VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

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1. Welcome to Strongwater!

Thank you for volunteering at Strongwater! Our program is a community effort with volunteers serving a vital role. Because of your generosity, we are able to reach out to a variety of riders, adding an important dimension to their lives.

Most of the volunteer opportunities at Strongwater do not require special skills. One of the goals at Strongwater is to provide the necessary guidance and training to make your experience safe and enjoyable. This handbook will acquaint you with Strongwater and serve as a resource to introduce you to the program and your role as a volunteer.

As you become acquainted with Strongwater, please feel free to bring any questions or concerns regarding your role to our Volunteer Coordinator: Kassandra Carefoot.

volunteer@strongwaterfarm.org

Mission Statement

Enriching lives through the healing power of the horse.

Organizational History

Strongwater Farm Therapeutic Equestrian Center, Inc. is a 501c3 non-profit organization located in Tewksbury, MA. Strongwater provides equine-assisted activities and therapies to individuals with cognitive, physical, behavioral and emotional challenges. Although located on the campus of Tewksbury Hospital, Strongwater is an independent non-profit and receives no funding from the state or federal government.

In 1997, local residents initiated Strongwater to provide a series of equestrian events for Tewksbury Hospital patients to improve their health and enable them to enjoy the beautiful countryside that surrounds the hospital. A historic dairy barn on the Tewksbury Hospital campus was restored and converted into a wheelchair-accessible stable and therapeutic facility.

PATH Intl

Strongwater is a Premier Accredited Center with the Professional Association for Therapeutic Horsemanship, Intl (PATH Intl). In order to achieve this accreditation, Strongwater has passed and complies with all of the program, facility, administrative, and other standards set by PATH Intl which regulates the practice of therapeutic equine activities.

PATH Intl is a non-profit organization headquartered in Denver, Colorado that exists to promote equine activities for individuals with disabilities. PATH Intl is a membership organization that fosters safe, professional, ethical and therapeutic equine activities through education, communication, standards and research for people with and without disabilities. Formed in 1969, PATH Intl members are individuals and centers that participate in therapeutic horseback riding programs. Individual members are volunteers, riding instructors, disabled participants with special needs and their families, physicians, therapists, teachers, researchers, and other interested individuals.
The PATH Intl centers are the heart of the riding for the disabled community as they bring together all the necessary individuals, horses, equipment and program knowledge. PATH Intl centers range from small one-person programs serving a half-dozen participants to large operations with several therapists and Therapeutic Riding Instructors serving up to 200 participants each week. PATH Intl promotes therapeutic riding primarily through public awareness campaigns and educational events. Above all PATH Intl is concerned with safety and service to members and participants. To learn more about PATH Intl, please visit their website: www.pathintl.org.

Program Operations, Closures, Cancellations

Strongwater Farm Therapeutic Equestrian Center operates year-round. There are no programs offered on most major holidays. Our therapeutic riding program operates with seven week sessions with a one week long break in-between each session.

If Strongwater Farm closes due to inclement weather, participant cancellations, or other unforeseen circumstances, we will try our best to contact you by using the primary phone number listed in your contact information. We will also post updates on our website in case of cancellations: www.strongwaterfarm.org. Please call if you have a concern regarding whether or not we will be in session.

The Benefits of Our Programs

Benefits from therapeutic riding fall into three categories: physical, psychological, and social.

Physical

- Relaxation of spasticity
- Muscle stretching and strengthening
- Improved head and trunk control
- Endurance
- Posture
- Mobility
- Motor planning
- Coordination
- Body awareness
- Reduced tactile and sensory behavior

Psychological & Social

- Increased self-confidence
- Increased social/behavioral skills
- Auditory/language and communication skills
- Increased attention and ability to follow directions
- Increased motivation, self-control and perceptual skills.
The goals of therapeutic riding vary for each individual, depending on his or her ability and needs. Regardless, therapeutic riding rejuvenates the spirit as well as the body.

2. Volunteer Policies and Procedures

One of the most important mainstays of the program is the volunteer staff. Volunteers are always needed and welcome. Previous experience with horses is not required.

Volunteer Orientation and Training Sessions

Strongwater’s goal is to have the safest environment possible for everyone involved in the program. New volunteers are required to attend an Orientation and Training session which will introduce them to the program, operational and safety procedures, and give them hands-on training in side walking and/or leading. We also provide continued learning experiences throughout the year for our established volunteers.

Physical Considerations

Leading, side walking and helping in the stable can be physically demanding. Please let the staff know if the strenuous nature of these activities might affect any conditions which you may have. Strongwater also has areas outside the arena where volunteers are needed.

The horse Leader, Side walker and Participant
Volunteer Opportunities

Your service allows our program to function at its best. No matter how many hours you are able to devote to our program, your commitment is always greatly appreciated! We have needs in the following areas:

Lesson Volunteers:

Sidewalkers focus on the participant throughout the lesson and receive training on safety and effectively learning to provide assistance for participants.

Leaders are responsible for the horses before, during and after the lesson. They also receive training on how to safely and effectively lead horses before, during and after the lesson.

Grooms assist in grooming and tacking horses for lessons.

Equine Volunteers:

Barn Chores care for our herd’s stalls which includes but is not limited to: mucking stalls, cleaning water and feed buckets, sweeping and adding shavings to stalls.

Feeders and Closers are responsible for feeding our horses throughout the day as well as for turn-out and turn-in and also closing the barn for the night. They also ensure that the herd appears healthy and happy at intervals throughout the day.

Special Skills Volunteers:

Special Event volunteers assist with various special functions throughout the year – horse shows, fundraisers, etc. Duties may include assisting with event coordination, service on committees, and/or assisting at the event.

Special Skills volunteers offer assistance through the use of their expertise in various program areas. If you have experience with a skill such as arts and crafts, grant writing, photography, public relations, technology, graphic design, landscaping/grounds keeping, etc.

