



VOLUNTEER MANUAL

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GENERAL INFORMATION & ABOUT US

OUR MISSION

The mission of Saddle Up! is to provide children and youth with disabilities the opportunity to grow and develop through therapeutic, educational, and recreational activities with horses.

ADDRESS: 1549 Old Hillsboro Rd.
Franklin, TN 37069

PHONE: (615) 794-1150 x290 Lesson Hotline
FAX: (615) 794-7973

WEBSITE: www.saddleupnashville.org

*The Lesson Hotline (x290) is reserved for messages regarding tardiness or absences. If you (volunteer) are going to be absent, please email us at attendance@saddleupnashville.org

VOLUNTEER SERVICES STAFF:

Volunteer Services Director	Sally Stonage	x230
Volunteer Services Coordinator	Katherine Shaoul	x230

ABOUT OUR STAFF

- All Saddle Up! Instructors are required to hold a PATH International Professional Certification in their program field.
- All Saddle Up! Therapists are required to attend trainings through the American Hippotherapy Association.

ABOUT OUR HORSES

- All horses are required to go through a trial period in order for us to assess whether or not they are appropriate for our program.
- Before entering the program, they must pass their Instructor/Therapist evaluations with more than an 80% pass rate.
- Each horse has a nutrition, conditioning, and training plan in order to maintain optimal health.

ABOUT PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THERAPEUTIC HORSEMANSHIP (PATH) INTERNATIONAL:

- PATH International is the credentialing organization for accrediting centers and certifying instructors and equine specialists.
- Saddle Up! is a PATH International Premier Accredited Center.
- Saddle Up! follows the PATH International Precautions and Contraindications for determining eligibility for our programs.
- Professional certifications through PATH International provide staff with disability education and horsemanship training specific to the program.

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR...

- History of the organization
- Program details and schedule
- Upcoming events
- Current list of staff
- Current list of Board of Directors
- Current list of horses and their biographies
- Other ways YOU can support Saddle Up!



COMMON SPECIAL NEEDS THAT SADDLE UP! SERVES

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ALSO KNOWN AS AUTISM)

A developmental disorder of variable severity that is characterized by difficulties in social interaction/communication and by restricted or repetitive patterns of thought and behavior.

SENSORY PROCESSING DISORDER

A condition in which the brain has trouble receiving and responding to information that comes in through the senses.

DOWN SYNDROME

A congenital disorder arising from a chromosome defect, causing intellectual impairment and physical abnormalities, including short stature and a broad facial profile.

CEREBRAL PALSY

A condition marked by impaired muscle coordination (spastic paralysis) and/or other disabilities, typically caused by damage to the brain before or at birth.

ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)

Any range of behavioral disorders occurring primarily in children, including such symptoms as poor concentration, hyperactivity, and impulsivity.

ANXIETY

A nervous disorder characterized by a state of excessive uneasiness and apprehension, typically with compulsive behavior or panic attacks.

MULTIPLE DIAGNOSES

A term for participants who have more than one diagnosis (e.g. Autism and Down Syndrome).

HOW CAN YOU HELP THE PARTICIPANT AS A VOLUNTEER?

- Prior to the lesson, find out what you need to know about the participant from the Instructor/Therapist.
 - Support needed (e.g. type of sidewalker hold)
 - Medical concerns to be aware of
 - Communication skills
- Follow the instructions given by the Instructor/Therapist throughout the program.
- Promote independence, don't over-help. It is okay to provide an appropriate level of challenge for our participants.
- Stay focused on the participant.
- Be aware of the participant's safety, and help keep them safe.
- Share concerns with the Instructor/Therapist, who is your boss.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Saddle Up! is a PATH International Premier Accredited Center which provides high quality services in the field of equine assisted services. Based on your child's needs and interests, we can provide quality services through Adaptive Riding, Therapy Services, Equine Assisted Learning, Fun on the Farm, Saddle Up! Equestrian Club, Interactive Vaulting, and/or Alumni Transitions. To find out more information about our services and how to get your child involved, please review the information below. More details about each program are available on our website at www.saddleupnashville.org.

Saddle Up! understands financial concerns some of our families may experience, and we will do all we can to assist. Our goal is to allow the families to focus on the health and well-being of their child. Please let a staff member know if you would like information on our Financial Aid program.

WHY THE HORSE?

Nothing can compare to the power of the horse. The auto industry has put "horsepower" into their engines for decades, but there is a "horse power" beyond strength and speed that only a real horse can provide. We partner with our herd to offer children and youth with disabilities a unique environment to grow and develop. Our horses provide movement, support, learning opportunities, strength, stability, companionship, and much more to participants in all of our different programs. To see the horses in action and the amazing power they have to offer, feel free to schedule a visit for you and your family.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

Saddle Up! serves children and youth with disabilities between the ages of 2 and 26 years-old. Additional eligibility requirements differ depending on the program, so please visit our website for more information. Saddle Up! follows the PATH International Precautions and Contraindications for participant eligibility in all of our programs.

ADAPTIVE RIDING

Saddle Up!'s Adaptive Riding (AR) program is an equine-assisted service in which participants work on their mounted and unmounted horsemanship skills. Our PATH International Certified Instructors adapt the lesson for the purpose of contributing positively to the cognitive, physical, emotional, and social well-being of children with disabilities. Secondary benefits that have been observed by Saddle Up! families include improvements in balance, endurance, coordination, communication, speech, attention, and much more. Our Adaptive Riding program serves children with disabilities from the age of 4 through their 19th birthday.

