

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Monterey Bay Horsemanship & Therapeutic Center

2012

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Welcome and Thank You

We at Monterey Bay Horsemanship and Therapeutic Center are happy that you have decided to volunteer for us. Thank you for dedicating yourself and your time to our program. We really appreciate you. Volunteers are the lifeblood of Monterey Bay Horsemanship and Therapeutic Center. Our need for volunteers is great. It can take up to three volunteers to put a student on a horse and the horses need much care and attention. We rely on volunteers to make the programs run smoothly and help as many clients as possible. Staff and volunteers working together, form a vital team, that is essential to the success of our riders. Monterey Bay Horsemanship and Therapeutic Center is a place where miracles happen. A place where children can bond with a horse and accomplish life-changing goals never before dreamed of. A place where a person might take their first steps or speak their first words or become best friends with a 1,000- pound buddy and experience unconditional love. You will find that volunteering here is truly a rewarding experience.

Whether your experience with horses is lifelong or nonexistent, we have a job for you, and there are always opportunities to learn. We have many volunteer opportunities that you can participate in. We will work with you to find the area where you feel most comfortable and that will be most rewarding for you.

This handbook has been designed to be a reference to help you through your volunteer experience at MBHTC. Please do not hesitate to ask the staff any questions or further advice that you might have.

Again, thank you for joining us in working towards a common cause - - - the beauty of what a horse can do for a human! We hope that you enjoy your experience with us as a volunteer.



Introduction to Monterey Bay Horsemanship and Therapeutic Center



Located ocean-side in beautiful La Selva Beach, Santa Cruz County, California, our fabulous equestrian center offers a year round program for all ages and ability levels, including those with special needs. Our programs range from beginner to advanced; English and Western styles of riding. We are a full inclusion facility, providing support when needed.

Monterey Bay Horsemanship and Therapeutic Center's Mission Statement

To encourage and enable participants of every ability level to reach their full potential in a safe, nurturing, fully inclusive environment. To promote and encourage community participation in all aspects of our working horse facility, "The Barn".

Programs Offered

- Special Needs Lessons
- Special Needs "Hang with the Horses!"
- Pony Club
- Lunge Lessons
- Group Lessons
- Home School P.E Program
- Mini Horse Camps
- Spring, summer, Winter Horsemanship Day Camps
- Residential summer and Winter Horsemanship Camps
- Show Team
- Private Lessons

Volunteer Opportunities

Leader

The leader is responsible of leading the horse during classes and on trail. The main responsibility of the leader is to control the mount, but he/she must also constantly be aware of the rider, instructor, and any potential hazards in arena or out on trail.



Sidewalker

Sidewalkers are volunteers whose primary responsibility is to insure the safety of the rider. The degree of assistance from the sidewalker will depend on the balance of the rider.

Working Student!

We need an energetic, hard working, horse oriented, older teen or adult to help maintain the horses and equipment for our therapeutic program. Benefits to you are learn Barn Management, Facility Management, Therapeutic Riding Instruction, working with school horses and improving on your own riding skills. Great opportunity for someone who loves kids and horses!

English to Spanish Translator!

Help translate our website, forms and handbook into Spanish for our Spanish speaking clients. This will also allow community members who are most comfortable speaking Spanish to access our services. We know there are many Spanish speakers out there that do not know of us and what we can offer their child(ren)!

Attorney/CPA

Advise our Board of Directors on legal issues regarding our 501(c)3 status and other aspects of running a charitable organization. Your expertise is invaluable!

General Office

Answer phones, give tours of the facility, run errands, copy forms and brochures, maintains bulletin boards and info binders.

Teacher

Design, develop and teach various subjects from the arts to science to horsemanship. Teach what you've always wanted to teach!

Therapist

Use your fabulous skills helping those that truly need you! Bring your love of horses and children to create a fabulous medium for therapy.

Young Child Barn Buddy

Be a barn buddy for one of our little ones with special needs. Under the supervision of the Director and within the framework of our working horse facility, explore the wonders of the barn together. Join in on group activities. Give Mom and Dad a much needed break and in return get the joy of making a difference to a young child. Children are ages 2 through 6. Our little ones have varying needs and all are precious!

Elementary Aged Child Adventure Guide

Be an adventure guide for a child with special needs! Under the supervision of the Director and within the framework of our working horse facility explore the world of horses together. The barn is a hussling, bussling place where there is action, interaction and lots of things to learn and do. Make a difference in a child's life. All our children have unique needs and need unique Adventure Guides. Come and join the fun and community spirit and help a wonderful child grow!

Teen Mentor

Be a teen mentor for one of our teens with special needs. Our teen mentors work under the supervision of the Director and work within the framework of our working horse facility. Mentors help facilitate communication and integration of the teen into the barn environment. Help the teen with barn chores, grooming horses, turning out horses, bringing horses in, feeding, homework help. Teens are full of fun and life!

Young Adult Activities Leader

Work with one of our young adults with special needs to integrate into our barn community. Under the supervision of the Director help with interaction and communication. Help facilitate communication, activities and barn chores. Work on vocational skills, computer skills, organizational skills. If you don't already know how to drive a small tractor, learn with your young adult! Drive lunch and dinner to the lower paddocks (hay for the horses of course!). The focus is on fun and community.

Horse Care Facilitator

Assist with horse care including blanketing, unblanketing, turnout, bring horses in, feed, and feed management.

Horse Facility Management

Horse barn, stable and paddock maintenance. Fix fences, gates, scrape paddocks with tractor.

