program may be placed on the waiting list until an appropriate level class becomes available. The first 10 week session for any new rider will serve as a probationary period to determine if continuation in the adapted riding is recommended.

## **Criteria for Denial or Dismissal from the Program**

To abide by our commitment to provide services in the safest manner possible and to determine if Adapted Horseback Riding lessons are recommended, the program staff will evaluate all participants in accordance with our program guidelines. Weight evaluations will be conducted at the beginning of each 10 week session which will include a weigh in on our scale and/or an assessment on our stretching barrel.

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

- Participant exceeds the maximum allowable weight or does not have a weight and height ratio that can be safely managed by staff, volunteers, and/or the equine
- The program does not have an appropriate equine to meet the needs of the participant
- The participant's goals have been achieved
- A change in the participant's medical, physical, cognitive, emotional or behavioral condition or development of a contraindicated condition
- Inappropriate, disruptive or unsafe behaviors
- Unwilling or unable to follow verbal instruction
- Use of or being under the influence of alcohol or drugs while on the property.
- Breach of confidentiality and/or HIPPA violation.
- Failure to submit the annual medical records for riders with a neurological related diagnosis, such as Downs Syndrome who are required to submit a current health physical signed by a physician specifically stating that they have been tested and are negative for atlantoaxial instability as well as any other serious medical conditions.
- Inability to comply with COVID health and safety policies
- Excessive tardiness (10 min.) or frequently missed lessons (3 or more) without advance notification
- Fees not paid as agreed

## **Policies and Procedures**

### **Session and Class Assignments**

Parent/caretaker must remain on site for the duration of the lesson, riders may not be dropped off and left unattended. There are five 10 week sessions in each calendar year. Our lessons are ability based allowing us to group participants of similar skill levels and goals together. This determination is made after the initial intake. All classes are 45 minute group lessons which are held weekly. Riding participants may sign up for a full year. If a riding participant withdraws from a session or fails to register, their spot will be released to riders on the waiting list. Riders re-entering the program will be placed on the waiting list and may require an updated intake.

### **Forms**

In compliance with the policies of the Achievement Centers for Children and the standards set for by PATH International all riders must complete registration and update their forms on an annual basis.

### **Fees and Payments**

The calendar year is followed for all scheduling. The session fee for each 10 week session is due prior to the start of each session. A split payment option is also available. All third-party payers or outside funding sources must have written authorization in place prior to attendance. The participant/family is financially responsible for all program costs not covered by third-party payers. Accounts that are past due will have services suspended until payment is current. Cancellation must be made in writing 2 weeks prior to withdrawal from the program to avoid a 2 class penalty. There are no credits/refunds for cancelled or missed classes (including for illness) with the exception of medical related absences. Documentation, including a release to return to riding without restrictions, may be required for medical related absences.

Payments can be made as follows:

- ✓ Log in and pay through your online account
- ✓ Pay by debit/credit card by calling the Finance Department at 216-292-9700 ext. 239
- ✓ Leave a check in the mailbox in the barn

**Holidays** - In observance of the following holidays, the agency will be closed and classes will not be offered.

- New Years' Day
- Martin Luther King Day
- Presidents Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving and the Friday after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Day

**Arrival**

Riders should arrive 10 minutes prior to class start time. Services will not be provided if a rider arrives more than 10 minutes after the scheduled class start time.

**Cancelling a lesson**

Each participant has an assigned horse and volunteer making it essential that we are notified of absences as soon as possible. **As soon as you are aware you will be absent, including pre planned vacations, etc. please call 440.238.6200 Ext. 255** and leave a message including: name, date, time of class and reason for absence. Cancellations made less than 2 hours prior to class start time are not eligible for a make-up.

**Make-ups**

Make-up lessons are based on availability and are scheduled through the Manager of Equine Programs. Riders may be provided one make-up lesson per 10 week session. No call/no shows are not eligible for make-ups.

**Safety Guidelines**

By participating in the program, all staff, riders, volunteers and families have agreed to follow the guidelines identified in the Achievement Centers for Children Physical Plant and Safety Manual as well as those directly related to the Therapeutic Horsemanship Program as outlined below.

**Emergency/Incident Policy**

In the event of an accident or an emergency during a lesson, the instructor will indicate to all participants, 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 and documented 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 and training needs. For more information please see our Physical Plant and Safety Plan or the posted safety & evacuation information located in all buildings.