THERAPY SERVICES

Saddle Up!'s Therapy Services (TS) offers physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech-language therapy that incorporates equine movement as a treatment strategy. Our therapists skillfully direct the movement of the horse to challenge and engage the client's neuromuscular and sensorimotor systems to address the client's challenges, such as deficits in balance, endurance, coordination, communication, speech, and attention. Therapy Services treats clients with disabilities as young as 2 years-old.

EQUINE-ASSISTED LEARNING

Saddle Up!'s Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL) program is an experiential learning approach which involves students interacting with horses to build self-confidence, improve social skills, and reinforce academic skills. Using the barn as a dynamic classroom, students also get to participate in arts, crafts, games, and discovery. This program is designed for students in Kindergarten through 12th grade with learning and/or social differences.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW CONT.

EQUESTRIAN CLUB

The Saddle Up! Equestrian Club (SUEC) is comprised of riders who have excelled through the Adaptive Riding program and are working on mastering their horsemanship skills. Each SUEC meeting gives riders the opportunity to participate in class work, barn work, riding, and horse care. Riders are children with disabilities who have achieved Level #4 in RIDES® through our Adaptive Riding program and show continued interest in excelling their horsemanship skills.

INTERACTIVE VAULTING

Saddle Up!'s Interactive Vaulting (IV) program is an equine-assisted service in which participants perform movements on and around the horse, while the horse is being lunged in a circle. During a lesson, our PATH International Certified Vaulting Instructor directs vaulters to interact with each other and their horse in many different ways in order to foster teamwork and independence, teach respect for the horse, build confidence, and encourage social interaction. Our Interactive Vaulting program serves children and youth with disabilities from the age of 6 through their 19th birthday.

ALUMNI TRANSITIONS

Saddle Up!'s Alumni Transitions (AT) program is for Saddle Up! Graduates. They will continue their Adaptive Riding education and combine it with vocational and life skills to enhance their quality of life and community impact. During a lesson, our PATH International Certified Instructor will lead Graduates in a 1.5 hour lesson that includes learning activities, riding, and vocational skills. Our Alumni Transitions program serves youth with disabilities from the age of 19 through their 26th birthday.

FUN ON THE FARM

Fun on the Farm is a summer only, equine-assisted learning program in which participants get to come out to Saddle Up! for a week and discover the farm from our herd's point of view. Activities such as nature hikes, horse handling, crafts, water play, and riding lessons will teach students leadership, teamwork, and problem solving skills... and they'll have so much fun, they won't even know they are learning! Our Fun on the Farm program is designed for children and youth with disabilities from the age of 6 through their 19th birthday.

For more information about our programs, please visit our website www.saddleupnashville.org.

SADDLE UP! RULES

Saddle Up! asks that all of its participants, parents, volunteers, and staff understand and adhere to the following rules:

1. This is a program that celebrates diversity and sees value in all the participants. Respect and cordiality toward all participants is expected.
2. Respect Saddle Up! facilities, materials, animals, and all participants' confidentiality.
3. No smoking on Saddle Up! property.
4. No alcoholic beverages on the premises except for Executive Board approved functions.
5. All participants, staff, and volunteers are required to wear closed-toe shoes, preferably boots or tennis shoes, when past the lobby and office area. Visitors and special guests without appropriate footwear will be allowed on staff guided tours, but, for their own safety, will not be allowed to interact with horses.
6. Do not climb on any fences or enter pastures if you are not authorized by Saddle Up! to do so.
7. Do not feed or pet Saddle Up! horses through the fences and gates.
8. Parents/guardians are to remain in the lobby during programming, unless they have special permission from a staff person.
9. Any volunteer who exhibits behavior that is potentially dangerous to themselves, our horses, other volunteers, participants, and/or staff can be dismissed from the activity and/or program.
10. Saddle Up! will take appropriate measures up to and including calling the local police department if a staff person suspects that a parent or volunteer is under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
11. Saddle Up! is required by law to report any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. Saddle Up! is committed to ensuring the safety of all program participants and volunteers.
12. All persons on the property outside of the lobby must sign a volunteer waiver or visitor release form.
13. For the safety of all participants, pets are not allowed on the Saddle Up! property, with the exception of service animals.
14. Saddle Up! asks you to please refrain from bringing treats for the horses.
15. Although an individual may be licensed to carry a firearm in the state of Tennessee, Saddle Up! prohibits all employees, volunteers, and families/program participants from possessing, using, displaying, or carrying either open or concealed firearms or other weapons on their person while on the Saddle Up! premises, performing Saddle Up! business, or representing Saddle Up!. Weapons, firearms and/or ammunition must be locked or secured inside the locked trunk, glove box, or firearm vault in private vehicles (or within a locked compartment on a motorcycle) within the designated Saddle Up! parking areas and the vehicle itself must be locked at all times.

CONSEQUENCES FOR RULE INFRACTIONS

Level 1: Verbal Warning

- Breaking of the rules will be followed by a verbal warning from the supervisor in the area you are serving.
 - Sidewalker = Instructor/Therapist
 - Leader = Instructor/Therapist
 - Stable Hand = Barn or Equine Operations Director
 - Feeder = Barn Manager
 - Pony Pal = Equine Operations Director
 - Farm Hand = Property Director
- The warning will be documented in the volunteer's file.

