

The Equestrian Therapy Program

# Volunteer Handbook







## **THE EQUESTRIAN THERAPY PROGRAM**

Dear Volunteer,

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with The Equestrian Therapy Program! We offer equine-assisted services for people with disabilities.

Please keep this booklet in a safe place and refer to it from time to time throughout the year. Thank you for your time and commitment to our program.

Sincerely,

The Equestrian Therapy Staff

**If you are unable to attend your scheduled volunteer time, please let us know.**

**Office (answering machine): 419-657-2700**

**Email: [volunteers@etpfarm.org](mailto:volunteers@etpfarm.org)**

**Volunteer Coordinator: (419) 371-4881**

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22532 Bowsher Road Cridersville, Ohio 45806 Phone: 419-657-2700 Farm: 419-657-6900

## Introduction to Equine-Assisted Services

### Therapeutic Riding:

Uses horseback riding for the purpose of contributing positively to the cognitive, physical, emotional and social well-being of people with disabilities. Therapeutic Riding provides benefits in the areas of therapy, education, sport and recreation and leisure. Studies show that horseback riding is therapeutic in the treatment of various physical and cognitive disabilities and can boost self-image. Riding is particularly beneficial for students with impaired motor function. The movement of the horse both relaxes and stimulates unused muscles, building muscle tone and improving coordination and balance.

### Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy:

Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) is an experiential intervention that uses the principles of animal-assisted therapy to help clients find solutions to the problems they are facing. The program is based on the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning (EAGALA) model. It is ground-based, so there is no horseback riding involved. Individuals, families, and groups with various mental health issues and human development needs can utilize EAP. Volunteers are typically not utilized in EAP sessions.

Please contact [allison@etpfarm.org](mailto:allison@etpfarm.org) for more information.

### Equine-Assisted Learning:

Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) addresses a student's learning goals through horse-related activities and often works toward the student's personal exploration of feelings and behaviors. EAL often includes social and emotional learning. The equine specialist and educator cooperate to best achieve these learning goals.

### Boots on the Ground:

Therapeutic Ground lessons provide benefits in the areas of mobility, social, education, sport, recreation and leisure. Activities are centered more on the care of horses than on actual riding of a horse. These activities provide benefits to participants that may be reluctant to climb on the back of a horse. This "hands on" approach uses equine-oriented activities for the purpose of contributing positively to the cognitive, physical, emotional and social well-being of people with disabilities. Though participants do not ride a horse, they receive enormous benefits from this tactile therapy.

### Leading to Literacy:

Leading to Literacy is a Horse-Powered Reading program using equine-oriented activities for the purpose of positively contributing to the physical, emotional, and social well-being of people struggling with reading/literacy.

### Hippotherapy

Hippotherapy is a direct medical treatment. It literally means "treatment with help of the horse" from Greek word hippos, meaning horse. Medical professionals, primarily physical, speech, and occupational therapists, use this treatment for their clients who have movement challenges. Clients benefit from improvement in dynamic posture, balance, sensory processing, and functional mobility.

## **Volunteer Opportunities**

**Side Walker-** The side walker's role is to support the participant with physical safety, to assist with activities, and to encourage the participant. Sidewalkers must attend a volunteer training session before participating in a Therapeutic Riding class.

**Horse Leader-** The horse leader's role is to maintain the equine during the lesson. The horse leader typically grooms and tacks the horse before the lesson and leads the horse throughout the lesson. Leaders must attend a volunteer training session before leading in a riding session.

**Groomer-** The groomer's role is to groom the equine(s) before classes. Groomers will usually arrive an hour before classes begin to prepare equines for class. Grooming includes brushing the coat, mane and tail. This also includes cleaning all four hooves. Groomers must attend a volunteer training.

**Special Events-** Assist with organization fundraisers, horse shows, Ride-a-Thon and other events held throughout the year.

**Builders/Handy Persons-** Use your special skills to rebuild fences, paint, do yard work and miscellaneous maintenance necessary.

