



Therapeutic Riding Volunteer Handbook

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4:13 Therapeutic Riding Association

Our programs aim to relieve conditions associated with disability by providing therapeutic riding programs to support the physical, mental and emotional well being of individuals with disabilities and their families.

CLASS ROUTINE

To give new volunteers an opportunity to learn the routine for lessons, we will try to pair you with an experienced volunteer. A general outline for lessons is as follows:

PRE-CLASS:

Leaders:

- Arrive one hour before class is due to start.
- Sign in and ask for important information from the instructor/volunteer coordinator.
- Under the direction of the instructor, assist with grooming and tacking up the horses. Put on the saddle first, and do up the girth gently and slowly until just snug. Leave the final tightening for the Instructor. If assigned, bridle the horse over top of the halter and twist up the reins to avoid dragging.
- Lead the horse to the arena when asked.
- Lead the horse around the arena several times for a pre-lesson warm up and behavior assessment. During this time, the Instructor will check each horses' tack.
- The Instructor will give directions for mounting order and location.

Sidewalkers:

- Arrive at least 15 minutes before class is due to start.
- Sign in and ask for important information from the instructor/volunteer coordinator.
- Locate the student that you will assist and help them prepare for lessons: boots, helmet, and safety belt if required.
- Wait with student until Instructor calls for the first student to enter the arena.

DURING CLASS:

- Volunteers must be alert at all times to the request and directions of the Instructor, who is responsible for the smooth running of the class and the safety of the students.
- You can help make each class an enjoyable experience for our students. If you are needing some assistance with the horse that you are working with, speak to the Instructor quietly but do not alarm your student unnecessarily. If you are having difficulty with a student, please also speak discreetly to the Instructor who can advise.

AFTER CLASS:

- The Instructor will give directions for dismounting order and location. Then the students and horses will exit the arena.
- As we run back-to-back classes, please help switch horses and change tack as needed before the next class.
- Brush the horse lightly and return to paddock or stall.
- Both leaders and sidewalkers ensure that equipment in the area and tack up area are put away and clean.
- Record comments about the students progress etc. in the rider report book and sign out.

VOLUNTEER ROLES

ROLE OF LEADERS:

The leader is responsible for the horse at all times. On occasion, a student may go off the lead for parts of the lesson, in which case the leader should remain in the leading position between the horse's head and shoulder, ready to assist or take control again if necessary. Some students ride independently but leaders will still be stationed inside, around the arena in case of an accident.

1. At the start of a lesson, bring the horse to the mounting ramp/area when directed to by the Instructor and hold the horse securely while the student mounts, paying attention to the horse and student. When approaching a mounting block or ramp, lead the horse from the right side so that the horse's left side is against the block or ramp. Halt the horse and make sure it is still and quiet.
Please remember to keep your attention on the horse.
2. After the student is mounted, the Instructor will tell you to "walk on" or request the rider to tell the horse to "walk on", but just until you are clear of the mounting area. Halt again so that stirrups and student position can be adjusted by the Instructor or Assistant Instructor.
3. If your student is standing with you waiting to be mounted and you do not have a sidewalker, make sure that he or she does not wander around, but stands quietly beside you.
4. Usually horses are led from their left side with the leader's right hand 6-8 inches from the horse's halter with the extra rope folded in the left hand. Maintain a position slightly behind the horse's head. Be prepared to change sides after a change of direction.
5. The Instructor will tell the student what to do with the horse; the leader's job is to assist the student in carrying out these instructions safely while giving the student every opportunity to do as much as possible.

ROLE OF SIDEWALKERS:

The sidewalker is responsible for the safety of the student and should stay at the student's side to prevent falls and to assist the student to carry out the Instructor's directions. The levels of physical and moral support required of the sidewalker vary considerably with each student. The Instructor will inform you of a particular student's requirements.

1. Many of the students need help with the "hand over hand" method. This will enable the student to learn the skill faster. Perseverance and repetition with lots of encouragement will pave the road to success. **Encouraging the student to do the task is often much harder than doing the task ourselves.** It is important to remember that the student needs the opportunity to try the task themselves!
2. It sometimes happens that there are surplus helpers because of an unforeseen absence of students, but the time need not be wasted. Extra volunteers gain the opportunity to observe the ride (lesson) as a whole, or chat with a relative or teacher and gain an insight to the student as an individual and use the knowledge to gain a more meaningful relationship with the student. You will find that the better you get to know your student, the more rewarding your job as a volunteer will be.
3. Where two sidewalkers are required, direction should be given by one designated person.

POINTS TO REMEMBER:

LEADERS	SIDEWALKERS
<p>Know the name of your student and sidewalker.</p> <p>Check that everyone is ready before "walking on".</p> <p>Leave sufficient space for the students' legs and sidewalkers when passing obstacles, going through openings and along walls.</p> <p>Make large gentle turns: sharp corners throw the student off balance.</p> <p>Concentrate always on your horse and the situations around you. Two horse-lengths should be left between the horses and the leader should be ready to pass or cut across the arena to avoid traffic jams. Be ready to slow the horse down or halt if the student becomes unbalanced. (Your sidewalkers should inform you).</p> <p>Allow the student to do as much as possible on his/her own. Wait for the student to attempt to complete the instruction before assisting.</p> <p>When the students are stopped to do the exercise it is the leader's job to see that the horse stands still and squarely on all four legs. Stand to the left of the horse facing your student during exercises.</p> <p>Falls are rare but can happen. If your student falls, your only concern must be for the horse you are leading. The Instructor will take care of the student. If another student falls or a horse gets loose or shies, stop your horse and hold it securely until all is calm. Never let go of your horse!</p>	<p>During mounting, stand on the off side (right side) of the horse to discourage the horse from moving sideways and to assist the student if necessary.</p> <p>Keep your student interested and occupied until all students are mounted and the Instructor is ready to begin the class. Once the class has started avoid excessive chatting and encourage the student to concentrate on the Instructor's directions.</p> <p>Walk next to the student's hips, facing forward.</p> <p>Always be aware of your student's position on the horse. If your student starts to slip sideways, don't panic, but support the student and encourage them to correct their position themselves (notify their leader first). If the student cannot correct his or her own position have the leader halt the horse in the center of the arena and help the student correct his position.</p> <p>When a student needs considerable support, there will be two sidewalkers. The sidewalkers may need to change sides during the class to avoid muscle fatigue. Alert your leader, who will halt the horse so you may change sides one at a time, moving in front of the horse.</p> <p>Be alert for signs of fatigue or discomfort in your student and let the Instructor know if there is a problem.</p> <p>Escort your student back to the spectator area after dismounting.</p>