**Annual Safety Drills**

In addition to a review of our safety plan during orientation, a program safety review and drill will be conducted annually. To perform the drill, the instructor will verbally review these guidelines with the class and inform everyone that they will participate in a safety drill, including an emergency dismount at the conclusion of class. During the emergency dismount, the riders will line up in the center of the ring and follow the Instructors direction for riders to dismount with the assistance of their volunteers. Riders that use a wheelchair or walker will be dismounted by the instructor. Riders will be escorted out of class to reunite with their family.

**Where is the emergency phone located?**

A phone is located in the barn kitchen/observation room. Emergency phone numbers along with the camp address are posted next to the phone. In addition all Instructor's carry a cell phone.

**Where is the first-aid kit located?**

The human First-Aid kit is located in the kitchen/observation room in the barn. In addition a First Aid fanny pack and cell phone are required to accompany classes on all trail rides. The equine First Aid kit is located in the tack room.

**What if I see something that could be unsafe?** Please report any objects, holes or environmental hazards that may cause harm or injury to participants or horses to the Manager of Equine Programs.

### **Where are the fire extinguishers located?**

There are fire extinguishers located at every main door and exit in the barn (observation/kitchen, arena, and horse stalls). In the event of a barn fire immediately call 911 and evacuate all persons from the building to the bathhouse in the center of camp. Call for camp staff to assist. If the scene is safe horses should be led out to the pastures. There is a steel safety door that will automatically drop down to separate the stalls from the arena in the event of a fire.

**Communicable Disease** - We continue to take steps to reduce the risk of spread of communicable diseases including Covid-19 within the buildings and grounds. The individual programs at Camp Cheerful will engage in regular cleaning and sanitizing of the facility as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for the safety of clients, employees, volunteers, visitors and the horses. Our efforts to keep everyone informed and safe is a dynamic process based on the current federal, state and local health department guidelines. Our agency task force will continue to keep us up to date and in compliance with all safety recommendations.

Everyone will perform a self- assessment for symptoms of illness prior to arrival and will agree not to come unless they are symptom free.

- Wash and/or sanitize hands upon arrival
- Agrees to follow our program and all CDC and State & Local guidelines

### **Confirmed Case of Covid-19**

If any person who comes on the property tests positive for Covid-19 or is exposed to someone who has tested positive, they must inform the Program Manager to determine next steps.

### **Where do we evacuate?**

Evacuations due to fire, weather, intruders or other emergencies may become necessary. Immediately call 911. Our emergency exit is located behind the Bath House through the cabins to Valley Parkway, however if that direction is not passable we may exit through the Sensory Trail to Valley Parkway. The Instructor will determine whether or not to dismount riders as it may be quicker and/or safer to keep riders mounted depending on the circumstances and needs of individual riders. Should an offsite evacuation become necessary we will stay together as a group and report to the Best Western Plus on Route 82 to ensure that everyone is safe and accounted for to reunite with families. If we are unable to evacuate off site, riders will be escorted to safe zones identified with a red shelter signs throughout the barn. These signs are located in the viewing room, restrooms, tack room and throughout the barn. Staff will make a determination whether horses should remain in their stalls or be turned out to pastures based on the safest option for personnel – people first.

### **What do I do if someone is injured?**

When a rider, visitor, volunteer or staff person has fallen or is injured stay with them and assess the situation:

- DO NOT move an injured person, remain calm and stay with them. If a helmet is on leave it on/do not remove it
- Move all horses away from incident and halt.
- Keep uninvolved riders and volunteers away and calm.
- Request assistance from a certified CPR staff member so they can assess seriousness of injury. The AED is located in the camp Great Hall.
- Instruct nearby person to call 911 and if available have someone outside to meet EMS and direct them to you.
- Contact individual's family. Rider phone numbers are located in the progress note box in the viewing room.
- Notify the Vice President of Recreation and Sports, and the Manager of Equine Programs of incident.
- Accompany individual to hospital if necessary along with emergency authorization release and records.
- Complete incident report immediately/asap.

### **What if a horse gets loose?**

In the event of a horse getting loose, yell out "loose horse" to warn others. Remain calm and do not chase the loose horse, they will generally stop to eat grass. Request assistance from barn staff and wait for their assistance. If no barn staff members are available get a halter, lead rope and a scoop of grain and shake the can while approaching slowly & calmly in a soft voice. When you approach the horse give him a handful of grain while you clip a lead rope on his halter or around his neck. Lead him slowly back to his stall and move on to the task at hand.