Level 2: Written Warning

- Breaking of the rules for a second incident will be followed by a discussion with the supervisor and Program Director with a written warning issued by the Program Director. The written warning will be placed in the volunteer's file.
- Steps will be outlined to prevent future rule infractions, and a follow up meeting will be scheduled.

Level 3: Dismissal from the Organization

- Anyone facing dismissal from the organization will be informed by a written notice and a discussion with the Executive Director and the Program Manager. The following infractions are grounds for immediate dismissal from the organization.
 - Theft
 - Inappropriate use of the facilities, mailing lists, or monies.

- Abuse of the animals or properties.
- Repeated disregard of the organization's policies and procedures.
- Harassment of or inappropriate behavior toward any staff member, volunteer, or student.
- Use, possession of, or under the influence of alcohol or drugs while on Saddle Up! property.

VISITORS

Saddle Up! allows friends and other family members to visit the program.

- Visitors **MUST** remain in the family area, therapy room, or outdoor family courtyard during lessons. If the scheduled activity cannot be observed from the family area or courtyard, then visitors will not be able to observe that activity.
- Special permission can be obtained by the Instructor for the visitor to observe from the bleachers, and this request needs to be made prior to the start of the lesson.
- If visitors want a tour of the facility, they must sign a Visitor Release form and be wearing closed toed shoes. We can only accommodate this request if a staff person or trained volunteer is available to provide the tour. If you know your visitor will want a tour, please contact the office a few days in advance to schedule the tour.

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

- I. **GENERAL PRINCIPLE:** Saddle Up! shall preserve the right of confidentiality for all individuals in its program. Participants, their families, and our volunteers have a right to privacy that gives them control over the dissemination of their personal, medical, or other sensitive information.
- II. **INFORMATION COVERED BY THE CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY:** The staff shall keep confidential all medical, social, referral, personal, and financial information regarding a person and his/her family. This includes mailing lists for the organization.
- III. **PERSONS SUBJECT TO THE CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY:** Anyone who works, volunteers, or provides services for Saddle Up! is bound by this policy. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. Full and part-time staff
 - b. Independent contractors
 - c. Temporary employees or interns
 - d. Volunteers
 - e. Board members
- IV. **COMPETENCY AND INFORMED CONSENT DISCLOSURE:** A participant may not be competent to give consent for disclosure of medical or sensitive information, or both (including photographs and videotapes), because of age or mental incapacity. Only parents, legal representatives, or others defined by state statute have this authority.
- V. **INTRA-AGENCY ACCESS TO AND DISCLOSURE OF MEDICAL AND/OR SENSITIVE INFORMATION:** No access to, or disclosure of, medical and/or sensitive information will be made without a participant's consent based on a perceived need to protect staff or anyone else from possible exposure through casual contact. Universal precautions will be used with all participants under the assumption that all participants may have been exposed to infectious disease.
- VI. **EXTRA-AGENCY DISCLOSURE OF MEDICAL AND/OR SENSITIVE INFORMATION:** Disclosure of information to outside agencies or individuals will be made only with specific written consent of the participant or guardian.
- VII. **WRITTEN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY:** Each volunteer and staff member for Saddle Up! has signed a written statement acknowledging this policy.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Saddle Up! could not operate without the dedicated help of an army of volunteers from our community. There are numerous positions that require a wide variety of talents. The areas marked with (*) will require prior experience or additional training (other than New Volunteer Training) that will be provided for you. All volunteers MUST attend New Volunteer Training before participating in any of the below listed opportunities.

OPPORTUNITIES IN LESSONS

Lesson Team

Consistency in the Lesson Team is very important. When possible, Saddle Up! creates and maintains the same team (instructor, sidewalker, leader, child) for the entire session. We strongly recommend that a volunteer commits to a minimum of one lesson per week for a session. If there is an emergency absence, a lesson sub will be scheduled to substitute.

Sidewalkers

The primary responsibility of a sidewalker (Interactive or Supportive) 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 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. (Sidewalkers must be at least 16 years-old and able to walk briskly beside a horse for an average of 30 minutes.)

Interactive Sidewalker

The interactive sidewalker is an extension of the Instructor. Interactive sidewalkers talk and interact directly with the rider during grooming and during the lesson. They may be asked to teach the grooming tools and steps, repeat the directions given by the Instructor, assist the rider in performing these directions, and monitor for specific skills. (Interactive sidewalkers should be comfortable with the child's disability, have a minimal understanding of grooming, riding commands and horse parts, and be confident in following the Instructor's directions.)



Supportive Sidewalker

The supportive sidewalker will not have a verbal role in the lesson; however, they will be hands-on with the rider. The supportive sidewalker will focus solely on the rider, ensuring safety during the lesson. The supportive sidewalker will be in different levels of physical contact with the rider, depending on the rider's needs. (No prior experience is required.)



Leaders*

The main responsibility of the leader is to control the horse during grooming, ground, and mounted lessons. Most riders who have leaders are unable to fully control their horse. 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. Leaders must be able to walk at a fast pace for 30 minutes and jog intermittently during the lesson. (Leaders are volunteers over the age of 16. They should be very comfortable with horses and react calmly if an incident arises. In addition to New Volunteer Training, **Leader Training** is required prior to handling horses in lessons. Before going through Leader Training, we ask that you sidewalk in at least 6 lessons first to get a feel for our programs.)

