

# Strides Therapeutic Horsemanship Center

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## VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK 2025

Welcome to Strides Therapeutic Horsemanship Center, simply known as Strides! Thank you for choosing to volunteer with us. Your involvement is vital in making a meaningful difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities.

At Strides, we are dedicated to enhancing the physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being of our clients in a safe, nurturing, challenging, and fun environment. This handbook will guide you through your role and responsibilities as a volunteer, providing the necessary guidelines, procedures, and expectations to ensure a safe and rewarding experience for both you and the participants.

Volunteer training is an ongoing process. The orientation and training courses you will complete will equip you with the information and tools needed to be an effective and productive volunteer. We hope this training will serve as a strong foundation for your time with Strides, allowing you to be invested in the positive outcomes for each rider. Many of our volunteers feel that they receive as much therapy as the clients simply by being here and helping.

We are deeply grateful for the volunteers who dedicate their time, energy, and skills to Strides every week. Without your support, we would not be able to offer our services to the community. Whether you're assisting during therapy sessions, cleaning pens, or helping with fundraising events, your contributions are invaluable. Our door is always open, and we are just a phone call away to provide you with the support you need.

Warm regards,  
Cyndie Planck  
Strides Executive Director

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"Additional written descriptions for specific roles are available on separate sheets outside of this document. These descriptions provide further details and responsibilities for each volunteer position and are designed to ensure a clear understanding of expectations. Please refer to these sheets for a more in-depth look at the roles, including any particular requirements, tasks, and skills needed. For questions or clarifications, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator."

- |  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| Role of Instructor                               | Role of Client Coordinator |
| Role of Horse Leader                             | Role of Volunteer          |
| Role of Sidewalker                               | Role of Feeder             |
| Role of Therapist                                | Role of Supplements Team   |
| Role of Program Director                         |                            |
| Role of Volunteer Coordinator                    |                            |
| Role of Equine Manager                           |                            |
| Role of Horse Adoption                           |                            |
| Role of Groundskeeping.Maintenance               |                            |
| Role of Administrative Assistant                 |                            |
| Role of Marketing and Communications Coordinator |                            |
| Role of Fundraising and Development Coordinator  |                            |
| Role of Community Outreach Liaison               |                            |
| Role of Herd Manager                             |                            |
| Role of Event Coordinator                        |                            |

## General Rules & Guidelines

Welcome to Strides Therapeutic Horsemanship Center! As a member of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.), Strides follows the standards and guidelines set forth by PATH Intl. to ensure that we provide the highest quality of care and service for our staff, volunteers, horses, and clients.

These rules and guidelines are necessary to maintain safety, consistency, and professionalism in all our activities. Many of the rules and regulations specific to volunteers are outlined in this handbook. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask. Strides is also committed to providing you with any additional educational materials or training to support your work with our riders and ensure your success as a volunteer.

### Key Points to Remember:

- **Adherence to Safety Standards:** The safety of our clients, horses, volunteers, and staff is our top priority. Please follow all safety procedures and guidelines to minimize risks and maintain a secure environment. If you are ever unsure of a safety procedure, please ask for clarification.
- **Commitment to Confidentiality:** As a volunteer, you will be privy to sensitive information about our clients and the work we do. It is essential that you adhere to the confidentiality policy outlined later in this handbook to ensure the privacy and dignity of all participants.
- **Professional Conduct:** While volunteering at Strides, your actions should reflect the standards of care, respect, and professionalism that we uphold. This includes maintaining a positive attitude, being patient, and working collaboratively with your fellow volunteers, staff, and clients.
- **Non-Compliance with Rules:** Any failure to adhere to safety rules or regulations, especially those that may jeopardize the well-being of participants, horses, or others, may result in immediate dismissal from activities or a recommendation for additional training or guidance. Strides will work with you to ensure that you have the support you need to be a successful volunteer.
- **Emergency Information:** In case of an emergency, safety procedures and emergency contact numbers are posted on the board in the feed station. Please familiarize yourself with these important details.
- **Fire Safety:** In the event of a fire, please proceed towards Honeysuckle Road for evacuation. Ensure that you are aware of the emergency exit routes and protocols.

Thank you for being a part of Strides and for committing to uphold these important guidelines. Your adherence to these rules will help ensure a safe, positive, and productive experience for everyone involved.

## Dress Code

At Strides, our dress code is designed to ensure your safety, comfort, and functionality while working with our clients and horses. We want to support your individuality and personal style, but our primary goal is to protect you from injury and to create an environment where everyone can work safely and efficiently.