Benefits of Therapeutic Horseback Riding

The benefits of therapeutic riding are incalculable. There have been few research studies done on the efficacy of therapeutic riding. However, as a volunteer you will witness progress and many astounding instances.

The horse, rider, instructor and volunteers make up a unique team providing an opportunity for physical, emotional, social, recreational and educational gains for participants with disabilities.

Physically –

It is the horse's movement, which has dynamic affect on the rider's



body. The horse stimulates the rider's pelvis and trunk in a manner that closely resembles the normal gait of a human. This movement can be used to produce specific physical changes in the rider including normalization of muscle tone and improvement in posture, balance, coordination, mobility, and increased endurance. It can improve gross and fine motor skills and stimulate the cardiovascular system. Here at MBHTC, the use of draft horses, makes the rider feel much more movement than what a normal sized horse would emit. Also, it is believed that the movement of the horse affects the rider's parasympathetic nervous system in a positive fashion.

Sensory –

The horse and the riding environment offer a wide variety of input to participants. Movement exploration on the horse combined with so many other sights, smells, things to touch, and sounds one encounters in the riding program contribute to the overall sensory experience.

Emotionally –

The success of overcoming fear and anxiety and the ability to achieve riding skills help a rider to realize self-worth and increase self-esteem, independence, and confidence. Relationships develop between riders, volunteers, horses, and staff and are all an integral part of a positive, emotional experience provided by a therapeutic riding program. Also, a horse is a live animal

that responds and shows emotion.

Cognitively –

The horse provides a strong motivator for riders. Riding lessons incorporate activities and games on horseback designed to help each rider achieve specific goals such as following direction, staying on task, color and number recognition, and reinforcing existing skills as well as learning new ones. Riders don't know how much they are truly benefiting, as they are busy having too much fun.



Socially –

Therapeutic riding programs and their associated activities provide an excellent opportunity for participants to interact with their peers, program volunteers and staff in a positive and enjoyable environment. Riders develop a meaningful and positive relationship with the volunteers and a strong bond with the horses. At MBHTC everyone, including the horses, interacts with one another. They gain many social skills and develop friendships in this non-judging environment. Children with special needs are in the same programs as other children without special needs. Then there is a barn-buddy system where riders are paired with another older child/teen/adult who acts as a mentor, helper, and friend.

Behaviorally-

Horseback riding channels aggressive or hyperactive behavior into a constructive activity. It also improves compliance and the ability to follow directions.

Horses are mobile and large, lifting the child up both physically and psychologically. Children are not just taken for a ride, they are taught to ride. This way a child with special needs can learn horse related skills and excel in the sport.

Confidentiality Policy

Riders and their families have a right to privacy that gives them control over the dissemination of their medical or other sensitive information. MBHTC shall preserve the right of confidentiality for all individuals in its program.

No information shall be shared with individuals outside of MBHTC on a rider's medical information, disability, financial status, or other sensitive factors involved. All volunteers and staff of MBHTC are bound by this policy to protect the rights of the individuals served by MBHTC. Individuals involved with MBHTC shall keep confidential all medical, social, referral, personal, and financial information regarding a person and his/her family.

MBHTC will agree to disclose information to outside agencies or individuals only with the specific written consent of the rider or the rider's legal guardian.

MBHTC shall preserve the right of confidentiality for all individuals in its program. As a program, we keep all files (including rider and volunteer information) strictly confidential. As a volunteer, you must maintain the confidentiality of sensitive information regardless of how it is obtained. Information that must be kept confidential should include but is not limited to: all medical, social, referral, personal and financial information regarding a person and his/her family.

Interaction Guidelines

Being around an individual with a disability or unique need may be a new experience to you. You may be overwhelmed at first with things you have never seen before or do not understand. This is a natural reaction. Allow yourself to get to know the students. They do not look upon themselves with pity or sadness, and they don't want you to either. Individuals with disabilities do not want to be treated any differently than you or me. Respect, friendship and acceptance are the qualities that our students seek from us and from the world in general. When working with individuals with disabilities, simply follow the Golden Rule: Treat others, as you would want to be treated if you were in their situation.

- Be yourself when you meet him or her
- Get to know riders as people, not as disabled people
- Be friendly and accepting. Remember that a person with a disability is a person like everyone else
- Be supportive and encouraging.
- Respect our students. Many of them have faced hardships that you or I cannot imagine. Their courage and strength are to be admired, not pitied.
- Use your normal voice and give support, but try not to over praise
- Have conversation like you would with anyone else
- Never talk down to a person with a disability or speak to them as if they were very young children. Talk with them and treat them according to their chronological age. This is especially important to remember when working with people with mental retardation.
- Speak directly to the student. No one likes to be referred to in the third person. Your attention should be focused on the rider, not on the people around them. If the student has difficulty communicating, their caregiver or instructor will help facilitate communication.
- Have fun with them, a disability does not limit or dampen a person's sense of humor
- Do not do things for them, let them do things on their own when possible. Try to only help when requested by the rider. When in doubt, ask, "May I help you?"
- Be patient with them. Give our students time to process their surroundings. Speak slowly and clearly when needed. Learn to listen with your eyes and instincts as well as your ears. Let the rider set his own pace. Such as in walking and talking.