Volunteer General Requirements

All volunteers are required to:

- Adhere to all PATH Intl. standards and Strongwater policies and procedures
- Complete volunteer training and volunteer paperwork, including a background check
- Commit to complete a seven week session block

Volunteer Duties: General Duties, Barn Chores, Sidewalking, Leading

- Focus on the participant and not the disability
- Work with the participant as a sidewalker or with the horse as a leader
• Carry out emergency procedures including, but not limited to, emergency dismount, medical emergency, fire emergency, or weather emergency
• Sign in and out using the Log In Book AND log your hours online www.trackitforward.com
• Read class template
• Grooming of horse with appropriate tools and safety precautions
• Tack and untack of horse
• Assist with mounting and dismounting as directed by instructor
• Knowledge of alternate tack (bareback pad, surcingle, Cashel, etc.)
• Assist with barn chores, if time allows

Sample Template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thursday 7/17/14</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Horse</th>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>S/W</th>
<th>VG</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00-9:30</td>
<td>Patti</td>
<td>Nora H</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30-10:30.</td>
<td>Ellie</td>
<td>Jim A</td>
<td>Mary B</td>
<td>Kris</td>
<td>Cassio B</td>
<td>Vicki P</td>
<td>Cassio B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30-11:00</td>
<td>Ellie</td>
<td>Jill P</td>
<td>Henry</td>
<td>Cassie</td>
<td>Vicki P/Taylor L</td>
<td>Cassio B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00-2:00</td>
<td>Ellie</td>
<td>Bay Berry</td>
<td>Peaches</td>
<td>Sue Bal</td>
<td>Vicki P</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00-3:00</td>
<td>Ellie</td>
<td>Kaitlin W</td>
<td>Timmy</td>
<td>Julie E</td>
<td>Andrea P</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00-3:30</td>
<td>Ellie</td>
<td>Kasey S</td>
<td>Chester</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Will not ride 4.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30-4:00</td>
<td>Ellie</td>
<td>Braedon P</td>
<td>Acadia</td>
<td>Need sub</td>
<td>Andrea P</td>
<td>BJ will return 4.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Confidentiality Policy

Strongwater has strict confidentiality guidelines regarding the right to privacy and their diagnosis involved within our program. This policy extends to all program participants and their diagnosis and any and all sensitive information. Further, this is true for all those involved with the program including but not limited to volunteers and staff. **It is extremely important** that volunteers and staff respect the right to confidentiality of all involved in the program. **Please do not take issues or personal information of our participants or program personnel beyond the confines of Strongwater.** If you have any questions or concerns which involve the program, please approach the Volunteer Coordinator who can direct you to the appropriate individual to address the issue.

Volunteers should never be alone with one participant. Please be sure that other personnel are present at all times.

Background Check

In compliance with Massachusetts state law and our PATH Intl. Premier Accredited Center status, background checks on all of Strongwater’s volunteers are required.

As a necessary precaution and essential screening tool, **all volunteers are required to fill out the non-fingerprint conviction information name check request (copy attached). Background checks may be required every year upon request.** If anything alarming is found in the background check,
Strongwater will schedule an appointment with you and appropriate action will be taken, including dismissal from the program if appropriate. All information will remain confidential.

It is the policy of Strongwater to perform background checks on new volunteers for the purpose of protecting all persons affiliated with Strongwater. These forms must be completed and returned prior to volunteering in the program.

**Volunteer Sign-In**

Please sign-in upon arrival and check in with your instructor as to where your assistance is needed. All volunteers are required to create a (free) account with Track It Forward and utilize this website for logging and tracking all volunteer hours. In the instance when a volunteer or group of volunteers does not have access to email, you must discuss with the Volunteer Coordinator to make other arrangements for logging your hours.

**Step-by-Step Guide for Setting up Your Track It Forward Account:**

- Go to [www.trackitforward.com](http://www.trackitforward.com)
- Click “Find your Organization”
  - HINT: it’s below the orange “Get Started” button
- Search for “Strongwater” or “Strongwater Farm”
  - Select our organization from the search results
- A new page will come up asking you to Sign In
  - **If you’ve never used the site before, you will have to create a new account.**
  - Select “Sign Up” under the orange “Sign In” button
- Register to Log Hours
  - Enter your full name, email, password and phone number and select “Sign Up”
- You will then see your home page, which is an Hour Logging page
  - NOTE: All new accounts will require approval from the Volunteer Coordinator, HOWEVER you will still be able to log and track your hours before approval
- Enter your hours accumulated for that shift
  - Example: 1.5 hours
- Select the date for the shift
  - NOTE: You can add in shifts retroactively
- Select your Activity
  - NOTE: If you did multiple activities during your shift, either select the activity you did MOST or create separate entries for each activity
  - If your activity isn’t listed, select “Misc.” and enter a description in the “Notes” section
- Select “Submit Time”

**Other Uses for the Site:**

- Select “Timesheet” from the upper tab to see your total number of hours accumulated (year-to-date)
- Select “Charts” from the upper tab to see a visual representation of your hours
- Select “Event Sign-Ups” from the upper tab to see available events, training/workshops, etc.
• Select “Account” from the upper tab to see your profile, update your information, and export your hours logged.

Mobile App
• There is a free mobile app available. You must create an account on a computer first; once your account is approved, you can use the mobile app to log your hours.
  o All other functions (profile updates, exporting data, viewing charts and milestones) must be done on a computer.

Helmet, Clothing, Footwear Policies
All participants are required to wear protective helmets that are ASTM-SEI approved for horseback riding and no more than 5 years old from manufacturers date. The helmets must be worn while participating in horseback riding and horse related groundwork activities. Volunteers at times may assist but instructors are responsible for ensuring proper helmet fit for participants.

All other functions (profile updates, exporting data, viewing charts and milestones) must be done on a computer.

Helmets should fit snugly with two fingers above the brow. The helmet on the right is too far back.

Participants, volunteers and staff should dress appropriately for the weather and season. Please wear riding boots or sturdy, hard-soled shoes with a ¼ inch heel (no loafers, open-toed shoes or sandals) are highly recommended to be worn for all equine-related activities. Volunteers are required to wear shoes or boots that offer adequate foot protection. Please avoid dangling jewelry or clothing with loose strings (hood ties).

Conduct and Behavior
Appropriate behavior is always expected from any individual involved with Strongwater. If you are subjected to any type of inappropriate behavior, please notify the Director of Operations and Volunteer Coordinator immediately. Examples of inappropriate behavior would include any form of harassment, aggressive, or abusive behavior towards themselves, others, or any animals, verbal attacks towards instructor, client or parent, inappropriate client discipline, negative words or name calling. The situation will be dealt with and if needed, additional assistance will be called.
Reassignment/Termination

Strongwater policies have been developed to serve the best interests of our entire Strongwater community. Safety, confidentiality, respect for all—human and equine—and the preservation of the optimal environment for beneficial therapeutic riding are the primary reasons for strict adherence to the rules.

Individuals who fail to respect and observe the rules and procedures of Strongwater will be given an opportunity to discuss any situation that is perceived to be a violation of these standards. If necessary, a job change may be appropriate, but Strongwater reserves the right to determine if it is in the best interest of the program to terminate a volunteer’s involvement at any given time.

