



Equestrian Volunteer Handbook

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EAGLE MOUNT GREAT FALLS MISSION

Our Mission

Eagle Mount Great Falls provides therapeutic and recreational activities for children, adults and veterans with physical, developmental, mental and/or behavioral challenges, striving to improve the quality of life for them and their families.

Founded by William S. Macfadden (a.k.a. Ol'Bill), Eagle Mount Great Falls is a non-profit organization that has been serving Great Falls, MT and surrounding communities since November of 1990. We offer exciting programs that allow infants, youth, adults, veterans, and seniors with challenges (who we call our “participants”) to explore recreation and take on new adventures based on their abilities, not their disabilities. Parents can watch their children grow socially, emotionally, and physically and are given an opportunity to develop a personal support network with each other.

Businesses and individuals provide their support through the use of their time, talents, facilities, equipment and donations. Eagle Mount Great Falls does not receive government funding and is truly blessed by local support!

Volunteers

We need you! We rely heavily on volunteers and the local community to run our programs. Each program provides a fun way to gain volunteer experience. Volunteers will receive specialized training, develop great friendships, get some exercise, and share the love of recreational activities with a child or adult while helping them overcome challenges. There is no cost but your time, effort, and desire to work with children or adults with disabilities. The rewards of everyone involved are immeasurable!

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LOCATIONS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Locations

Eagle Mount Equestrian Center
4792 13th St So

Eagle Mount Activity Center
1065 Franklin Ave

Mailing Address

P.O. Box 2866
Great Falls, MT 59403

Phone Numbers

Office: 406-454-1449
Equestrian Center: 406-771-4829
Cell: 406-403-9968

EQUESTRIAN PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

Email: emgfequestrian@gmail.com

Arena Phone: 771-4829. Office Phone: 454-1449. Cell Phone: 403-9968

Remind App – ask instructor for current remind code.

EQUESTRIAN PROGRAM HISTORY

The equestrian program became a part of Eagle Mount the summer of 1992. The program was primarily a recreational program with therapeutic goals. Since then, the size and scope of the program has dramatically increased to many different activities.

The horsemanship programs focus primarily on teaching individuals with disabilities how to ride a horse. This riding helps the individual with disabilities by improving balance, posture and coordination and aids the person psychologically by improving their self-confidence and motivation. The participant is able to achieve goals such as being independent and mobile. Further benefits have been experienced that can be used at home, school and other social settings.

Participants' are given an evaluation by the riding instructor that will assist in assigning them to the appropriate class. Some individuals may be unable to ride due to weight or other contraindicated disability. The instructor will develop special goals for each person based on their abilities.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteers must be 16 years or older assist in riding classes. Volunteers younger than 16 years of age will be evaluated on an individual basis and can assist in camps and other unmounted activities.

Equestrian Volunteer Opportunities

Not all the equestrian opportunities listed below are appropriate for all volunteers, ages, and skills. Volunteers will be assessed on an individual basis for appropriateness in the opportunities available to them.

You are a valued TEAM member! Without you, our participants wouldn't be able to thrive in the unique partnership with horses.

Sidewalkers: The primary responsibility of a sidewalker is to ensure the safety of the rider. This is usually done by walking beside the horse's girth with one arm poised at the rider's thigh or the heel. The degree of assistance from the sidewalker will depend on the balance of the rider. Sidewalkers, who accompany poorly balanced riders, must be a good fit with the height of the horse and be in good physical condition. Prior horse knowledge is not necessary. (Sidewalkers must be able to walk briskly beside a horse for an average of 30 minutes and jog intermittently during the lesson).

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Horse Leaders: The main responsibility of the leader is to be in charge of the horse during grooming and the lesson. Most riders who have leaders are unable to fully control their horses. It is the leader who must help in guiding, stopping and starting without making the rider feel that they are simply a passenger. The rider must be allowed to do as much as possible with the leader helping only when necessary. Horse leaders need to be competent in managing horses in a variety of situations. Eagle Mount provides additional training to horse leaders to ensure this competency. (Leaders must be able to walk at a fast pace for an average of 30 minutes and jog intermittently during the lesson).