- Don't shower them with kindness or be overly sympathetic
- Don't offer pity or charity. Be honest and genuine at all times
- Don't exaggerate the accomplishments of riders. They will gain the most from being judged fairly and without overstatement.
- Be optimistic about life in general and the rider's outlook in particular. However, don't encourage unrealistic goals or attitudes.
- Use appropriate body language. Maintain eye contact to let the person know you are interested. Keep an open body posture, arms by your side or in your pockets.
- Incline your head toward the person. Closed arms and leaning away from a person creates a closed or unfriendly position.
- Behavior that is not appropriate for persons without disabilities (mental or physical) is not appropriate among persons who have disabilities.
- Excessive hugging or kissing is not appropriate. Encouraging pats on the back or high fives are ways to praise riders for their accomplishments. Let the rider take the lead as to what type of recognition makes him/her feel comfortable.
- Do everything you can to respect the dignity of and be sensitive to the cultural differences of our riders.
- Do not focus on a disability unless it is crucial to the matter on hand. Emphasize abilities, not limitations.
- Avoid asking the rider questions about their disability. If a rider wants to tell you about his disability, he/she will bring up the subject themselves.
- Do not speak for persons with disabilities if they are capable of answering for themselves.
- Don't make assumptions about people based on their disability. You may be surprised at how wrong you are at prejudging the person.
- Respect the confidentiality rights, dignity, and privacy of the rider.
- Model understanding and acceptance through actions and words so that children without a disability can learn how to interact with children who may have a disability.
- Use words and images that create a straightforward, positive view of people with disabilities.

Rider Disabilities



Amputation

Characteristics - congenital, accidental or surgical removal of limb(s) or extremities.

Benefits of therapeutic riding - Improves balance and posture. Strengthens limbs and improves mental attitude.

Problems that could arise – stump soreness, occasional depression

What to do – Make sure rider is comfortable while riding. Make sure none of the tack is bothering them, especially if they have stump soreness. Give off a positive attitude to help rider with their possible depression.

Mount – Depends on riding skills. Mount should be a normal width in most cases.

Tack – Varies with individual. Discuss special tack for stump soreness. Consider western tack or surcingle. (If the rider has hand clamps, do not use clamp on reins as it could pull out the prosthesis if the horse jerks his head down.)

Arthritis

Characteristics - Inflammatory disease of the joints

Benefits of therapeutic riding - Gentle rhythmic movement to promote joint mobility, muscle strength, and relieve pain. Increases cardiopulmonary output through minimal exercise.

Problems that could arise – They might have a lack of mobility and have a loss of strength. Be aware of pathological fractures, fatigue, pain, high humidity and extreme cold.

What to do – Make sure rider is comfortable while riding

Mount – supple gaits, and light sided

Tack – Surcingle or bareback (heat from horse helps.)

Arthrogryposis

Characteristics - Fixation of a joint in a flexed or contracted position, walk is with stiff-legged motion; trunk can be used to propel legs. Overall muscle weakness and lack of joint mobility.

Benefits of therapeutic riding - Improves balance, strengthens muscles, and promotes joint mobility.

Problems that might arise – Possible poor circulation, easily fatigued, lack of some motor movements because of minimal joint mobility

What to do – Make sure rider is comfortable while riding. Might want to go on a shorter trail if they are easily fatigued.

Mount – Wide-based to normal. Well schooled and can neck rein. Voice trained. Supple gaits.

Tack – Surcingle, Devonshire boots. Mild bosal or English hackamore.

Attention Deficit Disorder

Characteristics - A persistent pattern of impulsiveness and inattention, with or without a component of hyperactivity.

Benefits of therapeutic riding- calming effect

Problems that might arise- hyperactive on horse

What to do – Do not over stimulate. Go on a shorter ride to match attention span.

Mount- Horse that does not mind much movement and or noise from rider

Tack- Depends on rider's abilities

Autism Spectrum

Characteristics - Unresponsiveness to the presence of others; withdrawal from physical contact; severely delayed and disordered language; self-stimulating behaviors; insensitivity to pain; unawareness of real dangers; hyperactive; passive; unusual behaviors such as smelling/tasting/licking/mouthing all objects; ritualistic behaviors; developmentally delayed; usual response to sounds; clumsiness; social withdrawal; resistance to change abnormal self-absorption, short attention span. Might be abusive to others. Withdrawn. Repetitive and/or meaningless movements, rocking motion, head banging, flapping, etc.

Benefits of therapeutic riding - Interaction in a group setting stimulates interest away from self and toward others and the horses. Postural and verbal stimulation. Sensory integration.

Problems that might arise– inconsistent responsiveness, might be abuse to horses, volunteers, self and other riders. Puts many things into mouth. Unable to communicate with them and they might move around on horse.

What to do – Set limits. Short clear directions. Try to maintain eye contact. Praise when correct. Keep lessons lively. Use games frequently. Have lesson be behaviorally structured, functional, individualized program. Increase interpersonal relationships and social interaction. Encourage confidence in communication with horse and volunteers. Teach by repetition and bodily guidance. Sometimes it helps to have the same horse and volunteer. Once on the horse, start walking for stimulation.

Mounts – Depends on height and weight of rider, but prefer mount on the smaller side, so volunteer can handle rider safely

Tack – Surcingle or depends on rider abilities

Cerebral Palsy

Types and Characteristics-

- Spastic – hypertonicity with hyperactive stretch reflexes, muscle imbalances and equilibrium. Increased startle reflex and other pathological reflexes.
- Athetoid – extensor muscle tension, worm-like movements, abnormal posturing and slow and deliberate speech
- Ataxic – poor balance, difficulty with quick, fine movements and are often described as having a “rag doll” appearance.