### General Guidelines:

- **Footwear:**
  - Wear comfortable **closed-toed shoes** that protect your feet and ankles. These are required for your safety when working around horses and other animals.
  - **Waterproof shoes** are highly recommended, especially for outdoor walking in wet or muddy conditions, particularly in the spring and winter.
  - **No sandals, open-toed shoes, or open-backed clogs** or slides. These do not provide enough protection during barn activities.
- **Clothing:**
  - When riding, **long pants** are strongly suggested to protect your legs from injury.
  - **Hats and sunscreen** are encouraged during the summer months for sun protection. Be aware that some of our clients may try to remove your hat, so be prepared for that possibility.
- **Jewelry:**
  - Only **small earring studs** and a **watch** are allowed.
  - **Dangling jewelry** can get caught in horses' manes or tails, or distract the clients during sessions. Jewelry can also distract the horses, so please keep it to a minimum.
- **Appropriate Clothing:**
  - Please avoid clothing with **offensive or suggestive messages**, or clothing that promotes alcohol or drug use, as some of our clients are learning to cope with such issues.
  - Dress appropriately, meaning **no revealing clothing**.
    - Shorts should reach **past your fingertips** when your arms are hanging by your sides.
    - **No low-cut tops or spaghetti straps**. Tank tops should have at least a **1-inch strap**.
    - **No crop tops** or any clothing that exposes your midriff when your arms are raised above your head.
  - Remember, you are representing Strides to our clients, and we want to maintain a professional, respectful environment.

- **Helmets:**
  - **Everyone on a horse** must wear a helmet at all times.
  - **Children under 12** are required to wear a helmet **whenever around horses**.

### **Strides Merchandise:**

Strides is in the process of developing an online store for merchandise. Please keep an eye on our website for updates and information about our brand gear.

By following these dress code guidelines, you'll help us maintain a safe and professional atmosphere for everyone involved. Thank you for your cooperation!

## **Barn Etiquette**

At Strides, we strive to create a safe, respectful, and efficient environment for both volunteers and horses. Please follow these barn etiquette guidelines to help ensure smooth operations, safety, and professionalism during your time at Strides.

### **Parking:**

- **Primary Parking:** Park in the designated area near the horse pens.
- **Overflow Parking:** If there is not enough space, please use the family parking area by the arena.
- **Do Not Park in Front of the House:** The area directly in front of the house is reserved for the property owners' personal vehicles.

### **Personal Items:**

- Please leave **pocketbooks and personal items** locked in your vehicle, as we do not have storage space available. Strides is not responsible for loss or theft.
- **Water bottles, snacks, and car keys** can be stored in the volunteer area near the tack room.

### **Cellphones:**

- **No cellphone use** during therapy sessions. If possible, leave your phone at the table in the break area.
- Always ensure your phone's **ringer is turned off** to avoid disruptions.
- **No photography** is allowed past the grooming area or in the arena areas. Taking photos in these areas or using the arena as a background while clients are present may be a HIPAA privacy violation.

### **Gates:**

- Always **close gates** behind you, including **entrance gates, horse pen gates, and pasture gates**, even if there are no horses present. This ensures that the horses remain secure in their designated areas.

### **Pets:**

- Please **leave pets at home**. For the safety of our clients, horses, and volunteers, animals are not permitted on the premises.

### **First Aid Kit:**

- The **human first aid kit** is located in the tack room.
- If the first aid kit is needed, please notify the instructor immediately.
- If the injury is beyond what the first aid kit can address, the instructor will call for **emergency medical treatment**.

### **General Behavior:**

- **No running, screaming, or loud behavior** is allowed on the property to maintain a calm environment.
- Practice **courteous behavior** with clients, parents, horses, and fellow volunteers. Treat everyone with respect.
- When using the hose to wash horses, **turn off the water** after use and **neatly fold the hose** away.
- Please **clean up after yourself**. **Recycle your water bottle** and dispose of any trash in the designated bins.

### **Horses:**

- Horses should be left to **rest while in their pens**.
- **Do not pet horses** on the muzzle or face area, as this may encourage them to enter your space or nibble.
- **Horse Leaders:** When horses are wearing a **halter, lead rope, or bridle**, they must not be allowed to graze, sniff the ground, or rub their faces on their front legs. Allowing this behavior teaches the horse that it is acceptable. For safety reasons, horses must keep their heads up while working under tack or halter and lead.

By following these barn etiquette guidelines, you help create a safe, organized, and respectful environment for all at Strides. Thank you for your cooperation and commitment to maintaining a positive atmosphere at our center!

## Volunteer Responsibilities

Thank you for choosing to volunteer at Strides Therapeutic Horsemanship Center! Your contributions play a vital role in enriching the lives of our clients, and we appreciate your dedication and support. To ensure a smooth and organized experience, please review and follow the volunteer responsibilities outlined below.

**Step 1: Volunteer Application and Registration** Before you can begin assisting with any horse-related activities, we require all volunteers to complete the following steps:

1. **Fill out the Volunteer Application:**

The application can be found online at [www.stridestc.org/volunteerforms](http://www.stridestc.org/volunteerforms).

2. **Liability Waiver and Background Check:**

Both are mandatory to ensure the safety and security of all participants, volunteers, and staff. A background check will be completed as part of the application process.

