



## **Sidewalker Training Manual**

45 minutes – Mock lesson

15 minutes – Wrap up in classroom

Sidewalker Session to Include:

- Confirm Volunteer forms are completed and turned in by all participants
- Participant Introductions- make name tags
- Review sidewalker position information–will practice during the mock lesson

Tour of the Facility:

- Volunteer Room –volunteer sign in – name tags
- Full emergency site training tour – (site diagram handout)
- Review evacuation location -Practice Fire Drill to evacuation site

Move to ring for mock lesson

Return to classroom:

- Discuss upcoming lessons/sign up

## **CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY**

Due to the nature of therapeutic horseback riding, it is the policy of the EQUI-KIDS Therapeutic Riding Program that all information pertaining to our participants, families, caregivers, staff and volunteers shall remain privileged and confidential. This information may include, but not be limited to, any medical, social, referral, personal and/or financial information that may be disclosed because of participation in this program.

Disclosure of any confidential information shall not be released to anyone not associated with EQUI-KIDS. Discussions involving any participant shall be limited to progress reports, appropriate mounted and dismounted safety guidelines and any other guidelines the instructor may deem appropriate in each situation. Volunteers will be given information concerning participants on a "need to know" basis and in keeping with the confidential nature of our clients' records. Each participant shall be assured of record confidentiality and as such, only authorized staff will have access to a secured records location.

Interviews or other forms of public discussions with any public relations media, either through television, radio or any other type of publications, is strictly prohibited by any volunteer. All such matters shall be directed to the Executive Director for appropriate action.

Because our intention is to safeguard information about our participants, this policy is designed to ensure that the privacy of our participants, their families and caregivers, staff and volunteers is protected. Sensitive medical, psychiatric, psychological and/or personal information may be detrimental if released to those outside of the EQUI-KIDS organization. Such a breach of confidentiality may also constitute grounds for legal action.

Failure to adhere to the EQUI-KIDS confidentiality policy by any staff or volunteer could result in their termination of employment or service.

It is also the policy of the EQUI-KIDS Therapeutic Riding Program that no external form of communication that uses the EQUI-KIDS logo and/or name be used without written authorization from the Executive Director or Director of Development. Further, no employee or volunteer is authorized to speak on behalf of EQUI-KIDS to the media without consent. Media includes television, social media, radio, or print.

## **WHEN YOU MEET A PARTICIPANT**

First, remember that the person with a special ability is a person. They are like everyone else, except for the special limitations of his or her need/s.

A special ability need not be ignored or denied between friends, but until your relationship is one of friendship, show interest in them as a person only.

Be yourself when you meet a person with a disabling condition.

Talk about the same things as you would with anyone else.

Help the person **ONLY** when they request it. When a person with a special need falls, they may wish to get up by themselves, just as some people with visual impairments prefer to get along without assistance (clear emergency situations are the exception).

Be patient, let the person set his or her own pace walking or talking.

Don't be afraid to **LAUGH WITH THE PARTICIPANT!**

Don't stop and stare when you see a person with a special need. They deserve the same respect any person should receive.

Don't ask embarrassing questions. If the person wants to tell you about their special need, they will bring up the subject themselves. (When working with **EQUI-VETS DO NOT** ask them about their special need /trauma, etc.)

Don't separate the person with a special ability from his wheelchair or crutches unless they ask you to remove them. They may want them close by.