Grievance/Chain of Command

All concerns should be taken up with the Director of Operations, Volunteer Coordinator and a member of the Board. volunteer@strongwaterfarm.org  Barn: 978-851-5540

General Program Policies

- **Smoking** – It is illegal to smoke in our establishment. ABSOLUTELY NO SMOKING in the barn and arenas.
- **Alcohol and Drugs** – The consumption of alcohol to and/or while at Strongwater is strictly prohibited. The use of illegal drugs prior to and/or while at Strongwater is strictly prohibited. If you are taking prescribed medications which might adversely affect your volunteer role, please alert the Volunteer Coordinator.
- **Quiet, Please** – All electronic devices should be turned off during lessons. To avoid startling the horses and disrupting the participants, no loud noises or yelling while in the barn. Also, please walk in the barn area and avoid sudden movements and running.
- **Horse Treats** – Giving treats to horses are NOT permitted and absolutely NO handfeeding.
- **No Pets** – Please leave your pets at home where they will be safe and comfortable while you perform your volunteer role or while visiting the farm in a non-volunteer capacity.
- **Farm Property** – Please do not enter any restricted area without permission from the staff. No volunteer is allowed in any horse pasture at any time without express permission from a staff member.
- **Gates** – Please keep all gates and doors as you find them. If they are closed before you walk through, please close them behind you. All gates in arena must be closed during sessions.
- **Parking** – Please park behind the barn, near the Office. Do not park in front of the barn, directly in front of any entrances or in reserved parking areas.
3. Emergency Information

Safety First is a priority at Strongwater. Volunteers are responsible for knowing and applying all safety rules, emergency policies, and procedures in order to promote a safe working environment. Please report any conditions or behaviors which might be a concern for the program.

Please be familiar with the following safety procedures discussing specific emergencies. It is important to remember to remain calm in any emergency situation. **Strongwater’s staff is responsible for managing the emergency and applying any first aid required.** Volunteers may be called upon for assistance.

Safety Week will be held a minimum of twice yearly.

Medical Emergencies

Immediately notify a Strongwater staff member when an injury or accident occurs. The instructor or staff member is responsible for managing the emergency, evaluating the scene, and determining if additional medical assistance is required. They will provide first aid if needed.

In the event of an emergency, a volunteer may be asked to call 911 for emergency medical assistance. Emergency call information and facility diagram are posted near each telephone.

**Emergency use telephones, human first aid kits, AEDs and equine first aid kits are on site and located in these areas:**

**Phones:** in the office, outside of the office entrance, near the stable entrance of the barn and by the arena during lessons

**Human First Aid:** white metal cabinet near the stable entrance of the barn

**Equine First Aid:** standing grey-metal cabinet near sign-in book by the main entrance

Should an incident and/or injury occur during the course of the program, it must be reported to the Instructor, immediately, or at least within 24 hours of the incident.
General Emergency Plan

- The horse leader secures the horse by:
  - Turning the horse’s head TOWARD the dismounted participant and halting
  - Keeping clear of any other people or horses in the arena
- The Instructor will stay with the injured person and provide first aid or other treatment as needed
- If another treatment session is going on in the arena, the Instructor may dismount their participant and clear the arena
- A volunteer or staff member may be assigned to call 9-1-1 and may do the following:
  - Give directions to the facility (all information is posted by each phone at the barn)
  - Instruct the dispatch 9-1-1 operator to ensure that the ambulance driver turns the siren off as soon as they enter the property
- A volunteer or staff member may be assigned to go to the entrance of the property and direct the ambulance to the accident site. Doors and gates need to be opened for easy access
- A staff or volunteer may obtain the participant medical release form from the participant’s file
- After the paramedics arrive and take charge of the accident victim, the Instructor will fill out the necessary forms, including those which need to accompany the victim to the hospital
- *Parents, visitors, other volunteers and staff are required to stay at a safe distance unless otherwise requested by the Instructor to assist.*

In an emergency, the side walker on the inside of the arena is typically the primary side walker.

Emergency Dismount Procedure

If the participant needs to be immediately dismounted due to safety or health reasons, the following steps will be taken:

- The emergency dismount is called by anyone saying, “Emergency dismount” or “get him/her off.” Typically, the Instructor will call an emergency dismount, but a horse leader or a side walker may call an emergency dismount if the participant’s safety is at risk.
• The side walker who will be assisting the participant dismount (primary side walker) will call it by saying, “I’ve got him/her.” Typically, the side walker on the inside of the arena will become the primary person assisting the participant dismount.

• Both side walkers will make sure the participant’s feet are quickly taken out of the stirrups.

• The side walker will help get legs over neck or hip of the horse as quickly as possible.

• The primary side walker will quickly and carefully assist the participant to the ground.

• The leader will remain at the head of the horse and will turn the horse’s head to face the participant. The side walker who takes the participant off will grab either under the armpits or around the chest. Protect the participant by placing their head and neck against your chest. Be aware of helmets in a seizure, incident could be dangerous to your face.

• Carry/drag the participant with the head/neck against your chest to a safe distance far away from the horse (approx. 30 feet). Be careful when walking backwards.

• *Note: if the participant is in a sideways, upward sitting position with both legs on one side, the side walker on that same side as they are facing becomes the primary side walker and helps the participant dismount.

Hazards Specific to Working with Equines

Fallen Participant or Participant Emergency

If a participant falls from a horse, becomes injured, or has a medical emergency during a lesson, all activity will stop. The Instructor is responsible for managing the incident.

In the event of a fallen participant, the horse leader will turn the horse toward the participant and then halt. The leader will keep the horse at a safe distance (backing the horse if necessary). Side walkers with the fallen participant remain with their participants unless otherwise directed. All other side walkers are to apply “arm over the thigh” support and stay with their participants as they await further directions from the instructor. No one, including the participants’ parents, should enter or leave the area unless they have been directed by the Instructor.

Loose Horse

If a horse becomes loose in the arena during a lesson, all activity is to stop. Leaders will halt the horses while side walkers will apply the “arm over the thigh” support and await directions from the Instructor.

Do not chase a loose horse anywhere on the grounds.

Any person assigned to the task by the Instructor should attempt to approach the horse from the side in a quiet manner. Place a lead rope around the neck and then put on the halter. If necessary, a small amount of feed or a treat in a bucket may be used to encourage the horse to approach you.
Natural Disasters

Weather

In the event of tornado/warnings given for Tewksbury, Strongwater will cancel classes. Therapists/Instructors will email and/or call if cancellations can be given with enough notice. Please call the Center if you are not sure.

In the event of a tornado, hurricane, thunder or electrical storm during a scheduled class time, participants will be dismounted. In the event of a tornado, participants and personnel will seek shelter in the basement (bat cave) of the barn, which is located under the barn, adjacent to the outdoor arena until the danger has passed. Leaders, if time permits, will release horses into pasture or arena as directed by Instructor. Side walkers will escort the participants to the basement.

If outside, participants will be dismounted by all personnel and proceed to the nearest shelter. Leaders will remain with the horses, leading them away from the participants or as directed by Instructor. When the storm has passed, participants may remount and return to the arena if deemed safe by Instructor.