Arena Workers/Groups: Provides general assistance. Scoop poop, clean waterers, and many other basic arena chores as needed. There may also be big clean-up or building projects for any groups interested.

General Maintenance: General maintenance may include mowing lawns and other property maintenance/clean-up work. There is also always a need for mechanical, electrical and equipment maintenance.

VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Eagle Mount Great Falls staffs Certified Riding Instructors for the Disabled to teach mounted riding classes. Mounted riding classes must be taught by a Certified Riding Instructor or must be directly supervised by a Certified Riding Instructor if a volunteer is assisting in instruction.

Eagle Mount Great Falls provides volunteer opportunities at its riding center in many different forms, including limited opportunities to assist in instruction. Eagle Mount Great Falls does not certify riding instructors. The staff certified instructors may offer mentorship to those volunteers interested in becoming an instructor but they are under no obligation and cannot make any guarantees regarding the volunteers' abilities to be certified.

Eagle Mount Great Falls Riding Center Volunteer Training – this training demonstrates and practices our policies, procedures, how the arena and classes are conducted and what volunteer opportunities are available. This is a free training provided to all volunteers to assist with safety and risk management within the programs.

EMPLOYMENT

Volunteering for Eagle Mount is NOT employment. Job openings (if any) are posted on the Eagle Mount website or within our main office. The Executive Director is the only one authorized to hire and/or fire employees of Eagle Mount. If you have questions or concerns regarding employment or a possible opening within the company, you must contact the Executive Director directly.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Safety is the primary concern in all Eagle Mount Great Falls activities. Even with well trained volunteers, accidents may occur. If an incident should happen, big or small, please report it immediately to an Eagle Mount Great Falls staff person and complete appropriate incident reports.

Eagle Mount Great Falls has a zero-tolerance policy on the use of drugs and alcohol during volunteer hours. If you are suspected of being under the influence you will be asked to leave immediately.

It is important to be informed about the participant's disability and physical limitations. Each volunteer will be provided with the appropriate history and medical concerns relating to the participant she/he is working with. Remember this is confidential information.

Participants need to manage their own bowel and bladder functions. Volunteers should not assist in bathroom needs, except to escort participants to restroom. Volunteers should not be alone with participants in the bathroom.

Set personal boundaries. It is strongly discouraged to add any participant or participant family on any social media platform. Do not give out your personal information such as cell phone number, email, home address, etc.

Do not take or post any pictures without permission from Eagle Mount staff.

Appropriate physical contact between participants and volunteers and staff is inevitable and guidelines to reduce the potential for misconduct must be followed.

- Physical contact should only take place in public where there is no potential for, or actual, physical or sexual intimacies during the physical contact.
- Participant is to receive verbal notice of the contact about to take place – ask before physically assisting.
- Keeping a participant safe may include physical contact. In emergencies, make participant aware they may be in harm's way and provide appropriate assistance if needed.
- Physical contact is only for the benefit of the participants need in program, not to meet any type of emotional or other need of an adult.
 - Appropriate public expressions of celebration or consolations are high-fives and fist bumps, side hugs, jump-arounds and pats on the back.
 - Prohibited forms of contact, which shall be reported immediately to Eagle Mount staff.

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- Massages or rubdowns
- Lingering or repeated embraces of participants that go beyond the criteria set forth for acceptable physical contact.
- Slapping, hitting, punching, kicking or any other physical contact during any aspect of participation.
- Playful, yet inappropriate contact that is not part of regular participation.
- Continued physical contact that makes a participant or volunteer uncomfortable, whether expressed or not.
- Any other contact that would result in child abuse, sexual misconduct, emotional or physical misconduct-including stalking, bullying, hazing and harassment, aiding and abetting, misconduct relating to reporting or any other deemed inappropriate misconduct.

