

Therapeutic Riding, Inc.

Rider Handbook

Updated 2015



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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Therapeutic Riding, Inc.	
Therapeutic Riding, Inc.'s Mission Statement	2
What is therapeutic riding?	2
How Do I Register For Classes?	3
Rider Status Policy	4
Weight Limit Policy	4
Conduct Review Policy	4-5
Important Things To Know	5-6
Confidentiality Policy	6
Therapeutic Riding, Inc.'s Horses and Ponies/ Michigan Equine Activity Liability Act	7
Barn Rules and Safety Guidelines	8-9
The Therapeutic Riding, Inc. Team Members	10
Therapeutic Riding, Inc.'s Budget	11
Emergency Procedures	12-14

Therapeutic Riding, Inc.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Therapeutic Riding, Inc. affectionately known as TRI. We are a volunteer-based, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization operating in the greater Washtenaw County area.

Therapeutic horseback riding for people with disabilities was first started in England in 1954. In 1969, Lida McGowan, with the help of the Kellogg Foundation, started the "Cheff Center for the Handicapped", now known as "Cheff Therapeutic Riding Center," in Augusta, Michigan.

Therapeutic Riding, Inc. (TRI) was founded in 1984 to provide horseback riding to individuals with physical, cognitive, and emotional disabilities.

Our Program Instructors are certified through PATH, Intl., the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship, International. Instructors are responsible for rider admission into the program, evaluation of horses to be used in the program, coordination of classes, and documentation of results achieved during each riding session. Generally, riders are grouped into classes of four or five riders, riding for thirty minutes per class.

In December 2010, we moved into our new home, The Harold and Kay Peplau Therapeutic Riding Center. This 46 acre facility was custom designed for our program and riders, and we built the option for future expansion of our arenas and stall barn into the original site plans.

Each week, 80-100 riders experience the joy of horseback riding with the assistance of four instructors, fifteen horses, and up to 150 volunteers.

Please take the time to become familiar with the materials provided in this Rider Handbook. Please note that it has been updated to fulfill current PATH, Intl. standards for accreditation. We look forward to working with you.

Therapeutic Riding Inc.'s Mission Statement

TRI's mission is to provide a therapeutic environment through horseback riding and other activities for people with disabilities or other challenges.

What is therapeutic riding?

Therapeutic riding adapts horseback riding to the needs of individuals with disabilities so that they can experience riding's physical, cognitive, and emotional benefits. The synchronized movement of horse and rider is used as a therapeutic tool to improve strength, balance, coordination, and self-confidence.

Instructors and volunteers work as a team with horses and ponies. These animals are specifically evaluated and trained to work with riders with disabilities as well as with assistive devices such as mounting lifts, wheelchairs, etc.

Therapeutic Riding, Inc. (TRI) is a member center of PATH, Intl., the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship, International.

TRI provides year-round programming in horseback riding and other equine assisted activities. Classes are currently offered weekday evenings and some mornings and afternoons. We have a heated lounge, restrooms, and an outdoor arena as well as an indoor arena with radiant heat. There are generally four or five riders in each class. We also offer private and semi-private lessons as well as ground lessons, showmanship, grooming and tacking, and lessons in basic safe horse handling skills. Staff members assign leaders and sidewalkers to riders based on their abilities and needs.

For general information about therapeutic riding programs, go to <http://www.pathintl.org/>.

How Do I Register For Riding Classes?

Prospective New Riders

- Prospective new riders should call the TRI office at 734-677-0303 and request a Wait List Application Form.
- Once this form is completed and sent back to the TRI office, the rider will be added to the Wait List.
- As spaces become available, applicants at the top of the Wait List will be contacted to schedule an intake meeting to assess their appropriateness for the program.
- Instructors make the final determination as to a potential rider's eligibility for participation in riding lessons. Safety is our top priority. If we do not feel we can safely mount, dismount, or teach a rider, or if they are medically unsafe to work with horses, we will not accept that person into our program. TRI uses the PATH Intl. Precautions and Contraindications as a guide to decision making.

Active Riders

- Active riders register separately for each session. Materials must be received by each session's due date or a rider risks losing his or her spot in that session.
- Current riders can download registration materials from our website or request a packet to be sent via the mail.
- Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis.
 - Active Riders are registered before returning Inactive Riders and new riders.
- Class assignments are made by the Head Instructor, taking into account each rider's riding ability, age, schedule restrictions, and horse and volunteer needs.
 - Confirmations are emailed or sent via the mail if requested.
- Rider forms are required to be updated annually under guidelines established by PATH, Intl.
 - No rider will be allowed to ride until all these forms are completed and on file at TRI.
 - These forms will be available for download from our website, or can be mailed if requested, by January 1st of each year.