**Office-** Assist with filing, data entry, mailings, photocopying, phone calls, research and other miscellaneous tasks

**Volunteer Hours may vary depending on job and time of year**

## **Our Mission**

The Equestrian Therapy Program is a 501(c) 3 charitable corporation organized to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities by providing equine assisted activities and therapies.

## **Our Participants**

The Equestrian Therapy Program serves people with disabilities that range from physical, cognitive, developmental, mental, and emotional. It is important that you as a volunteer consider the following when communicating with people with disabilities:

- \*Use “people-first” language such as a “person with a disability” rather than “disabled person”.
- \*When communicating with a person with a disability, it is important to take steps to ensure that effective communication strategies are used. This includes sitting or standing at eye level with the person and making appropriate eye contact.
- \*Treat adults with intellectual, cognitive or developmental disabilities as an adult.
- \*Use concrete, specific language and simplistic wording.
- \*Be patient, be prepared to repeat the same information more than once and in different ways.
- \*Avoid sensory overload by providing information gradually and clearly.
- \*Some of our participants are non-verbal. When communicating with a person who is non-verbal, be mindful of the following things: pay attention to the body language of the participant, keep talking to the participant and explain things, use visual cues, and imitate the desired behavior.

*Suzanne C. Smeltzer, Bette Mariani & Colleen Meakim of Villanova University College of Nursing, January 28, 2017*

## **Volunteer Requirements/Commitments**

- The minimum age for volunteers is 12 years.
- A training session is required for all volunteers.
- Mandatory training for all horse leaders on the leading method (Sandy Webster video) that ETP uses in classes and other therapy sessions.
- For the safety of everyone, we ask that phones are turned off or on silent/do not disturb. The vibration of a phone could potentially scare the equine(s) and disrupt the lesson.
- We ask that volunteers refrain from taking pictures or videos. This is for the privacy of participants, staff, and other volunteers.
- Leaders and sidewalkers must be able to walk at least one hour and jog occasionally, often on thick footing. Our volunteers have estimated that one-hour class is equivalent to walking a mile. Volunteers who cannot do this easily can be asked to help with other ETP needs.
- **Attire:** Volunteers should not wear open-toed shoes or sandals when working around horses. Volunteers should wear shoes or boots that offer foot protection. Dangling jewelry is unsafe to wear. Perfumes can attract bees or other insects and can cause allergic reactions to others. Chewing gum is not permitted during class.
- Volunteers must familiarize themselves with the location of the AED, phone, fire extinguisher, first aid equipment (human and horse) and other safety signs around the arena.
- **Volunteers must be willing to commit to a standing obligation.** Promptness, regularity and reliability are KEY! We will have a one-month trial period, since therapeutic riding is not an activity in which everyone feels comfortable or functions adequately, even with the best of intentions.
- **The volunteer shall maintain professional confidentiality with participant information.**

# What a Volunteer Can Expect

## Before the lesson:

- Please call if you cannot come at your regular time. When possible, give at least twenty-four-hour notice so we can find a replacement.
- If you need to cancel last minute, we understand. Please call the Volunteer Coordinator's phone and leave a message.
- For side walkers: Please arrive at least fifteen minutes before class begins.
- Horse leaders: Please arrive 15-30 minutes before classes begins, in case your help is needed in grooming your horse before tacking.
- Groomers: Please arrive 1 – 1 ½ hours before the start of the first class.
- Please remember to sign in each time. before beginning your volunteer session

## When you arrive:

- **Find the volunteer sheet and check the date by your name.**
- Look at the student roster for the day's assignments. Know your student's and your horse's names.
- Horse leaders, please make sure your horse is properly tacked and ready.
- Sidewalkers, please make sure your rider has a properly fitted safety helmet and any other safety devices needed. All riders must wear helmets.