GENERAL GUIDELINES WHILE VOLUNTEERING

- Please dress neatly in appropriate conservative attire with boots or hard toe/soled shoes. Unless it is extremely hot, please wear long pants. Avoid loose clothing and jewelry, as they can be obstructive and cause injury.
- Any individual mounted on horse, whether staff, volunteer or participant, **MUST** wear a helmet.
- Be on time! Arrive 15-30 minutes (depending on what you are assigned to do) before the scheduled session.
- Cell phones are not allowed in the arena. If you are expecting an important call, please leave your phone with the program director or volunteer not participating in the session. Answering a call takes your attention away from your most important job—the safety of our participants and horses.
- No pets/animals allowed in the arena during classes.
- Don't forget to sign in and out. This is how we track hours for statistics.
- We depend on you to be here. If you cannot come, please let us know ahead of time so that we can arrange for a substitute. We appreciate your consideration.
- We treat our horses with respect. All movements and actions must be born from that in a gentle manner.
- We treat our students with respect. Talk to them appropriately for their age and never yell. Be patient. The instructor will give you any extra information/direction when working with a specific participant.
- Keep what happens at Eagle Mount confidential. Do not discuss riders outside of Eagle Mount.

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EQUESTRIAN CENTER RULES

- Parents/guardians are responsible for their own children! Children under 18 must be supervised and adhere to the rules and policies at all times. Eagle Mount is not responsible for children not participating in the programs.
- No one is permitted on the property unless a staff member is on the premises or has written permission.
- No unauthorized person is permitted in restricted or hazardous areas that are posted as such. All fenced and gated areas are considered restricted whether posted or not. Pastures containing horses are considered restricted.
- No unauthorized feeding of any of the horses or any other center animals.
- No running and screaming.
- No outside animals allowed on the property without written permission. No outside animals allowed in area of classes being taught.
- Abusive, threatening or violent behavior will not be tolerated from anyone for any reason!
- Absolutely NO smoking, alcohol, or drugs on Eagle Mount property.
- Report accidents, injuries or hazardous conditions to a staff member immediately.
- Eagle Mount has the right to refuse services or help to or from anyone for any reason.

EAGLE MOUNT CONDUCT & CORE VALUES

The staff and volunteers at Eagle Mount support a positive and caring atmosphere to reinforce good behavior. Our staff and volunteers will promote and model positive behavior with clear guidelines and expectation. Inappropriate behavior by any individual in the Eagle Mount programs will be attended to in a sensitive manner and the individual will be redirected towards a positive behavior. If the individual does not adhere to the positive behavior, the following actions will occur.

1. Verbal warning
2. Written warning and call to parent if a minor.
3. Termination from program.

* If there is a concern please contact: 1) Program Instructor 2) Program Coordinator 3) Executive Director or Coordinator of Operations

Code of Conduct

- To ensure the quality of Eagle Mount programs and public safety, we ask that all participants, staff, instructors, volunteers, parents, and spectators to abide by this Code of Conduct.
- All persons shall act with respect towards other persons, their privacy and safety.
- Confidentiality of all information obtained on participants or volunteers is strictly enforced.
- Physical or verbal abuse of any kind will not be tolerated.
- Program rules and regulations shall be followed at all times.
- All persons shall treat property and equipment with respect.

Core Values

Staff, volunteers, and participants will adhere to the following Core Values for their time at Eagle Mount Programs.

RESPECT: Always be respectful of each other's space. Be sensitive, caring and aware of each other's needs, and respect their space. If there are concerns, please refrain from gossip or rumors – contact the appropriate staff members: 1) Program Instructor 2) Program Coordinator 3) Executive Director or Coordinator of Operations

APPRECIATION: During competition, winners will be gracious while understanding and appreciating their winning was due to skills learned. They will be supportive of all other participants on the team to reach the same level.

ACCEPTANCE: Diversity of all types of participants will be recognized and accepted. Diversity is what makes programs fun and fulfilling.

THOUGHTFULNESS: Be thoughtful, kind, and caring of others.

ACCOUNTABILITY: Take responsibility for your actions, learn from your mistakes and be a positive model for others.

EMERGENCY PLAN

In the event any emergency occurs the most important thing to remember is to stay calm. Follow the directions of the instructor. A calm and confident tone of voice and reassuring body language will give the rider and horse confidence.