Benefits of therapeutic riding- Normalization of tone, stimulation of postural and balance mechanisms, muscle strengthening and perceptual motor coordination.

Associated Problems- Seizures, hearing defects; visual defects; general sensory impairment; perceptual problems; communication problems; mental retardation; emotional disturbance; learning disabilities

What to do- encourage physical relaxation without force. strengthen weak muscles. Develop balance and coordination. Keep movements slow. Allow sufficient process time. One direction at a time.

Mount – generally narrow with excellent voice training.

Tack – Devonshire boots. Saddle with narrow tree or surcingle

Cerebral Vascular Accident – Stroke

Characteristics - Hemorrhage in brain, which causes varying degrees of functional impairment. Speech, sight, balance, reasoning, sensation, coordination, and strength might be impaired.

Benefits of therapeutic riding - Promotes symmetry, stimulates balance, posture, motor planning, speech and socialization.

Problems that might arise - balance, motor planning and fatigue.

What to do – encourage balance, coordination. Strengthen weak muscles. Create opportunity for memory, reasoning, and concentration. Encourage optimism.

Mount – wide-based. Well schooled and will neckrain. Voice trained

Tack- Surcingle or depends on rider abilities

Developmental Disabilities

Characteristics - A general term applied to children functioning two or more years below grade-level. Varied, but can include slow physical, motor and social development. Lack of ability to learn and perform at normal and acceptable levels, unpredictable, language difficulty. Inability to communicate at normal age levels. Short attention span. Poor muscle tone, coordination and balance, does not comprehend abstract concepts.

Benefits of therapeutic riding - Provides arena for success, opportunity for sport and recreation, stimulates body awareness.

Problems that might arise – rider may employ negative attention getting techniques. Long time for motor planning necessary. Inappropriate social behavior.

What to do - work on balance and body awareness. Demonstrate; show and tell. Use repetition. Simple directions; don't frustrate. Be patient. Deal on functional level of rider both physically and mentally.

Mount and Tack -Depends on height, weight and skill of rider

Down's Syndrome

Characteristics - Condition in which a person is born with an extra chromosome, resulting in mental retardation and developmental delay. Broad flat face, slanted eyes, neck and hands are often broad and short.

Benefits of therapeutic riding - Riding improves expressive and receptive language skills, gross and fine motor skills, balance, posture, muscle tone and coordination.

Problems that might arise – Behavior problems, problems understanding and following directions

What to do - Be patient. Give simple directions, allow time to process, and repeat. Confront and explain to them why and how they can correct their behavior.

Mount and Tack - Depends on rider abilities and skills, height and weight.

Emotional Disabilities/ Emotionally Conflicted

A congenital or acquired syndrome often compounded by learning and/or physical disabilities incorporating numerous other pathologies.

Characteristics - Trouble coping with everyday life situations and interpersonal relations. Behaviors such as short attention span, avoidance, aggression, autism, paranoia, or schizophrenia may be exhibited. defiance of authority. Anger. Temper tantrums, manipulation. Easily frustrated. Short attention span.

Benefits of therapeutic riding - Increases feelings of self-confidence and self-awareness, and provides appropriate social outlet.

Problems that might arise – can be disruptive during lesson.

What to do – set limits. Recognize when riders need time and space. Set standards high. Discipline must be firm and consistent. Recognize changes in mood before they become outbursts. Be self-confident. Use appropriate games for emotional release.

Mount & Tack– Depends on height, weight and skill of rider

Epilepsy

Characteristics - Abnormal electrical activity of the brain marked by seizures with altered consciousness. Communication difficulties – may use lip reading, finger spelling or sign language. Often phase out and have attention deficits

Problems that might arise - Stress, fatigue, seizures could be triggered by different conditions

What to do- Promote relaxed, consistent environment. Avoid sudden changes in routine. Simple, direct instructions. If seizure occurs – remove rider from horse after seizure. Always have at least one sidewalker.

Mount and Tack- Sturdy, well mannered. Use as small horse as possible so emergency dismount is easy. Use surcingle.

Head Trauma

Accidental injury to the head resulting in intra-cranial bleeding with death of brain cells.

Characteristics: Gross and fine motor skill deficits. Often have impaired memory, speech, balance and/or vision. May have psychological effects.

Benefits of therapeutic riding: Stimulates balance, posture, gross and fine motor skills, speech and perceptual skills.

Problems that might arise: Cognitive and perceptual. Difficult in following directions. Poor balance, memory, possibly incontinent, poor judgment.

What to do: Be consistent. Brief, clear instructions. Repeat as necessary. Promote balance, coordination and posture. Be patient.

Mount and Tack: Narrow to normal width considering possible spasticity. Coordinate height of mount to sidewalker. Use surcingles. Consider western tack if appropriate.

Hearing Impairment

Characteristics: Congenital or acquired hearing loss varying from mild to profound.

Benefits: Stimulates self-confidence, balance, posture and coordination. It also provides appropriate social outlets and interactions.

Problems that might arise: Low frustration level, often mimics. May have rhythm and balance difficulties.

What to do: Learn the sign language provided in this manual. Demonstrate everything. Teach in a small area and stay in center of the ring. Keep class interesting to sustain attention. Sight and feel are very important. Have sidewalkers if balance is an issue.

Mount and Tack: Depends on height, weight and skill of rider.

Learning Disabilities

Catch-all phrase for individuals who have problems processing, sequencing and problem solving, but who appear to have otherwise normal intelligence skills.

Characteristics: Short attention span, easily frustrated, immature.