Fire

If a fire starts and you are dismounted, all volunteers will assist participants to the nearest clear exit. Instructors will make emergency calls to authorities from the nearest telephone. Participants, volunteers and instructors will meet on the far side of the metal round pen, which is located directly across from the Main Entrance of the barn, near the Office. Leaders will take horses to the nearest clear exit once participants have passed. Horses are to be released in paddock or pasture.

If participants are mounted when a fire starts, volunteers will assist participants in dismounting (except in cases of participants using a wheelchair); side walkers will escort participants via nearest clear route to the meeting place. Leaders will retreat to furthest side of arena and release horses into paddocks closest to location, and proceed to meeting area above. In all cases of participants using wheelchairs, all personnel will escort horse and participant to nearest clear area or paddock. ALL personnel and participants will meet by the round pen following completion of duties.

Fire Evacuation Procedure

In case of a fire or evacuation, follow these steps:

- The horse leader will stop the horse.
- Side walkers quickly and calmly dismount the participant (follow the above emergency dismount procedures 1-7).
- Side walkers walk the participant, holding their hand, or carry the participant out of the building by walking out the clearest exit of the arena. Go directly to the meeting place. Do not wait for parents (refer to exit map).
- Leaders will then lead the horses out. If the horse will not exit, leave the horse and exit the building. Once outside, follow staff’s directions. Horses will return to their stalls even if a fire is present. If you have access to a blanket or towel, place over horses eyes and lead away ONLY if instructor has deemed this to be safe.
- Everyone will meet by the metal round pen for a head count and any necessary first aid.
Man-Made Hazards

Required Closing of the Gates During Lessons

The gates should be closed during all programming between Livingston St. and the Tewksbury Hospital. They may also be closed at other times at the Instructor’s discretion.

On-Site Facilities

On-site facilities will have signage of “Authorized Personnel Only” on buildings surrounding the activity site.

Seizures

Definition: When a seizure occurs, the brain functions abnormally, resulting in a change in movement, attention, or level of awareness. Different types of seizures occur in different parts of the brain and may be localized (affects only a part of the body) or widespread (affects the whole body).

1. Partial seizures
   a. Simple partial – movement component that is located in one portion of the body; the child may appear awake and alert but as seizure progresses other parts of body affected
   b. Complex partial – the child is unaware of what is going on, and may repeat an activity (like clapping); the child will not have any memory of seizure episode; the child will be disoriented afterward; chewing, lip smacking, and clapping are possible symptoms.

2. Generalized seizures – involving a much larger part of the brain
   a. Convulsive- may start with a cry of loss of consciousness; there may be rigidity and shallow breathing, followed by louder breathing in a relaxed state; usually lasts less than five minutes with uncontrollable muscle jerking and a period of drowsiness; child may have incontinence and loss of memory of the seizure; sometimes the jerking can cause an injury anywhere from biting the tongue to a broken bone.
   b. Tonic – continuous muscle contraction and rigidity
   c. Petit Mal – short episodes where child may stare or blink rapidly with no awareness of his/her surroundings; episodes start and stop abruptly, usually only last a few seconds, and child will have no memory of the episode; commonly, it is misinterpreted whether a child actually had a seizure and is NOT daydreaming or just missing instructions or assignments.
   d. Drop Seizures – may be a sudden and complete loss of postural muscle tone; this could cause a child to fall on a sidewalk or straight down on the horse, resulting in injury; please be aware that when working with a child with a history of any type of seizure, seizures may occur at any time; symptoms for drop seizures may include – convulsions (rhythmic, jerking, muscle spasms, difficulty breathing, rolling eyes, sleepiness) and no memory of seizure episode – this is common of the grand mal (generalized) seizure; Epilepsy – refers to a pattern of chronic seizures of any type over a long period of time.

3. If a participant is having a seizure:
   a. Remember, the Instructor is in charge of decisions regarding the situation. Not all seizures require an emergency dismount.
   b. If the participant is dismounted: help the participant lie down in a safe area.
c. Check if the participant is breathing – call 9-1-1 if not breathing.
d. Remove glasses or other harmful objects from the arena (horses, tack, etc).
e. Do not put anything in the participant’s mouth.
f. After seizure ends, place participant on one side and stay with participant until fully awake. Observe for breathing. If not breathing within one minute after seizure stops, start mouth-to-mouth rescue breathing. Do no rescue breathe for participant during a seizure.
g. Check for fever.
h. No food, liquid, or medication should be given by mouth to a participant who just had a seizure.

4. Volunteer/Staff Reminders
   a. The biggest impact caregivers can have is to prevent further injury if a seizure occurs!
   b. Be aware that medication to prevent seizures may slow response time or increase hyperactivity.

4. The Side walker

Side walker Guidelines

Side walkers help the participant with balance and reinforce instructions in the lesson. If there are two side walkers, the Instructor will designate one side walker to be the communicator to the participant in the lesson. **Too many people talking to the participant is VERY confusing.**

As a side walker, you are responsible for the safety of the participant providing support for the entire lesson. **The side walkers are directly responsible for the participant.** As such, side walkers have the capability to either enhance or detract from the lesson.

*The side walkers are directly responsible for the participant.*
Too many people talking to the participant is VERY confusing.

The Role of Side Walking During Lessons

The ultimate goal for hippotherapy and therapeutic riding is to encourage the participant to stretch and reach his or her fullest potential in a safe manner.

- Assist in mounting; pull down stirrup on your side, hold saddle to prevent from slipping, and assist leg over horse’s rump or crest (directed by the Instructor).
- Different levels of support are used for each individual participant. The Instructor will determine the best way for you to assist. **Do not offer any more support than the participant needs.**
- **Stay with your participant at all times!** His/her safety depends on you.
- **Try to avoid unnecessary talking with either the participant or other volunteers.** Too much input from too many directions is very overwhelming to a participant with a perceptual problem.
- **Volunteers should aid the participant only to the degree needed.** Participants learn to control their horses to the best of their abilities.
- **Remember the participants are to do the exercises and the side walkers are to reinforce and assist. They will not develop to their full potential if the volunteer does it for them.**
- It is important to maintain a position by the participant’s hip and no more than an arm’s length away. Not being in the correct position will hinder helping the participant, whether assisting with instructions or providing coverage for safety if the horse should trip or shy.
- **Remember not to bump into or rest any part of your body on the horses’ side or body.** This is an "action" which will cause a "reaction" by the horse.
- Some participants can become off balanced very easily. Please make sure when doing any hold you don’t lean and cause a balance issue.
- When the Instructor dismounts the participant, make sure the participant’s foot is free from the stirrup and help the leg over the horse’s rump/crest. When it is an over-the-crest dismount, support the participant’s back with one hand and help the leg over with your other hand.
- If the participant is off-center, the side walkers should center the hips of the participant.
Volunteer Requirements for Side walking

In order to serve as a side walker, the volunteer must be able to:

- Walk with the arm-over-thigh hold for at least 30 minutes
- Hold a large participant (possible weight of 200 lbs) in midline position
- Perform all emergency procedures (emergency dismount, fire procedure, etc.)
- Run while maintaining an arm-over-thigh hold for two laps of the arena
- Refrain from talking during the session
- Must be at least 14 years old to volunteer per PATH Int’l standards
- Wear sensible and comfortable clothing, sturdy shoes, or boots with heels (no open-toed shoes or sandals)
- Be realistic about your level of fitness. If you are unable to trot, let the Instructor know before the session begins
- Be realistic about your knowledge of horses. Let the Volunteer Coordinator know about any experience you have with horses
- Be punctual and regular in attendance. Strongwater is relying upon your skills to provide a quality session. Arrive 10-15 minutes prior to your scheduled lesson to sign in and confirm with the team. Please remember to record your volunteer hours for each lesson.
- If you are going to miss a lesson, contact the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible. The Coordinator will search for your substitute.
- Be sensitive to the participant’s needs and to the needs of their families. Please remember all medical and personal information about Strongwater’s participants is confidential.
- Be attentive and alert. We are there to assist the participants and maintain the highest standards of safety within the program 100% of the time. Always anticipate the unexpected.

Side Walker’s Responsibilities

Side walkers are responsible for:

- Ensuring the participant’s safety at all times
- Assisting the participant in maintaining balance, correct alignment, and staying centered
- Reinforcing the Instructor’s directions
- Assistance during mounting: the Instructor MUST be present

Reinforce directions progressively by: verbal prompt, hand tap, hand over hand
Only Instructors, who are trained in transferring participants with disabilities, may assist participants to mount and dismount. Volunteers may aid the Instructor as instructed. Participants may mount from the ramp, a mounting block, or the ground.

- Go to the horse you are scheduled to work with before the participant arrives there (See class template).
- Remember – you are the barrier at the ramp while the participant is mounting or dismounting when you are on the opposite side of the participant.
- All volunteers must be in position before the participant mounts.
- The Instructor will make tack adjustments before mounting.
- On some occasions, if the participant is mounting from the ground, hold down the right stirrup leather so the saddle won’t slip when the participant puts weight in the left stirrup.
- The Instructor will make adjustments to the equipment as needed after the mount. Side walkers may assist the participant with balance or adjusting the stirrups as indicated by the Instructor.

Hand Holds to Stabilize Participants

Different methods are used with participants depending on their needs. Common examples of side walker assistance are:

- **Arm-over-Thigh Hold**: With the arm closest to the participant, hold onto the saddle pad or saddle, reaching over the participant’s leg, palm grip down on the hand hold.
- **Ankle Hold**: Hold the participant at the ankle, anchoring the legs and seat, palm down, keeping heel under hip in proper alignment, unless Instructor says otherwise.
- **Gait Belt**: Hold the gait belt ONLY when the participant is in specific positions as instructed by the Instructor (i.e. vaulting) or for emergency purposes. Never pull on gait belt – hand hold should be palm down always.
- **Spotting**: Walk beside participant’s leg, assisting only when needed (i.e. at the trot or to reinforce the Instructor’s direction) – maintain position by keeping shoulder at participant’s hip, your hip at participant’s ankle (hand hold)
Side Walking at the Halt:

- Always remain at the participant’s side

Side Walking at the Walk:

- Keep your body in position at all times! Your shoulder will be at the participant’s hip, and your hip will be at the participant’s ankle.
- Adjust to the horse’s stride.
- Stay next to the participant’s side! A side walker should never leave the participant’s side unless told by the Instructor or a substitute is present.
- Keep physical contact with the participant unless otherwise instructed.

Side Walking at the Trot:

- Communicate to the horse Leader when ready.
- Make sure the participant is balanced on the horse.
- Make sure participant is prepared to trot.
- When in doubt, support the participant by using the arm-over-thigh hold, unless otherwise instructed.
- Stay next to the participant’s leg as the horse is trotting. Do not drop out of position such as behind the flank (a sensitive and dangerous place on a horse). If you find you cannot keep up with the participant, request that your horse Leader halt until you are able to reposition yourself safely.
- Communicate with the horse Leader. If a problem arises (i.e. participant becomes unbalanced), if the Leader is falling behind and causing you to step on them, or you lose your position, have the horse Leader stop the horse and then make adjustments. If the Leader is pushing you into the arena wall communicate with each other.

Review – Emergency Dismounts

- Call it!
- Put arms under participant’s arms. *Always protect head and neck!
- Swiftly take participant off the horse.
- If you are on the opposite side of the emergency dismount, help get foot out of stirrup and participant’s leg over quickly.
- Take participant to a safe distance across arena.
- Leader will be trained to turn horse’s head toward the situation.

Assistance During Dismounting (Instructor MUST be present)

- Remember – you are the barrier at the ramp while the participant is mounting or dismounting when you are on the opposite side of the participant.
• When dismounting to the ramp (extreme cases only due to higher risk), the left side walker will “hand off” the participant to the Instructor once they are in position and ready to receive the participant from the side walker on the ramp.
• When the participant has safely left the mounting area, the horse leader will lead the horse away from the mounting area. Side walkers will assist the participant safely to the deck or parent waiting area.
• Remember to always wait for the Instructor for dismounting. Never dismount the participant yourself.

**Points to Keep in Mind**

• Refrain from conversation during session. Direct the participant’s attention to the instructor.
• If a problem arises, immediately tell the horse leader and the Instructor so appropriate action can be taken.
• If you need to change sides with the other side walker, ask the leader to bring the horse to the center of the arena and stop. Side walkers change sides one at a time. When changing sides, one side walker walks in front of the horse to the second side walker’s position. That side walker then walks in front of the horse to opposite side. Never leave the participant alone or unassisted.
• In a safe environment, it is okay for a participant to make a mistake – LET THEM! Mistakes are often the best way for the participant to learn. Give the participant the opportunity to follow the Instructor’s directions. *It is okay for the participants to make mistakes and learn from them.*
• The participant’s ears, shoulders, hips, and ankles should be in a straight line for the correct alignment (see picture below).
• Any mounted person must wear an ASTM approved, well-fitted helmet at all times.
• All children in the barn should be supervised by an adult and remain in the designated area with proper supervision. If you see a child unsupervised, please hold their hand and return them to their family immediately.
• All decisions concerning mounting, dismounting, and the therapy session are the responsibility of the Instructor.
• Be attentive and ready to interpret the requests of the Instructor for your participant.
• When assistance to the participant is needed, be positive in your approach. Be specific and objective. Some participants may be challenged with directions and need them simplified. Be encouraging with your assistance. At times, the Instructor may step in and switch places with a side walker in order to facilitate the participant.
• Use multi-sensory approach when assisting a participant. Give your participant time to process information and to perform.
• Report any unusual behavior or fatigue to the Instructor.
• Maintain your position behind horse’s shoulder and in front of horse’s flank. If you are too far forward or backward, you won’t be in position to assist in an emergency.
• When using the arm-over-thigh hold, grip the front of the saddle with the hand closest to the participant. Gently rest you forearm on the participant’s thigh.
• If the arm-over-thigh hold is too uncomfortable for the participant (be sure you don’t dig into the participant’s thigh with your elbow), try the therapeutic hold. Simply hold the leg at the joint, usually the knee or ankle. Check with your Instructor on which position is best.
Never wrap an arm around the participant’s waist. This can offer either too much or uneven support. You may even pull the participant off balance. Use the gait belt to help keep the participant stable but do not pull or push against it.