## During class:

- Please refrain from unnecessary conversation—it distracts the rider. Use non-verbal communication whenever possible during lesson times. Exception: TELL THE INSTRUCTOR IMMEDIATELY OF ANY UNSAFE SITUATION.
- Pay attention to the instructor throughout the lesson.
- In case of a problem (stirrup or rider adjustment, side walkers changing sides, etc.), bring the horse into the center of the arena. Avoid stopping on the rail if possible, as this causes traffic jams.
- Notify the instructor of any unusual signs or problems, such as drowsiness, fatigue or emotional stress. Be discreet, however, when discussing a student in his/her presence.
- Be relaxed, confident and reassuring. Your rider will respond accordingly.
- Keep alert! You are responsible for your rider, as well as for the safety of the other riders in the class.
- Expect good behavior. Notify the instructor if you are having any problems. We do not tolerate hitting, biting, kicking, etc.

## In an emergency:

### **\*If the instructor shouts "STOP". Everyone in the arena must stop immediately.**

- Immediately halt all horses, with the leader taking the position at the front of the horse.
- Falls are rare, but can and do happen. In case of a fall, the instructor is trained to make the necessary decisions and will take care of the student.
- Try to keep your rider's attention away from the rider with the problem.
- **Be calm and alert.** Both riders and horses will respond to you with quiet reassurance.
- Remember, sudden noises and movement can frighten both people and horses.



## During the lesson:

- **Games** are important in almost every lesson. They may be simple, like Simon Says, or more complicated like Horseopoly. The volunteer plays an important part in every game. The instructor will give the students the rules for the game to be played. Watch the rider to see if they understand the directions.
- **Enthusiasm:** It helps if the volunteer is excited too, but not so much that you play the game instead of the rider. Allow the rider to do as much as possible by himself. The real accomplishment comes when he/she does it himself and knows that he/she has.
- **Listen to the instructor.** Commands are given to everyone as a class, or to the rider as an individual, so it is necessary to listen closely to the instructor. Excessive talking is one of the worst distractions in the arena. Please keep conversations with the riders to what is necessary and save the conversations with other volunteers until after class. This is difficult at times, but with up to twenty people in the arena at a time, the confusion and noise can get out of hand.
- **Rider control:** It is difficult not to do things for the riders, such as guiding, stopping, etc., but the only way they will learn is to do it themselves, even though it may take twice as long for them to complete a task that you would do without thinking. Use common sense. If a rider has a real problem or becomes too frustrated, of course you can assist. But the more we let them do on their own, the more they will learn and feel a true sense of accomplishment. Give lots of encouragement and praise.

## Additional Information

>The rider does not assist with taking the horse to or from pasture areas for any reason; nor can the rider walk part way out there with you for any reason. ETP Staff members, horse leaders, and other designated personnel are the only ones allowed to take horses to and from their pasture areas.

>Riders may assist with taking their horse to or from the stall with a staff member or horse leader present with them.

>Riders may not enter the arena without the Instructor present in the area, in case an emergency occurs.

## **Basic Safety Rules Around Horses**

- Always speak to the horse as you approach or before touching him.
- Always approach the horse at the shoulder area, never from the rear, as he cannot see you.
- Avoid ducking under or stepping over cross ties. Either walk in front of the horse or right behind him. Stay close to him as you go. If you keep one hand on him and talk to him, he will know where you are.
- Let the horse know what you are going to do. Example: Run your hand down his leg before you pick up his foot.
- It is wise to wear boots or sturdy shoes in case a horse should accidentally step on your foot. Never go barefoot around a horse.
- **Never** tie a horse by the reins or bit.
- **Never** leave the reins or lead hanging on the ground for the horse to step on.
- **Never** wrap the lead rope or the reins around your hand, wrist or any part of your body.
- **Always** tie with a quick release knot.
- **Never** tie a horse to a moveable object such as a barn door, a trailer door, the arena fence, a bench or any object that a 1000-pound horse can move when frightened.
- If a horse becomes frightened or nervous, halt and talk to him reassuringly, stroking him on the neck or shoulder.
- **Never** tease a horse. Your safety may be threatened.
- When grooming, always maintain a position that allows you to move quickly should the horse move suddenly.
- When leading horses in and out, be sure stall doors are all the way open with the door latch back and down. They could hurt a hip or shoulder if the latch is left partly out.
- **Always** lead the way through openings. Never let the horse start ahead of you, as he could kick you or ram you into the door or gate post.
- Open gates wide and be sure the gate does not squeeze or bump the horse as he goes through. He could run over you if he thinks the gate will hurt him.
- If another horse gets loose, or loses its rider, halt your horse, remain calm and wait for instructions from the instructor. Do not let go of your horse.
- Pay attention to footing—the barn floor can become slick if it's wet or snowy, especially if your horse has shoes on.
- If in doubt about a procedure, ask your instructor.