Benefits of therapeutic riding: Effects depend upon the particular disorder. Stimulates attention span, group skills, cooperation, language skills, posture, and coordination.

Problems that might arise – might exhibit hyperactive/or inappropriate behavior and a low tolerance to frustration

What to do – discipline should be consistent. Set limits. Simple instructions. Sequence very slowly. Promote posture. Use simple lesson plans with numbers and letters in lesson. Show and tell. Small teaching area. Give reference points such as towards rail, instructor, gate, etc. Use visuals, auditory and kinesthetic modes for all instruction. Don't get frustrated with them.

Mounts & Tack depends on height and weight of rider

Mental Retardation

Lack of ability to learn and perform at normal and acceptable levels. Degree of retardation is referred to as educable, trainable, severe or profoundly retarded.

Characteristics - Developmentally delayed in all areas. Short attention span.

Benefits of therapeutic riding - Stimulates group activity skills, coordination, balance, posture, and fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination. Provides a structured learning environment.

Problems that might arise - Trouble understanding and carrying out directions.

What to do: break down the skill or project being taught into small tasks. Be patient, persistent, and consistent. Showing is often more effective than telling. Practice activities over and over. Select activities that match the child's mental age and abilities.

Mount and Tack: Depends on height, weight and skill of rider.

Multiple Sclerosis

Progressive neurological disease with degeneration of spinal column tracts, resulting in scar formation.

Characteristics: Most commonly occurs in the 20 to 40 year old range. It is progressive with periods of exacerbation and remissions. Fatigues easily. Symptoms include weakness, visual impairment, fatigue, loss of coordination and emotional sensitivity.

Benefits of therapeutic riding: Maintains and strengthens weak muscles and provides opportunities for emotional therapy.

Problems that might arise: Speech and memory. Can be very moody. Avoid heat and cold. Fatigue and weakness.

What to do: Improve balance, posture and coordination. Encourage movement for improved circulation. Allow time to process directions.

Mount and Tack: Supple gaits, light sided, well schooled. Use surcingle

Muscular Dystrophy

Deficiency in muscle nutrition with degeneration of skeletal muscle. Hereditary disease that mainly affects males.

Characteristics: Progressive muscular weakness, fatigues easily, sensitive to temperature extremes.

Benefits of therapeutic riding: Provides opportunity for group activity, may slow progressive loss of strength, stimulates postural and trunk alignment, and allows movement free of assistive devices.

Problems that might arise: Easily fatigued: watch for facial expression to show extreme tiredness. Poor balance.

What to do: Avoid extreme temperatures, especially heat. No forward or backward bending. Be careful in transfer. Stimulate cardiopulmonary output. Avoid strenuous exercise. Provide sidewalkers.

Mount and Tack: narrow to normal based. Well schooled, neck reins, voice trained, very supple and smooth gait. English tack or small surcingle

Poliomyelitis

Infectious virus disease. Inflammation of gray matter of spinal cord

Characteristics: Flaccid paralysis, atrophy of skeletal muscle, often with deformity.

Benefits of therapeutic riding: Strengthens non-paralyzed muscles, stimulates posture.

Problems that might arise: Pressure sores. Balance

What to do: Improve posture. Encourage active movement. Strengthen weak muscles.
Create opportunity for success.

Mount and Tack: Use surcingle

Spina Bifida

Congenital failure of bones of the spine to unite in the middle of the back, causing damage to the spinal cord.

Characteristics - Characteristics depend on the severity. Lack of bladder and bowel control, hydrocephalus, and mental retardation. Varying degree of paralysis of the lower limbs coupled with sensory loss. Might also have pressure sores.

Benefits of therapeutic riding - Stimulates posture and balance, improves muscle strength and self-image.

What to do: Maintain mobility and good posture. Be careful when fitting helmet. Make sure rider is comfortable while riding.

Mount and Tack: Avoid wide-based. Voice trained. Use surcingle.

Spinal Cord Injury

Trauma to the spinal cord resulting in a loss of neurological function.

Characteristics: Paralysis of muscles below the level of injury – can be flaccid or spastic. Fatigue, sensory loss, and pressure sores.

Benefits of therapeutic riding: Stimulates posture and balance, strengthens trunk muscles, is an option for sports participation and recreation.

Problems that might arise: fatigue, balance and pressure sores

What to do: Always make sure rider is comfortable while riding. Take a shorter trail if they are experiencing fatigue or pressure sores.

Mount and Tack: wide based, voice trained, use surcingle

Visual Impairment

Partial to total loss of sight

Characteristics: Insecure posture, lack of visual memory, anterior center of gravity, fearfulness, and developmental delay.

Benefits of therapeutic riding: Stimulates spatial awareness, posture and coordination. Provides social outlet, structured risk taking and freedom of movement.

Problems that could arise: be aware of other senses and stress independence through use of other senses. Sometimes weakness in trunk muscles with balance problems. Posses fine and gross motor deficits.

What to do – encourage independence find out degree of blindness, total or partial. Be definite and exact on directions, have good tactile orientation of barn, ring, and horses. Talk rider through directions by giving point of references. Be aware of balance and muscle strength.

Mount – varies with rider's size, muscle tone, fear and balance.

Tack – Depends on rider skills. Can use surcingle. Occasional use of beepers or bell. Radio in a corner can be both pleasing and effective.

Barn Activities

There are many activities that you can do with the children at MBHTC. Be creative and find something to do and play with them.