3. **We are working on new volunteer software and will implement it when it is up and running until then, follow the instructions in #4**

4. **Create an Account on the Volunteer Information Center (VIC):**

Once you have submitted the application, you can sign up for activities using the “Volunteer Information Center” (VIC). You will find the link in the **bottom-left corner** of the Strides webpage.

- The first time you log in, use the same **email address** you provided on your application and click on “**Need a Password**” under the Password box.
- Follow the prompts to create a new password.

## Step 2: Signing Up for Volunteer Activities

Once logged into the Volunteer Information Center (VIC), you can:

- **Sign up for volunteer activities** through the **calendar** feature.
- Review the calendar for available slots and choose activities that match your interests and availability.

## Step 3: Logging Your Volunteer Hours

It is essential that volunteers **log the hours** they spend volunteering. Tracking volunteer hours is a key part of Strides' records as a non-profit organization.

- Please log your hours after each volunteer shift to ensure they are properly recorded.

- If you have any questions on how to log your hours or how to navigate the Volunteer Information Center, feel free to reach out to the **Volunteer Coordinator**.

You can contact the Volunteer Coordinator by calling **509-492-8000** for assistance.

By following these steps and responsibilities, you help us maintain accurate records and contribute to Strides' ability to offer services to our community. Thank you for your time, dedication, and commitment to making a difference!

## **Volunteer Responsibilities During Riding & Equine Activities**

Volunteers play a crucial role in ensuring that our clients have a successful and positive experience during equine activities at Strides. To be an effective team member and to maintain consistency and quality, please follow these important guidelines during riding and equine activities.

### **Punctuality & Reliability:**

- **Be Prompt:** Arriving on time is essential. If a volunteer is late, it could cause the lesson to start late, and the client may miss out on their session.
- **No Show:** If a volunteer does not show up without arranging a substitute, it could result in the cancellation of the session for the client, as we rely on all volunteers for support. Clients value consistency and may not cope well with last-minute changes.
- **Commitment:** Strides requests that volunteers be committed to their role, arrive **early** to help prepare the horses and arena, and stay **30 minutes after the lesson** to help with clean-up and provide feedback.

### **Communication:**

- **Notify the Volunteer Coordinator:** If you are unable to volunteer, please inform the **Volunteer Coordinator** as soon as possible, so a substitute can be arranged. This helps avoid any disruption to the clients' activities.
- **Feedback:** Instructors value your feedback and suggestions. Since you will be working closely with the clients, your observations can help improve the lessons or activities. However, please remember that the instructor may have specific approaches tailored to the needs of the clients, which could differ from able-bodied riding practices.



### **Professionalism & Behavior:**

- **Positive Role Models:** Volunteers should exhibit **calmness, discipline, and kindness** at all times. You are an important role model for our clients, and your behavior impacts their experience.
- **Respect for Confidentiality:** It is absolutely essential that all volunteers respect the **confidentiality** of our clients. You may be privy to personal information, and it's vital that you maintain privacy and discretion at all times.

### **During the Activity:**

- **Pay Close Attention to the Instructor:** Once the lesson or activity begins, give your full attention to the instructor. *Avoid unnecessary chatter, as it can be distracting to the clients and staff.*
- **Provide Minimal Assistance:** It is important to provide the rider *with as little help as possible and as much help as necessary*. Support the rider in following the instructor's directions, but **avoid taking over the process unless directed to do so by the instructor**.

### **Instructors' Approach:**

- Instructors may have methods that differ from traditional able-bodied riding practices. These approaches are designed specifically to meet the needs of the riders, who may face challenges processing sensory input. Please trust that these methods are in place for the best interests of the clients.

By following these responsibilities, you will help create a positive and supportive environment that ensures both the safety and success of our riders. Thank you for your dedication to Strides and for making a difference in the lives of those we serve!

## **Confidentiality Policy**

At Strides, we value and respect the privacy of our clients and their families. We are committed to maintaining the confidentiality of all sensitive information shared with us during their participation in our programs. This policy ensures that all staff and volunteers uphold the right to privacy and confidentiality for every individual involved in our services.

### **Right to Privacy:**

- Riders and their families have a fundamental **right to privacy** that allows them to control the distribution of their personal, medical, and sensitive information.
- Strides respects this right and is dedicated to preserving confidentiality at all times.

### **Confidentiality Guidelines:**

- The staff and volunteers of Strides will keep all **medical, social, referral, personal, and financial information** related to participants and their families strictly confidential.

### **Scope of the Confidentiality Policy:**

- This policy applies to all individuals working or volunteering at Strides, including:
  - **Full-time staff**
  - **Part-time staff**
  - **Temporary employees**
  - **Volunteers**
  - **Members of the Board of Directors**

### **Commitment to Confidentiality:**

- All staff and volunteers are required to sign a statement agreeing to adhere to these confidentiality guidelines. This ensures that every individual involved in Strides understands their role in protecting the privacy of our clients and their families.