**ENJOY** yourself and your friendship with the person. Their philosophy and good humor may give you inspiration.

**SMILE!**

## GENERAL RULES

- Volunteers must be at least 14 years old.
- No smoking, vaping, or drinking of alcoholic beverages will be allowed at the facility.
- No Dogs allowed!
- Do not feed the horses, each has their own special diet.
- Gates must remain closed at all times, if you open it, you are responsible for closing it.
- Classes are held rain or shine. During inclement weather, it will be determined if lessons can be safely held in the indoor arena or if there will be a barn lesson.
- Please arrive for your volunteer shift at the time stated in Volgistics. .
- Please let us know of absences in ADVANCE by email at least 48 hours prior to your lesson time at [Volunteer@equikids.org](mailto:Volunteer@equikids.org) or call 757-721-7350, (if your absence is after 48 hours prior to your scheduled lesson time you must call or text and speak to someone to inform us of your absence).
- If a volunteer is a “no show” more than once (i.e. does not call for an absence) EQUI-KIDS reserves the right to reevaluate your volunteer service.
- Remember that participants with special abilities are just as active as everyone else. Close supervision is always a must while the participants are around the horses. All participants must wear helmets when working with or riding the horses.
- Although quite rare, falls from the horse occasionally do occur if this happens, STOP! Remain as calm as possible. The horse leader is responsible for holding the horse while the sidewalkers are responsible for the rider. The instructor will take charge immediately and tell you what is to be done next. This will be discussed further during the Sidewalker training.
- Volunteers are never to dismount a rider unless under the direct supervision of the instructor.
- Do not lead or handle horses until you have been through Horse Leader Training and specifically asked to handle a horse.
- Do not open or close stall door windows.
- Volunteers are not to speak to the media about EQUI-KIDS. If you are asked to write an article or publish a photo you must have approval from the EQUI-KIDS Executive Director. Do not place any photos of riders or other volunteers on public social media sites such as FaceBook or Instagram. This is to ensure the privacy of our participants.
- EQUI-KIDS reserves the right to dismiss volunteers from their duties. In this regard, any person who violates any of the aforementioned incidents or any unnamed incident that negatively affects the program can be asked to leave.

## SAFETY INFORMATION

- First Aid Kits are available in the administration building in the cabinet in the family waiting area (marked by red placard) and in the Farrier Stall in the barn. We will review the sites on the site tour.
- AEDs are located in the copy room behind the front desk and outside the feed room in the barn.

- Fire Safety Regulations – we will discuss further in training and walk through a practice “Fire Drill”. We will review the R.A.C.E fire plan.
- Incident Loss Report requirements review.

## **FIRE SAFETY REGULATIONS**

In the event of a fire emergency, your responsibility as a Volunteer is to R.A.C.E

**R - RESCUE** - This means only HUMAN BEINGS who are in immediate danger of being injured by the fire as you are LEAVING for safety.

**\*\*Absolutely no attempt should ever be made to ENTER a burning building to rescue anyone, anything or any ANIMAL! Volunteers and riders will assemble at the designated area (shown on tour) either in the Mountain Range or if in the outdoor ring, all will remain in the ring, unless otherwise instructed. Do not go to the parking lot, this will enable a clear path for rescue vehicles.**

**\*\* ONLY STAFF are authorized to attempt to rescue animals. Special procedures have been developed to ensure fire evacuations of the barn.**

**A - ALARM** - YELL loudly and continuously “FIRE! – CALL 911” as you are exiting the building to safety. Continue to “sound the alarm” and alert everyone of the fire – activate all emergency response systems or make sure someone responsible has made the call to proper authorities. Familiarize yourself with the locations of all available telephones (administration and barn locations). Emergency phone numbers are posted by each on site phone.

**C - CONTAIN** - If possible, to safely smother the fire with water, sand, fire extinguishers, etc. BEFORE it becomes out of control, do so as you leave. NEVER continue to try to extinguish any fire that is rapidly developing – REMOVE yourself from the danger immediately! Remember – HAY and WOODEN structures can ignite in seconds! SAVE YOURSELF and others–the barns can be rebuilt YOU CANNOT BE REPLACED! Familiarize yourself with the locations of all fire extinguishers on the property (both ends of the barn by each door and at the back door in the office/barn). Fire escape routes are clearly marked in the barn, volunteer lounge, classroom, and in the office/administration areas. Review how to safely “operate” a fire extinguisher – point at base of fire, pull lock, aim and squeeze – gently move from side to side to cover base of fire. REMEMBER – STOP-DROP and ROLL if anyone catches on fire (clothes, etc). Water hoses are also located at both ends of the barn and near each pasture.