- Go on a trail ride
- Groom horses
- Art and horse worksheets
- Play on the vaulting barrels
- Play in the sand pile
- Take a ride on a vaulting horse
- Go on a tractor ride
- Help feed horses
- Ride bikes
- Sit and talk and play with others
- Eat lunch outside



Other Instances That Might Occur

- If a child or someone becomes violent. Such as pushing, hitting, spitting, or throwing objects. Immediately tell a staff member, so that the situation can be handled by a person with training and much more experience.



- If a child asks why a child with special needs is that way give a neutral, non stigma, factual, observable, positively framed answer. Ask the child how we could help him/her.

-If a child refuses to ride a horse that he/she has heard negative stories about, say that the horse has a twin. Gossip about negative things horses might do flies through the barn. A child might not want to ride a horse because they have heard that it is too fast. If you pretend that the horse is a twin of the horse they are assigned, they might be inclined to try riding that horse. Just make sure no one tells them the truth until they find that riding that horse is fine.

-If a horse has died and the child does not yet know-

Many of the riders get attached to the horses and may have been riding this particular horse for a long time. Unfortunately, horses are very expensive animals to maintain, are easily injured, and go lame when they age. Therefore, horses are sometimes put down when this occurs. As a non-profit agency MBHTC cannot afford to keep all horses that cannot be ridden. When a child asks where his horse is and you have been told that the horse has been put down, you might have to be the one to tell the child that the horse is “in horse heaven with hundreds of acres of green grass to roam in.” Hopefully,

the parents of the child will be notified beforehand if the child had a special attachment to the horse and inform the child to their discretion.

Leaders

The main responsibility of the leader is to control the mount, but he/she must also constantly be aware of the rider, instructor, and any potential hazards in arena or out on trail. In addition, he/she must also consider the sidewalkers, making sure there is enough room along the fence and around obstacles for them to pass.

Most riders who have leaders are unable to fully control the animals. It is the leader who must help in guiding, stopping, and starting without making the rider feel he is simply a passenger. **The rider must be allowed to do as much as possible with the leader helping only when necessary.** An effective leader pays close attention to the rider's needs as well as to where the horse is going. This attention reinforces the rider's attempts to control the horse. However, the leader should not execute an instruction for the rider before he has time to process the information and make an effort to comply. Sometimes it may be appropriate to walk into the corner and stand until the student figures out what to do.

The leader should hold the lead six to eight inches from the horse's head with the extra lead looped in the free hand, not wrapped around it.

When a rider is being mounted, the leader must hold the animal as still as possible, both at the ramp and in the ring. A good leader anticipates problems and acts in such away as to avoid them.

At the trot, the volunteer will have to speed his walk to a jog. Mounts should trot alongside the leader. The leader should avoid breaking into a run, as the mount will pick up speed accordingly. The leader should use voice commands (whoa, walk, trot, canter) to aid in transitions from one gait to another.

Once the lesson has started, it is important that the leader be alert and pay close attention. Leaders can help the instructor by keeping the rider's attention on the instructor. Many riders like to talk and ask personal questions of their volunteers. The volunteer should not be rude but should keep the rider's attention on the lesson. After the lesson, personal conversation can take place, but not during the class.

Leaders should keep the mounts from becoming too close if the rider cannot. Commands for the rider to halt, cross the arena, or do a circle can prevent an accident or pile up. The leader must use common sense if a problem arises.

Falls can and do happen. If a rider should fall, the leader must take care of the horse. He should **not** drop the lead and run to the fallen rider. The situation could easily become more dangerous if there are loose horses running around the arena. Listen for directions. The instructor will call the class to a halt and assist the rider. Move your horse as far from the fallen student as possible and **keep calm!** If an accident is about to occur, such as if the horse is spooked on trail. Keep hold of the lead in the left hand and turn towards rider and help with right hand.

Sidewalkers

Sidewalkers are volunteers whose primary responsibility is to insure the safety of the rider. The degree of assistance from the sidewalker will depend on the balance of the rider. Sidewalkers, who accompany poorly balanced riders, need to change sides occasionally to relieve the stress on their arms. Sidewalkers should not pull the rider sideways or backwards. At a trot, the sidewalker must be able to jog alongside the rider. It is important for sidewalkers to maintain a position by the rider's knee at all times. Being too far forward or back will make it very difficult to assist with instructions or provide security if the horse should trip or shy.

There are two common ways to hold onto the rider without interfering. The most commonly used is the "arm-over-the-thigh" hold. The sidewalker grips the front of the saddle with the hand closest to the rider. Then the fleshy part of the forearm rests gently on the rider's thigh. Be careful that the elbow doesn't accidentally dig into the rider's leg. Sometimes, pressure on the thigh can increase and/or cause muscle spasticity, especially with the Cerebral Palsy population. In this case, the "therapeutic hold" may be used. Here, the leg is held at the joints, usually the knee and/or ankle. The instructor will determine which method is most suitable for each rider.

Avoid wrapping an arm around the rider's waist. It is tempting, especially when walking beside a pony with a young or small rider, but it can offer too much and uneven support. At times, it can even pull the rider off balance and make riding more difficult. Encourage students to use their own trunk muscles to the best of their abilities.

When you are ready for relief for your arm, ask the leader to move into the center to stop and trade sides, one at a time, with the other sidewalker – never leave a rider with poor balance unsupported! Unless specifically told otherwise, the "arm-over-the-thigh" method is used.