OPPORTUNITIES IN THE BARN

Feeders*

Our horses are fed each morning and evening by a mix of staff and 2-3 trained volunteers. Feeders report to the Barn Manager. We ask that Feeders make a commitment of at least 4 months (or the duration of a Saddle Up! program session), and we prefer that a volunteer Feeder can come out to feed at least once a week on a regular schedule. In an emergency, your scheduled feeding time slot may be traded with another Feeder. (Being a feeder requires **Leader Training** and **Feeder Training**, in addition to New Volunteer Training. Prior horse experience is required.)

Stable Hands*

Stable Hands take care of the barn chores, mostly during lesson times. Stable Hands report to the Barn Manager. They also ensure that stalls are cleaned each day. (In addition to New Volunteer Training, Stable Hands must complete **Stable Hand Training**. The Barn Manager will teach you how to groom our horses. Prior horse experience is helpful.)

Farm Hands*

Farm Hands help out with other chores and projects around the farm. Farm Hands report to the Property Director. If you have special skills (e.g. prior experience as an electrician, carpenter, with HVAC, welding, lawn care, etc.), this is the volunteer opportunity for you! (In addition to New Volunteer Training, Farm Hands must complete **Stable Hand Training** and **Farm Hand Training** to review relevant information about tools/machinery in use at Saddle Up!. The minimum age to be a Farm Hand is 16. Prior horse experience is helpful.)

Pony Pals*

A Pony Pal must complete New Volunteer Training, Leader Training, and pass a riding evaluation by the Equine Operations Director. Prior horse experience is essential, as a Pony Pal's skill level must be at or above the level of the horse's training. A Pony Pal must:

- Have already been volunteering in at least one lesson per week as a leader or sidewalker for at least 3 months prior to applying to be a Pony Pal
- Fill out a Pony Pal application and have prior riding experience
- Upon becoming a Pony Pal, you must be able to commit to a weekly Pony Pal schedule for a duration of at least 3 months, including continuing to volunteer as a leader or sidewalker in at least one lesson per week.
- Must follow a conditioning plan provided by the Equine Operations Director and provide conditioning notes
- If you are not able to attend your scheduled slot, you must let the Equine Operations Director know ASAP.

It is beneficial for the horse, and in turn for our riders, to have people assigned to each horse that can deliver consistent attention and conditioning. Each Pony Pal must follow the Conditioning Plan provided by the Saddle Up! Equine Operations Director, as well as the organization's Rules and Best Practice procedures for handling the Saddle Up! horses. You will report directly to the Equine Operations Director about your horse's progress and needs. You must be able to make a weekly commitment to your assigned horse and take good, detailed notes. **Conditioning notes for the Equine Operations Director should be submitted via the Volunteer Hours Log form (www.tfaforms.com/4837296)** when logging your Pony Pal volunteer hours.

Pamper Pals*

If you are a less experienced horse person who wants to give your favorite horse a little extra love, being a Pamper Pal could be for you! Pamper Pal activities can range from doing the horse's physical therapy exercises on the ground to bathing the horse and, well, pampering them! A Pamper Pal must:

- Complete New Volunteer Training and Leader Training. The Equine Operations Director will provide relevant additional Pamper Pal Training, where you will learn skills such as bridle path trimming, mane pulling, body clipping, and in-hand ground work for physical therapy exercises.
- Be willing to help in another volunteer capacity other than being a Pamper Pal (e.g. volunteering in lessons, being a stable hand, feeding, etc.)
- Be able to commit to a weekly schedule for a duration of at least 3 months
- Must follow a Pamper Plan set by the Equine Operations Director and provide relevant notes in the Volunteer Hours Log. Because a horse's needs may change day to day, a Pamper Pal must check in with the Equine Operations Director upon arrival to go over activities for the day.

VOLUNTEER CANCELLATIONS

Volunteers are critical to the success of the program. When you commit to your volunteer role, your support is truly needed to safely serve a participant. Please reserve cancelling your scheduled day/time for emergencies. If you **MUST** cancel, please contact Saddle Up! as soon as possible so a replacement may be found.

Email attendance@saddleupnashville.org with the date and time of your absence. If you are calling, you should call Saddle Up! at (615) 794-1150. Either leave a message with the person who answers or on the Lesson Hotline x290. Please also use this phone number/email to let us know if you are running late for a lesson, so we may start the process of getting your horse ready, if necessary.

If you know days in advance that you will miss a volunteer commitment, please email attendance@saddleupnashville.org, and provide the date and time of your upcoming absence.

When letting us know about an absence/tardiness, **please use the Attendance email** rather than emailing individual staff members directly. This will ensure that an on-site staff member will see your message if an individual is not at their desk. If we don't find out in time, this could lead to a participant not being able to get on their horse for their lesson.

VOLUNTEER ATTIRE & GENERAL ON-SITE GUIDELINES

- Dress appropriately for each volunteer activity, so as not to distract the horse or rider. Avoid short shorts, halter tops, tops with spaghetti straps, or anything revealing.
- Wear comfortable clothes that are appropriate for the weather.
- Tie back long hair.
- Remove dangling earrings, loose watches/rings.
- Wear sturdy shoes that enclose your foot (no Crocs, sandals, or open-toe shoes).
- If riding, wear an ASTM-SEI approved helmet and sturdy shoes that enclose the entire foot.
- Leave cell phones in your car or turn them off, as they can disrupt a class and startle horses or participants.
- Bring a refillable water bottle. Water fountains are sometimes unavailable.
- Please use a quiet voice while in the barn and working around the horses.
- Please park on the last rows in front of the Sensory Field. Parking spots by the front entrance are for Saddle Up! participants.