MOUNTED EMERGENCY PLAN

- All horses will be halted.
- All Horse Leaders will position themselves in front of the horse. The horse leaders are responsible ONLY for the horse, not the rider.
- All sidewalkers will stabilize their riders (arm over leg support). The sidewalkers are responsible ONLY for the rider, not the horse.
- The instructor will supervise the dismounting, either verbally or personally.
- In the event that a rider must be removed from the horse quickly, as in a seizure or spooked horse, the sidewalker on the left is responsible for dismounting the rider.
- If circumstances call for the arena to be evacuated, the participant will be escorted out by the sidewalkers to the assigned place outside the arena next to the mailbox. The horses will be removed by their leaders to an assigned place.
- The instructor will determine if medical personnel are required and will request assistance in contacting specific personnel.

UN-MOUNTED EMERGENCY PLAN

- All horses will be halted
- Any tied horse will be removed by their leader to the assigned place. Any horse being led by a participant will be switched with a volunteer so that the Instructor or who the instructor deems can escort the participant to the safe place outside the arena.
- Follow the instructor's directions.
- If circumstances call for the arena to be evacuated, the participant will be escorted out by their sidewalkers to the assigned place outside the arena next to the mailbox. The horses will be removed by their leaders to an assigned place.

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- The instructor will determine if medical personnel are required and will request assistance in contacting specific personnel.
- All personnel and center guests not in the arena will remain in the waiting area unless instructed otherwise by Instructor/Director in charge of the emergency. **DO NOT ENTER THE ARENA UNLESS INSTRUCTED.**

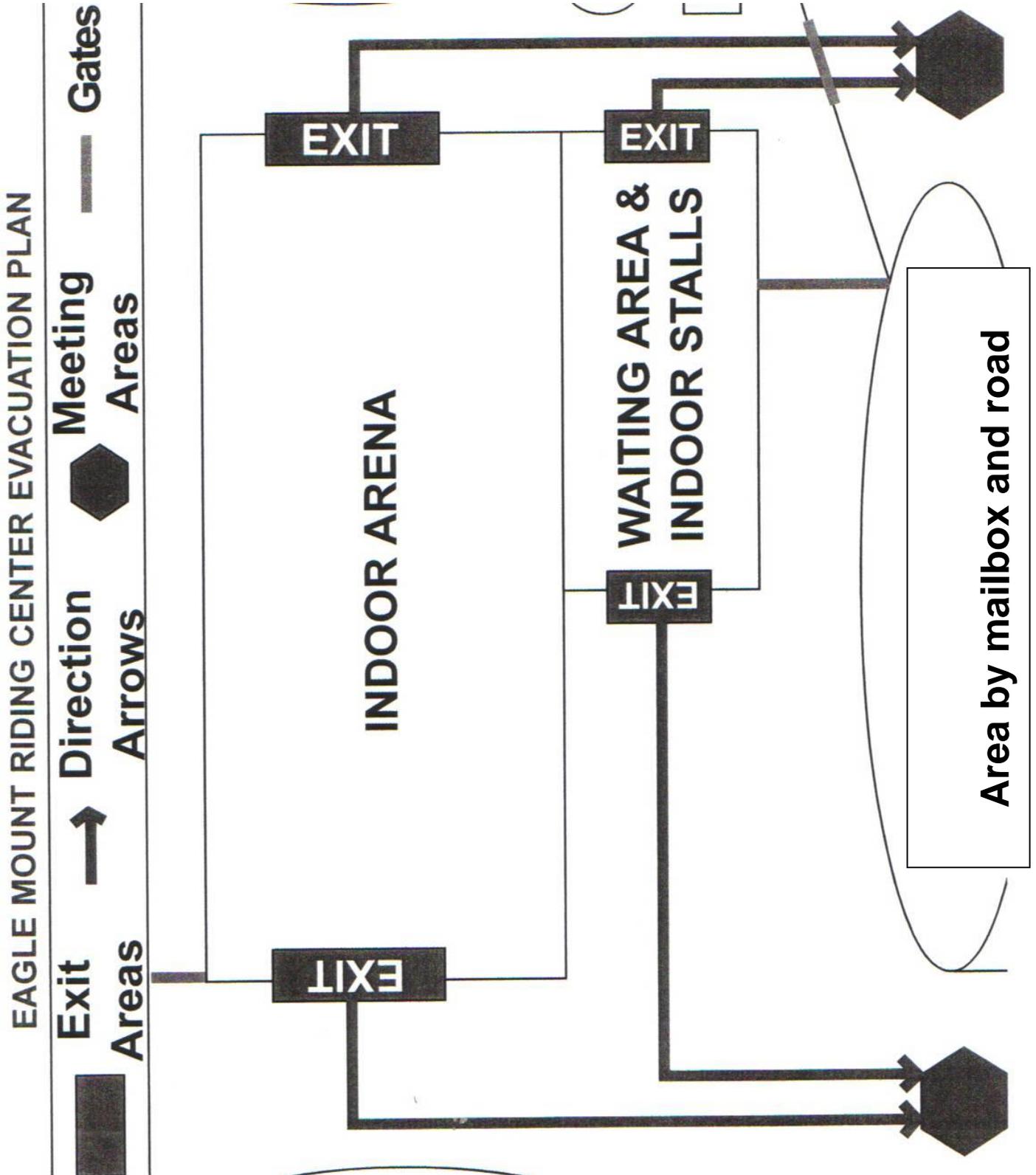
Emergencies include, but not limited to: Loose horse, fire, participant seizure, extreme weather, acute horse injury.