Sidewalkers can also help the instructor in many other ways; i.e., keeping the rider's attention on the lesson, assisting in right/left directionality, spatial orientation, understanding the instructor's directions, and helping to keep the mount walking on. As with the leader, any unnecessary interference should be avoided. Otherwise, the rider may be confused as to who is teaching the lesson. Too much input from too many directions is very confusing to anyone, and to riders who already have perceptual problems, it can be overwhelming. If two sidewalkers are working with one student, one should be the "designated talker" to avoid this situation.

When the instructor gives a direction, allow your student plenty of time to process it. If the instructor says, "Turn to the right toward me," and the student seems confused, gently tap the right hand and say, "Right," to reinforce the command. You will get to know the riders and learn when they need help and when they're just not paying attention.

During exercises, pay attention to your rider. Sometimes volunteers forget that the riders are to do the exercises and the sidewalkers are to reinforce and assist. The same applies to games. The ultimate goal for therapeutic riding is to encourage the rider to

stretch and grow to be as independent as he can possibly be. The sidewalker is right at his side and should help the instructor to challenge him to the best of his ability.

If a rider starts to fall, pushing him back into the saddle is more effective than trying to get him off the horse. If there is no way to prevent a fall, the sidewalker should try to soften the fall, making sure he doesn't compound the problem by getting in the way. In most instances, the job of the sidewalker on the left is to pull the child off while the sidewalker on the right assists by getting the rider's right foot free of the stirrup and lifting it over the horse's neck. If the sidewalker on the left is uncomfortable with this role, other arrangements must be made before the lesson begins. The sidewalker should do nothing with the rider who has fallen, allowing the instructor to handle the situation.

Sidewalkers can be used with a rider who is starting to ride alone. No leader is present, but the sidewalker is there to control the horse or pony if the rider's aids are not effective. The sidewalker is for the control of the mount rather than for helping the rider's balance. It also helps the confidence of the rider to have a sidewalker for the first few times he rides alone.

Horse Behavior

Sight

- The horse's eyes are set on either side of the head; there is good peripheral (lateral) vision, but poorer frontal vision. A horse focuses on objects by raising and lowering its head. The horse's visual memory is very accurate. Horses are thought to see quite well in the dark, due to the large size of their eyes. There is still controversy as to whether or not horses see in color.
- The horse may notice if something in the arena or out on a trail is different. Allow the horse an opportunity to look at new objects. Introduce new props that the horse may be unfamiliar with.
- The horse has better peripheral vision; consider two blind spots: directly in front and directly behind. The best way to approach a horse is to his shoulder. It may startle him if you approach from behind or directly in front. The horse may be unable to see around the mouth area, which is a safety consideration when hand feeding.

Flight As A Natural Instinct

- Horses would rather turn and run away from danger than face and fight it.
- At a sudden movement or noise, the horse might try to flee. Speak to the horse calmly.
- A frightened horse that is tied up or being held tightly might try to escape by pulling back. Relax your hold or untie him quickly and usually he will relax. Be sure not to stand directly behind the horse.
- If flight is not possible, the horse could either turn to kick out or face the problem and rear, especially in a tight area like the stall. A halter with a lead rope may assist with maintaining control while working around the horse in a stall.
- The horse may look to you for reassurance. It is helpful if the volunteer remains calm and talks to the horse in a soothing voice.

Herd Animal

- Horses like to stay together in a herd or group with one or two horses dominant, with a pecking order amongst the rest.
- Be aware that a horse may not like being alone. This is a consideration when horses are leaving the arena or a horse loses sight of the other while on a trail ride.
- Be aware that if the horse in front of a line is trotting or cantering, the horse that is following may also attempt to trot or canter.
- If one horse spooks at something, the surrounding horses may also be affected.
- For safety, it is recommended to keep at least two horse lengths between horses when riding within a group to respect the horse's space and pecking order.
- Being aware of horse behaviors is one of the best safety precautions that can be

used.

Basic Safety Rules for Working with Horses

- Horses and ponies are friendly and sensitive animals. Reward them by voice and firm pats on the neck and shoulder.
- Stay calm and quiet around mounts.
- Horses and ponies are creatures of habit. They are suspicious of anything new, unusual, or different. If the horse shies, they are alarmed at something.
- A horse or pony may kick and squeal when close to another animal. Do not allow them to “sniff” noses; keep them separated.
- To catch a loose mount, wait until he is standing still, and approach him slowly at the shoulder, talking soothingly. Slowly put the lead around his neck. If there is a loose horse, yell “Heads Up” so that others know.
- Never tie a mount by his bridle reins; he may injure his mouth or break the bridle. Put the halter over the bridle; then tie him to the lead.
- When leading a horse or pony, walk between his head and shoulder so his expression (eyes/ears) can be observed. Hold the lead 6” from the bit; the excess lead should be **folded** and held in the other hand.
- To avoid horses stepping on reins and lead ropes, keep reins and leads off the ground.
- To calm an excited mount, rub his neck and speak in a soothing voice. If handlers are calm and confident, the horse or pony will generally reflect those attitudes.
- When leading single file, keep at least the length of two horses between the leader and the mount in front to prevent kicking.
- Never approach a mount directly from the rear. Even in standing stalls, it is possible to approach from an angle at the rear. This allows the horse/pony to see the person. Approach the mount from the side, talk to him in a low voice, and keep a hand on his body when walking around him.
- Always speak to a horse/pony before approaching or touching him. Some mounts are likely to jump and may kick when startled.
- Never wrap a lead or reins around a hand, fingers, wrist or body.
- Horses and ponies often swell up when first saddled, and failure to re-tighten the girth just prior to and after mounting can result in serious accidents.

