

HORSES FOR HEROES

Participant Eligibility Requirements

Essential Considerations

Our primary concern is to provide a safe, productive experience for all riders. Included in this is the wish to “do no harm.” Recognizing that horse-related activities do hold inherent risks, we need to assess rider/driver participation with a “Risk/Benefit” analysis. The essential question for all participants is, “Will the benefit of the therapeutic riding/driving activity outweigh the risk?” This question must be answered with consensus by the entire therapeutic riding/driving team--- participant, parent/guardian, instructor, program manager, and physician. **All individuals must be comfortable with the decision to ride/drive or not to ride/drive, by being familiar with all pertinent information.**

- Therapeutic riding/driving inherently involves movement. **If the movement activity will cause a decrease in the participant’s function, an increase in pain or generally aggravate the medical condition, therapeutic riding/driving may not be the activity of choice.**
- The essence of therapeutic riding/driving is the human-animal connection. **If this interaction is detrimental to the rider/driver or the horse, equine activities may be contraindicated.**
- Therapeutic riding/driving requires the use of certain equipment in a prescribed environment and is, by definition, interaction with a horse. **If the therapeutic riding/driving program cannot accommodate the participant’s equipment needs, or the environment will aggravate his/her condition, riding/driving may not be the activity of choice.**
- Mounted/driving activities always present the potential for a fall. In most instances, the fall would be from four to six feet above the ground. **Such a fall may cause a greater functional impairment than the participant originally had. The possibility of a fall should be give careful consideration, and may lead to the informed decision that therapeutic riding/driving is not the activity of choice.**
- Working around horses involves risk. **The safety of the participant, volunteers, staff and horses are of the utmost importance and each will be taken into consideration when accepting new participants.**

~~~~~

1. Veterans and/or their family members must have a completed Application and Health History, Release and Assumption of Risk, and Authorization for Emergency Medical Treatment.
2. If the Veteran has a disability or medical discharge from the military, a signed Medical History and Physician’s Statement must also be completed and signed by a physician before participation in this program.

3. If a participating family member has a disability or history of medical conditions, a Medical History and Physician's Statement must be completed and signed by a physician before participation in this program.
4. Due to the weight and height carrying limits of our therapy horses as well as the availability and limitations of our volunteers, individuals weighing over 200 pounds are ineligible to ride. This rule is needed in order to provide for the safety of the rider, volunteers and staff as well as to protect the health and soundness of the horses. These individuals are, however, eligible to participate in our carriage driving program.
5. Due to the limitations of our staff and volunteers, individuals that are aggressive toward people or animals and/or are unable to be controlled through their behavioral outbursts are ineligible to ride.
6. **All riders/drivers must be able to wear an approved riding helmet (provided), long pants and closed-toe, hard-soled shoes with heels.**
7. All participants must be willing to abide by all rules established and posted.

***SMART reserves the right to periodically review and reassess a participant's progress and eligibility in the program.***