

# Volunteer Manual and Reference Guide





# Mission Statement

**Healing with Horses Ranch** provides safe, affordable, Equine Assisted Activities and Therapies (EAAT) to individuals with physical, cognitive or emotional challenges to promote healing and independence.

## Tagline

Where Horses Heal ..., Body, Mind, and Soul



Welcome!!

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with Healing with Horses Ranch!! We are excited and thankful to have you here. Our volunteers are the backbone of Healing with Horses Ranch, and without YOU, we would not be able to offer such a wonderful program to our community.

We hope that you not only grow to love the riders and horses that make this program so unique, but that you also have the opportunity to learn, whether that's developing horsemanship skills for the first time or learning what a difference therapeutic riding can truly make in the life of another.

The sense of joy and accomplishment experienced by our clients is due to you and all of our wonderful volunteers, who dedicate hours each week to make a difference.

Thank you again,

The Healing with Horses Ranch Family



## History of Healing with Horses Ranch

Healing with Horses Ranch was founded in July of 2011 by Patty D'Andrea, a PATH Intl Advanced Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor and Certified Equine Specialist since 2004. With 30+ years of experience including professional roles as a Therapeutic Sports Riding Director, Program Director, and now Executive Director and driven by a desire to provide the highest quality Equine Assisted Activities and Therapies (EAAT) to South East Austin, Travis and Bastrop Counties and surrounding areas, Healing with Horses Ranch was established to increase independence for individuals with special needs.

## Programs offered at Healing with Horses Ranch

Healing with Horses Ranch provides EAAT including, but not limited to therapeutic horsemanship, encouraging and providing opportunities to bond and partner with a horse using the horses' rhythmic, three-dimensional and symmetrical movement which leads to significant healing benefits including increasing strength and flexibility, improving motor skills, promoting speech, cognitive reasoning, and building relationships and social skills.

**Therapeutic Riding** is a distinctive combination of sport, recreation, and education in partnership with the horse focused on improving *functional life skills* for those with disabilities.

**Equine Facilitated Learning (EFL)** - Through guided interactions with the Double H Ranch horses, veterans, at-risk youth, and others that may have experienced trauma in their lives develop coping skills, reduce truancy, improve academic performance, and achieve healthier family relationships



## What is Therapeutic Riding?

PATH Intl. is an international voice of the EAAT industry. As the premier professional membership organization, PATH Intl. advocates for EAAT and provides standards for safe and enabling equine interaction, through education, communication, standards and research.

Throughout the world, hundreds of thousands of individuals with and without special needs experience the rewarding benefits of equine-assisted activities and therapies (EAAT). A physical, cognitive or emotional special need does not limit a person from interacting with horses. In fact, such interactions can prove highly rewarding. For instance, experiencing the rhythmic motion of a horse can be very beneficial. Riding a horse moves the rider's body in a manner similar to a human gait, so riders with physical needs often show improvement in flexibility, balance and muscle strength. Therapeutic riding provides benefits in the areas of therapy, education, sport, and recreation & leisure. In addition to the therapeutic benefits, horseback riding also provides recreational opportunities for individuals with disabilities to enjoy the outdoors.

Research shows that individuals of all ages who participate in EAAT can experience physical and emotional rewards. For individuals with emotional challenges, the unique relationship formed with the horse can lead to increased confidence, patience and self-esteem. For teams in the corporate workplace and any individual seeking better leadership, team building or communication skills, working with horses provide a powerful new paradigm for enhanced communication and fresh approaches for effective team building.

(1) Taken from the Path International website.

## Who can Benefit?

The individuals served by Healing with Horses Ranch may face any number of challenges, including:

- Amputation
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- At Risk Youth
- Autism
- Brain Injury
- Cancer
- Cerebral Palsy
- Down Syndrome
- High Risk Teens
- Injuries received in military service
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Muscular Dystrophy
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Sensory Integration Dysfunction
- Spina Bifida
- Spinal Cord Injury
- Stroke
- Visual/Hearing/Speech Impairments.



