



Hidden Acres Therapeutic Riding Center

Participant Handbook

Our Mission

Improving the minds, bodies & spirits of children and adults with physical, developmental and emotional disabilities through the benefits of therapeutic riding and equine-assisted activities.

Hidden Acres Therapeutic Riding Center Participant Eligibility Guidelines

Hidden Acres programs are based on an individual's ability to participate safely provided the necessary resources are available including: a suitable instructor, horse, volunteers and class availability which meets an individual's needs. Hidden Acres does not discriminate against any individuals or group nor is financial consideration a determining factor in eligibility for participation.

As a PATH Intl. member center, Hidden Acres follows the Precautions and Contraindications as recommended by the Medical Committee of PATH Intl. as well as Professional Standards. Our professional staff will provide initial and ongoing evaluations for all prospective and active participants.

Due to the nature of therapeutic riding and other equine related activities, there are individuals for whom Hidden Acres programs may be determined inappropriate during the evaluation process and are not accepted for enrollment or not eligible to continue in Hidden Acres programs. This determination is made on the basis of an individual's physical and behavioral status, and other limitations such as available resources.

Individuals accepted into Hidden Acres programs are required to take part in periodic progress reviews and follow Hidden Acres' policies and procedures. During these reviews, or as the result of unusual occurrences during a program session, the Hidden Acres staff may find that continuance in the program for a given individual is inappropriate. For this reason, Hidden Acres reserves the right to discontinue the participation of an individual in its programs when it is deemed that discontinuance is in the best interests of Hidden Acres and/or the individual concerned.

Hidden Acres reserves the right to decide we are unable to serve an applicant due to unavailable resource(s) and or/safety concerns including PATH Intl. guidelines relating to contraindications for participation.

Hidden Acres Participant Handbook

Welcome to Hidden Acres Therapeutic Riding Center. We are delighted to serve you! Our mission is to improve the minds, spirits and bodies of children and adults with physical, developmental and emotional disabilities through the benefits of therapeutic riding and equine-assisted activities. With a holistic perspective (mind, body, spirit), we incorporate the unique benefits and lessons the horse brings to us in their trusting and non judgmental manner. Our PATH International Certified Instructors focus on providing benefits in a safe and supportive environment.

Whether activities are mounted (on horseback) or unmounted (on the ground), all sessions are planned with the participant's individual physical, social, educational, emotional and recreational goals in mind. Instructors work collaboratively with parents, educators and therapists to maximize benefits. Equine assisted activities also provide a great format for addressing sensory challenges, increasing communication skills, team building experiences, and fostering self esteem.

Program Operation - Hidden Acres operates year-round, Monday through Saturday, and offers four semesters per year - Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall. Semester run from 6-12 weeks in length.

Therapeutic Riding - Mounted sessions may be private, semi-private, or small cohesive groups and range between 30-45 minutes in length. Activities may include exercises, horsemanship skills development, games to reinforce skills, and trail rides. We also try to dedicate at least two sessions to learning safe unmounted horsemanship.

Unmounted Horsemanship Program – Take place on the ground (no riding). Sessions focus learning safe horsemanship and individual goals such as confidence and empathy through the horse and human connection. Sessions may be private (30 minutes), semi private, or group (45 minutes). Unmounted curriculum centers around topics such as horse communication, safe handling, basic care, grooming, first aid, feeding, etc.

Equine Facilitated Learning – This unmounted program focuses on teaching life skills such as self awareness, communication and problem solving through interactions with the horse. These sessions focus on experiential learning with the horse as our teacher. Sessions range from 30 minutes to ½ day programs and are customized to meet the needs of individuals or groups.

Integrated Summer Program – Horse Spirit! - These integrated sessions take place Mon-Thu mornings during August and are designed to bring together children with and without special needs to have fun with horses while learning horse care, riding skills and have fun with special equine-related projects. Activities are designed to foster confidence, self expression and team building.

Demonstration Days - This special week-long event takes place at the end of the Spring semester. On the last regularly scheduled session of the Spring semester, each participant has an opportunity to showcase their skills for family and friends –to celebrate their successes and receive a ribbon!

Specialty Programs & Field Trips - Hidden Acres provides specialty programs and field trips for schools groups, organizations and birthday party experiences. Programs may be mounted or unmounted and from 1-2 hours in length. Please contact us for more information. Prices vary accordingly.