# The Horse Leader

**The main responsibility of the horse leader is the horse.**

## **In the mounting area:**

- If you are leading a rider who has to be mounted in the mounting area, pay close attention to the instructor because she will tell you where to position the horse. You will want to place the horse as close as possible to the side of the lift/ramp on which the rider will be mounting.
- Your responsibility is to keep the horse as quiet and still as possible. Stand in front (or just to the side) of the horse's head with your hands on the lead or reins. You may need to lower the horse's head to make mounting easier for a rider whose leg must be passed over the neck or withers of the horse.
- After the rider is mounted, **and before the stirrup lengths are adjusted**, you will be asked to move the horse forward and out of the mounting area. Stop when told by the instructor. After the stirrups and girth are adjusted, the instructor will have you walk on.

## **Mounting in the arena:**

- If your rider will be mounting in the arena, the instructor will give you directions. The rider may lead his horse to the arena with your assistance, or you may be asked to lead the horse to a position in the arena and your student will come to you.
- **Do not attempt to help the student mount.** The instructor will do all the mounting unless you and the rider are told otherwise. During this type of mounting, once again stand with your position in front of the horse. If your rider is standing with you waiting to be mounted, please see that the rider stands quietly beside you.

## **In the arena:**

- Once you have entered the arena with your mounted rider, the instructor will give you directions. Be sure you are a safe distance from the horse in front of or beside you. As the class begins, all instructions will be given to the rider by name, so be sure you know your rider's name. Try to discourage casual conversation, and direct the attention of your rider to the instructor. **Do not let go of your horse!** A loose horse can cause all kinds of problems. The main goal is to understand the situation and to look at each situation individually.

## **If a rider falls:**

- Falls are rare, but can and do happen. If your rider falls, your only concern is the horse you are leading. The instructor will take care of the student.
- If another rider falls and his horse gets loose, **stop immediately** in front of your horse and hold him as you would when at the ramp. **Never let go of your horse!** A loose horse can cause trouble.
- Do not panic if there is a fall. The riders fall frequently in all types of situations. They fall on sidewalks, off swings, etc. The fall off a horse is really not any worse than they could get at home. **Be calm.** The instructor is trained to handle any situation—that is her job; keep your mount under control and allow the instructor to do her job.