**E - EVACUATE** - Again, as a volunteer this means only assisting in evacuating PEOPLE (not horses or other animals). Staff are responsible for implementing animal fire evacuation only. Direct all people to meet at the designated area -MOUNTAIN RANGE - (pasture with small hills nearest Sandbridge Road). Team leaders or instructors will take the roll to ensure safety of all volunteers for that day. (This is the reason it is important to sign in each time you are on the property.) Evacuation routes are posted in the barn and in the administration office. Remember to evacuate from either end barn doors or any side door. Windows may be open in some stalls, if closed do not attempt to open them as they may be locked; find an exit route.

## **EMERGENCY INFORMATION**

### *Emergency In A Lesson*

- All horses will be halted.
- All horse leaders will position themselves beside the horse. The horse leaders are responsible ONLY for the horse, not the riders.
- All sidewalkers will stabilize their riders (arm over leg support). The sidewalkers are responsible ONLY for the rider, not the horse.
- The instructor will supervise the dismounting, either verbally or personally.

### *Emergency Dismount*

If a rider must be removed from the horse quickly, as in a seizure or a spooked horse, the sidewalker on the left is responsible for dismounting the rider. Both sidewalkers should immediately remove the rider's feet from the stirrups.

If circumstances call for the arena to be evacuated, the riders will be escorted out first by their volunteers (if used) and the horses will be removed by their horse leaders to an appropriate place, after the riders are out of danger. We will gather at our evacuation meeting site at the MOUNTAIN RANGE.

The instructor will determine if medical personnel are required and will request assistance in contacting specific personnel.

### *Spooked Horse*

Should a horse become frightened, sidewalkers are to apply the arm over thigh support hold to their rider. The horse leader should attempt to halt and calm the horse. The horse leader must always try to stay with the horse. The sidewalkers should attempt to stay with their rider and maintain a supportive hold. Listen for directions from the instructor and follow directions.

### *Loose Horse*

If a horse should become loose in the barn or while in the ring - DO NOT chase after the horse. If they feel you are a threat, they will run more. Keep calm. The horse will eventually stop. One person will be designated to approach the horse to "catch" them. The instructor will give the instructions and who is to be designated to get the horse. If you are in a lesson with another team, as a sidewalker, calm your rider. If a horse

becomes loose in the barn - do not chase - but do warn others by announcing - "Loose Horse" to alert others in the barn. Get to a safe area out of the horse's path until the horse stops.

### *Universal Precautions*

Universal precautions are used to minimize contact with blood and body fluids by taking steps that may prevent non-intact skin exposures of individuals to specific organisms such as Hepatitis B and Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus (HIV/AIDS). When you follow universal precautions, you assume that all persons are potentially infected with blood-borne pathogens.

- Wear disposable latex or vinyl gloves when it is likely that hands will be in contact with bodily fluids. .
- Protect clothing with an impervious material when it is likely that clothing will be soiled with bodily fluids.
- Wear masks and/or eye protection when it is likely that eye and/or mucus membranes will be splashed with bodily fluids.
- Wash hands often, before and after attending the person, paying particular attention to around and under fingernails and between the fingers, even if gloves are worn. If unanticipated contact with these body substances occurs, washing is done as soon as possible.
- Resuscitation masks should be used for CPR (Chest compressions only are in use during Covid-19).
- Covid-19 Protocols

## **EMERGENCY DRILL PRACTICE**

The following guidelines will help you understand what will occur and your part during the drill. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation with these drills. To be discussed and practiced during the first lesson of every session. For riders, volunteers, staff and families.

### ***If you are in the barn***

- Leave what you are doing immediately.
- Proceed directly to the nearest exit.
- All volunteers/personnel will meet at the Mountain Range.
- If possible and there is no risk, a team leader/instructor will take roll call. The team leader can start with the volunteers at the Mountain Range then proceed to the ring.
- EQUI-KIDS personnel along with the Emergency First Responders (if called) will evaluate the situation as to the safety of returning to the barn.