## Benefits of Therapeutic Riding

### ...Horses Heal

#### **Body:**

The rhythmic, 3-dimensional and symmetrical movement of the horse provides numerous physical benefits such as:

- Increased muscle tone for strength and agility
- Enhanced circulation, respiration and metabolism
- Greater balance and coordination
- Increased fine and gross motor skills

#### **Mind:**

The therapeutic riding experience offers numerous opportunities for cognitive advancement such as:

- Increased concentration, reasoning and attention span
- Enhanced sensory integration
- Better visual and spatial perception
- Improved language skills

*and*

#### **Soul:**

The ability to be mobile, to bond and partner with the horse, and the potential for increased independence provide many emotional benefits including:

- Improved self-image
- Enhanced motivation
- Greater self-confidence
- Self-discipline

Every student has his or her own *individualized set of goals and objectives* established by the Healing with Horses Ranch team of medical, educational, behavioral and therapeutic riding specialists, students, parents, and caregivers. The therapeutic riding instructor or therapist develops lesson plans for each student and each lesson. Lesson plans are executed and then evaluated after the lesson to monitor the student's progress.



## Disability Etiquette

The rules of etiquette and good manners for dealing with people with disabilities are generally the same as the rules for good etiquette in society. These guidelines address specific issues which frequently arise for people with disabilities in terms of those issues related to disability and outline basic etiquette for working with people with different kinds of disabilities.

Remember: People first, disability second. I.e. The child with autism, NOT the Autistic child

### **Ten Commandments of Etiquette for Communicating with People with Disabilities**

1. When talking with a person with a disability, speak directly to that person rather than through a companion or sign language interpreter.
2. When introduced to a person with a disability, it is appropriate to offer to shake hands. People with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb can usually shake hands. (Shaking hands with the left hand is an acceptable greeting.)
3. When meeting a person who is visually impaired, always identify yourself and others who may be with you. When conversing in a group, remember to identify the person to whom you are speaking.
4. If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Then listen to or ask for instructions.
5. Treat adults as adults. Address people who have disabilities by their first names only when extending the same familiarity to all others. (Never patronize people who use wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulder.)
6. Leaning on or hanging on to a person's wheelchair is similar to leaning on hanging on to a person and is generally considered annoying. The chair is part of the personal body space of the person who uses it.
7. Listen attentively when you're talking with a person who has difficulty speaking. Be patient and wait for the person to finish, rather than correcting or speaking for the person. If necessary, ask short questions that require short answers, a nod or shake of the head. Never pretend to understand if you are having difficulty doing so. Instead, repeat what you have understood and allow the person to respond. The response will clue you in and guide your understanding.
8. When speaking with a person who uses a wheelchair or a person who uses crutches, place yourself at eye level in front of the person to facilitate the conversation.
9. To get the attention of a person who is deaf, tap the person on the shoulder or wave your hand. Look directly at the person and speak clearly, slowly, and expressively to determine if the person can read your lips. Not all people who are deaf can read lips. For those who do lip read, be sensitive to their needs by placing yourself so that you face the light source and keep hands, cigarettes and food away from your mouth when speaking.
10. Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use accepted, common expressions such as "See you later," or "Did you hear about that?" that seems to relate to a person's disability. Don't be afraid to ask questions when you're unsure of what to do.

Source: [Office of Disability Employment Policy \(ODEP\)](#)



## **Rules, Safety Procedures & Risk Management**

The Risk Management Procedures (RMP's) will be placed in a three ring binder and placed in the front office next to the insurance manual. Training in the form of safety drills is conducted periodically at least 4 times a year to insure that everyone knows what to do in case of an accident, incident, or emergency.