## How to lead a horse:

- The proper position for the leader is to walk just back of the horse's head in the neck/shoulder area. Do not get in front or too far behind. When there are two sidewalkers present, the leader will walk more forward toward the horse's head so there is enough room for the sidewalker to walk comfortably behind him. When there is only one sidewalker, the leader may walk on the opposite side of the horse.
- It is important to keep two horse lengths between riders.
- **The lead line should never be used to pull the horse forward.** For all practical purposes, the horse should not know you have a lead on him-only that you are walking beside him. Care must be taken to ensure the horse's head is not up high in the air or too low to the ground, as this may throw the rider off balance.
- Hold the lead line in the hand closest to the horse, approximately six to eight inches away from the ring or bucket. Hold the extra line in the other hand; **never wrap it around your hand.** Just loop and hold it lightly. We are using the Sandy Webster Leading method in all classes and therapies sessions.
- Keep your hand away from the horse's mouth. Our horses are patient, kind and gentle; however, when annoyed or out of sorts, they can and may bite. If nipping should occur when a rider is mounted, usually a firm snap on the lead and a sharp "no" will eliminate the problem. Inform the instructor.
- In order for the rider to have complete freedom to use the reins correctly, care should be taken to ensure that the lead line is not run over the reins. The lead line must be hanging between the reins and not over the top of them.
- Remember, just as the size of the mount varies, so do their steps. With some horses, you will be able to walk faster than others. Adjust your step to that of the horse so you are not pulling him forward or holding him back; but do try to **encourage the horse to have an easy, forward-moving, steady walk.**
- If you are leading a lazy horse, the leader should not try to take the place of the rider either by pulling the horse forward or turning or stopping the horse. **Encourage the rider to do as much as possible alone.** When a rider has been asked to perform a task, allow him a reasonable length of time to accomplish it on his own before providing assistance.
- **Look up and ahead to where you are going.** Many leaders forget that they have sidewalkers and get too close to the arena walls, poles, etc. Avoid sharp turns and cutting corners. These are hard on the riders and the sidewalkers.
- **Give yourself room from the horse in front of or beside you.** Though none of our horses are known kickers, all horses will kick if pressured by a mount being too close to their hind legs. If your rider cannot maintain a safe distance, then you may always help him/her do so. Many of our riders have no space orientation, and consequently, do not realize when they are too close to the horse in front of him. Use common sense; if you see your rider getting into trouble and unable to follow the instructor's directions, certainly you can assist.
- **Be aware** of your horse (mood, speed and walk), your student, and your position in the arena at all times.

### **At the Halt:**

- One of the most important tasks the leader has, particularly with a handicapped rider, is at the halt. Whenever the horse and rider are stopped, stand in front of or just to the side of your horse's head holding the lead or reins. Allow the horse some freedom to move his head, but keep him quiet and calm by petting him or softly speaking to him or both.

### **At the Trot:**

- Often during a lesson, the rider will be asked to trot or jog. The instructor will come over, if necessary, to give instructions to the rider and you. **Make sure the rider and sidewalker are ready before you trot.**
- Start your gait a little faster and say "Trot!" Most of our horses are good on voice command, though you can always run into one that is lazy that day and just does not want to do more than walk. Do not pull on the lead. This will only make the horse mad and he will fight it.
- When the command is given to walk or stop, do so in a steady, straight line so as not to unseat the rider.

### **Dismounting:**

- Unless otherwise specified, the instructor will dismount the student. You will receive specific instructions as to whether to bring your rider to the mounting area or remain in the arena. Once again, keep your horse quiet by standing in front and keeping him still while dismounting is taking place. The instructor will tell you where to put your horse and his tack after that.

# **The Sidewalker**

## **The main responsibility of the sidewalker is the rider.**

- The job of the sidewalker is to help maintain the balance of the rider when he cannot do so himself, to clarify instructions and directions when needed, and to provide reassurance and encouragement to the rider.

## **NEVER LEAVE YOUR RIDER UNLESS SOMEONE IS THERE TO TAKE YOUR PLACE!**

- Some students, especially in the beginning stages, have a definite balance problem, off the horse as well as on. Depending upon this balance, there will either be one or two sidewalkers assigned to the rider. For example, some riders will need to be helped by the placement of your forearm over their thigh; some riders will not have to be held at all, or will only need the reassurance of your hand on their leg. The instructor will inform you as to the requirements of your rider. You may be asked to spot or assist with mounting your rider.