5. Be attentive to the instructor at all times.

The Horse Leader

The Horse Leader’s Responsibilities:

The horse leader is responsible for controlling the horse at ALL times and assisting the participant in directing the horse, when appropriate. All Leaders must attend Leader Training workshops and work towards being signed off as a Leader 1 or Leader 2 before working with the horses in lessons.

How to Lead:

- Lead with your fingertips, not your hand.
- Walk beside the horse’s head, staying next to the horse’s cheek.
- Hold the lead rope slightly below the clip attached to the halter or bit lead.
**Strongwater Leader Competency Checklist**

- Influence the horse in a positive and relaxed manner
- Assess issues and use correct training methods/aids within scope of Strongwater’s policies and procedures
- Hold excess lead rope at an appropriate length from the halter
- Look up and ahead in direction of travel with soft eyes for awareness of surroundings
- Allow horse to move freely forward and relaxed with complete freedom of head and neck
  - Walk with clearly balanced rhythm in harmony with horse’s movement while positioned at horse’s head
- Be comfortable, safe and not disruptive to the team (horse, participant, side walkers)
- Be able to safely control and maneuver the horse at halt/walk/trot, including squaring horse at mounting block and maintaining safe distances between other teams
- Be able to stop horse and handle correctly at mounting block
- Be able to anticipate and evaluate horse behavior

**Volunteer Requirements for Horse Leaders**

In order to serve as a horse leader, volunteer must be able to:

- Perform all emergency procedures (emergency dismount, fire procedure, etc.)
- Refrain from talking during the session
- Must be at least 14 years old per PATH Intl standards
- Wear sensible and comfortable clothing, sturdy shoes or boots with heels (no open-toed shoes or sandals)
- Be realistic about your level of fitness. If you are unable to trot, let the Instructor know before the lesson starts
• Be realistic about your knowledge of horses
• Be punctual and regular in attendance. Strongwater is relying on your skills to provide a quality lesson. Arrive 10-15 minutes prior to the time your lesson is scheduled to begin to sign in and confirm with the team. Please remember to record your volunteer hours for each session.
• If you are going to miss a lesson, contact the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible.
• Be sensitive to participant’s needs and to the needs of their families. Please remember all medical and personal information about Strongwater’s participants is confidential.
• Be attentive and alert. We are there to assist the participants and maintain the highest standards of safety within the program 100% of the time. Always anticipate the unexpected.

The Session

Each participant may need up to three volunteers to assist in a lesson. Most “teams” will consist of a horse Leader and 1-2 Side Walkers. Some of the goals of therapeutic riding classes are to teach horsemanship skills, improve balance, muscle tone, self-esteem, communication, and socialization skills. Lesson plans will vary from class to class to address the goals of the individual participants.

Leader Guidelines

An effective leader stays focused on the horse as well as the participant’s needs. Often times the participant needs extra time to process the information from the Instructor. Wait for the participant to attempt to give the correct cue before you assist in the execution of the task. Your job is the horse; you should have no verbal communication with the participant unless there is a safety issue.

Wait for the participant to process the instructor’s information and give the right cue before helping, if needed. Do not do everything for the participant!
Leading in the Lesson

- Participants are urged to control their horses to the maximum of their abilities. A leader must NEVER take the place of the participant, but should be there to assist in the control of the horse. Check with your Instructor before the lesson regarding the level of the participant’s ability.
- When the participant is controlling the horse, allow some minimal slack in the lead so that you do not influence the horse unless this becomes necessary for safety reasons. The horse may become confused if he feels both a tug on the reins and on the lead.
- **Your focus is on the horse so conversation with side walkers and participants should be nonexistent.** The exception would be a safety concern or if the participant does not have side walkers.
- Position yourself on either side of horse using your dominant hand on the lead, with your shoulder even with the horse’s ear.
- Hold the lead rope to allow for the natural head movement of the horse.
- Always loop your excess rope in a figure 8. NEVER coil the rope around your hand. A sudden pull could amputate your fingers. NEVER let the rope drag on the ground.
- Keep a minimum of two horse lengths between your horse and any other horse.
- Make sure to allow space for your side walkers when next to an obstacle, wall or fence.
- When the horse is stopped, stand directly in front of the horse. This is extremely important at the mount and dismount.
- Talk softly and gently pet the horse if the horse seems nervous or distracted.
- If a horse shies or pulls away, go with him until you get him stopped. **When a participant is mounted on the horse, never totally let go of the lead under any circumstances.**
  When doing an emergency dismount, the leader is responsible to turn the horse immediately toward the participant on the ground. The leader is responsible to keep the horse calm, quiet and at a safe distance from the situation (backing the horse may be necessary).

6. The Groom

The Groom must be knowledgeable in all areas of horsemanship. The Groom will bring in the horse slated for the upcoming lesson(s), groom and appropriately tack the horse as well as care for the horse after the lesson. The Groom must attend Groom Workshops in order to be certified. In some cases, a Groom-in-training may shadow an experienced Groom to gain experience “on the job.”

Parts of the Horse

When working around horses there are some special words and terms that you will need to know. Some parts of the horse are labeled below.
Grooming the Horse

Grooming is a perfect time to bond with the Strongwater herd; making friends, encouraging trust, and respect. Grooming keeps the horse’s coat clean and healthy. It eliminates dirt, dried sweat, and loose hair that can irritate the horse under its tack. It also gives you the opportunity to check for any injuries. Please inform the staff if you notice any injuries.

Basic Grooming and Safety

- Secure horse for grooming in the Grooming Stall or in the horse’s stall. If in the Grooming Stall, use the cross ties to secure the horse; if in the horse’s stall, use a safety-release to secure him. Horse should be facing out of the grooming stall to be aware of distractions.
- Never kneel down beside a horse when grooming. Always maintain a crouch or squat position while staying on your feet, in case the horse moves unexpectedly.
- Maintain both hands in contact with the horse while grooming. The hand which is not active can monitor the body movement of the horse or act as a support to push away from the horse in case of an emergency. This allows the horse to know where you are at all times.
- When using a brush or a rag, always move in the direction of the hair growth.
- Clean area of debris after the grooming session.