TRAINS

Trains pass by the arena many times and have the potential to startle the riders. Although the Eagle Mount horses are trained and accustomed to the trains, the class will be stopped for further instructions from the instructor.

Please See Emergency Evacuation Plan Map

EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLAN MAP



SAFETY IN THE ARENA

Participants are only allowed in the arena as part of their supervised session. The instructor or volunteer for that session will retrieve the participant from the waiting area and accompany them into the arena. Participant must be wearing a helmet if they are in a riding class.

The gates **MUST** be closed at all times. Once a class is in session, no one is allowed in or out unless in an emergency or has permission from the Instructor.

During a class, everyone in the arena needs to be able to hear the instructors' instruction. There are specific cues for each of the volunteers as well as the need for everyone to be able to hear in an emergency situation.

Riding Area

- If there are multiple horses in a class, observe the 2 horse length rule - leave at least two horse lengths between you and the next horse/rider. If there is a need to stop your horse, move to the middle and leave the rail open.

Grooming & Mounting Area

- With multiple horses being tied in the grooming area, please remember the **6 foot danger zone rule**: within 6 feet a horse can kick, buck, cow kick (kick to the side), bite or rear.
- Warn a horse that you are approaching. Approach from the side and use your voice and a gentle touch.
- NEVER walk under a horse's neck.
- NEVER walk under a horse.
- Never stand directly in front of a horse except to hold the horse for a rider. Never stand behind a horse for any reason.
- Hand feeding and putting your hands to the horse's mouth is an invitation to have your fingers bitten. Any smell on your hand that is inviting (any foods or grains) to the horse and he will bite – he doesn't know you don't have food, it smells good. **KEEP YOUR HANDS AWAY FROM THE HORSES MOUTH.**
- Don't yell, run, or make sudden movements near a horse. Be slow and gentle.
- Never tie a horse to the arena gate, rail or fence. Always use the tie hooks.
- Always tie a horse with his lead rope and halter. NEVER tie a horse with reins.
- Always lead a horse by his lead rope. NEVER lead a horse by his reins.
- If a tied horse rears, pulls back, or is highly agitated in any way, **STAY AWAY** and let the instructor deal with the horse. A panicked horse is very dangerous.