Hidden Acres Policies and Procedures

Non-Discrimination Policy -Hidden Acres Therapeutic Riding Center accepts participants and volunteers regardless of income, race, color, nationality or ethnic origin.

Hidden Acres Personnel – Services are conducted by PATH Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructors and trained volunteers. (Professional Assoc. of Therapeutic Horsemanship Intl.)

Fees & Payment -Fees should be prepaid on a semester basis and due by the first day of class unless a pre-arranged payment plan or scholarship has been established individually.

Scholarship Program - Hidden Acres is committed to accepting participants into the program based on need rather than financial means. To support this commitment, we have established a Scholarship Program. To apply, please request an application. Funds are limited.

Scheduling - Registration takes place approximately four weeks before the upcoming semester. Current participants are offered an opportunity to continue from one semester to the next prior to open registration. A calendar of class dates is provided prior to the start of each semester. Please make note of any days when programs are not in session (holidays and breaks, etc.).

Attendance & Cancellation Policies - Hidden Acres believes in the benefits of the human-animal bond. If riding is prevented due to weather conditions, unless otherwise notified, an unmounted learning session is scheduled. If you are unable to attend a regularly schedule session, please contact your instructor directly or call 203-516-8380 so we may notify staff and volunteers.

Make-up sessions are not available unless Hidden Acres needs to cancel due to some unforeseen circumstances. We will make every attempt to notify participants at least 2 hours prior to the change and an opportunity to reschedule will be provided.

Attire, Helmets & Footwear -Participants are required to wear an ASTM/SEI approved riding helmet, which is provided by Hidden Acres. Saddles are equipped with safety stirrups, however for additional safety, participants should wear a sturdy-soled boot with a ¼ inch heel. Please have participants prepared for an outdoor activity including – gloves, jackets and warm clothing for cooler weather and light pants, sun screen and bug repellent for the summer.

Participant Records & Confidentiality - Participants are required to complete the application paperwork and release forms prior to receiving services. In addition, Hidden Acres also requires a Yearly Update Form and updated medical histories every five years. For individuals with Down Syndrome, annual medical clearance from a licensed physician that includes a neurological exam that specifically denies any symptoms consistent with atlanto-axial instability is required. Any information pertaining to the participants at Hidden Acres is kept confidential. It is critical that we respect the privacy of each individual. Adhering to Hidden Acres policy regarding confidentiality is required by all staff and volunteers.

Change of Health / Medical Status - For safety reasons, please inform Hidden Acres of any changes which may affect the participant's functioning abilities such as changes in health, diagnosis, surgeries, medications, emotional status, etc.

Holiday Closings – Hidden Acres is closed on the following:

- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Day
- New Year's Day

Parking - Please drive slow when entering / leaving Hidden Acres and please do not block any driveways or emergency access roads. Designated handicap parking is available.

Communication - The staff of Hidden Acres is always available to speak with participants, their parents, or with permission, educators or therapists to help deliver the most effective services possible. Please contact the Program Director at 203-723-0633 to discuss any questions, concerns, or suggestions you may have.

Program Newsletter – a quarterly newsletter is sent by email and posted on the bulletin board in the stable and includes program highlights, upcoming events and relevant program updates for participants, families, volunteers and others interested in Hidden Acres. Please let us know if there is something you would like to share with others.

Mail/Email – periodic emails are sent to participants and volunteers with updates and important announcements. Please be sure we have your current email and mailing address.

Website – Please visit the Hidden Acres website at www.hiddenacrestrc.org for information on our programs and services, as well as upcoming events.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Safety and Conduct for Participants, Families & Visitors

The following are to assist in promoting a safe environment.

- NO Smoking at the farm please
- Feeding the horses is not permitted.
- Encourage children to walk, not run.
- Quiet hands and feet are required on and off horses.
- Avoid placing hands through stall bars or petting horses near their mouth.
- Wear closed footwear when in the barn or near horses (no sandals.)
- Ask prior to taking photos or videos.
- View lessons away from arena fence during class.
- Visiting children must be supervised by an adult at all times.
- Please ask before bringing a pet.
- Any type of weapon, alcohol or illegal substances are not permitted on the premises.
- Respect any off-limit areas including the feed room, horse paddocks, construction areas and equipment such as tractors.
- Please – arrange with staff if you would like to bring visitors or visit the farm outside of your regularly scheduled class time.