Grooming

- Start at the neck and work back towards the rump with curry comb in circular motion; in direction of the hair growth
• Stiff and/or soft brush is to be used from head to rump in the direction of the hair growth
• Soft brush only or specialized groom curry for face.
• Brush legs in direction of hair growth. Do not use a curry comb.
• Brush out mane and tail with specialized combs and/or fingers.
• Clean eyes/nose with clean, damp sponge or towel

**Barn/Arena Horse Handling Procedures**

• Halters will stay on horses at all times while in preparation for sessions
• Halter and lead rope remain on front of stall door when not being used
• Leave 1/3 of the stall door open whenever people are inside with a horse (there should always be an escape route out of the stall)
• While grooming in stalls, keep the horse’s head pointed towards the stall door
• Horses should always be returned to the stall where you found them. Strongwater has stalls labeled with individual horses’ names

**Horse Verbal Cues**

*Note we want these to be used on a consistent basis by all participants. Please help us help our horses!*

1. “Walk on”
2. “1 2 3 Trot” (with inflection)
3. Kiss or Canter cue with inflection for canter/lope
4. “And…whoa”
5. “Back”
Understanding Horse Behavior

When developing relationships and working with horses, communication is the key. It is critical to provide a safe environment in a hippo therapy/therapeutic horseback riding setting. Beginning a process of understanding the horse senses, instincts and implications is a step in predicting behaviors, managing risks, and increasing positive relationships.

- **Smell:** The horse’s sense of smell is very acute, which allows him to recognize other horses and people. Smell also enables the horse to evaluate situations.
  - Allow horses the opportunity to become familiar with new objects and their environment by smelling.
  - Do not carry treats in your pockets since horses may desire to go after them.
  - Lotions and/or perfumes may entice horses to lick you.

- **Hearing:** The horse’s sense of hearing is also thought to be very acute. The horse may also combine their sense of hearing and sight to become more familiar with new or alerting sounds. “Hearing and not seeing” is often the cause of the flight/flight response. Forward ears communicate attentiveness and interest. Ears that are laid back often communicate that they are upset and/or showing aggression towards another horse or person.
  - Horses are wary when they hear something but do not see it. If your horse is acting nervous, talk to him in a quiet and calm voice for reassurance.
  - Avoid shouting or using a loud voice and making loud noise. This can be frightening to a horse.
  - Watch your horse’s ears for increased communication.

- **Sight:** The horse’s eyes are set on either side of the head; there is good peripheral (lateral) vision but poor frontal vision at close range. A horse focuses on objects by raising and lowering its head. The horse’s visual memory is very accurate. Horses are thought to see quite well in the dark, due to the large size of their eyes.
The horse may notice if something in the arena or out on the trail is different. Allow the horse an opportunity to look at new objects. Always slowly introduce new props that the horse may not be familiar with initially.

- Although the horse has good peripheral vision, consider two blind spots: directly in front of and directly behind. The best way to approach a horse is at his shoulder, as you may startle the horse if approached from the front or behind. The horse may be unable to see around their mouth area, which is a safety consideration when hand feeding. **Do not walk behind the horse at any time!**

- **Touch**: Touch is used as a communication tool between horses and people. Horses are sensitive to soft or rough touch with a person’s hands or legs.
  - Horse leaders should treat the horses gently but with confidence
  - Each horse has sensitive areas and it is important to be familiar with them (i.e. flank and belly area)
  - Watch the participant’s leg position, as they may need appropriate assistance to reduce squeezing or kicking. Ask the instructor what the best technique would be.

- **Taste**: Taste is closely linked with the sense of smell and helps the horse to distinguish palatable foods and other objects. Horses may lick or nibble while becoming familiar with objects and people. This leads to biting so please do not offer hands to tempt horses.

- **Sixth Sense**: Horses do have a “sixth sense” when evaluating the disposition of those around them. Horses can be hypersensitive in detecting the moods of their horse leaders, side walkers, and participants. At times, there may be a personality conflict between horse leaders and horses. It is important to let the Instructor know if you are having a difficult time relating to or getting along with a particular horse, or feeling at ease. Remember that horses do sense fear. **Always let us know if you are not 100% comfortable with the horse you are to be working with.**

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The horse’s six senses – can you name them all?

**The Horse’s Lifestyle**

In addition to understanding the horse’s senses, we need to appreciate and increase our awareness of the horse’s lifestyle. This will assist us in responding appropriately to his reactions to situations.

- **Flight as a Natural Response**: Horses would rather turn and run away from danger than face it.
  - At a sudden movement or noise, the horse might try to flee—speak to the horse calmly.
o A frightened horse that is tied up or being led tightly might try to escape by pulling back. Relax your hold or untie him quickly and usually he will relax.
o If flight is not possible, the horse may turn to kick out or face the problem and rear, especially in a tight area.
o With horses chosen to work in a therapeutic horseback riding setting, we attempt to condition horses to have less of an instinct to flee. The horse leader may need to remain calm and talk to the horse in a soothing voice to reassure him when startled.

• Herd Animals
  o Horses like to stay together in a herd or group with one or two horses dominant, and a pecking order amongst the rest.
  o Horses may not like being alone. This is a consideration when they are left in the arena.
  o If the horse in front of a line is trotting or cantering, the horse that is following may also attempt to trot or canter.
  o If one horse spooks at something, the surrounding horses may follow.

Horse Sense is the basis of horsemanship. This is the ability of a person to understand horses and even to think like a horse. The better you understand horses, the more you will enjoy them and the better volunteer you will become.

Horses are prey animals (animals taken by predators as food) and are driven by 3 main instincts:

• Observant to danger
• Flight instinct/flee from fear
• Herd animal

Reading a Horse’s Body Language

• Contented – relaxed head and neck, soft eye, swishing tail
• Interested – head and neck elevated, ears forward, eyes bright
• Submissive – lowers head, stands ground, licks lips, eyes alert
• Aggressive – humps back, lowers neck, grind or snap teeth, lashes tail, lays ears flat against head, eyes have a sharp and assertive look
• Excited – may pace or wheel around, raises head and arches neck, eyes wide may show white, nostrils flare, may neigh or squeal, buck, snake head, snort
• Angry or Intimidated – stamp feet or paw, swishes tail, grind teeth or nip, lays ears back
• Ill or Depressed – lackluster eyes, weak posture with low neck, motionless tail, legs splayed out to hold up body, uninterested expression, ears neutral, breathing abnormal
• Fearful – horse stops in his tracks, runs or leaps suddenly and snorts, white ring around eye, nostrils flared, head and neck raised, heart rate increases, rapid breathing, ears pricked toward object
Horse Body Language

Interested  Contented  Submissive
Aggressive, Angry  Excited  Ill or Depressed  Fearful

Parts of an English Bridle

Head Piece
Brow Band
Cheek Piece
Noseband
Bit
Throatlatch
Reins
Headstall
Parts of a Western Saddle
7. The Participant

Diagnoses Commonly Served

The following are brief, non-medical descriptions of common diagnoses and conditions treated at Strongwater. This is not intended to be a comprehensive explanation of a specific condition, but rather a general overview, along with an explanation of how hippo therapy and therapeutic horseback riding can be beneficial.