### **In the arena:**

- **Be alert to your rider at all times!** – especially the ones with balance problems. Never become so relaxed that you are not totally aware of the rider, the horse, the leader, the instructor and the other activities around you. Be careful not to walk with your eyes to the ground, since you will not be able to observe the rider for any sudden loss of balance or be able to assist the rider if the horse should stumble or shy.
- If a rider starts to slip, do not just grab the rider; gently push him back into the proper position. Sidewalkers are very important, as they are constantly aware of the rider and what he/she is doing. The safety of the rider depends on you.
- Sidewalkers should position themselves at the rider's knee, facing forward. Stay close to the rider's knee at all times so the horse knows where you are. In this position, you can easily and quickly place your forearm across the rider's upper leg to aid their balance.
- Since the sidewalker is always close to the rider, you will find they will want to talk to you a great deal. Do not ignore direct questions, but try and get your rider to pay attention to the instructor. Many handicapped riders have difficulty focusing on instructions, so all talking should be kept to a minimum.
- Sidewalkers should be listening to the instructor's directions so you can be ready to reinforce the directions, assist the rider in carrying out the instructions, or direct the rider's attention to the task at hand.
- A sidewalker may need to assist the rider to hold or position the reins, hold onto the handhold, or use the leg aids.
- Watch your rider carefully during exercises and assist them as needed.

### **At the trot:**

- Before trotting, make sure the rider is positioned squarely in the saddle and that they are holding the handhold.

**Ask the leader to stop the horse if:**

- The rider is off-balance and cannot regain his balance while the horse is moving.
- The saddle pad has slipped or the girth is loose.
- The stirrups need adjusting.
- The rider's helmet needs adjusting.
- The rider is fatigued, in pain, or needs to stop for any other reason.
- You need to change sides or you are having difficulty and cannot carry out your job in comfort and safety. Avoid twisting yourself, or trying to walk in an awkward position. We do not want you going home with sore muscles.

Unless it is an emergency, the leader will take the horse to the center of the arena while tack is adjusted, or the rider is properly settled.

**Dismounting:**

- The instructor will inform the rider and sidewalker of the correct procedure during the dismount. When dismounted, many riders are able to run up the stirrups.
- When finished with the lesson, the sidewalker helps the rider put his helmet away and accompanies the rider back to the bleacher area.

**Before you leave:**

- Please share any ideas, problems, observation or suggestions you have with the instructor. Our volunteers are a vital part of the team and we want to hear from you.

# **FASSETT FARM/EQUESTRIAN THERAPY PROGRAM EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN**

## **FIRE:**

- 1. CALL 911. If you cannot safely reach a phone, do not delay evacuation.**
- 2. Leave the building at the nearest exit.**
- 3. Go to the central meeting place assigned:**
  - A. Green Space**
- 4. Wait for further instructions from emergency personnel.**

**DO NOT ATTEMPT TO REMOVE ANIMALS FROM BUILDINGS!!**

## **SEVERE WEATHER:**

- 1. Go to the designated Safe Shelter area – Feed room in new building.**
- 2. Close doors. Cover your head.**
- 3. Tune in to local radio and television stations for emergency information.**

**Wait for further instructions from the ETP Staff person(s) in charge.**



## Barn Rules

1. Riders must wear a helmet when mounted and working with a horse.
2. No chewing gum.
3. Everyone is to walk quietly through the barn, without running.
4. Always walk around the head of the horse, not behind (whenever possible).
5. Respect all persons, animals and property.
6. Students (adults and youths) must always stay with an instructor, volunteer, or teacher when going beyond waiting area.
7. Treats can only be fed to the horses with instructor permission and with the help of a volunteer. No feeding from your hand—only use **Treat Bowls**.
8. Students must wear sturdy closed-toed shoes. Crocs, sandals, etc. are not permitted.
9. Indoor voices and appropriate language must be used at all times.
10. Pet the horses on the neck or shoulder – not the face. Approach horses in a slow quite manner.
11. Listen to the instructor and follow directions carefully.
12. **Staff, volunteers, and participants must silence their cell phones during equine assisted activities and/or while handling equines. Even the vibration of a cell phone can disrupt a lesson as horses are highly sensitive animals. Using a Do Not Disturb feature or turning the phone off is recommended. Staff, volunteers, or participants should not answer their cell phones during equine-assisted activities or while handling equines. Staff may use their cell phone in special circumstances – such as an emergency. Cell phones should be left outside the arena, if at all possible.**