Rider Status Policy

Active Status

- A rider is considered to have Active Status if he/she is medically safe to ride, submits annual paperwork by the deadline, and rides on a consistent basis as determined by the Head Instructor.

Inactive Status

- If annual paperwork is not submitted by the deadline and/or the rider does not ride consistently as determined by the Head Instructor, the rider will be placed on Inactive Status.
 - One email will be sent to alert the rider that this is about to take place to give him/her chance to rectify the situation.
- A rider can also request to be placed on Inactive Status for medical or other reasons. This status change would be at the discretion of the Program Director and/or Head Instructor.
 - Rider paperwork would need to be updated prior to the rider being returned to Active Status.

Removal from Program

- If a rider does not rectify the situation which resulted in their Inactive Status, one email will be sent to alert the rider that he/she is no longer an Active Rider in the program and that, if he/she wishes to return to TRI, he/she will need to apply to the Wait List.

The Program Director and/or Head Instructor have the discretion to make exceptions to this policy.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Inactive Riders do not take up spaces that could otherwise be filled by Wait List applicants. The emails are a courtesy to the riders to ensure that they are aware of the consequences of missing paperwork and/or sessions and are not surprised when they are removed from Active Status.

Weight Limit Policy

The first priority of Therapeutic Riding, Inc. is to ensure the safety of our riders, volunteers, and horses. In order to achieve this goal, we have established the following weight limit policy in regards to riding in this program.

Weight Limit Policy: 200 pounds - dependent upon ambulatory status, range of motion, and discretion of instructor.

The Program Director and/or Head Instructor have the discretion to make exceptions to this policy.

CONDUCT REVIEW POLICY

Allegations of misconduct by riders/volunteers/staff, including but not limited to, inappropriate and/or abusive behavior toward others, failure to follow established safety procedures, incidents due to the use of drugs or alcohol, and mistreatment/abuse of equines and other animals at Therapeutic

Riding, Inc. will be evaluated. Decisions will be made on appropriate action to be taken by (in this order):

- A. Instructor relevant to occurrence
- B. Volunteer Coordinator
- C. Executive Director

Important Things to Know

1. Riders are required to wear long pants and appropriate shoes.
 - a. Even in hot weather, riders will be more comfortable in **long pants** as their skin will be protected from being rubbed or pinched by saddle leathers.
 - b. **Shoes should be closed toe and hard soled.** Ideally, shoes should have a smooth sole with a small heel, but tennis shoes are acceptable if necessary.
 - c. Expect riders to get dirty and choose clothing accordingly.
 - d. The barn is often hotter or colder than the outside temperatures so we recommend that riders dress in layers
2. Riders are required to wear riding helmets in the arena, mounting area, and stall barn.
 - a. TRI will provide helmets for each rider.
 - b. Riders may wear their own helmets if approved by the Instructor in advance. All helmets must be ASTM/SEI certified.
3. Riders should arrive 10 - 15 minutes before their class begins.
 - a. Riders should put on their helmets and wait quietly in the observation area until the Instructor is ready to begin mounting each of the riders.
4. Riders, siblings, friends, and parents are expected to follow all barn and safety rules.
5. Family members, guardians, caregivers, and friends must remain on the property during their rider's class time.
 - a. All family members, caregivers, and friends must remain in the observation area, front lobby, or on property during the riding lesson time unless otherwise directed by an Instructor.
 - b. Siblings and young guests must be closely supervised at all times.
6. Always notify TRI if you/your rider will be late or absent.
 - a. Call the TRI office at 734-677-0303 and leave a message for your Instructor.
 - i. Therapeutic Riding, Inc. is listed in the phone book and the number is also in your confirmation email.
 - b. **Absences must be called in**, NOT emailed, as Instructors do not have access to email and email is not checked as often as voice mail.
 - c. Volunteers are waiting to assist each rider. As a courtesy to them, we need to know in advance if a rider will be absent.
 - d. Riders arriving more than fifteen minutes late may be unable to ride during that class.
 - e. Three unexcused absences may result in a rider being changed to Inactive Status and may potentially result in a rider being removed from the program.