### **What if a horse bites, kicks or injures someone?**

People first - immediately notify a barn staff member to assist you or the injured person. Follow staff instructions regarding the horse. If no one is available to assist with the horse return the horse to its stall. There are no circumstances in which a horse should be struck or restrained physically in a manner in which they may be harmed. An incident report must be filled out. The horse will be assessed for corrective training as determined by staff.

## Weather Policy

Weather can adversely affect participants and horses. The information below outlines our policies. 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 and listen to the updated recording.**

**Summer/heat** To avoid heat related incidents, take frequent breaks, offer water and offer to dismount and remove rider helmet. Periodically, due to heat and humidity elevation, it is necessary to monitor and limit the workload of 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 will 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 [www.accuweather.com](http://www.accuweather.com) (zip code 44136). Since the majority of our classes are in the evening, we are **not** automatically closed when Strongsville schools are closed. Our arena temperature is set at 40-45 degrees, so dressing in layers is recommended. Although it is cold in the barn, it is very comfortable in the arena when the heaters are turned on.

**Thunderstorm/lightening** If a thunderstorm occurs during a lesson the Instructor will determine if the lesson can proceed in a safe manner. If lightening occurs during lessons, all riders are to be dismounted and taken to indoor shelter for safety. Horses are to be returned to their stalls.

**Tornado** In the event of a tornado watch or warning immediately dismount riders and move to the designated "tornado safe areas" designated in the buildings. If necessary take cover in place by kneeling down and covering your head. If possible return horses to their stalls, if not turn loose in pasture.

**Flood** In the event of a flood a determination will be made by the Vice President of Recreation & Sports and the Metro Park Rangers regarding evacuation. In the event of an evacuation all persons will evacuate to the Best Western Plus across the street through the emergency exit behind the bathhouse. Return all horses to their stalls as they will be evacuated to the Mounted Ranger Station under the direction of the Manager of Equine Programs or the Barn Manager.

## General Guidelines

### Dress Code

All riding participants 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 and manufactured within the past 5 years.

### Spectator Code of Conduct

Parents, volunteers and spectators are welcome to audit the lessons from the viewing room. We ask that you remain quiet and refrain from distracting behavior such as calling the participant's name, waving, taking photos, coaching from the sidelines and loud conversations. These actions are detrimental to the safety of all participants and horses and are disruptive to the class. Visitors should be supervised at all times and refrain from loud noises, movement and actions which may startle the horses. 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 of the participants. 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 participants are free of distraction and given processing time.

### **Pictures/videos**

Our program follows the guidelines set forth by HIPPA to protect each participant's privacy. If you would like to take pictures, please notify the instructor to allow time. No one is permitted to photograph or video the class/other participants.

### **Pet/Animal Policy**

No dogs or pets are permitted on the camp property. Service dogs that are working are permitted with prior approval from the Manager of Equine Programs, however they must be supervised at all times.

### **Smoking Policy**

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

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is covered in the Adapted Horseback Riding Lessons?**

Riders are taught proper riding position, reining skills and general horsemanship in an environment that's tailored to their specific needs, goals and learning styles. Riders may have a volunteer horse leader and one or two side walkers/coaches, who assist the Instructor as needed. The mounted 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, grooming and tacking (saddling), lunging, feeding and equine care.

### **What is a ground lesson?**

A ground lesson is an unmounted lesson which provides an opportunity for participants to interact and bond with the horses. Ground lessons teach horsemanship skills while building curiosity, responsibility and compassion in a safe environment. Ground lessons will be conducted at the instructor's discretion.

### **Why is it that sometimes a riding participant has a horse leader & side walkers and sometimes not?**

There could be several answers. We may have changed the riding participant'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 riding participant, 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 riding participant. 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 participant. Repetition builds muscle memory, learning and confidence. It also helps with, sequencing, decision-making and discipline. As participants advance, these skills become second nature as they seek more challenging pursuits. Repetition allows the Instructor to observe the consistency and evaluate growth in each skill area throughout a session as indicated in the rider's weekly progress report. Please refer to the Adaptive Riding Exercise Manual for recommended exercises.

### **Why has the participant's horse changed?**

As the skill level of a riding participant increases, we often give them a more challenging horse to ride. It is also a goal of the program to have each riding participant learn to ride more than one horse. Sometimes a horse needs a rest due to an unexpected injury, is retired or removed from the program.

### **Why do you change equipment for the participant 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.

### **Who do I contact if I have questions?**

Cory Ramsey, Manager of Equine Programs 440-238-6200 x225 cory.ramsey@achievementctrs.org

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