LOGGING VOLUNTEER HOURS

When you come to volunteer, please remember to log your volunteer hours. There are several options to log in your hours. Please note that signing in on a clipboard does not log in your volunteer hours.

- **Option 1:** Go to www.tfaforms.com/4837296. This takes you directly to the Saddle Up! Volunteer Hour Log form to log your hours.
- **Option 2:** Out in the barn, you will see QR code signs posted in several locations. It is easy to scan this code with your phone camera, and it will take you directly to the online form to log your hours.
- **Option 3:** Go the Saddle Up! website and navigate to the "Logging Volunteer Hours" section. (From the homepage, hover over "Volunteer" in the top navigation. Then click "Logging Volunteer Hours," and you will be directed to the online form to log your hours.)
- **Option 4:** The weekly Volunteer emails include the link/QR code to the online form to log your hours.
- **Option 5:** Grab a SU! Volunteer Log keychain with the QR code to log your hours. You can find one at the Volunteer Table or ask a staff member.



“WHAT DO I DO WHEN I ARRIVE FOR A LESSON?”

SIDEWALKERS

- Arrive at least 10 minutes before your assigned time. Review the posted volunteer schedule to verify the Instructor, child, and horse you will be with (*Note: Child and horse assignments can change at the last minute, so it is important to check the schedule even if you are a regular sidewalker.*)
- The horse and leader should already be in the cross-tie area. Ask the leader and/or Instructor if there is anything that you need to know as the sidewalker for that lesson.
- Wait for the Instructor to indicate when it is time to go get your student.

LEADERS

- Arrive 30 minutes before your assigned time. Review the posted volunteer schedule to verify the horse you will be leading (*Note: The horse assignment can change at the last minute, so it is important to check the schedule even if you are a regular leader.*)
- Retrieve the groom box and tack needed for the lesson, and take to the cross-tie area for that lesson.
- Retrieve the horse, and take to the cross-ties.
- Groom your horse, and verify if the child will be tacking or if you need to.
 - After grooming, if the rider will be tacking the horse, you will need to warm up the horse for a couple of minutes before the rider comes out to start tacking.
 - After grooming, if you will be tacking the horse, then tack at this time. After tacking, you will warm up the horse before the rider comes out for their lesson.
- Warm up horses for a couple of minutes, practicing the following:
 - Walk straight and DO NOT take sharp turns when entering the arena. Turning sharp is hard on the horses stifles which causes sore hocks.
 - Do a good walk for 1 lap around the arena.
 - Then do a half circle and change directions.
 - Come down the centerline of the arena and ask for a trot.
 - Then turn right ,and make BIG serpentines across the arena.
 - A happy warmed up horse will result in a good lesson for your rider.
- Wait for the Instructor, rider, and sidewalker to come out for the lesson.
 - If the rider will be tacking the horse, go back to the cross-tie area after the warm-up.
 - If your horse is already tacked, go back to the cross-tie area after the warm-up to wait for the Instructor/rider, or you may go directly to the mounting area if the Instructor indicates that they are ready to mount.

HORSE CARE AND HANDLING

The following are horse handling practices followed by Saddle Up!. Our therapy horses require consistent handling by everyone in order to remain well trained and safe. All volunteers are expected to follow these practices.

- Talk to your horse while stroking or patting them to let them know you are a friend.
- **Pet horses on the neck or shoulder, never on the nose.**
- **Do not bring treats for the horses, and do not keep food in your pockets, especially peppermints!**
- No standing directly behind or in front of a horse. A horse’s two blind spots are in front of their face and right behind their head, which extends over the back and behind the tail.
- Slide the halter up over the horse’s muzzle on to their head. The crown piece should come across the horse’s head right behind the ears.
- Fasten the throat latch clip to the left side of the halter.
- Keep at least 1-2 horse lengths between you and the next horse in lessons.

SECURING YOUR HORSE

When it is time to groom or saddle your horse, you will need a way to keep the horse standing still while you work. We do NOT groom in the stalls, but use cross ties to secure the horse. Cross ties are two straps attached high up on each side, and they are located in the indoor/outdoor grooming stalls and vet stall.

- Each strap has a snap or clip on the end to attach to the halter.
- Attach the cross ties to the square side rings on the part of the halter that goes around the horse's muzzle.
- Never attach cross ties directly to the bridle.
- Ensure that the length of rope is not too tight or too loose for the size horse.
- Never step over or reach over the cross ties at the horse's head.
- Walk under the cross ties near the pole, NEVER walk under the horse's neck.
- Never walk behind the horse while in the cross ties.
- Never leave a horse unattended in the cross ties. If you need to step away (e.g. to grab something from the tack room), please ask someone (who is not already responsible for a horse) to watch your horse.

LEAD YOUR HORSE

- Typically, you should be on your horse's left, leading between their head and shoulders unless instructed otherwise.
- Place your right hand on the lead rope about six to twelve inches from the halter.
- Never hold on to the halter or any part of the bridle.
- Hold the excess rope with your left hand. If the lead rope is very long, double the excess back and forth in a figure eight pattern. Make sure the rope in between your hands does not hang down below your knees, as it could cause you to trip.

GENERAL HORSE INFORMATION

HORSE BEHAVIOR

Horse behavior will teach you the characteristics of the horse and give you an understanding of the horse's reasons for certain actions or habits. When you know why a horse does something, you will be better prepared to respond to them properly. It is important that you know the horse's traits and instinctive responses. They vary different degrees in every horse, but they are common to all.

