

# Therapeutic Riding, Inc.

## Rider Handbook

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# **Therapeutic Riding, Inc.**

## **Therapeutic Riding Inc.'s Mission Statement**

Therapeutic Riding, Inc. is a volunteer based, non-profit organization that provides the opportunity for personal growth through the horseback riding experience to Washtenaw County area youth and adults with disabilities.

Our mission is to provide recreational horseback riding which develops physical, cognitive, and emotional capabilities and enhances self-esteem.

## **What is therapeutic riding?**

Therapeutic riding adapts horseback riding to the needs of individuals with disabilities so that they can experience riding's physical, cognitive, and emotional benefits. The synchronized movement of horse and rider is used as a therapeutic tool to improve strength, balance, coordination, and self-confidence.

Instructors and volunteers work as a team with horses and ponies. These animals are specifically evaluated and trained to work with riders with disabilities as well as with assistive devices such as mounting lifts, wheelchairs, etc.

Therapeutic Riding, Inc. (TRI) is a member center of Path, Intl., the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship, International). We are affiliated with Washtenaw County's 4-H Youth Program and Michigan's 4-H PEP (Proud Equestrians Program).

TRI provides year round programming. Classes are currently offered weekday evenings and some mornings and afternoons. We have a heated lounge, restrooms, and an outdoor arena as well as an indoor arena with radiant heat. There are generally four or five riders in each class. We also offer private and semi-private lessons. Staff members assign leaders and sidewalkers to riders based on their abilities and needs.

For general information about therapeutic riding programs, go to <http://www.pathintl.org/>.

## **How Do I Register For Riding Classes?**

### **Prospective New Riders**

- Prospective new riders should call the TRI office at 734-677-0303 and request an Initial Contact sheet.
- Once this sheet is completed and sent back to the TRI office, the rider will be added to the Wait List.
- As spaces become available, applicants at the top of the Wait List will be contacted to schedule an intake meeting to assess their appropriateness for the program.
- Instructors make the final determination as to a potential rider's eligibility for participation in riding lessons. Safety is our top priority. If we do not feel we can safely mount, dismount, or teach a rider, we will not accept that person into our program.

### **Active Riders**

- Active riders register separately for each session. Materials must be received by each session's due date or a rider risks losing his or her spot in that session.
- Current riders can download registration materials from our website or request a packet to be sent via the mail.
- Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis.
  - Active Riders are registered before returning Inactive Riders and new riders.
- Class assignments are made by the Head Instructor, taking into account each rider's riding ability, age, schedule restrictions, and horse and volunteer needs.
  - Confirmations are emailed or sent via the mail if requested.
- Rider forms are required to be updated annually under guidelines established by Path, Intl. and Michigan 4-H.
  - No rider will be allowed to ride until all these forms are completed and on file at TRI.
  - These forms will be available for download from our website, or can be mailed if requested, by January 1<sup>st</sup> of each year.

## **Rider Status Policy**

### **Active Status**

- A rider is considered to have Active Status if he/she submits annual paperwork by the deadline and rides on a consistent basis as determined by the Head Instructor.

### **Inactive Status**

- If annual paperwork is not submitted by the deadline and/or the rider does not ride consistently as determined by the Head Instructor, the rider will be placed on Inactive Status.
  - One email will be sent to alert the rider that this is about to take place to give him/her chance to rectify the situation.
- A rider can also request to be placed on Inactive Status for medical or other reasons. This status change would be at the discretion of the Program Director and/or Head Instructor.
  - Rider paperwork would need to be updated prior to the rider being returned to Active Status.

### **Removal from Program**

- If a rider does not rectify the situation which resulted in their Inactive Status, one email will be sent to alert the rider that he/she is no longer an Active Rider in the program and that, if he/she wishes to return to TRI, he/she will need to apply to the Wait List.

The Program Director and/or Head Instructor have the discretion to make exceptions to this policy.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Inactive Riders do not take up spaces that could otherwise be filled by Wait List applicants. The emails are a courtesy to the riders to ensure that they are aware of the consequences of missing paperwork and/or sessions and are not surprised when they are removed from Active Status.

## **Weight Limit Policy**

The first priority of Therapeutic Riding, Inc. is to ensure the safety of our riders, volunteers, and horses. In order to achieve this goal, we have established the following weight limit policy in regards to riding in this program.

- Riders weighing 180 pounds or more may be evaluated to ensure the safety of their participation in TRI. Among the factors to be considered will be the availability of appropriate horses and volunteers.