### **Compliance with Privacy Rights:**

- At no time should confidential information about a rider, their medical history, or personal circumstances be shared without explicit consent from the individual or their guardian, unless required by law.

By abiding by this confidentiality policy, we help foster a trustworthy, respectful, and supportive environment for our clients and their families. Thank you for your commitment to upholding the privacy and confidentiality of all individuals in the Strides program.

## **Safety Precautions**

Ensuring the safety of both volunteers and horses is of utmost importance at Strides. By following these safety precautions, you will help maintain a safe environment for all participants and horses during equine activities. Please carefully review and follow these guidelines to ensure a safe and effective experience.

### **Approaching Horses:**

- Always **approach a horse from the side** in a way that the horse is aware of your presence before you get too close.
- **Talk to the horse** and keep your hand on the horse when walking around them, especially when coming from behind.

- **Pet the horse** by gently stroking its shoulder or neck. Avoid touching or dabbing at the horse's nose, as this may cause discomfort.

### Handling Horses:

- **Always walk around the horse** rather than ducking under or stepping over the lead rope.
- Horses should always be tied using a **quick release knot** for safety. Or using the blocker ties installed in the grooming stalls.
- **Use a lead rope with both hands** when leading a horse:
  - One hand should be **6 to 8 inches** from the halter.
  - The other hand should hold the **gathered lead rope** in a folded position.
- **Never wrap the lead rope or reins** around your hand or body, as this can pose a risk of injury if the horse reacts unexpectedly.
- If the horse rears or pulls back hard, **release the hand closest to the halter** to stay grounded and avoid injury.

### Leading Horses:

- Always lead the horse **on the left side**—never ahead or behind.
- If the horse pulls back on the lead rope, **step back** and use the end of the rope behind your body to encourage forward movement.

### Handling Gates and Pens:

- When leading a horse into a pen or turning the horse out into the pasture:
  - **Turn the horse to face you** and the gate.
  - **Close the gate** before removing the halter or releasing the lead rope.
- Always keep **lead ropes and reins off the ground** to avoid tripping hazards and ensure control.

### Bridling and Saddling:

- When bridling a horse, always **keep your head clear** in case the horse suddenly throws its head or strikes.
- When adjusting the saddle and girth:
  - **Tighten the girth gradually**—one or two holes at a time.
  - **Check the girth at least three times**, as horses hold their breath when first saddled.
  - Never adjust the girth in the ramp area—this should only be done before bringing the horse to the mounting area.
  - After the rider is on the horse, the instructor will oversee final girth adjustments.

### **Standing Safely:**

- When standing in the halt position, always stay in front and off to the **left side** of the horse. This helps avoid injury if the horse unexpectedly raises its head.

### **General Safety:**

- Never leave a horse unattended in **cross ties** or at the **hitching post**.
- If you are unsure about a task or have any questions about safety procedures, **PLEASE ASK** for clarification.

By following these safety precautions, you help ensure a secure and positive environment for both the horses and riders at Strides. Thank you for being proactive about safety and supporting the well-being of all participants.

**ALWAYS TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS AND REPORT ANY SAFETY CONCERNS IMMEDIATELY TO THE INSTRUCTOR**

## **Understanding Horse Behavior**

Building strong, positive relationships with horses is a vital part of equine-assisted activities. By learning and understanding horse behavior, you can help create a safe and nurturing environment for both the horses and the riders. Horses communicate through their senses and behaviors, and recognizing these cues will help volunteers respond appropriately, reducing risks and fostering stronger connections with the horses.

### **Equine Senses**

The key to understanding horse behavior lies in recognizing the importance of their senses. Horses are highly attuned to their surroundings, and their sensory perception plays a crucial role in how they react to stimuli. Understanding these senses will help you anticipate their responses and ensure a positive interaction.

#### **Smell**

Horses have an exceptional sense of smell, which they use to evaluate their environment, recognize individuals, and assess other animals.

#### **Implications:**

- Horses should be allowed to smell new objects and environments to help them become familiar with them.

- Avoid carrying treats in pockets, as the smell may encourage the horse to seek them out.
- No food should be present in the riding arena, as the horse may become distracted or agitated by food smells.

## **Hearing**

A horse's hearing is highly sensitive, and they often rely on both hearing and sight to assess their surroundings.

### **Implications:**

- If a horse is startled by a sound but doesn't see its source, it may react with a flight or fight response. In such situations, use a calm, soothing voice to reassure the horse.
- Always be aware of the position of the horse's ears, as they provide important information about the horse's mood:
  - Forward ears indicate attentiveness or interest.
  - Back ears signal aggression, discomfort, or irritation.
  - Drooping ears suggest relaxation, tiredness, or even illness.
  - Flattened ears indicate anger, fear, or a threat.
- Avoid loud noises, shouting, or sudden movements, as these can startle or distress a horse.