HERD INSTINCT

All horses possess a strong group or herd instinct. In their wild state, there was safety in numbers. For this reason, an untrained horse will not leave the group unless he is forced to, and even then, he may attempt to remain with the other horses. Another way the horse shows their group instinct is in their desire to mimic other horses. If one horse shies, they all will shy. When one bucks, they all want to. Horses obey humans through habit and training. They don't know that they are bigger and stronger, or they would realize that they don't need to obey us. When you handle a horse, you are either helping their training or hurting it. If you always handle horses properly, using the same rewards and punishments they are used to, they will keep their training and remain obedient.

REWARD AND PUNISHMENT

Horses are trained by reward and punishment. They learn how to obey commands and to do or not to do certain things by connecting these things with pleasant (reward) or unpleasant (punishment) feelings. A horse can only pay attention to a reward or punishment for about 3 seconds. This means that the pleasant or unpleasant feelings must come immediately after the horse has done something right or wrong. A few minutes later will be too late, and they won't understand why they are being rewarded or punished.

POSSESSIVENESS

Horses can be possessive about their food, their stall, or their friends. For this reason, it is not a good idea to bother a horse while they are eating their grain. They may think that you are teasing them or trying to take it away from them and may get angry.

COURAGE AND LAZINESS

Most horses are a little lazy about working for people. Horses like to do things the easy way, and they don't make any more work for themselves than they have to. This leads them to find ways to cheat when the work gets hard or boring, just like kids looking out a window in school. Horses are surprisingly generous. They will often continue to obey their riders even after they are tired or hurting. This is a special kind of courage that horsemen call heart.

FEARFUL

Horses are very big, powerful, and fearful creatures. If they are frightened, they will try to run away from whatever scares them. They can be scared and startled by many things that don't bother people. Things that may frighten a horse include loud noises, sudden movements, and things that move toward them suddenly. When a horse is nervous or frightened, they will often calm down if someone gives them confidence by keeping them under control. Be kind but firm, soothing them with quiet words. If you act frightened or nervous, your horse may become more frightened themselves. They will feel that something must be wrong if you are frightened.

HORSE SENSES

Touch - Horses use touch to examine strange objects. They will look, sniff, and then feel the object with their muzzle and lips. The horse's sense of touch is very sensitive. They can feel a fly land on their skin and are able to detect a very light touch or pressure. We depend on their sense of touch in most riding and training. Horses are trained by applying and removing pressure.

Smell and Taste – These senses are related quite loosely. Horses have a keen sense of smell and can detect odors that humans cannot. Horses may recognize familiar horses or people by their familiar scent.

Hearing - A horse's hearing is very acute. Their ears can swivel like radar screens to seek out sounds in any direction. They can hear very soft sounds, like a rustle in the bushes which might conceal a predator. Since their hearing is very acute, it is not necessary to shout voice commands at horses to make them hear. They can hear you just as well if you talk quietly to them.

PHOTOS/VIDEOS & SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

PHOTOS & VIDEOS

- NO flash photography.
- You must have permission from the Instructor/Therapist prior to taking photos/video of programs.
- Do not lean through the arena railing or fencing for a photo/video.
- Do not enter the arena or pasture for a photo/video.
- Do not photograph or video another person's child.
- If you realize you have a photo or video with another person's child in it, please delete it.

SOCIAL MEDIA

- We ask that you keep social media posts about Saddle Up! positive and encouraging.
- Do not post photos or videos that include other people's children.
- Do not post photos or videos with identifying information about riders or volunteers.
- Always comply with copyright and fair use laws when publishing something on a social media platform.

INCLEMENT WEATHER & TEMPERATURE

INCLEMENT WEATHER GUIDELINES

- Due to our indoor arena and classroom, Saddle Up! is able to operate programs in many different types of weather and throughout the year. Saddle Up! defines inclement weather as weather that affects the safety of conducting programs or traveling to the farm for participants, volunteers, and staff. Inclement weather could include snow, ice, flooding, etc..
- The decision to cancel programs due to inclement weather will be made by the Saddle Up! staff.
- Communications regarding program cancellations are sent out via Facebook, email, text messages, or phone calls prior to the scheduled program time whenever possible.
- Inclement weather is assessed by monitoring weather forecasts and evaluating roads conditions.
- We DO NOT follow the local school system for program cancellation.
- If sudden inclement weather occurs during program activities, the Instructor/Therapist has ultimate responsibility for participants, volunteers, and horses.
- If you are not sure whether Saddle Up! programs are operating due to inclement weather, please contact the Lesson Hotline at (615) 794-1150 x290 for more information.

TEMPERATURE GUIDELINES

The temperature will be based on www.weather.com for Franklin, TN (zip code 37069) at the time the mounted programs occur. Hot and cold weather is evaluated due to medical conditions of participants, volunteer/staff comfort due to amount of time to be exposed, and horse health.

Heat:

- If the heat index is above 95 °F, all programs must stay in the indoor arena/barn area, and mounted programs will be limited to walk-only. Participants and volunteers/staff will be evaluated for heat tolerance as needed.
- If the heat index is 100 °F or above, mounted programs will not occur, and participants will be evaluated for heat tolerance as needed. Lessons are NOT cancelled.
 - Adaptive Riding, Interactive Vaulting, Alumni Transitions, and Equestrian Club lessons will take place off the horse in the form of unmounted horsemanship activities.
 - Therapy Services appointments will take place in the therapy room utilizing the MiraColt.
 - Equine Assisted Learning will occur as usual.