7. Classes are held during most inclement weather except in cases of tornado warnings or severe winter weather that negatively affects the road conditions.
 - a. We will make every effort to contact riders by email, telephone, and/or text to inform them of a cancellation.
 - b. If you have any question as to whether classes will be held, please call the barn phone. If classes are cancelled, the outgoing message will be changed to indicate this.
 - c. To ensure we can reach you during an emergency, please make sure we have up-to-date contact numbers for you at all times and sign up for our Remind text contact group.
8. At times, unexpected events may disrupt our schedule and cause classes to run late or be cancelled. We apologize in advance for any inconvenience this may cause you. We strive to have these incidents as infrequently as possible. We have built make up weeks into our Early Bird session to accommodate potential weather related cancellations.
9. The Instructors want each rider to have a positive experience. If you have any questions or wish to share information with your Instructor, please feel free to do so either before or after class.

Therapeutic Riding, Inc.'s Confidentiality Policy

TRI shall preserve the right of confidentiality for all individuals (volunteers, riders, and staff) in its program. As a volunteer, rider, or staff member, you must maintain the confidentiality of sensitive information regardless of how it is obtained. Information which must be kept confidential should include, but not be limited to, all medical, social, referral, personal, and financial information regarding a person and his/her family. Breach of this confidentiality may result in either reprimand and/or loss of staff job and/or volunteer position.

Therapeutic Riding, Inc.'s Horses and Ponies

TRI owns the horses and ponies used by the program. All have been selected for their quiet temperaments and have been trained to be comfortable working in the mounting lift area, around wheelchairs and other assistive devices, as well as with leaders and sidewalkers. However, no matter how calm the horses may seem, they may occasionally spook at sudden noises or movement, or for reasons unknown. For this reason, it is imperative to follow all barn and safety rules.

The horses and ponies used in TRI classes are wonderful animals and they deserve the utmost respect for their tolerance of tight leg muscles, bouncing riders, and hands which may pull too much or too often.

No one - leader, sidewalker, rider, or staff - may tease, taunt, harass or purposely annoy, scare or irritate any horse for the purpose of exercises or games solely for the client's benefit. All horses will be treated with respect, understanding, and in a humane manner at all times.

WARNING

Under the Michigan Equine Activity Liability Act, an equine professional is not liable for an injury to or the death of a participant in an equine activity resulting from an inherent risk of the equine activity.

Barn Rules and Safety Guidelines

Barn Rules

1. There is no smoking anywhere on the property – inside or outside.
2. Stay in the Observation Room or front lobby unless otherwise directed by an Instructor.
3. Only touch horses with permission and under supervision.
4. Do not feed horses unless directed and supervised by an Instructor. They are on specially supervised diets and extra food items could cause them to become ill.
5. Always use quiet voices and calm behavior while on the property.
6. Only riders, Instructors, and trained personnel are allowed on lifts and mounting blocks.
7. Stay away from fences and paddocks - all of these areas are surrounded by electric fences.
8. All children must be closely supervised and remain with an adult in the Observation Room or front lobby.
9. No dogs are allowed on the property or in vehicles parked on the property.
10. The TRI office phones may be used for emergency phone calls only.
11. If you have any questions about ANYTHING, please ask. There is no such thing as a stupid question!

Safety Guidelines

- 1. Always walk around horses and in the barn. No running.**
2. Always speak to a horse when approaching it and before touching it. Never approach any horse directly from the rear.
3. Pet a horse on its shoulder or neck, not on its face, nose, or mouth.
4. Always be quiet and calm around horses. They may become frightened by loud noises or sudden movements.
5. Control your temper when working with horses and never mistreat them. A horse will respond best when you are kind and gentle.
6. Wear appropriate clothing when working with a horse. Sturdy shoes or boots and long pants are required.

7. Keep your feet clear of the horse's feet. Do not kneel or squat around horse's feet. They outweigh you.
8. Never wrap a lead line around your hand or body. Hold lead line with two hands.
9. When riding or leading a horse, always maintain at least one horse's length between you and the horse in front of you.
10. Do not enter a horse stall or paddock without permission. Do not duck under or climb gates, ropes, stall guards, or fence rails. Undo or open them first.
11. Volunteers must receive approval from the Head Instructor prior to taking horses out of paddocks or leading horses out of the barn to return them to their paddocks.
12. Whenever you get out equipment, it is your responsibility to put it away properly.
13. Always take off a horse's halter after you have put the horse in its stall.
14. Never leave a horse in the stall with its reins, bridle, or lead rope still attached.
15. No matter what you are doing, the safety of rider, volunteer, and horse is the main priority.
16. No one – leader, sidewalker, rider, or staff may tease, taunt, harass, or purposely annoy, scare, or irritate any horse for the purpose of exercises or games solely for the client's benefit. All horses will be treated with respect, understanding, and in a humane manner at all times.