## **Sight**

Horses' eyes are positioned on the sides of their heads, providing them with excellent peripheral vision but poor frontal and rear vision. Horses also have a good visual memory and can see well in low light conditions.

### **Implications:**

- Horses are sensitive to changes in their environment. If a new object is introduced, allow the horse time to observe it from both sides before continuing.
- When handling a horse, consider their peripheral vision. A slightly looser rein will allow the horse to move its head comfortably.
- Be mindful of the horse's blind spots—directly in front and behind them—and approach them from the side to avoid startling them.

## **Touch**

Horses use touch as a form of communication. They are sensitive to both soft and rough contact, and certain areas, such as the flank and belly, are more sensitive than others.

### **Implications:**

- Always be gentle but firm when handling a horse, as they are responsive to touch.
- Pay attention to the rider's leg position to avoid causing discomfort, and work with the instructor to provide the best support.
- Horses may touch or paw at unfamiliar objects, especially during training or when introduced to new equipment.

### **Taste**

Taste is closely linked to the horse's sense of smell and touch. Horses use taste to discern edible from non-edible items and are often curious about objects they encounter.

### **Implications:**

- Horses may nibble or lick unfamiliar objects as they explore their environment. Be cautious, as this behavior can sometimes lead to biting.

### **Sixth Sense**

Horses possess a “sixth sense” that enables them to perceive the emotions and mood of people around them. They are often hypersensitive to the emotional states of their handlers and riders.

### **Implications:**

- A good therapy horse is chosen for its sensitivity to the rider's emotions. However, personality conflicts can arise between the handler and the horse.
- If you are having difficulty relating to or handling a particular horse, inform the instructor or therapist for guidance.

### **The Horse's Lifestyle**

Understanding the natural instincts and behaviors of horses will help you appreciate their needs and respond to them effectively.

### **Fight or Flight Response**

Horses have a natural survival instinct to either fight or flee in response to danger. In most cases, the flight response is more common, but horses may also become aggressive if they cannot escape.

### **Implications:**

- If a horse is frightened, avoid sudden movements and remain calm. Speak in soothing tones to reassure the horse.
- If the horse is tied up or restrained, it may pull back out of fear. Relax your grip or untie them quickly if necessary.
- If a horse is frightened in a confined space (like a stall), they may try to kick or rear. Use a halter with a lead rope to maintain control.
- Horses may look to experienced handlers for reassurance when frightened.

### **The Horse as a Herd Animal**

Horses are naturally social animals and prefer to be with other horses. They have a pecking order, with dominant horses leading the herd.

### **Implications:**

- Be aware that a horse may become anxious when separated from the group or loses sight of other horses.
- If one horse spooks, others in the group may also react in a similar manner.
- When riding in a group, always maintain at least one horse-length distance between horses to respect their space and pecking order.

By understanding and respecting the behaviors and instincts of horses, you will create a safer and more effective therapeutic environment for both horses and riders. Always approach horses with care, be mindful of their reactions, and maintain a calm and reassuring presence to build trust and positive relationships.

### **Emergency Procedures at Strides**

At Strides, safety is a top priority. In the event of an emergency or safety concern, it is crucial that all staff, volunteers, and riders understand the procedures to follow to ensure the well-being of everyone involved. In general, the on-site instructor oversees critical decision-making and delegates appropriate tasks in any emergency situation. The Director or team lead may assist by calling 911 when necessary. All occurrences, whether minor or major, are documented, and an incident report will be prepared.

## General Emergency Procedures

- **Instructor's Role:** The instructor or team lead is responsible for overseeing emergency situations, including delegating tasks to volunteers and staff. The instructor will provide medical history and treatment forms when necessary.
- **Incident Report:** The Director will ensure that all incidents are documented in accordance with Strides policy. This includes preparing an occurrence report that details the event and the parties involved.
- **Medical Attention:** The instructor or team lead will administer first aid when necessary and will direct volunteers to assist riders. If dismounting is required, the instructor will give clear instructions, and volunteers will help return horses to a safe area.

## Mounted Activity Emergency Plan

In the event of an emergency while a lesson is in progress, the following steps will be followed:

1. **Halt All Horses:** When an emergency occurs, all horses must be halted. If there is a loose horse, all other horses must also be stopped.
2. **Position of Horse Leaders:** Horse leaders will assume the halt position in front and to the side of the horses.
3. **Stabilizing Riders:** Sidewalkers will work to stabilize the rider.
4. **Dismounting Procedures:** The instructor will supervise the dismounting procedure, either by giving verbal instructions or assisting directly.

### Safety Dismount:

- **Sidewalker #1** will inform the rider that they are going to dismount.
- Both sidewalkers will remove the rider's feet from the stirrups.
- **Sidewalker #1** will assist the rider off the horse and move them to a safe location.
- **Horse Leader** will turn the horse's hindquarters away from the rider to maintain control of the horse.