Cold:

- If the actual temperature is below 32 °F degrees, mounted lessons/appointments will not occur, and participants will be evaluated for cold tolerance as needed.
 - Adaptive Riding, Interactive Vaulting, Alumni Transitions, and Equestrian Club lessons will take place off the horse in the form of unmounted horsemanship activities, preferably in the classroom or therapy room.
 - Therapy Services appointments will take place in the therapy room utilizing the MiraColt.
 - Equine Assisted Learning will occur as usual.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

EMERGENCY PROCESS

Inform a staff person immediately of any type of emergency and follow their instructions.

A staff person trained in CPR/First Aid will evaluate the person, provide care as needed, and determine whether emergency services are needed.

If the injured party has fallen from some type of height (i.e. horse), have them remain on the ground and still until evaluated by a staff person trained in CPR/First Aid.

Secure all horses in the area/arena by ensuring they are on-lead, and move them away from the injured party.

- If this type of emergency occurs during a program, please follow these additional guidelines:
 - Volunteers remain with their assigned participant or horse, unless told differently.
 - The Instructor/Therapist will decide whether to dismiss or resume the program/activity.
 - Parents and guardians should not approach the scene until asked to do so by the Instructor/Therapist.
- Any additional people or participants (not needed for medical support) in the area/arena should be diverted to another location to give the injured party privacy.

EMERGENCY DISMOUNT PROCESS

If there is an emergency that arises while a horse is being ridden, it may be necessary to get the participant off quickly. If there is not enough time to stop and do the participant's usual dismount, then an Emergency Dismount will be necessary.

Here are the steps for an Emergency Dismount:

- Sidewalkers
 - If the Instructor calls for an emergency dismount by a sidewalker, and two sidewalkers are present, the **Interactive sidewalker** (rather than the Supportive sidewalker) has the primary responsibility of performing the emergency dismount (unless the Interactive sidewalker is situationally unable to do so).
 1. Ensure the participant's feet are clear of the stirrups.
 2. Wrap your arms around their waist.
 3. Pull them to your hip.
 4. Slowly back away from the horse (avoid putting you and the participant directly behind the horse).
- Leaders
 - Ensure the horse is on-lead.
 - Walk the horse away from the participant (avoid putting the participant directly behind the horse).

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

- Telephones are located in the main office and inside the barn office. Vet and other important numbers are posted by the phone with directions to the facility.
- Four fire extinguishers are located in the indoor arena, one at each corner. Two extinguishers are located in the main barn next to the North and South roll-up doors.
- Human first aid supplies are located in the cabinets behind the lobby desk and in the designated locker in the barn.
- Horse first aid supplies are found in the main barn vet area.
- All Saddle Up! Instructors and Therapists are CPR/AED, First Aid, and Concussion trained.

ALL EMERGENCIES OR INJURIES TO PEOPLE OR HORSES MUST BE DOCUMENTED IN AN OCCURRENCE REPORT AND SUBMITTED TO THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR. A STAFF PERSON FILLS OUT THE REPORT AND WILL NEED INPUT FROM ALL WHO WITNESSED THE EVENT.

DISASTER PLANS

FIRE

- Inform a staff person immediately and call 911 or pull a fire alarm pull station to notify the Fire Department.
- If the fire is small, locate a fire extinguisher and/or water hose, and use it to extinguish the fire. If that does not work, please evacuate the facility.
- Evacuate the facility at the closest exit to you that is not near the fire.
- Before evacuating, staff and volunteers in the barn need to release horses to the closest pasture, if time allows.
- Once evacuated, everyone needs to go to the grassy area at the back of the parking lot that is located between the parking lot and sensory field. This is a safe zone where staff will do a head count to ensure everyone is accounted for.
- Do not leave the property until told to do so.
- If this type of emergency occurs during a program, please follow these additional guidelines:
 - Sidewalkers – Dismount participants immediately, evacuate the facility with the participant, and go to the safe zone.
 - Leaders – Once your participant is dismounted, evacuate the facility, remove all equipment from the horse, release them to the closest pasture, and go to the safe zone.
 - Parents and guardians should not attempt to retrieve their child from programming. We will reunite parents with their child in the safe zone.

TORNADO

- If we are under a tornado watch, staff will monitor the weather forecast and the weather outside to determine if programs can operate. If programs continue operation, they must remain in the indoor arena.
- If we are under a tornado warning, all programs must immediately cease, and the procedure below is in effect:
 - Take cover in the closest Severe Weather Shelter Area (indicated with a green sign with a tornado on it).
 - If time allows, staff and volunteers in the barn need to release horses to the closest pasture.
 - Do not leave your cover area until told to do so by a staff person.
 - If this type of emergency occurs during a program, please follow these additional guidelines:
 - Sidewalkers – Dismount participants immediately, get the participants to their family (if time allows), and take cover.
 - Leaders – Once your participant is dismounted, remove all equipment from the horse, release them to the closest pasture, and take cover.
 - Parents and guardians should not attempt to retrieve their child from programming. We will reunite parents with their child before taking cover, if time allows.