The Program Director and/or Head Instructor have the discretion to make exceptions to this policy.

## **Important Things to Know**

1. Riders are required to wear long pants and appropriate shoes.
  - a. Even in hot weather riders will be more comfortable in long pants as their skin will be protected from being rubbed or pinched by saddle leathers.
  - b. Shoes should be closed toe and hard soled. Ideally, shoes should have a smooth sole with a small heel, but tennis shoes are acceptable if necessary.
  - c. Expect riders to get dirty and choose clothing accordingly.
  - d. The barn is often hotter or colder than the outside temperatures so we recommend that riders dress in layers
2. Riders are required to wear riding helmets in the arena, mounting area and stall barn.
  - a. TRI will provide helmets for each rider.
  - b. Riders may wear their own helmets if approved by the Instructor in advance. All helmets must be ASTM/SEI certified.
3. Riders should arrive 10 - 15 minutes before their class begins.
  - a. Riders should put on their helmets and wait quietly in the observation area until the Instructor is ready to begin mounting each of the riders.
4. Riders, siblings, friends, and parents are expected to follow all barn and safety rules.
5. Family members, guardians, caregivers, and friends must remain on the property during their rider's class time.
  - a. All family members, caregivers, and friends must remain in the observation area or front lobby during the riding lesson time unless otherwise directed by an Instructor.
  - b. Siblings and young guests must be closely supervised at all times.
6. Always notify TRI if you/your rider will be late or absent.
  - a. Call the TRI office at 734-677-0303 and leave a message for your Instructor.
    - i. Therapeutic Riding, Inc. is listed in the phone book and the number is also in your confirmation email.
  - b. Absences must be called in, NOT emailed, as Instructors do not have access to email and email is not checked as often as voice mail.
  - c. Volunteers are waiting to assist each rider. As a courtesy to them, we need to know in advance if a rider will be absent.
  - d. Riders arriving more than fifteen minutes late may be unable to ride during that class.
  - e. Three unexcused absences may result in a rider being changed to Inactive Status and may potentially result in a rider being removed from the program.
7. Classes are held during most inclement weather except in cases of tornado warnings or severe winter weather that negatively affects the road conditions.
  - a. We will make every effort to contact riders by email and/or telephone to inform them of a cancellation.
  - b. If you have any question as to whether classes will be held, please call the barn phone. If classes are cancelled, the outgoing message will be changed to indicate this.

- c. To ensure we can reach you during an emergency, please make sure we have up to date contact numbers for you at all times.
- 8. At times, unexpected events disrupt our schedule and cause classes to run late or be cancelled. We apologize in advance for any inconvenience this may cause you. We strive to have these incidents as infrequently as possible. We have built make up weeks into winter sessions to accommodate potential weather related cancellations.
- 9. The Instructors want each rider to have a positive experience. If you have any questions or wish to share information with your Instructor, please feel free to do so either before or after class.

## **Therapeutic Riding, Inc.'s Horses and Ponies**

TRI owns the horses and ponies used by the program. All have been selected for their quiet temperaments and have been trained to be comfortable working in the mounting lift area, around wheelchairs and other assistive devices, as well as with leaders and sidewalkers. However, no matter how calm the horses may seem, they may occasionally spook at sudden noises or movement or for reasons unknown. For this reason, it is imperative to follow all barn and safety rules.

The horses and ponies used in TRI classes are wonderful animals and they deserve the utmost respect for their tolerance of tight leg muscles, bouncing riders, and hands which may pull too much or too often. Any overt abuse toward them will not be tolerated. Any such incidents may result in removal from the horse and/or loss of Active Rider status.

### **WARNING**

Under the Michigan Equine Activity Liability Act, an equine professional is not liable for an injury to or the death of a participant in an equine activity resulting from an inherent risk of the equine activity.

## **Barn Rules and Safety Guidelines**

### **Barn Rules**

1. There is no smoking anywhere on the property – inside or outside.
2. Stay in the Observation Room or front lobby unless otherwise directed by an Instructor.
3. Only touch horses with permission and under supervision.
4. Do not feed horses unless directed and supervised by an Instructor. They are on specially supervised diets and extra food items could cause them to become ill.
5. Always use quiet voices and calm behavior while on the property.
6. Only riders, Instructors, and trained personnel are allowed on lifts and mounting blocks.
7. Stay away from fences and paddocks - all of these areas are surrounded by electric fences.
8. All children must be closely supervised and remain with an adult in the Observation Room or front lobby.
9. No dogs are allowed on the property or in vehicles parked on the property.
10. The TRI office phone may be used for emergency phone calls only.
11. If you have any questions about ANYTHING, please ask. There is no such thing as a stupid question!