Emergency Policies & Procedures

Hidden Acres' intention is to provide a safe environment for all individuals involved with the program. Being prepared in the event of an emergency is part of providing a safe atmosphere. It is important to remember in any emergency situation to remain calm and take direction from Hidden Acres staff, which are responsible for managing the emergency and applying any first aid required; others may be called upon to assist.

Medical Emergencies

Please notify staff or instructors of any injury or medical emergency. Staff is responsible for managing the emergency including evaluating the scene, determining if additional medical assistance is required, and providing any first aid required. An occurrence report must be completed by staff and individuals involved with an incident.

Calling for Emergency Medical Assistance

In the event of an emergency, contact information and numbers are posted on the volunteer bulletin board in the stable.

Location of First Aid Kits

Primary human and horse first-aid kits are located in a marked cabinet in the stable feed room.

Severe Weather

In the event of severe thunder storms, high winds or threat of hurricane – program activities will be discontinued. Please take direction from the instructor regarding escorting participants, parents and visitors to a safe place.

Fire

The stable is equipped with two fire extinguishers. If you see a fire or smoke, please dial 911 and evacuate the stable. Designated staff will assist with evacuation and do a roll call from the Class Schedule and Volunteer Sign in Sheet. The designated meeting place will be the small outdoor arena. If it is safe to enter the barn, a staff person will designate crew to assist with evacuating the horses to the turnout paddocks.

“Emergency” Dismount

During riding sessions, if an emergency dismount is required, either an instructor or a trained volunteer may conduct as follows: When an instructor calls for an emergency dismount, horse leaders halt and head off their horse. Sidewalker(s) inform rider of emergency dismount, make sure the rider has removed their feet from the stirrups, will place their arms around the riders waist and gently guide rider off and safely away from the horse. Horse leaders are instructed to keep the horse a safe distance from rider.

Fallen Rider or Medical Emergency

Should a rider fall from a horse, become injured or have a medical emergency during a session, all activities will stop. The instructor is responsible for managing the incident including applying any first aid needed. Designated volunteers or others may be asked to assist by retrieving a first aid kit, calling for emergency medical assistance (911), and locating the rider's emergency medical form (located in “rider” file drawer in the barn office. We ask that no one enter the arena without direction from the instructor.

About our Equine Friends...

Our horses provide a special service and in return receive the quality care and consideration from us they deserve. Only a small percentage of horses qualify to be a therapy horse due to the level of patience, tolerance and training required. As their advocates, we consider their physical abilities and needs when scheduling activities. Prior to work in program, each horse is assessed for signs of injury, illness or discomfort and would not be asked to work when they are uncomfortable or unfit. It is critical that we do not exceed each horse's established weight limit. Currently, Hidden Acres horses have a maximum carrying capacity of between 100-165lbs depending on the horse. Alternative activities to riding such as the Unmounted Horsemanship program may be provided based on horse availability and limitations. We ask for your understanding as we try our best to serve our participants within the limits of our herd.

Additional Program Information

Hidden Acres is a non-profit 501c3 which subsidizes the actual cost of each participant through fundraising, grant & foundation requests, and special events. We do not receive any state or federal funding. This program operates thanks to the generosity of others. Please let us know if you would like to become involved in supporting this program.

Volunteer Program

Volunteers are critical to the success of our programs! We are always seeking support for our participants and special events. Or, you may have a special skill to share that would benefit the organization. Please call 203-723-0633 for information on volunteering.

Board of Directors

As a nonprofit corporation with 501(c)3 tax exempt status, Hidden Acres is overseen and guided by a volunteer Board of Directors.

The Connecticut Equine Liability Act is Section 52-577p of the Connecticut General Statutes. That Section provides: **Assumption of risk by person engaged in recreational equestrian activities.** Each person engaged in recreational equestrian activities shall assume the risk and legal responsibility for any injury to his person or property arising out of the hazards inherent in equestrian sports, unless the injury was proximately caused by the negligence of the person providing the horse or horses to the individual engaged in recreational equestrian activities or the failure to guard or warn against a dangerous condition, use, structure or activity by the person providing the horse or horses or his agents or employees.