SEVERE THUNDERSTORM/HEAVY LIGHTNING

- Depending on the severity of the storm, Saddle Up! staff will determine whether programs will be able to operate. Often, if the horses and participants are not bothered by the storm, we are able to operate.
- If programs are not able to operate, an indoor/unmounted program will be available, if appropriate, and the procedure below is in effect:
 - Everyone should remain in the facility until the lightning has ceased.
 - Staff and volunteers in the barn can choose to get horses to cover if it is safe and time allows.
 - If this type of emergency occurs during a program, please follow these additional guidelines:
 - Sidewalkers – Dismount participants immediately, and escort them into the front lobby.
 - Leaders – Once your participant is dismounted, remove all equipment from the horse, put them in a stall, and remain in the facility.
 - Parents and guardians should not attempt to retrieve their child from programming. We will reunite parents with their child.
 - Instructor/Therapist will decide if an indoor/unmounted program will be available.

FLOOD

- Depending on the severity of the flooding, Saddle Up! staff will determine whether or not programs will be able to operate. Due to the Harpeth River backing up to our property, we have minor flooding in our back fields that does not affect program operations.

- There are local roads that have been known to flood that can affect participants, volunteers, and staff from safely traveling to the farm. If multiple roads are affected by flooding, and it is not safe for people to travel to Saddle Up!, then programs will be cancelled.
- If programs are in progress during a Flood Warning, staff will monitor local road conditions and determine whether programs will be able to continue.
- Since people travel from many different locations to Saddle Up!, we ask that you follow general safety guidelines for flooding (listed below from www.ready.gov/floods.com).
 - Do not walk, swim, or drive through flood waters. Turn Around, Don't Drown!
 - Six inches of moving water can knock you down.
 - One foot of moving water can sweep your vehicle away.
 - Stay off of bridges over fast-moving water.
 - Determine how best to protect yourself based on the type of flooding.
 - Evacuate if told to do so.
 - Move to higher ground or a higher floor.
 - Stay where you are.

ACTIVE SHOOTER

- Call 911 immediately and inform a staff person, if possible.
- In the event of an active shooter, there are three recommended actions provided by the Department of Homeland Security: FEMA, and in order, they are...
 - Run – Evacuate the facility at the closest exit to you that is not near the shooter, and find somewhere to take cover. Help others evacuate, if possible.
 - Hide – Take cover in an enclosed room, and lock it behind you or barricade the door, if possible. Help others hide, if possible.
 - Fight – As a last resort and if your life is in imminent danger, attempt to disrupt and/or incapacitate the shooter.
- Once law enforcement arrives on the scene, their immediate purpose is to stop the active shooter. Please remain calm, and follow their instructions as they assess the scene.
- Law enforcement will need everyone to stay on site until all questioning has been completed, and they have determined that it is safe to leave.
- If this type of emergency occurs during a program, please follow these additional guidelines:
 - Sidewalkers – Dismount participants immediately, and follow the best course of action based on the recommended actions above for you and the participant to get to safety.
 - Leaders – Once your participant is dismounted, follow the best course of action based on the recommended actions above to get to safety. If possible, remove all equipment from the horse, and release them to the closest pasture.
 - Parents and guardians should not attempt to retrieve their child from programming. We will reunite parents with their child as soon as possible.

OTHER WAYS TO HELP

As a non-profit, Saddle Up! relies heavily on people giving of their time, money, and talents. If you have the ability to provide additional support to our organization, there is more information below on how you can do that.

DONATE

Your monetary gift will help children experience the physical, emotional, and mental benefits of this special program. Saddle Up! keeps fees low due to the support of generous donors that help fill the gap between program fees and actual costs. If you would like to help support our programs, please visit our website at www.saddleupnashville.org.

VOLUNTEER YOUR SKILL/PROFESSIONAL SERVICES (IN KIND)

Many of our parents/guardians have skills or offer professional services that we aren't aware of. This could include many different career areas such as electricians, landscapers, musicians, technology, marketing, fundraising, public speaking, finance, carpenters, etc.. If you have a skill or if your company or business would be willing to donate a professional service that Saddle Up! could benefit from, please let a staff person know.

VOLUNTEER WITH A GROUP

Certain times of the year, Saddle Up! has special projects that need to be completed by large groups. We have many businesses come out for teambuilding and group volunteer projects throughout the year. If you know of a business/organization that is interested in volunteering as a group (5+ people), please have them fill out the [Group Volunteer Interest Form](#) (www.tfaforms.com/4899641), and a staff person will reach out. We will provide on-site training specific to their project.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Saddle Up! holds several special events each year where you can come and enjoy a day or evening of activities, knowing your money is going to a good organization. You can visit our website at www.saddleupnashville.org to see our upcoming events.

TERMINOLOGY

It is essential that accurate terminology/wording be used when describing activities that incorporate horses in order to promote clarity, consistency, and transparency in settings. This includes marketing, research, and clinical documentation, which results in improved quality of communication, better consumer protection, and expanded professionalism. We have defined some helpful terms below for our families and volunteers to have a better understanding of the services we provide.

Mounted Horsemanship: This term is used to describe activities that are performed when riding on the back of a horse. In mounted horsemanship, the participant uses their natural (hand, seat, and leg) and artificial aids (if needed) to influence the movement of the horse. Mounted horsemanship activities include, but are not limited to, upward transitions, downward transitions, use of rein aids, use of leg aids, 2-point position, posting trot, sitting trot, diagonals, mounting, dismounting, and canter leads.

Unmounted Horsemanship: This term is used to describe activities that focus on learning more about the horse and their environment from the ground. In unmounted horsemanship, the participant does not ride the horse, but can interact with the horse in-hand (being led), as well as participate in activities without a horse. Unmounted horsemanship activities include, but are not limited to, horse breeds, horse body language, farm/barn responsibilities, horse health care, grooming, and tacking.