



Oak Hill Farm
Therapeutic Riding
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OAK HILL FARM VOLUNTEER MANUAL

Oak Hill Farm would like to thank you for agreeing to volunteer in the Therapeutic Riding Program. The purpose of this manual is to provide you with the information you need to do your job well. If at any time you are uncertain about anything, please ask. Safety is the number one concern, followed closely by providing excellent therapy and riding instruction services. This manual is designed for you to be able to participate in the therapeutic riding program of Oak Hill Farm.

MISSION STATEMENT: Our mission at Oak Hill Farm is to provide an atmosphere to develop strong minds, bodies and self-esteem. We support family involvement to build strong kids and families.

Therapeutic riding uses strategy that utilizes equine movement. It helps improve the physical and emotional well-being of patients. We build self-confidence and independence in our work for everyone. Equine Therapeutic Riding is a unique tool, which provides multiple input to the rider, which can enhance the therapy session. Physically it provides a three-dimensional movement pattern, which is very similar to the movement we experience when we walk. Secondly, the horse provides warmth to the rider that helps them relax. The horse also provides sensory input, which bombards the rider's system and finds a way to help the rider organize himself. Finally, the horse makes a bond with the rider, which is irreplaceable. This strong animal to human bond is the magical part of therapeutic riding. The riders, instructors, and volunteers can all experience this. (Parts of the above passage were taken from the volunteer manual at Children's Therapy Plus.)

VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES

1. All volunteers must be trained. Preferably they will attend a training session. If this is not possible, volunteers may be trained on an individual basis or through a video.
2. Please sign in and out of the volunteer sign up sheet every time you are here.
3. Please arrive on time when you are scheduled to work. If for some reason you are unable to come at your scheduled time, please let me know as soon as possible.
4. Volunteers must wear enclosed shoes - no open-toed shoes or sandals allowed. Please dress neatly and avoid dangling jewelry that could get caught on the tack or rider.
5. Please respect the client's privacy. Any information you know about the client must not be shared with anyone outside of Oak Hill Farm. If you are asked questions about a client, just politely let them know that you cannot share that information. There is legislation which was written to protect patient privacy called HIPAA. It makes confidentiality not only ethically necessary but the law.

HORSE SAFETY DO'S AND DON'TS

- Approach your horse from the side, talking to her in a low voice. When unmounted, like in the cross-ties, keep your hand on the horse when walking around her (she can't see you when you stand directly in front or behind her). When there is a rider on the horse and you are walking behind the horse, say "HO" before you move and keep plenty of distance between you and the horse. Avoid touching the horse; rather, use your voice to let her know where you are when the horse has a rider.
- Always speak to a horse before approaching or touching her. Horses are more likely to become startled if you surprise them.
- Walk beside the horse when leading, not ahead or behind her. Lead the horse with one hand six inches from the halter and the other hand holding the remaining lead (fold it back on itself - do not wrap around your hand and do not allow it to drag on the ground).
- Do not try to out-pull the horse (she weighs a lot more than you do). Face forward and say "walk on", then walk.

A slight tug down and forward on the lead rope may help.

- DO NOT dab at the end of the horse's nose to pet her - fingers look and feel like carrots. She loves it when you scratch her forehead and rubbing her neck is a safe way for patients and siblings to pet her.
- Do not squat or kneel when cleaning hooves; do it from the side facing the rear, and watch your toes.
- Do not hand feed.

THERAPEUTIC RIDING

A typical therapeutic riding session will consist of work to prepare the client for independent horse back riding; work on the horse may include exercises. There may be work off the horse to build strength. The amount of time spent on the horse will vary from patient to patient.

The session is scheduled for one hour and it is important that we stay on schedule. If we only have one hour a week to work, I want 60 minutes of time (actually the last 10 minutes or so will be used as a wrap up to get the progress note signed and give suggestions for home follow-through).

If you are a non-parent volunteer please arrive 30 minutes before the beginning of the first therapy session you are scheduled to help with. Please do not enter the pasture. The horses should be in their stalls - if not please ask for instructions. Put the horse in the cross-tie area. Grooming should include curry comb, hard brush, soft brush, cleaning hooves. Fly protection may be necessary but we don't want to do this too many times per day. The horse handler will be responsible for fly protection. We may or may not use a fly mask. Usual tack will be bareback pad over the washable saddle pad; please make sure the clean side is up. We may also use sursingle or little saddle. Apply loosely in cross-ties and tighten once you have walked around the arena. Bridles or halters may be used – again this is the horse handler's responsibility. Please allow time to walk the horse around the arena. It is important that the horse is sufficiently warmed up. Walk her around the arena at least three times in either direction. Please be ready for the rider by 10 minutes after the scheduled appointment unless the therapist tells you different. You may have to wait for us. The horse handler is responsible for having the horse ready. The sidewalker, if a volunteer, and not a parent should help whenever possible.

Let's all make sure that the girth is tight and the client is wearing their helmet. Remember only trained volunteers are allowed in the arena. Once the session starts the therapist will give specific instructions on the planned activities. If they are unclear please ask for clarification. Our focus is on achieving the therapy goals. While we want you to interact with the child, please remember we want to focus on the activity at hand, so reserve visiting with the child and the rest of the team before and after the session.

When the session is over you will either need to wait for the next rider or put the horse away. Lead the horse back to the cross-tie area and remove the tack. Please brush and clean hooves, and sweep the floor. If you are giving a treat, please place it in a feed bucket – do not hand feed. Please double check latches on the gates when leaving.