5. **Evacuation:** If the area needs to be evacuated, riders will be dismounted and evacuated by their volunteers. Horse leaders will move horses to a safe place.
6. **Medical Assistance:** The instructor will assess if medical personnel are required and will ask for help contacting specific personnel if needed. If a rider is injured, the instructor may ask everyone to leave the ring, placing one person in charge of the area.
7. **Restricted Access:** No one, including parents, is allowed in the arena unless invited by the instructor.

## Seizure Procedure

Seizures are emergencies that require quick and specific action. The following steps outline the procedure to follow if a seizure occurs during an equine-assisted activity:

### For Horse Leaders:

- **Halt the Horse:** Immediately stop the horse and assume the halt position.
- **Hold the Horse:** Make every effort to keep the horse calm and in place.

### For Sidewalkers:

- **Stabilize the Rider:** Move in to stabilize the rider and remove their feet from the stirrups.
- **Safety Dismount:** If necessary, perform a safety dismount. This may be required for petit mal or grand mal seizures.

### Safety Dismount:

- **Sidewalker #1** informs the rider that they are going to dismount.
- **Sidewalker #1** wraps their arms around the rider's waist and gently pulls them off the horse, moving with them to a safe place.
- **After Dismount:**
  - Place the rider on their side on the ground, preferably with a towel or blanket beneath them.
  - Place a cushion (such as a towel or jacket) under the rider's head.
  - Loosen any tight neckwear.
  - Do **NOT** place anything in the rider's mouth or hold them down.
  - Allow the rider to rest or sleep if necessary after the seizure.

### **Call 911 if:**

- The seizure lasts longer than 5 minutes.
- The rider is not known to have epilepsy or another seizure disorder.
- The rider does not regain consciousness.
- The rider has difficulty breathing or is showing signs of slow recovery or a second seizure.
- The rider is pregnant.
- The rider has a medical ID.
- There is any indication of injury or illness.

### **Conclusion**

By adhering to these emergency procedures, Strides ensures that all riders, volunteers, and staff are prepared to respond to any emergency situation that may arise. The key to handling emergencies effectively is clear communication, calmness under pressure, and prompt action to ensure the safety and well-being of everyone involved.

## **Working with the Special Needs Population**

Volunteering with individuals with special needs can be a rewarding experience that fosters personal growth and understanding. It's important to approach each individual with respect, sensitivity, and patience. While working with participants who have physical or mental impairments—whether present from birth, due to injury, disease, or aging—it is essential to recognize that these individuals face challenges that often go beyond their disabilities. One of the biggest barriers for individuals with special needs is the lack of awareness or understanding from others. As a volunteer at Strides, it is crucial that you foster an inclusive, empathetic, and supportive environment for all participants.

### **Wheelchair Etiquette**

When interacting with individuals who use wheelchairs, it's important to remember that their wheelchair is an extension of their body. Here are some guidelines to follow:

- **Ask First:** Always ask the wheelchair user if they would like assistance before offering help.
- **Respect Space:** Wheelchairs should not be leaned on or hung upon unless permission is given.
- **Direct Communication:** Speak directly to the individual rather than talking to someone else about them. Ensure that the conversation includes the wheelchair user.
- **Eye Level:** If the conversation lasts more than a few minutes, sit or kneel to communicate at eye level with the person in the wheelchair.

## Escorting an Individual with a Visual Impairment

Individuals with visual impairments may require guidance and support. The following steps can help ensure a safe and respectful interaction:

- **Ask Before Helping:** If you notice someone with a visual impairment who might need assistance, always ask if help is needed.
- **Use Verbal Cues:** Often, verbal instructions or cues may be sufficient. If physical assistance is required, allow the individual to hold onto your arm above the elbow and walk half a step ahead.
- **Respect Preferences:** Some individuals may have specific preferences for how they like to receive assistance. Be open to adapting to their preferred methods.
- **Verbalize Information:** When you come across written information or signage, remember to verbalize it to ensure the individual has access to the same information.
- **Ask Your Instructor:** If you're unsure of how to assist, consult your instructor for guidance.

## General Guidelines for Working with Individuals with Hearing/Language Impairment

Effective communication with individuals who have hearing or language impairments requires patience and attentiveness. Here are some tips:

- **Maintain Eye Contact:** Always look directly at the individual when speaking to them.
- **Speak Clearly:** Use clear speech without over-emphasizing words or speaking too slowly. Avoid lengthy instructions or conversations.
- **Non-Verbal Communication:** Learn to use hand gestures and body language to enhance understanding. Many participants may use gestures to communicate.
- **Communication Assistance:** Be prepared to assist with communication, such as by using visual cues, gestures, or writing down instructions when needed.
- **Alert the Instructor:** If the individual uses a hearing aid, notify the instructor if there is an issue (e.g., whistling or ringing noises from the aid).

## Non-Verbal or Limited Verbal Expression

Some participants at Strides may be non-verbal or have limited verbal expression. In these cases, it's important to provide alternative methods of communication to ensure the individual's needs are met.