OTHER SAFETY PROTOCOLS

Mounting

- Never mount a tied horse. If the horse pulls back, the rider and the horse could be injured. Never mount next to a fence, car, another horse, or any solid object that the rider could be thrown into.
- Always mount from the ramp or block.
- Horse leaders will first let the instructor do a safety check on the tack before entering the ramp. The instructor will check that the girth for tightness, saddle, pads, blankets and bridle are placed properly on the horse, the stirrups are the correct length and are down, and that the rider has his/her helmet on securely.
- Instructor and participant will move to the ramp or block for mounting. Instructor will place sidewalkers where they want them (volunteers may be asked to assist on the opposite side of the horse).
- Horse leader will lead the horse into the ramp or next to the block.
- All riders must be mounted by the Lead Instructor or under the instructor's supervision.
- When assisting at the ramp, never stand on the ground or between the two blocks.
- When mounting from the block, a volunteer needs to be on the off-side of the horse to put weight into the stirrup and counterbalance the rider.
- After the rider is mounted, the horse will pace forward under the cue of the Horse Leader, halt and be rechecked by the instructor for safety.

Tacking and Untacking

- Observe the Safety in the Arena Rules – Grooming and Mounting Area.
- Always let the horse see and smell the tack that will be utilized for his class.
- Never throw tack on. Never “whip the saddle with loose stirrups” across the horses back.
- Always build a foundation, one piece of tack at a time.
- When cinching, do so in stages. Cinch, walk around and check the other side for alignment, cinch, walk and check the front for alignment, and then cinch again. Always work gently.
- If you are asked to use a bridle (rare in most classes), let the instructor tack them unless directed otherwise.
- When untacking, apply the same rules – gentle and work in stages.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who do I call if I cannot make it?

If you know ahead of time that you cannot come to a schedule class, call our Equestrian Center message phone at 771-4829 or send us a text through the Remind App ASAP. Remember you are very important to the equestrian team. We are unable to hold classes without our volunteers and we need as much notice as possible to find substitutes. Thank you for understanding.

Who do I call to find out if classes are cancelled for weather or holidays?

If it is a weather or non-planned cancellation, the coordinator or instructor will try and reach you. If you do not have voice mail - you may want to call and check in before coming out. Holidays are pre-scheduled and planned.

Who are the Eagle Mount Horses?

You will meet the horses personally during a tour and training. You will get to learn about each of them as you go through the program. Please feel free to ask questions!

How do I sign-in?

The volunteer station with the sign in book and other volunteer information is to your left when you walk through the door! Find the page with your name on it and remember to record your hours before you leave!

What do I do in an emergency?

You follow the plans outlined in the manual, but basically, you follow the directions of the Instructor.

Where is the phone?

One located inside the green room.

Where is the First Aid Cabinet?

It is located in our Vet Room on shelf.

Where is the fire extinguisher?

There are fire extinguishers placed on posts along the stall alleyway. One is available in the waiting area and one inside the arena.

Where can I get more information about Eagle Mount?

Go to our website www.eaglemount.net

INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE DISABILITIES

Many people may feel uncomfortable interacting with a person who has a disability. They may feel uncertain about how to act or what to say or they may have made assumptions about people with disabilities due to misinformation or lack of information. The suggestions below are meant to help you feel more comfortable in your interactions with our participants.

Interaction Guidelines

- Be yourself. Use your normal voice and give support, but try not to over praise.
- Don't exaggerate the accomplishments of participants.
- 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.
- If you need to physically assist a participant, ask the instructor first to ensure proper contact with participant.
- Excessive hugging or kissing is not appropriate.
- Do not focus on a disability unless it is crucial to the matter on hand.
- Do not speak for persons with disabilities if they are capable of speaking for themselves.
- 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 when working with people with mental retardation.
- Use words and images that create a positive view of people with disabilities.
- Follow appropriate contact guidelines stated on page 5 of this handbook.
- ASK questions! Each participant you work with will be different. Learn from the instructor!
- Relax. Enjoy yourself and have fun!

GLOSSARY OF DISABILITIES

The following are brief, non-medical descriptions of some disabilities and conditions of participants one might encounter in a therapeutic riding setting. This is not intended as a comprehensive explanation of a specific disability. Rather, it is a general overview with an explanation of how therapeutic riding can be beneficial.