The Therapeutic Riding, Inc. Team Members

In addition to our equine team members, TRI relies on the dedication of many different people to bring the joy of horseback riding to our participants.

There are many people critical to the success of Therapeutic Riding, Inc. (TRI) - from the staff and volunteers who arrive early to groom the horses, to the sidewalkers and leaders who work with the riders in the arena, to our Board of Directors who work hard raising the funds to operate the program. Many "behind the scenes" hours are put in to ensure that each and every rider has a safe and progressive riding experience.

Executive Director

Works with the Board to address issues relating to finances and legal concerns.

Office Manager

Responsible for the day-to-day business operations of the program. Handles all rider and volunteer paperwork.

Program Director/Head Instructor

Supervises Instructors, volunteers, barn staff, and horses and overall operations of program.

Instructors

All are PATH, Intl., (The Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship, International) certified.

Barn Manager

Responsible for the daily care and feeding of the TRI horses as well as the general maintenance and upkeep of the program's facilities.

Volunteer Coordinator

Works with the Program Director and Head Instructor to recruit and train new volunteers, schedule and supervise volunteers during classes, and coordinates special training sessions and other volunteer related events.

Facilities Manager

Oversees the upkeep of the entire facility and grounds.

Leaders

Volunteers with significant horse experience. They are trained in the leading techniques appropriate to a therapeutic riding class.

Sidewalkers

Assist riders during their riding lessons, following the directions provided by the Instructor. They have received training through TRI's orientation process.

Board of Directors

Develops the program budget, establishes long-term goals and fund raising strategies, and works closely with the Executive Director to ensure the quality of our program.

Therapeutic Riding Inc.'s Budget

Rider fees only account for a small percentage of the actual cost operating the program. The rest of the funds are raised through donations from individuals, corporations, and foundations, through grants, and through fund-raising events.

Here are some ways you can help support our program:

- Make a donation to one of our fundraising campaigns;
- Make a Memorial or Tribute donation to TRI;
- Investigate matching gift programs offered by your employer;
- Participate in our annual TRI-FECTA campaign;
- Adopt-A-Horse;
- Donate to the Sam and Juliana Zirinsky Memorial Scholarship Fund;
- Tell friends, co-workers, and others about TRI.

If you have personal or professional connections with foundations, corporations, or individuals that might assist us in our fundraising efforts, please contact the TRI office at 734-677-0303

Emergency Procedures

The first week of lessons in every session, rider and volunteer teams will go through "Emergency Drills" so that they are familiar with all emergency procedures from an arena standpoint.

All persons should know the location of the following items:

- Telephones and listings of emergency numbers and directions to the barn
 - Telephones are in both offices.
 - Listings of emergency numbers and directions are located by the phones in both offices, in the Observation Room, on the Tack Room outer wall, on wall behind the lift, and by the refrigerator in the front lobby.
- All exits from the stable and the arena are clearly marked with lighted signage.
- Fire extinguishers are located: by lounge entrance door, by the Emergency exit door of observation room, by the northeast exit door of the indoor arena (toy storage area), across from the east wash-rack, and by the north-west stall barn big doors.
- First Aid Kits (Human and Equine). Human first aid kit is kept in the board room on the sideboard table. Equine first aid kit is kept in the Tack Room on the shelf above the girths.
- Fuse box is located in the meter room.
- Hot and cold water can be obtained from all restrooms, in the Tack Room, in the laundry room, and from the hydrants in both wash racks. Cold water can be obtained at all other hydrants.

The most important things to remember in any emergency are to remain calm and to help the riders remain calm and feel safe.

- In all emergencies, the Instructor is responsible for making decisions on actions to be taken and for designating persons to assist them.
- The Instructor is responsible for organizing the safe movement of people;
- The leaders are responsible for the horses; and
- Sidewalker(s) are responsible for the riders.

If an emergency of any kind (e.g. illness, injury, fall, seizure, storms, or fire) should occur, please listen carefully to the Instructor's directions.

- All riding will STOP until the Instructor gives further directions. (Some horses need to keep moving when nervous).
- No-one, including parents, will be permitted to enter the arena during an emergency unless authorized by the Instructor.
- There should be no excessive talking or noise.