### **Safety Guidelines**

1. Always walk around horses and in the barn. No running.
2. Always speak to a horse when approaching it and before touching it. Never approach any horse directly from the rear.
3. Pet a horse on its shoulder or neck, not on its face, nose, or mouth.
4. Always be quiet and calm around horses. They may become frightened by loud noises or sudden movements.
5. Control your temper when working with horses and never mistreat them. A horse will respond best when you are kind and gentle.
6. Wear appropriate clothing when working with a horse. Sturdy shoes or boots and long pants are required.

7. Keep your feet clear of the horse's feet. Do not kneel or squat around horse's feet. They outweigh you.
8. Never wrap a lead line around your hand or body. Hold lead line with two hands.
9. When riding or leading a horse, always maintain at least one horse's length between you and the horse in front of you.
10. No matter what you are doing, the safety of rider, volunteer, and horse is the main priority.

## **The Therapeutic Riding, Inc. Team Members**

In addition to our equine team members, TRI relies on the dedication of many different people to bring the joy of horseback riding to our participants.

There are many people critical to the success of Therapeutic Riding, Inc. (TRI) - from the volunteers who arrive early to groom the horses, to the sidewalkers and leaders who work with the riders in the arena, to our Board of Directors who work hard raising the funds to operate the program. Many "behind the scenes" hours are put in to ensure that each and every rider has a safe and progressive riding experience.

### **Director**

Works with the Board to address issues relating to finances and legal concerns.

### **Office Manager**

Responsible for the day to day business operations of the program. Handles all rider and volunteer paperwork.

### **Program Director/Head Instructor**

Supervises Instructors, volunteers, barn staff, and horses and overall operations of program.

### **Instructors**

All are Path, Intl., (The Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship, International) certified.

### **Barn Manager**

Responsible for the daily care and feeding of the TRI horses as well as the general maintenance and upkeep of the program's facilities.

### **Volunteer Coordinator**

Works with the Program Director to recruit and train new volunteers, schedule and supervise volunteers during classes, and coordinates special training sessions and other volunteer related events.

### **Leaders**

Volunteers with significant horse experience. They are trained in leading techniques appropriate to a therapeutic riding class.

### **Sidewalkers**

Assist riders during their riding lessons, following the directions provided by the Instructor.

### **Board of Directors**

Develops the program budget, establishes long-term goals and fund raising strategies, and works closely with the Program Director and Instructors to ensure the quality of our program. Board members are elected to two year terms.

### **4-H Agent – ex officio Board Member**

Serves as a liaison to the Michigan State University Proud Equestrian Program (PEP).

## **Therapeutic Riding Inc.'s Budget**

Rider fees only account for about 26% of the actual cost operating the program. The rest of the funds are raised through donations from individuals, corporations, and foundations, through grants, and through fund-raising events.

Here are some ways you can help support our program:

- Make a donation to one of our fundraising campaigns;
- Make a Memorial or Tribute donation to TRI;
- Investigate matching gift programs offered by your employer;
- Participate in our annual TRI-FECTA campaign;
- Adopt-A-Horse

If you have personal or professional connections with foundations, corporations, or individuals that might assist us in our fundraising efforts, please contact the TRI office at 734-677-0303

## **Emergency Procedures**

All persons should know the location of the following items:

- Telephones and listings of emergency numbers and directions to the barn
  - Telephones are in both offices.
  - Listings of emergency numbers and directions are located by the phones in both offices, in the Observation Room, on the Tack Room outer wall, and by the refrigerator in the front lobby.
- All exits from the stable and the arena are clearly marked with lighted signage.
- Fire extinguishers are located on the east stall barn wall across from the wash rack and in the toy storage area in the indoor arena.
- First Aid Kits (Human and Equine). Human first aid kit is kept in the indoor arena behind the white boards. Equine first aid kit is kept in the Tack Room on the shelf above the girths.
- Fuse box is located in the meter room.
- Hot and cold water can be obtained from all restrooms, in the Tack Room, in the laundry room, and from the hydrants in both wash racks. Cold water can be obtained at all other hydrants.