### ***If you are in an outdoor riding ring***

- The instructor will move all teams to the furthest corner of the ring.
- If the Instructor deems it necessary, all riders will be dismounted, and horse leaders will remain with the horses.
- The instructor will move riders and sidewalkers to a safe area away from the horses.
- Once the situation has been deemed safe, the instructor may resume with the lesson as deemed appropriate.

- If the situation warrants, the instructors will use their Emergency Contact list to notify the Executive Director and Program Director of the emergency situation.
- The Executive Director or Program Director will then implement emergency protocols as documented in the EQUI-KIDS Risk Management Guidelines.

***If you are in the indoor arena***

- The instructor will dismount the riders in the arena as efficiently and safely as possible.
- Horse leaders will then exit with the horses through the far end of the arena through the large doors.
- Horse leaders will proceed to the large outdoor riding ring and stay with the horses until further notice.
- A sidewalker will be assigned to buddy up with a rider and escort them through the exit door on the far end of the arena (not the large doors). Everyone will proceed to the meeting evacuation site - the Mountain Range.

**INCIDENT LOSS REPORT REVIEW**

It is the policy of the EQUI-KIDS Therapeutic Riding Program to report and document incidents that occur, regardless if the incident is large or small, or a 'near miss', in a timely manner to the appropriate staff member and that the Program Manager is aware of such incidents; including accidents or injuries or adverse behaviors that have occurred involving participants, parents, volunteers, guests, employees or animal behaviors.

All participants, parents, volunteers, guests and/or employees involved must complete an Incident/Loss Report as soon as possible after the incident/loss occurred. This report shall include, but not be limited to:

- NAME AGE ADDRESS
- TELEPHONE NUMBER DATE/TIME OF INCIDENT/LOSS DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT/LOSS
- EQUINE INVOLVED (if applicable)
- SIGNATURE OF PERSON INJURED (if applicable) WITNESS VERIFICATION
- Please be very specific with details describing the incident so that we can follow up and implement changes as needed to mitigate future incidents
- Follow up information may include:
  - Telephone calls to injured parties and/or parent/guardian/caretaker by the Program Director and/or the Executive Director.
  - Telephone call to the Insurance Company to determine if the incident requires incident/loss documentation/reporting.
  - Final disposition of the incident/loss.

**Lesson Volunteer Ability Guidelines**

Due to the inherent risks associated with volunteering at a therapeutic horseback riding program, and for the safety of our riders and volunteers, we offer the following guidelines to prospective volunteers to acquaint you with the variety of tasks associated with the weekly mounted lessons.

***SIDEWALKERS***



Responsible for the rider during the lesson. After the lesson, sidewalkers can report to the tack cleaning station (located in the barn by the gate to the indoor arena) to begin cleaning all tack that was used. During the lesson, sidewalkers are positioned at each side of the rider to assist the rider.

- Ability to walk with your arms in a supporting position for a minimum of fifty minutes. The supporting holds can be different for each rider. Holds will be discussed in the mock training. Some holds can be tiring on the volunteer and volunteers are encouraged to change sides to assist with the volunteer's comfort. Guidelines are in place to help you safely change sides if your arm needs a rest. (ask for your instructor's permission and alert your team before changing sides).
- Ability to walk/jog alongside horse and rider as spotter for fifty minutes. Spotting at the trot requires some jogging but is limited to short distances. Volunteers can request a stand in during the trot if needed.
- Ability to relate to children and adults in an encouraging and humorous manner.
- Ability to reassure frightened/nervous riders.
- Responsible for the safety of the rider while mounted.
- Ability to assist a riding instructor with the proper mounting and/or dismounting of a rider if needed.

### **The Lesson Volunteer Team**

Leader



### **SIDEWALKER VOLUNTEER POSITION INFORMATION**

Sidewalker location and positioning - Sidewalkers are positioned at the rider's knee. Being too far forward or back will make it very difficult to assist with instructions or provide security to the rider if needed. It is also a safe place to be positioned as far as your safety around the horse.