- Sidewalker(s) will position themselves to protect and support their riders and will explain the situation calmly and quietly to their riders.
- Leaders will position themselves in front of their horse and maintain control of it at all times.
- No matter what happens, the leader must remain responsible for the horse and the sidewalkers remain responsible for the rider.

If the arena or stable must be evacuated for an emergency situation, all persons should meet on the lawn on the east side of the barn (driveway entrance side), keeping roads and parking areas clear for emergency vehicles.

All riders must be signed in in the attendance book at the front door - either by themselves, their parents or assistants - to allow for a head count during emergencies.

If any person is injured at Therapeutic Riding, Inc. an incident form will be completed at the time of the injury. If this is not possible, one will be completed as soon as possible thereafter. Even seemingly minor injuries must be reported and documented.

Loss of Electricity

In the event that the loss of power results in the loss of lights in the arena, riders will be dismounted and returned to the Observation Room. Emergency lighting exists throughout the building and we have a generator that comes on automatically.

Inclement Weather

Class may not be held during inclement weather including thunderstorms, lightning and high winds. A tornado, hail storm or severe thunderstorm warning, lightning, rain or strong winds, or power outages are all conditions that may warrant canceling classes. We will make every effort to contact you if classes are canceled. **Please make sure that we always have accurate and up-to-date contact information for you.**

The outgoing message on the barn voice mail at 734-677-0303 will be changed to indicate that classes have been cancelled.

If weather conditions deteriorate while classes are in progress and include any of the conditions listed above, classes may be dismissed and subsequent classes may be canceled. Periods of severe weather may cause classes to be temporarily suspended while waiting to see if conditions improve. If classes are canceled, all riders will be returned to their parents or caregivers. Therefore, it is crucial that these persons remain on the premises at all times.

If a tornado or high winds occur while lessons are in progress, horses in-hand will be turned loose in the arena and all people will proceed to the tack room.

Fire

In case of fire, all persons would proceed quietly and calmly to the nearest exit. Any person holding a horse would take that horse out of the barn if possible and release them into the nearest paddock/pasture. **TRI has fire alarms that automatically alert the Pittsfield Fire Department;** but as a secondary precaution, the Instructor will designate an individual to call 911 and report the

fire. Barn staff or persons designated by the Instructor will release any remaining horses to a paddock/pasture if possible. Some horses may become so panicked that it may not be possible to lead them safely and they must remain in their stalls or in the arena.

The barn is to remain evacuated until given the “all clear” by emergency personnel. All humans are to go to the east side of the barns in the grass area by the driveway.

Medical Emergency

Therapeutic Riding Inc.’s Instructors are all certified in CPR and First Aid. The Instructor will designate individuals to get the first aid kit and/or call 911 if needed. There is a sign next to both office phones, in the Observation Room, on the Tack Room outer wall, behind the lift, and by the refrigerator in the front lobby with the barn address and directions to get here so that emergency personnel can locate us. Do not hang up the phone until the 911 operator tells you to do so. Medical forms for all riders, volunteers, and staff are kept in the Program Office.

The equine first aid kit is located in the Tack Room. The human first aid kit is located in the board room on the side table. Latex gloves are kept inside the first aid kits. Everyone should be aware that there is a risk of transmission of disease whenever anyone comes into contact with human bodily fluids. If you are assisting during an injury where such exposure is possible, please wear gloves.

Arena Accident

If an accident occurs during class, all leaders must take their horses to the opposite end of the arena and await further directions from the Instructor. Some horses are calm at the halt; others do better walking quietly around.

Sidewalkers will remain in position with their rider until otherwise instructed. Sidewalkers will place an arm over the rider’s thigh to secure them. If necessary, the Instructor will ask sidewalkers to perform an emergency dismount.

Emergency Dismount

If an emergency dismount is needed, the sidewalker to the inside of the arena will notify the rider that he/she is going to dismount. That sidewalker will wrap an arm around the rider’s waist and the rider will be asked to remove his/her feet from the stirrups (with assistance from sidewalker on the other side as needed). When the rider’s feet are clear, he/she will be taken off the horse and will remain with the sidewalkers until directions are received from the Instructor. This procedure has been taught to volunteers during their orientation. If necessary, the Instructor will designate someone to call emergency medical services. The Instructor will notify all people if class can continue or if all riders must dismount and leave the arena.