## **CODE OF CONDUCT AND PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE**

1. In order to protect Equestrian Therapy Program staff, volunteers and program participants – at no time during an ETP event may ETP staff or volunteers be alone with a single child where staff or the volunteer cannot be observed by others.
2. Staff and volunteers shall never leave a child unsupervised.
3. Restroom supervision: staff and volunteers will make sure suspicious or unknown individuals do not occupy the restroom before allowing children to use the facilities. A staff member or a volunteer will stand in the doorway while a child uses the restroom, unless they are taken to the restroom by a parent or guardian.
4. Staff and volunteers should conduct or supervise private activities in pairs. When this is not feasible, staff or volunteers should be positioned so that they are visible to others.
5. Staff and volunteers should not abuse children, including:
  - Physical abuse – striking, spanking, shaking, slapping
  - Verbal abuse – humiliating, degrading, threatening
  - Mental abuse – shaming, withholding love, cruelty
  - Neglect – withholding food, water, basic care, etc.
  - Sexual abuse – inappropriate touching or verbal exchangesAny type of abuse will not be tolerated, and may be cause for immediate dismissal.
6. Staff and volunteers must use positive techniques of guidance, including redirection, positive reinforcement and encouragement rather than competition, comparison and criticism. Staff will have age-appropriate expectations, and set up guidelines and environments that minimize the need for discipline. Physical restraint is used only in pre-determined situations (necessary to protect the child or other children from harm), is only administered in a prescribed manner, and must be documented in writing.
7. Staff and volunteers will conduct a visual health check of each child, each day, as they enter the program, noting any fever, bumps, bruises, burns, etc. Questions or comments will be addressed to the parent or child in a non-threatening way. Any questionable marks or responses will be documented.
8. Staff and volunteers will respond to children with respect and consideration, and treat all children equally regardless of sex, race, religion or culture.
9. Staff and volunteers will respect children's rights to not be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable, and their right to say no.

10. Staff and volunteers will refrain from intimate displays of affection toward others in the presence of children, parents, and staff.
11. Staff and volunteers must appear clean, neat and follow the dress code policy.
12. Staff and volunteer identification badges must be worn during program operation.
13. Using, possessing or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs during working hours is prohibited.
14. Smoking, vaping or the use of tobacco in the presence of children or parents during working hours is prohibited.
15. Profanity, inappropriate jokes, sharing intimate details of one's personal life and any kind of harassment in the presence of children or parents is prohibited.
16. Staff and volunteers must be free of physical and psychological conditions that might adversely affect children's physical or mental health. If in doubt, an expert should be consulted.
17. Staff and volunteers will portray a positive role model for youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, courtesy, tact and maturity.
18. Staff and volunteers may not be alone with children they meet in ETP events outside of the Equestrian Therapy Program. This includes babysitting, sleepovers and inviting children to their home. Any exceptions require a written explanation before the fact, and are subject to administrator approval.
19. Staff and volunteers are not to transport children in their own vehicles unless participating in and ETP special event.
20. Staff and volunteers may not date program participants under the age of 18 years old.
21. Under no circumstances should staff and volunteers release children to anyone other than the authorized parent, guardian or other adult authorized by the parent or guardian (written parent authorization on file with the ETP).
22. Staff and volunteers are required to read and sign all policies related to identifying, documenting and reporting child abuse and to attend training on the subject as instructed by a supervisor
23. Every staff member or volunteer has an absolute duty to report any suspicion of child abuse, molestation or sexual misconduct to the proper authorities. The child protective agency will determine the accuracy of the report.
24. Volunteers or staff members may receive information regarding the participants. The staff and volunteers will treat any information regarding the participant as confidential.
25. Staff and volunteers will silence their cell phones during equine-assisted activities and/or while handling equines. Under no circumstances will staff or volunteers answer their cell phones during equine assisted activities.

**I understand that any violation of this Code of Conduct may result in termination.**

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Employee/Volunteer Signature

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Supervisor Signature

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Date

Updated February 2025