REMINDERS FOR ALL VOLUNTEERS:

1. Please be on time. Please aim to arrive 15 minutes before your session. Your student depends on you to get the horse ready. If you know you will be late, please contact us to let us know when you will arrive so we don't cancel your student's ride.
2. We need you, and no matter what your volunteer activity is, someone is depending on you. If you are going to be absent, please let us know as soon as possible. Advance notice gives us the opportunity to find someone else to help out.
3. Check your email for updates and new information. Sign in and out each time you come to volunteer. Also, please record your notes of your student's accomplishment after each lesson in the Instructor's Rider Report.
4. Please dress in comfortable, sensible clothing with minimal jewelry. In the interests of safety, class volunteers must wear sturdy shoes or boots with a low heel. Boots that come above the ankle are best. High heels, slip-on shoes, soft topped shoes and sandals are not suitable. Remember, horses occasionally step on toes by accident!
5. ANY accident or injury that occurs while volunteering, however minor, must be reported to the Instructor. Safety is a priority so proper medical attention should be sought and an incident report completed.
6. For safety reasons, smoking is not permitted.
7. While publicity is good, it is imperative that we maintain confidentiality regarding our students. Thus, all media persons etc. must be referred to facility staff. Photographs and videos cannot be taken without prior permission.
8. Please avoid feeding the horses anything.
9. You are very important to us and we want you to enjoy your time with us to the fullest. If you are unsure or have a question during lesson, ask the Instructor or another volunteer. A simple tip may improve the student's or your situation considerably. If you are having problems or conflicts during your volunteer

experience, please let the Instructor or Volunteer Coordinator know. We are happy to help you find the right class or job for you or to help you find a way to stay with our program even if your time commitment is limited.

10. We would like our volunteers who work in the arena with students to be at least 16 years of age. However, youths who are under 16, have experience with horses, demonstrate a mature personality and show an ability to handle unexpected situations may be able to work in the arena. This will be at the discretion of the Instructor, who will have the final say.

PROMOTING SAFETY

CONFIDENTIALITY:

While volunteering with 4:13 Therapeutic Riding Association, you may gain knowledge about a student or students, which is confidential. It is imperative that students not be discussed outside of the organization in any way which may break this confidentiality.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS DURING LESSONS:

1. Students and their parents/support staff will enter the designated area.
2. Loud noises and quick movements must be avoided around horses.
3. All students must be wearing a properly-fitted helmet before entering the riding arena. This should be done in the staging area.
4. Students are only mounted/dismounted under the supervision of the Instructor.
5. Never approach a horse from the rear. Make sure it can see you and that you speak before touching it. Keep a hand on the horse's body when walking behind it.
6. Never let go of the reins or lead rope on the horse and do not allow them to dangle on the ground where they may be stepped on or caught in a leg.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES:

1. In case of an emergency, telephone numbers for emergency services are located throughout the barn. Please note that cellular service is poor inside the barn. A phone with a landline is available in the office area.
2. A First Aid Kit is located in the arena area.

IN THE CASE OF A STUDENT ACCIDENT:

1. In the event of an accident or other mishap, the Instructor will attend to the student who is in trouble. In the event of a fall, the leader will stop the horse immediately a safe distance away from the student. If necessary, the Instructor will ask a sidewalker (or another volunteer) to phone the ambulance and/or notify the parent/guardians. All other students will be halted at the end of the arena away from the student in trouble and everyone in the arena will remain calm and conduct themselves in an orderly manner.
2. If an ambulance is not called, volunteers will keep their horses halted and their students quiet until further notice from the Instructor.
3. If an ambulance is called, the students will be quietly dismounted. Sidewalkers will escort students to their parents/staff in the spectator area (or stay with them if a parent/staff is not present). Leaders will quietly remove horses from the arena.
4. In an emergency, it is **IMPORTANT NOT TO RUN OR SHOUT AT ANY TIME. DO NOT** move a fallen student until it has been determined that it is safe to do so.

IN THE CASE OF FIRE:

1. The person who discovers the fire will first remove people from the immediate vicinity, then inform the Instructor or send a delegate to do so. If possible, use the nearest fire extinguisher. There are two fire extinguishers in the arena.
2. The Instructor will notify the fire department and send someone to meet them and direct them to the fire.

3. Students will be quietly dismounted; sidewalkers will stay with the students and escort them all together with spectators to a safe location. Leaders will remove the horses from the arena and hold horses safely away from the building.
4. No one is to leave until all are accounted for and records made.

Volunteers are encouraged to seek information or assistance from the Instructor, Volunteer Coordinator, or other staff whenever they are unsure of a procedure.

**We sincerely appreciate your generosity as a therapeutic riding volunteer with
4:13 Therapeutic Riding Association!**