Emergency Procedures

Mounted Emergencies:

- Halt all horses.
- Horse leaders will position themselves in front of the horses.
- Sidewalkers will stabilize their riders or backrider. (Backriders will stabilize the rider.)
- Instructors will supervise dismounting, either verbally or personally.
- Evacuate the arena, if necessary: Sidewalkers escort riders out of the arena through emergency exits.
- Horse leaders lead horses to the instructor-designated place after riders are out of danger, blindfolding them if necessary. Horses will then be held or tied in a safe area to keep them from danger.
- Instructor will assess the situation and determine what action to take concerning emergency assistance.

Emergency Dismount:

- Sidewalker calls out “Emergency!” to notify instructor and leaders of the need for an emergency dismount.
- Halt all horses.
- Sidewalker on the left removes compromised rider from horse, using his body as a cushion or barrier if necessary.
- Sidewalker on the right frees rider’s foot from stirrup and helps it over horse’s neck.
- Leader immediately moves the horse’s hindquarters away from the rider.
- Instructor will assess the situation and determine what further action to take.

➤ In Case of Injured Rider:

- Instructor will appoint one person to take charge of remaining class and will ask them to move away from immediate area to a more isolated area. This person will be responsible for the safe dismounting of and removal of students from the riding area.
- Instructor will ask one sidewalker to call 911 and to report the condition of the injured rider to them, while instructor takes care of injured rider performing CPR or First Aid procedures.
- The instructor will fill out an accident report to be turned in and go on file.
- It is important for you to be prepared to execute this plan at any time. If you have any questions concerning your part, or if you feel you are unable to assist during an emergency, please, talk to the instructor before assisting with class.

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Grooming

Remember when you are grooming to look for any problems on the horse, i.e.: cuts, scrapes, a runny nose/eye, bumps, swellings, heat in the hooves, etc. Notify the staff of any problems you notice. When grooming, start at the front of the horse and work your way back with each tool.

Grooming sequence:

1. Pick out all four hooves using a hoof pick. Dirt and rocks can be trapped in the hollow grooves on the underside of the hoof, causing problems such as lameness. To get the horse to pick up their hoof, start at the top of the leg and while running your hand down their leg, says “Hoof” or “Up”. To pick out the hoof, run the hoof pick from heel to toe, beside the frog, getting any dirt or rocks out. Be careful not to dig the pick into the frog.
2. Using a circular motion, use a curry comb over the neck, barrel, and rump. Do not use the curry comb on the legs or face.
3. Brush the entire body except for the face with a stiff/dandy brush. Use short, flicking strokes, following the direction of the coat. Be sure to brush the belly as well, especially where the girth will touch.
4. Next use a soft brush over the entire body, including the face. Use long, sweeping strokes going with the direction of the coat, to clean sensitive areas and to polish the whole coat.
5. To brush out the mane and tail, use a mane/tail brush. If there are a lot of tangles, use a mane and tail conditioner and then brush with a dandy brush so that you do not break or pull out the hairs. Start at the bottom and work your way up, always brushing in a downward motion. For any serious, lingering stains that won't come off with brushing, get a bucket of water and a rag and wipe off the spot. Be sure not to make any area wet that will be covered by tack.

Remember: While the horses do not need to be groomed so that they are “Show Quality” clean for lessons, it is important to make sure that any and all areas that will be covered by tack (the saddle, bridle, leg wraps/boots, etc.) are clean.

Tacking Tips:

Basic safety rules:

1. The order of tacking is: saddle first, bridle second.
2. When tying up a horse always use the quick release knot.
3. Reins should be put on last just before being lead to mounting block.
4. Make sure the stirrups are run up and not dangling.
5. Always hang the bridle from something; never drop it on the ground.
6. Don't let the horses or ponies eat with their bridles on. It teaches them bad manners, it makes the bit dirty, unhealthy and increases the chance of choking.

Saddling:

Place the saddle pad high on the withers, then slide it down onto the horse's back to smooth out the hairs. If a lift pad will also be used, place this on next, on top of the saddle pad. Then pick up the saddle, making sure the stirrups are run up or laid across the seat of the saddle so that they are not hanging (and as a result, will hit the horse when the saddle is put on). Lay the girth across the seat of the saddle. Holding the pommel with the left hand and the cantle in the right hand, place the saddle gently on the horse, in the center of the pad. Pull the saddle pad up into the gullet of the saddle to allow air to circulate between the horse's withers and the pad, and to prevent rubbing. When positioning the saddle, the front edge should be lined up with the center of the horse's shoulder. Always make sure the pad is smooth, and there are no wrinkles under the saddle that could cause sores. From the right side, take the girth off the saddle and attach the non-elastic side of the girth to right side of the saddle, using the first and third billets. Then go to the left side and attach the elastic side of the girth to the left side of the saddle, using the first and third billets.

Bridling:

1. Stand on the left side of the horse's head.
2. Hold the crown piece in the right hand and the bit in the left hand.
3. Place the bit into the horse's lips, and bring the crown piece to the horse's ears. If the horse fails to open his mouth and accept the bit, put your thumb into the side of the horse's mouth and press down on the bar (the area where the bit lies, where there are no teeth). Raise the crown piece and insert the bit.
4. Slip the crown piece gently over the ears, one at a time, pushing them flat first (so they aren't folded). Straighten the brow band and pull the forelock out so that it is over, not under the brow band.
5. Buckle the throatlatch loosely enough so that a hand can be inserted breadth-wise between the throatlatch and the throat.