- **Use of American Sign Language (ASL):** Instructors and volunteers may use basic American Sign Language (ASL) to reinforce requests and directions. It's helpful to learn basic ASL signs to support communication with non-verbal participants.
- **Reinforce Directions:** Provide clear, simple instructions along with visual or tactile cues to help the participant understand what is being asked.
- **Consult the Instructor:** If you are unsure how to communicate effectively with a non-verbal participant, ask your instructor for guidance on appropriate techniques.

## Conclusion

Working with individuals who have special needs requires compassion, adaptability, and patience. Every person is unique, and it's important to understand their specific needs and preferences to ensure a positive and effective experience. As a volunteer, your role is not just about assisting with tasks, but about fostering an inclusive, respectful environment where every individual can thrive and feel supported.

## Other Ways Volunteers Can Help

At Strides, there are numerous opportunities for volunteers to contribute beyond assisting in therapeutic riding lessons. Whether you have a passion for fundraising, facilities maintenance, or supporting our administrative functions, we greatly appreciate the diverse skill sets volunteers bring to our organization. Below are several ways you can support Strides and make a meaningful impact on our program:

### Fundraising Committee

Volunteers in this committee help organize and execute fundraising events, including our Annual Fundraising Event, and assist with finding sponsors and donors from local businesses and corporations. If you are passionate about helping Strides grow through financial support, consider joining this committee.

- **Key Tasks:** Event coordination, sponsor and donor outreach, and fundraising campaigns.
- **Contact:** If you know someone interested in raising funds for Strides, please direct them to call the Executive Director at **509-492-8000**.

### Facilities Committee

Volunteers in this committee help with the general care and maintenance of Strides' property. Tasks include groundskeeping (e.g., mowing the lawn), fence repair, building maintenance, and ensuring the facility is in good condition for our riders and horses.

- **Key Tasks:** Landscaping, fence maintenance, facility repairs, and other hands-on tasks.

- **Contact:** To join the Facilities Committee, please reach out to the Volunteer Coordinator for further information.

## **Administrative Tasks**

There are many essential administrative tasks at Strides that contribute to the smooth running of our organization. Volunteers can support our office operations in the following roles:

- **Executive Assistant:** Help with filing, data entry, copying, answering phone calls, managing email blasts, and assisting with newsletters.
- **Media and Marketing Committee:** Assist with graphics, social media management, web design, and maintenance under the guidance of the current coordinator.
- **Fundraising:** Work with our fundraising coordinator to generate ideas and assist with reaching out to potential sponsors and donors.
- **Contact:** If you have strong organizational skills and are interested in “working behind the scenes,” please contact the Volunteer Coordinator or call **509-492-8000** for more information.

## **Donations**

As a non-profit organization, Strides is always in need of donations to maintain and expand our programs. Making a donation is a meaningful way to support Strides and can be a unique way to honor someone special for birthdays, anniversaries, or in memory of a loved one.

- **How to Donate:** You can donate by calling **509-492-8000** or visit our website at [StridesTC.org](http://StridesTC.org) to learn more about donation opportunities and becoming a Strides partner.

## **Community Service Hours**

If you are a high school student or know someone who needs to fulfill community service hours, volunteering at Strides Therapeutic Horsemanship Center is a great opportunity. Volunteering with us can help students meet their service hour requirements while supporting a meaningful cause.

- **Contact:** For more information, please call **509-492-8000**.

## **School Credits**

If you are a home school student, high school student, or college student, your volunteer hours at Strides may qualify for credit hours. Volunteering offers a chance to gain practical experience while contributing to the community. Check with your educational program to confirm if Strides’

volunteer hours meet the requirements for credit, and then contact our Executive Director at **509-492-8000** for more details.

## **Get Involved and Make a Difference**

Volunteering at Strides is a fulfilling way to give back to your community and make a lasting impact. Whether you're helping with an event, maintaining the facilities, or assisting in the office, every contribution matters. If you're interested in any of these volunteer opportunities, please reach out to the Volunteer Coordinator at **509-492-8000**. We look forward to having you join us in making a difference in the lives of those we serve!

## **Introduction to PATH Intl. (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International)**

PATH International is a membership organization dedicated to fostering "safe, professional, ethical, and therapeutic equine activities through education, communication, standards, and research for people with and without disabilities." PATH promotes therapeutic riding primarily through public awareness campaigns and educational events. Their core mission is to ensure safety and provide the highest quality service to both its members and riders.

PATH International has developed various programs designed to benefit those involved in therapeutic riding. For more information, visit their website at [www.PATHIntl.org](http://www.PATHIntl.org).

### **Accreditation**

PATH International's accreditation program ensures that operating centers, like Strides, conduct safe and medically appropriate programs. All accredited centers must comply with mandatory and applicable standards outlined in the PATH Intl. Operating Center Standards and Accreditation Manual. **Strides is a PATH Accredited Center**, demonstrating our commitment to these high standards.