Healing with Horses Ranch has identified risk factors in each of the following areas and the RMP's define how to handle each situation:

- Hazards specific to the use of equines
- Natural hazards specific to the Healing with Horses Ranch site/location
- Man-made hazards specific to the Healing with Horses Ranch site/location
- Natural Disasters, (fire, flood, tornado, severe weather)
- Operations of facilities and/or equipment
- Risk Management Procedures for Horses
- Conduct of Personnel, Volunteers, Participants, and Guests

### **Prevention is the first line of defense.**

- Staff members are trained in CPR/First Aid. - The instructor or Executive director will take the lead in all emergency situations and will direct volunteers in how to help!
- Training and random safety drills will occur quarterly to help avoid problems and reduce the risks for everyone involved.
- As a general reminder, all bodily fluids should be considered to be infectious.
  - a. Gloves should be worn when treating any injuries to prevent contact with other's bodily fluids.
  - b. General Good Hygiene will be maintained by washing hands or disinfecting hands in between each client, after using the bathroom, or even after sneezing and coughing.
  - c. Disinfecting toys with a bleach water solution after each clients use will be standard policy.

### **First Aid Equipment –**

- First aid equipment is located the tack room.
- An injury to any staff member, volunteer, student, family member, or visitor should be reported to the Executive Director, as soon as possible, and an incident report prepared.
- The phone is located on the barrel by the arena. The phone number and emergency procedures are posted by the phone.
- Should it be necessary to call for emergency medical assistance, ask when making the call that the responding agency turn off their siren when approaching Healing with Horses Ranch to avoid spooking the horses.
- Student, volunteer, and staff files are in the file cabinet in the Tack Room alphabetically filed by last name.



## HORSE SAFETY

1. **Talking to a Horse.** Always speak to a horse in a calm, soothing and/or assertive voice. Never yell or raise your voice to a horse.
2. **Approaching a Horse.** Speak to the horse before approaching to avoid startling him/her. Approach a horse from the side, never from the rear, so that the horse can see you approaching. Never run up to or after a horse.
3. **Walking around a Horse.** When the horse is cross tied, always walk around the back of a horse – please don't walk under or over the tied lead rope. When walking around the back of a horse, walk close to its rear with your hand on its rump, and talk to the horse in a soothing voice, or walk at least one-horse length from the rear of the horse.
4. **Petting a Horse.** Pet a horse by placing a hand on its shoulder or neck, not on the nose or face. The horse's nose is a sensitive spot, and some horses can be head-shy.
5. **Watch Your Feet!** While a horse is very sure-footed by nature, it may accidentally step on a human's foot when balancing itself or turning around. Always be aware of where your feet are when working up close beside a horse. If a horse steps on your foot, *do not* try to pull your foot out from under the horse's foot. Rather, reposition the horse so that it removes its foot from yours.
6. **By watching the horse's ears** you can tell its mood and predict unwanted behavior.
7. **Never hand feed the horses at Healing with Horses Ranch** Hand-fed horses can become nippy, so Healing with Horses Ranch horses only receive food from a feed dish.
8. **Horses have sharp peripheral vision** but cannot see directly in front or behind their bodies.
9. **Never run up to or jump** in front of a horse as this could cause him to spook!
10. **Always approach the horse at the shoulder** so as he can clearly see you. That being said, horses do not have to turn their heads to see an object.
11. **Horses have a keen sense of smell** and do not need to sniff an object to smell it.
12. **Horses can be unpredictable animals.**
13. **Horses are "flight" animals** that can become startled by sudden movements or noises.
14. **Horses are "herd" animals** and often feel the need to return to their group when frightened.

### Common Sources of Equine Accidents

- Carelessness and overconfidence
- Lack of understanding of the horse
- Outside disturbances
- Inadequate training of the horse
- Inattentiveness
- Equipment failure
- Inadequate training of the personnel
- Failure to anticipate and plan for emergencies



## Volunteer Opportunities

- Facilities
  - Cutting down trees
  - Shredding
  - Building fences
- Office
  - Volunteer scheduling
  - Database maintenance
  - filing
- Side Walker
  - Responsible for the safety of the student
  - Assists the instructor as Risk manager
- Horse Handler
  - Assists the instructor as Risk manager
  - Responsible for the horse
  - Leads team in grooming and tacking
  - Grooms horse
  - Bridles horse before class
  - Leads the horse during classes
- Conditioning Team
  - Riding
  - Longing
  - Ground work