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1. Welcome to Strongwater!

Strongwater farm business hours: 9:00AM - 5:00PM, Monday - Friday

If volunteer is not listed on designated schedule found on volunteer desk please have them reach out to the vc and come back during business hours.
Thank you!

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:

Stacy Tofuri  
Email: volunteer@strongwaterfarm.org

Mission Statement

For over a decade, Strongwater Farm has improved the quality of life and health for thousands of children and adults with special needs in the greater Boston area by providing professionally supervised, equine-assisted activities and therapies.

Our mission is to enhance and enrich lives by providing education, physical activity, social opportunities, and emotional support to our clients through equine-assisted activities and therapies. We do this while honoring our core values; integrity, compassion, healing, and safety. Our family oriented programs succeed through the efforts of our dedicated volunteers, knowledgeable staff and valued equine partners. We strive to create a safe, welcoming environment where individuals can learn, grow, and heal through the healing power of the horse.

We are one of only two therapeutic riding centers in northeast Massachusetts with Premier Center accreditation from the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship, International (PATH Intl.). Strongwater’s instructors are licensed and certified by both PATH Intl and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Many instructors have additional certifications in related disciplines such as physical therapy, expressive arts therapy, special education, and mental health, ensuring high quality professionally trained instruction.

Strongwater is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization located in Tewksbury, Massachusetts. We are situated on 12 acres of land leased from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. There is a stable for twelve horses, an indoor program area, an outdoor riding ring, a sensory trail, and numerous paddocks on the property. We have also been granted the right to utilize 450 acres of adjacent conservation land containing miles of trails, and an event venue for our riding programs.

Strongwater offers therapeutic programs to a wide range of individuals with physical, cognitive, and emotional challenges. Examples of other individuals who could benefit from our services include autistic children, multiple sclerosis patients, veterans with a range of issues, including PTSD, and those with substance use disorders.
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 surround 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.

Volunteers-The Heart of Strongwater Farm

Strongwater owes its existence almost entirely to the efforts and generosity of volunteers. It operates under the direction of a volunteer Board of Directors and a volunteer Advisory Board. A majority of the intensive daily work of caring for Strongwater’s horses, maintaining its physical facilities and running its therapeutic programs, is done by volunteers and staff working together.
Our Supporters

One of Strongwater’s greatest strengths has been the diversity of its supporters: it unites the good will and professional skills of carpenters and engineers, business people and students, physicians and horseback-riding instructors. Indeed, virtually all aspects of Strongwater’s physical facilities and therapeutic programs have grown from gifts of time, professional expertise, labor, and materials. Our program has been in major expansion mode and will need community support. One way you can support the mission of Strongwater and the students we serve is by volunteering. Another way to support Strongwater’s mission is to financially partner with us.

*For more information regarding how you can financially partner with us or other ways you can contribute, please contact us at 978-851-5540. Thank you in advance.

Strongwater across the way

Strongwater is enhancing the local trail system and installing competition rings at other sites on the hospital campus, referred to collectively as “Strongwater Park”. Strongwater Park will serve not only our program but also outside equestrian organizations as a site for competitions, demonstrations, and other equestrian events that will help support our mission. The highly interconnected New England equestrian community has responded enthusiastically to the park project. For more information on how you can help maintain the trails and arena please contact the VC.

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

Lesson Volunteer Coordinator
Contact Information

In the event that you are unable to volunteer for a scheduled shift, please contact the Lesson Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible. We will need to schedule a substitute in order not to disrupt the flow of lessons. Many of our therapeutic lessons cannot take place without the generosity of our volunteers.

In the case of inclement weather, either your scheduled instructor or the Lesson Volunteer Coordinator will contact you as soon as we know the status of the lessons.

You can contact the Lesson Volunteer Coordinator with any questions or issues that arise during your time at the barn. We want this to be a fun and rewarding experience for you as well as our special equestrians.

VC: Stacy Tofuri, Barn: 978-851-5540, Email: volunteer@strongwaterfarm.org

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 leading and side walking. 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.