## **General Emergency Procedures**

The most important things to remember in any emergency are to remain calm and to help the riders remain calm and feel safe.

**In all emergencies, the Instructor is responsible for making decisions on actions to be taken and for designating persons to assist them.**

If an emergency of any kind (e.g. illness, injury, fall, seizure, storms, or fire) should occur, please listen carefully to the Instructor's directions. All riding will STOP until the Instructor gives further directions. No-one, including parents, will be permitted to enter the arena during an emergency unless authorized by the Instructor. There should be no excessive talking or noise. Sidewalkers will position themselves to protect and support their riders and will explain the situation calmly and quietly. Leaders will position themselves in front of their horse and maintain control of it at all times.

If the arena or stable must be evacuated for an emergency situation, all persons should meet on the lawn on the east side of the barn, keeping roads and parking areas clear for emergency vehicles.

All riders must be signed in in the attendance book at the front door - either by themselves, their parents or assistants - to allow for a head count during emergencies.

If any person is injured at Therapeutic Riding, Inc. an incident form will be completed at the time of the injury. If this is not possible, one will be completed as soon as possible thereafter. Even seemingly minor injuries must be reported and documented.

### Loss of Electricity

In the event that the loss of power results in the loss of lights in the arena, riders will be dismounted and returned to the Observation Room. Emergency lighting exists throughout the building and we have a generator that comes on automatically.

### Inclement Weather

Class may not be held during inclement weather including thunderstorms, lightning and high winds. A tornado, hail storm or severe thunderstorm warning, lightning, rain or strong winds, or power outages are all conditions that may warrant canceling classes. We will make every effort to contact you if classes are canceled. **Please make sure that we always have accurate and up-to-date contact information for you.**

The outgoing message on the barn voice mail at 734-677-0303 will be changed to indicate that classes have been cancelled.

If weather conditions deteriorate while classes are in progress and include any of the conditions listed above, classes may be dismissed and subsequent classes may be canceled. Periods of severe weather may cause classes to be temporarily suspended while waiting to see if conditions improve. If classes are canceled, all riders will be returned to their parents or caregivers. Therefore, it is crucial that these persons remain on the premises at all times.

### Fire

In case of fire, all persons would proceed quietly and calmly to the nearest exit. Any person holding a horse would take that horse out of the barn if possible and release them into the nearest paddock. The Instructor will designate an individual to call 911 and report the fire. Barn staff or persons designated by the Instructor will release any remaining horses to a paddock if possible. Some horses may become so panicked that it may not be possible to lead them safely and they must remain in their stalls or in the arena.

The barn is to remain evacuated until given the "all clear" by emergency personnel.

### Medical Emergency

Therapeutic Riding Inc.'s Instructors are all certified in CPR and First Aid. The Instructor will designate individuals to get the first aid kit and/or call 911 if needed. There is a sign next to both office phones, in the Observation Room, on the Tack Room outer wall, and by the refrigerator in the front lobby with the barn address and directions to get here so that emergency personnel can locate us. Do not hang up the phone until the 911 operator tells you to do so. Medical forms for all riders, volunteers, and staff are kept in the Program Office.

The equine first aid kit is located in the Tack Room. The human first aid kit is located in the indoor arena. Latex gloves are kept inside the first aid kits. Everyone should be aware that there is a risk of transmission of disease whenever anyone comes into contact with human bodily fluids. If you are assisting during an injury where such exposure is possible, please wear gloves.

### Arena Accident

If an accident occurs during class, all leaders must take their horses to the opposite end of the arena and await further directions from the Instructor. Some horses are calm at the halt; others do better walking quietly around.

Sidewalkers will remain in position with their rider until otherwise instructed. Sidewalkers will place an arm over the rider's thigh to secure them. If necessary, the Instructor will ask sidewalkers to perform an emergency dismount.

### Emergency Dismount

If an emergency dismount is needed, the sidewalker to the inside of the arena will notify the rider that he/she is going to dismount. That sidewalker will wrap an arm around the rider's waist and the rider will be asked to remove his/her feet from the stirrups (with assistance from sidewalker on the other side as needed). When the rider's feet are clear, he/she will be taken off the horse and will remain with the sidewalkers until directions are received from the Instructor. This procedure has been taught to volunteers during their orientation. If necessary, the Instructor will designate someone to call emergency medical services. The Instructor will notify all people if class can continue or if all riders must dismount and leave the arena.