BARN CLEAN UP

1. Please put all tack back where it belongs.
2. Sweep the floor.
3. Please provide your input on the session - suggestions, things that went well, etc. You can find the proper form in the Volunteer notebook - don't forget the date.
4. Record the time you spent in the Volunteer Binder.

HORSE HANDLER

It is your responsibility to have the horse ready to work 10 minutes after the scheduled appointment. It is your responsibility to control the horse. Please talk to the horse and be aware of attitude, willingness, and signs of fatigue or discomfort. Be aware of things that cause spooking and watch for them as well as signs of being spooked and know what the horse does when spooked. Inform the therapist if adjustments need to be made. Please do not assist the rider or pick up toys - your job is the horse.

MOUNTING

There is a lift at Oak Hill Farm. Prior to the horse being led into the block, the lift should be raised to the desired height and pressure released so it is ready to be lowered. When all the participants are in place (this includes a sidewalker opposite the mounting block to help guide the horse), a final tack check is done and then you can lead the horse to the mounting block. Leader, please get the horse as close to the block as possible and make sure she is standing squarely.

Your responsibility is to keep the horse as quiet as possible.

Face the horse and keep a loose hold on her. If you feel the horse is not ready, even after the mounting process has begun, speak up, don't let go of the horse. Mounting is the most dangerous part of the lesson. NEVER assist the rider - your responsibility is the horse. The therapist will lower the ramp if necessary.

Respond to the walk on cue - preferably from the rider, but you may also respond to the therapist. We want to spend as little time as possible on this process. Watch for trapping the leg in between the ramp and horse but walk right along the ramp so that the sidewalker on the ramp can maintain contact. When clear of the mounting area, on command of the therapist, stop. The gate will be shut and adjustments in position or tack will be done and ride will continue.

DISMOUNTING

Whenever possible, dismounting will be done to the ground. Keep the horse still until you are asked to move it and then go straight forward. You will stand facing the horse.

HOW TO LEAD A HORSE

- The proper position for the horse handler is to walk with the horse on his/her right side in the area between the horse's head and shoulder. DO NOT DRAG THE HORSE or let the horse drag you.
- With your right hand, hold the lead about six inches from the horse's mouth. Hold the extra part of the lead in your left hand - fold it and hold it lightly. NEVER WRAP THE LEAD AROUND YOUR HAND OR ANY PART OF YOUR BODY. The lead should never touch the ground.
- The lead should be slack. The horse will respond to your step length and speed. A quick pull followed by a release is the most effective way to get a horse to cooperate.
- NEVER DISCIPLINE A HORSE WITH A RIDER ON THE HORSE'S BACK.

SIDEWALKER

The sidewalker's responsibility is the rider. During the mounting process you will stand across from the ramp before the horse is brought to the ramp. You can help get her close by gently pushing on her hindquarters. When everyone is ready you will assist the rider sit softly and get the rider's legs straddling the horse. Save fine adjustments for after you are out of the block.

As a sidewalker, you are always close to the rider; therefore, you will find that he/she will want to talk to you. Do not ignore direct questions that concern the session but be aware that carrying on a conversation is a way to get out of working. Please take part in motivating the patient but remember that the therapist has particular goals and methods in mind. Also, some patients do better if they just have one person telling them what to do. As a general rule you will grasp the front of the bareback pad and gently rest your forearm across the rider's thigh, with the arm closest to the horse. Be careful not to lean into the horse or rider. The therapist may ask you to hold in another way.

Please help make sure the rider is in the center of the horse. It is easier to pull than to push so the sidewalker who is away from the side the rider is falling to will help center the rider.

If your arm gets tired, please ask to switch sides. If you aren't sure what to do - ask!

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Emergency Dismount - If the horse handler or any other member of the team is feeling the ride is unsafe, the command "dismount now" should be given. Volunteers, if time allows, tell your concerns to the therapist and allow them to make the "dismount now" command. The therapist will be responsible and will pull the patient toward her. If you are the other sidewalker please assist with the legs clearing the horse. The leader will lead the horse forward and away from the rider. If the therapist is not in a position to do this safely she may direct you to do it.

Fall – In the unlikely event that a fall should occur, the leader should take the horse forward away from the rider and stop. The rider should not be moved until examined by the therapist. If the injury is severe, the other sidewalker will be instructed to call 911. If there is no injury, the rider will be reassured and remounted if at all possible. Any time there is a fall an incident report will be filled out and signed by all witnesses.

Seizures – The horse will be stopped. Whether or not dismount occurs will be dependent upon the severity of the seizure. The therapist will make the decision. The horse handler should let the therapist know how horse is reacting to the situation.

Emergency information is posted on the dry erase board near the mounting lift. Brenda's cell phone will be kept in the top drawer of the white cabinet where the helmets are kept. The human First Aid Kit is on the white cabinet where the helmets are kept. All mishaps requiring First Aid must be reported to the therapist and recorded on an incident report.

EMERGENCY PLAN FOR FIRE

1. Calmly exit the building at the nearest exit. If necessary, help make sure the children are taken out.
2. The therapist will designate someone to call 911 from the closest phone. In the event the cell phone in the white cabinet can not be reached, go to the house to use the phone.
3. Everyone on the property should meet on the front porch of the house.
4. The therapist will make sure everyone is accounted for.

EMERGENCY PLAN FOR A TORNADO WARNING

1. Go to the fourth stall which is directly out of the arena if the storm comes up quickly. If there is sufficient warning time proceed to the walk-out basement in the house.
2. Remain calm and get low to the ground.
3. If you are caught outside, try to lay in a ditch or a depression in the ground.

If you notice an injury or a problem with a horse, please let Brenda know and fill out a Horse Incident Report.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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