### **The Holds**

Arm Over Thigh Hold – Sidewalkers will place their forearm against the rider's thigh with their fingers laying over the flap of the saddle, be careful not to wedge fingers under the saddle or between the saddle pad and saddle to prevent injury. Be careful not to lean into the rider's thigh to prevent bruising or injury to the rider who may not be able to express any pain or discomfort they may be feeling.

Ankle Hold – Sidewalkers will place their hand closest to the rider by cupping the back of the rider's ankle. Instructors may call for this by keeping the rider's legs stabilized.

Spotter – Sidewalkers will walk beside the rider, maintaining their position by the rider's lower leg, while keeping hands down by their sides. Please do not put your hands into your pockets as this could prevent a delay in your reaction time in the event of an emergency.

Please be mindful of your position when sidewalking. If you drift too far forward in front of the rider's leg, then you can no longer see what the rider is doing. If you drift too far back behind the rider's lower leg, then you are putting yourself in a precarious position with the horse.

Balance - The job of the sidewalker is to help maintain the balance of the rider when they cannot sustain it themselves. Some students have a definite balance problem on the horse as well as off. Depending on the skill level or ability of the student, there will be either one or two sidewalkers assigned to each rider. The instructor will inform you as to the requirement of each participant during the mounting time.

Changing positions or sides - Since the student with less muscle tone requires the volunteer to exert more physical support, you may need to change sides throughout the lessons. To do so, notify the instructor and horse leader that you need to "switch" sides. Come to the center of the ring and change with the other sidewalker one at a time, while the instructor steps in to assist with the switch. The student must never be totally left alone when switching sides since falling could occur.

Correct rider position - Do not grab at the student if he/she starts to slip, gently guide them back into the correct position. Sidewalkers are very important, as they need to be always constantly aware of the student and what they are doing. Our sidewalkers are the rider's "safety squad". Anything more than a minor adjustment must be brought into the center of the ring for the instructor to handle.

Communication - Since the sidewalkers are always close to the rider, you will find they will want to talk to you a great deal. Do not ignore direct questions but do try to get your rider to focus their attention on the instructor. If your student is not paying attention or does not hear the instructor, you can "coach" or help reinforce the directions of the instructor by repeating instructions, "modeling" or prompting the action requested by the instructor. One of the greatest distractions during lessons can be the excessive talking in the ring by volunteers. Please limit your conversations with the students and other volunteers during lesson time to what is necessary, do not talk over the instructor. Conversations between the volunteers and riders are encouraged and can take place during warm-ups and cool downs. The sidewalker on the inside of the arena will be the primary communicator "coach" for assistance to limit too many people talking.

Assisting the rider with instructions - When an instructor gives directions, allow your student plenty of time to process. If the instructor says, "turn to the right", and the student seems confused, gently tap the right hand and say, "right" to reinforce the command. You will get to

know the riders and learn when they need help and when they're just not paying attention. The instructor should always let you know what kind of prompting a rider may need during the lesson as well. Sometimes volunteers forget that the riders are to do the exercises, the same applies to games, we want everyone to have fun, but remember that the ultimate goal for therapeutic riding is to encourage the rider to stretch and grow to be as independent as possible. You are there to support and help challenge the rider to be the best of their ability.

Attention - The sidewalker will need to always observe the rider. Never become so relaxed that you are not totally aware of the rider, the horse and leader, the instructor, or other activities around you. Be aware of your position near the horse. Do not lean on, tap or "push" the horse, as this can agitate the horse, throw off the horse's balance and interfere with the communication between the horse and rider. It is important to remember that our horses are working. We do not want to interfere with their job by leaning on them, petting them, etc.

Anticipate - Sidewalkers will learn from experience how to anticipate difficulties from the horse or rider which might create accidents. Be as prepared as possible for the unexpected. Use your judgment as necessary. The horse does not always act in a predictable manner or "according to procedure". Always be alert to your horse.

Periodically, workshops and practice sessions are held. You may be asked to take advantage of the practice time and opportunity to improve your skills and knowledge.