- **Amputations**
  - Definition: a limb or part of a limb may be surgically removed or not present, congenitally or traumatically
  - Types: congenital, traumatic
  - Characteristics: may experience phantom pain, balance, skin breakdown; prosthetics may be used
  - Benefits: balance, self-concept, fine motor skills, self-esteem, strength and coordination

- **Autism Spectrum Disorder**
  - Definition: a self-centered mental state from which reality tends to be excluded
  - Characteristics: unresponsiveness to the presence of others, withdrawal from physical contact, severely delayed and disordered language; developmental unawareness of real dangers, hyperactive, passive, unusual behaviors such as smelling/tasting/licking/mouthing all objects, ritualistic behaviors, unusual response to sounds, clumsiness, social withdrawal, resistance to change
  - Benefits: interaction in a group setting stimulates interest away from self toward others and the horses

- **Brain Injury (BI)**
  - Definition: accidental/trauma or disease to the head resulting in intracranial bleeding with death of brain cells
  - Characteristics: gross and fine motor skill deficits; often have impaired memory, speech, balance and/or vision emotion or behavior; may have psychological effects
  - Benefits: promotes socialization and communication skills; provides sensory input and promotes sensory integration; develops strength, coordination, muscle tone, and gross and fine motor skills

- **Cerebral Palsy (CP)**
  - Definition: brain damage occurring before, at, or shortly after birth; it is a non-progressive motor disorder
  - Types and Characteristics:
    - Spastic: increased muscle tone, muscle imbalance and equilibrium; increased startle reflex and other pathological reflexes
    - Athetoid: extensor muscle tension, involuntary movements, difficulty maintaining upright posture
    - Ataxia: weakened muscles, poor balance, and difficulty with quick fine movements
  - Benefits: normalization of muscle tone, muscle strengthening, development of posture, balance, and motor coordination; opportunity to promote expressive skills, socialization and confidence
o Associated Problems: seizures, hearing defects, visual defects, general sensory impairment, perceptual problems, communication problems, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, learning disabilities

• Cerebral Vascular Accident – Stroke (CVA)
  o Definition: hemorrhage in the brain which causes varying degrees of functional impairment
  o Characteristics: flaccid or spastic paralysis of arm and leg on same side of body; may impair cognition, speech, sight, balance, coordination and strength
  o Benefits: promotes symmetry, stimulates balance, posture, motor planning, speech and socialization

• Developmental Delay (DD)
  o Definition: a general term applied to children functioning two or more years below grade
  o Characteristics: varied but can include slow physical and social development; often accompanied by coordination and sensory integration problems
  o Benefits: provides arena for success, opportunity for sport and recreation, stimulates body awareness, promotes sensory integration and helps develop self esteem

• Down Syndrome
  o Definition: condition in which a person is born with an extra chromosome resulting in developmental delay and mental retardation
  o Characteristics: mild to severe learning disabilities, low muscle tone, speech impairments; broad flat face, slanted eyes, neck often broad and short
  o Benefits: increases confidence and self-esteem; promotes social skills; increases balance, coordination, posture, and muscle tone; increases language and motor skills

• Sensory Integrative Dysfunction (SI)
  o Definition: an irregularity or disorder in brain function that makes it difficult to integrate sensory input effectively; SI may be present in motor, learning, social-emotional, speech/language or attention disorders.
  o Characteristics: may be overly or severely under sensitive to touch, movement, sights or sounds; under-reactive to sensory stimulation (may seek out intense sensory experiences); unusually high or low activity level; coordination problems (poor balance or difficulty learning a new motor coordination activity); delays in speech, language, motor skills or academic achievement; impulsive, distractible, poor task planning; poor ability to deal with failure (frustration, aggression or withdrawal)
  o Benefits: provides organized multi-sensory input with strong vestibular (movement in space), proprioceptive (deep tissue sensation from muscles and joints) and tactile (sense of touch to the skin) stimuli, which encourages more organized, automatic, and integrated responses

• Emotional Disabilities
  o Definition: social, emotional or behavioral functioning which is not age appropriate and affects a participant’s academics, social relationships and self-care
  o Characteristics: trouble coping with everyday life situations and interpersonal relations; depression, anxiety, physical symptoms, difficulty learning, withdrawal, and aggressiveness
  o Benefits: increase self-confidence, self-esteem, and promotes positive socialization; develops a sense of responsibility towards living creatures: a human-animal bond
Hearing Impaired
- Definition: congenital or acquired hearing loss varying from mild to profound
- Characteristics: communication difficulties may use lip reading or sign language
- Benefit: stimulates self-confidence, balance, posture and coordination; it also provides appropriate social outlets and interactions; promotes sensory integration and human animal bonding.

- Multiple Sclerosis (MS)
  - Definition: progressive neurological disease with degeneration of spinal column tracts resulting in scar formation
  - Characteristics: mostly occurs in the twenty to forty year old range; it is progressive with periods of exacerbations and remissions; symptoms include weakness, visual impairment, fatigue, emotional sensitivity, and loss of coordination
  - Benefits: maintains and strengthens weak muscles and provides opportunities for emotional therapy

- Scoliosis
  - Definition: lateral curve of the spine with a 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
    - NOTE: Severe Scoliosis is a contraindication for therapeutic riding

- Spinal Cord Injury (SCI)
  - Definition: trauma to the spinal cord resulting in loss of neurological function
  - Characteristics: paralysis of muscle below the level of injury; can be flaccid or spastic; easily fatigued, sensory loss
  - Benefits: stimulates posture and balance, strengthens trunk muscles, and provides opportunity for recreational and social activity
  - Associate Problems: pressure sores

- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
  - Definition: accidental injury to the head resulting in intracranial bleeding with death of brain cells
  - Characteristics: gross and fine motor skill deficits; often have impaired memory, speech, balance ad or vision; may have psychological effects
  - Benefits: stimulates balance, posture, gross and fine motor skills, speech and perceptual skills

- Visual Impairment
  - Definition: moderate to total loss of sight
  - Characteristics: insecure posture, lack of visual memory, anterior center of gravity, fearfulness; may have light sensitivity if partially sighted
  - Benefits: stimulates spatial awareness, proprioception, posture, and coordination; provides social outlet, structured risk taking, and freedom of movement