## **Glossary of Physical & Cognitive Disabilities**

Below are brief, non-medical descriptions of some disabilities you may encounter at Strides. This is intended to provide a general overview of how equine-assisted activities can be beneficial.

### **Autism**

A developmental disorder affecting social interactions and communication.

- **Characteristics:** Social withdrawal, language delays, repetitive behaviors, hyperactivity, and sensory sensitivities.
- **Benefits:** Encourages group interaction, improves focus, social skills, and postural control.

## **Cerebral Palsy**

A group of disorders caused by brain damage, affecting motor skills and coordination.

- **Types & Characteristics:**
  - **Spastic:** Muscle stiffness and exaggerated reflexes.
  - **Athetoid:** Involuntary, slow, and writhing movements.
  - **Ataxic:** Poor balance and coordination.
- **Benefits:** Improves muscle tone, posture, balance, and motor coordination.

## **Cerebral Vascular Accident - Stroke (CVA)**

A disruption of blood flow to the brain, causing paralysis and other neurological impairments.

- **Characteristics:** Paralysis, loss of balance, speech difficulties, and coordination issues.
- **Benefits:** Stimulates balance, posture, and coordination.

## **Down Syndrome**

A genetic disorder caused by an extra chromosome, leading to developmental and intellectual delays.

- **Characteristics:** Flat facial profile, short stature, hypotonicity (low muscle tone), and joint hypermobility.
- **Benefits:** Enhances language, coordination, balance, posture, and motor skills.

## **Emotional Disabilities**

Disabilities that affect emotional well-being, often alongside learning or physical impairments.

- **Characteristics:** Difficulty coping with daily life and social situations, aggression, anxiety, or mood instability.
- **Benefits:** Improves self-confidence, socialization, and emotional regulation.

## **Learning Disabilities (LD)**

A group of disorders affecting the ability to process information or perform tasks that require mental effort.

- **Characteristics:** Short attention span, frustration, and difficulty with reading, writing, or math.
- **Benefits:** Improves focus, cooperation, and language skills.

### **Mental Retardation (Intellectual Disabilities)**

A developmental disability characterized by limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior.

- **Characteristics:** Developmental delays, difficulty with problem-solving, and short attention spans.
- **Benefits:** Promotes socialization, coordination, balance, and motor skills development.

### **Multiple Sclerosis (MS)**

A chronic disease that affects the nervous system, leading to muscle weakness and coordination problems.

- **Characteristics:** Fatigue, visual impairment, muscle weakness, and impaired coordination.
- **Benefits:** Strengthens muscles, promotes emotional well-being, and improves coordination.

### **Scoliosis**

A condition where the spine curves abnormally.

- **Characteristics:** Postural asymmetry and discomfort.
- **Benefits:** Improves posture, balance, and trunk muscle strength.

### **Spinal Cord Injury (SCI)**

Damage to the spinal cord that results in loss of motor function and sensation.

- **Characteristics:** Paralysis below the injury site, muscle spasticity, and sensory loss.
- **Benefits:** Stimulates posture, balance, and trunk muscle strength.

### **Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)**

Injury to the brain caused by trauma, often resulting in cognitive, physical, and emotional impairments.

- **Characteristics:** Impaired memory, motor skills, balance, speech, and vision.
- **Benefits:** Stimulates motor coordination, balance, and cognitive skills.



## On-Site Competency Checklists

As a volunteer at Strides, you will undergo training and competency checks to ensure you are prepared for your role. Competency in specific tasks will determine your volunteer placement. The skills and levels include, but are not limited to:

- **Strides Groomer**
- **Horse Handler**
- **Horse Leader**
- **Sidewalker 1 & 2**
- **Lessons Team Lead**
- **Arena Assistant/Toy Runner (ideal for youth volunteers)**
- **Horse Adopter**
- **AM/PM Feeder**
- **Horse Exerciser - Ground Work**
- **Horse Exerciser - Riding**
- **Grounds Maintenance**
- **Herd Management**

Additional volunteer opportunities will continue to develop as we expand our programs.

## In Conclusion

Strides is primarily volunteer-led, and we rely on the dedication and commitment of our volunteers to provide exceptional services to the families we serve. We strive to create a welcoming, supportive environment for all participants and ensure that operations run smoothly.

If you're interested in joining our team, we encourage you to explore all the ways you can help. Whether you're involved in directly working with riders or assisting with the behind-the-scenes tasks, your contribution is invaluable to the success of our programs.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions or support needs. Visit our website at [StridesTC.org](http://StridesTC.org) for helpful links, volunteer resources, and more information about the community we serve.

Stay connected with us on social media:

- **Facebook:** [Stridestc](#)
- **Instagram:** [@strides\\_horsemanship\\_center](#)

We look forward to working with you and welcoming you to the Strides community!