Volunteer General Information:

Volunteers Must: Attend a Workshop
Be 14 years old or accompanied by an adult
Sign a Release form
Sign a Confidentiality form
Wear sensible and comfortable clothing and dress for the weather:
   Long pants or shorts
   Hat to protect from the sun, rain or snow.
   Sturdy shoes or boots
   Rain coat or jacket, Gloves
   No dangling jewelry (could become entangled in the rider or tack).
   No open-toe shoes, ripped jeans, shirts showing midriff, etc.
   Bring bottled water, especially in hot weather.

**Typical Shift Outline:**

Plan to arrive 15 minutes before your scheduled shift and to stay 15 minutes after your shift.

Sign-in using ‘Track it Forward’.

Locate your instructor. This is a good time to ask any questions you may have about the upcoming lesson(s).

Remember...the Instructor is in charge

The instructor may ask you to walk the horse down to the mounting ramp or arena. Wait for the instructor and student near the ramp or outside the arena

Assist with mounting

Listen to the instructor. Help the rider only when needed. The instructor will direct you on leading and sidewalk strategies

Dismounting can take place in the arena, at the mounting ramp or in front of the barn. The instructor will direct you on the planned dismount. You may then be asked to return the horse to the barn where a Working Student will take the horse to be un-tacked and turned out.

At the end of your shift please remember to sign out.

**Volunteers are not allowed to bring visitors, family or friends into the stalls, paddocks or riding arena**
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:

Side walkers 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.

Volunteer Grooms (VGs) 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 every time you volunteer
- 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

Confidentiality Policy

Strongwater has strict confidentiality guidelines regarding the right to privacy and the 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 CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information) report. 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.

**Please sign in using ‘Track it Forward’**

After completing your volunteer session, sign out noting the time of departure so that we can track the number of hours volunteered. Logging hour is incredibly important for grants and funds to help aid our programming.

**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.

*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). Whenever possible, please wear your Strongwater Volunteer shirt to distinguish yourself as a volunteer for participants, staff, and other volunteers.
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. vc@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 unless authorized by the Instructor.
• 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 INFORMATION** posted by all barn phones, first desk on the left when walking in the office door.

**MAKING THE CALL:**

Stay Calm and Be accurate – give as much information as possible regarding the emergency:

- Exact location of emergency (barn, ring, paddocks, etc.). We are located at 365 Livingston Street, Your name, What happened, Number of victims, Victim's condition, Current help being given

**REMEMBER: DO NOT HANG UP FIRST** Dispatcher may need more information

In case of an emergency requiring First Aid your instructor/barn manager will direct you.

Strongwater's Instructors and Barn Manager are certified by the American Red Cross in First Aid and CPR.

**First Aid Kits:**

- **Human:** Located to the right of the large doors in the front of the barn.
- **Horse:** Located in the main office side of the barn in the ‘Equine First Aid’ cabinet.

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

- **Phones:** in the office and outside of the office 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
- 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.*
Lesson Specific: 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.*
  o 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 sidewalk 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 past the hospital paddock on the hill. 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).
• 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 the body are 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 or 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 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 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
○ 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)
○ Definition: hemorrhage in the brain which causes varying degrees of functional impairment
○ Characteristics: flaccid or spastic paralysis of arm and leg on same side of body; may impair cognition, speech, sight, balance, coordination and strength
○ Benefits: promotes symmetry, stimulates balance, posture, motor planning, speech and socialization

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

● Down Syndrome
○ Definition: condition in which a person is born with an extra chromosome resulting in developmental delay and mental retardation
○ Characteristics: mild to severe learning disabilities, low muscle tone, speech impairments; broad flat face, slanted eyes, neck often broad and short
○ 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)
○ 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.
○ 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)
○ 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
○ Definition: social, emotional or behavioral functioning which is not age appropriate and affects a participant’s academics, social relationships and self-care
• Characteristics: trouble coping with everyday life situations and interpersonal relations; depression, anxiety, physical symptoms, difficulty learning, withdrawal, and aggressiveness
  • 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 and 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

*For the rider with postural asymmetry, horseback riding can stimulate postural symmetry and strengthen trunk muscles.*