Arthritis

Inflammatory disease of the joints.

Types: Osteo, rheumatoid and juvenile rheumatoid.

Characteristics: Pain, lack of mobility, deformity, loss of strength.

Benefits (of therapeutic riding): Gentle rhythmic movement to promote joint mobility and relieve pain.

Autism

A self-centered mental state from which reality often tends to be excluded.

Characteristics: Unresponsiveness to the presence of others; withdrawal from physical contact; severely delayed and disordered language; self-stimulating behaviors; unusual or special fears; insensitivity to pain; unawareness of real dangers; hyperactive; passive; unusual behaviors such as smelling/tasting/licking or mouthing all objects; ritualistic behaviors; developmentally delayed; unusual response to sounds; clumsiness; social withdrawal; resistance to change.

Benefits: Interactions in a group setting stimulates interest away from self and toward others and the horses. Postural and verbal stimulation.

Cerebral Palsy

Brain damage occurring before, at, or shortly after birth. It is a non-progressive motor disorder.

Types and Characteristics:

Spastic – hyper tonicity 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: 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.

Cerebral Vascular Accident (CVA or Stroke)

Hemorrhage in brain, which causes varying degrees of functional impairment.

Characteristics: Flaccid or spastic paralysis of arm and leg on same side of body. May cause mental impairment, impair speech, sight, balance, coordination and strength.

Benefits: Promotes symmetry, stimulates balance, posture, motor planning, speech and socialization.

Developmental Disabilities (DD)

A general term applied to children functioning two or more years below grade level.

Characteristics: Varied, but can include slow physical, motor and social development.

Benefits: Provides arena for success, opportunity for sport and recreation, stimulates body awareness.

Down Syndrome

Condition in which a person is born with an extra chromosome, resulting in mental retardation and developmental delay.

Characteristics: Broad flat face, slanted eyes, neck and hand are often broad and short. Usually Hypotonic, have hyper mobile joints and tend to be short and slightly overweight. Prone to respiratory infections.

Benefits: Riding improves expressive and receptive language skills, gross and fine motor skills, balance, muscle tone, and coordination.

Emotional Disabilities

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 and schizophrenia may be exhibited.

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

Epilepsy

Abnormal electrical activity of the brain marked by seizures with altered consciousness.

Types and Characteristics:

Petit Mal: Brief loss of consciousness with loss of postural tone. May have jerky movements, blank expression.

Grand Mal: Loss of consciousness and postural control. Usually preceded by an aura.

(Note: an active seizure disorder is a contraindication for horseback riding.)

Hearing Impairment

Congenital or acquired hearing loss varying from mild to profound.

Characteristics: Communication difficulties – may use lip reading, finger spelling or sign language. Often phase out and have attention deficits.

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

Learning Disabilities (LD)

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

Mental Retardation (MD)

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: Stimulates group activity skills, coordination, balance, posture, gross and fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination. Provides a structured learning environment.

Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

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: Maintains and strengthens weak muscles and provides opportunities for emotional therapy.

Associated Problems: Visual impairment, emotional lability, and impaired bowel and bladder function.

Muscular Dystrophy (MD)

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

Associated Problems: Lordosis, respiratory infection.

Polio

Infectious viral disease.

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

Benefits: Strengthens non-paralyzed muscles, stimulates posture.

Scoliosis

Lateral curve of the spine with C or S curve with rotary component.

Characteristics: Postural asymmetry. May wear scoliosis jacket or have had stabilization surgery.

Benefits: Stimulates postural symmetry. Strengthens trunk muscles.

Spina Bifida

Congenital failure of vertebral arch closure with resultant damage to spinal cord.

Characteristics: Varying degrees of paralysis of the lower limbs coupled with sensory loss.

Benefits: Stimulates posture and balance, improves muscle strength and self-image.

Associated Problems: Hydrocephalus, incontinence, urinary tract infection, lordosis, scoliosis, and hip dislocations.

Spinal Cord Injury (SCI)

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

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

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

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

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

Visual Impairment

Moderate to total loss of sight.

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

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