

# EXCEPTIONAL HORSEBACK RIDERS OF SAGINAW COUNTY

*Equine Partnerships for Exceptional People since 1974*



## PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK

### **Mission Statement**

The Exceptional Horseback Riders of Saginaw County strongly believes in the human/animal bond and in the benefits of equine assisted activities for people with physical, cognitive, social and emotional needs. The EHRSC strives to provide a safe, nurturing environment and encourages self-esteem and independence.

## Program

**Riding Lessons** are planned with the individual's educational, physical, social, and/or recreational goals in mind. Lessons and trail rides include warm-up exercises, skill development and other activities or games to reinforce goals.

**Carriage Driving Lessons** are also planned with the individual in mind and include a variety of activities including the use of obstacle courses to enhance skill development.

**Stable Management Lessons** are un-mounted lessons designed to provide a hands-on approach to horse care and stable care which may include grooming, tacking, feeding and other equine-related activities. These lessons are scheduled during regular sessions in order to provide a well -rounded equine experience to participants.

**Summer program** runs one week (M-F) every summer. Participants learn stable management, take riding lessons and engage in special project.

**EHRSC defines a "participant" in the program as: 1) a student involved in an equine activity; 2) a parent, guardian or adult that is charged with the supervision, custody or control of a minor student involved in an equine activity; or 3) an adult or minor volunteer in an equine activity.**

## Policies and Procedures

### Non-Discrimination Policy

EHRSC accepts participants and volunteers regardless of income, race, color, nationality, sexual orientation, or ethnic origin.

**The EHRSC program is a cooperative. Participants are required to engage in activities organized by the Board of Directors to promote the continued success of the program.**

### Fees & Payment

Equine assisted activities, including; Riding Lessons, Carriage Driving lessons and the summer program require a **prepayment of \$150.00 per session per participant.** A "session" is defined as a weekly lesson for a seven (7) week period; or one week (M-F) of summer program. Financial need scholarships are available when funding permits. A student in need of assistance must notify one of the program instructors and the instructor will address the anonymous application for a scholarship directly with the Board of Directors, on behalf of the student, at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

### Waiting list

EHRSC maintains a waiting list of candidates that have expressed a desire to participate in the program either as a student rider or student driver. Therefore, no student rider or driver in any EHRSC program session can be involved in any other equine assisted riding or driving program in another city or county at the same time they are involved the

EHRSC session. If it is discovered that an active student rider or driver is so involved they will be dismissed from the EHRSC program and all fees paid up to date of dismissal will not be refunded.

### **Attendance & Cancellation Policies**

If you are unable to attend a regularly schedule lesson you must contact **Tina Bennett at 989-274-5466** as soon as possible so adequate notice can be given to volunteers. We depend on volunteers for the success of the program and must be mindful of their time.

### **No call-no show**

A student rider or carriage driver who fails to call and report their inability to attend their lesson in advance of the lesson and does not attend the scheduled lesson will be dismissed from that program session and any fees paid up to the time of dismissal will not be refunded. Emergencies will be given special consideration.

**Late Arrival:** A student rider or driver who arrives more than 10 minutes late for their lesson will not be allowed to participate in the lesson.

### **Cancellation of classes**

Due to unforeseen circumstances such as inclement weather or a shortage of volunteers, classes may be cancelled and all participants will be notified as soon as possible. Time and availability of volunteers permitting, a make-up class will be scheduled.

### **Attire, Helmets & Footwear**

All student riders and carriage drivers must wear an ASTM/SEI approved riding helmet with the chin strap secured when working with or around horses. Helmets are provided by EHRSC at no cost to participants. All participants are encouraged to wear boots with a sturdy, smooth sole with a ¼ inch heel. Athletic shoes are acceptable, but not recommended. Any shoe with open toe is unacceptable when working around horses. Anyone wearing an open toe shoe will not be allowed to participate, even as a volunteer. Appropriate pants include: jeans, heavy cotton trousers or riding breeches. Shorts are unacceptable for a student who is riding a horse using a saddle or surcingle. Nylon and loose-fitting or stretchy materials are discouraged as they are slippery on a saddle as well as the seat of a carriage. Please note that the indoor arena is not heated or air-conditioned.

### **Participant Records**

Participants are required to update their paperwork annually. Participants will not be able to continue in the program without the required updated paperwork.

### **Change of Health or Medication Status**

Participants must inform EHRSC immediately and in writing of any changes in health status, conditions and medications. This includes, but is not limited to, changes in weight, medications and dosages, revised diagnoses, medical interventions, surgeries, etc. This also includes any change in your Health Care Provider.

### **Confidentiality**

Any information pertaining to the participants in the program must be held in strict confidence. It is critical that we respect each individual. Confidentiality is considered one of the most basic responsibilities of our staff and volunteers.

### **Conflict Resolution**

Problems should be handled immediately, confidentially, and directly between the parties involved and EHRSC. Participants who feel that their concerns are not being addressed may address the Board of Directors at any regularly scheduled meeting of the board.

## **Safety and Conduct for Participants & Visitors**

**The speed limit on all program roadways is five (5) mph.**

Working with horses is a high risk activity. The following rules must be adhered to at all times:

- Participants are required to use gentle hands and feet while on or near any horse.
- Running, yelling, abusive or aggressive actions are not allowed.
- Appropriate attire and footwear (no sandals) are required in barn and paddock areas.
- Hand-feeding of the horses is not allowed under any circumstance.
- Photography or video are not allowed without permission from staff.
- Please do not tap on the observation room windows as it may startle the horses.
- Children must be supervised by an adult at all times.
- Parents may view lessons from the observation room or arena rail just inside the stable door.
- No pets are allowed on the grounds.
- Smoking, alcohol or illegal substances are not allowed on the premises.
- Visitors wishing to tour the facility or grounds must be escorted by EHRSC staff or an assigned volunteer

Emergency procedures are posted in the barn and are available in the office.

## **Communication and Information**

**Glass Bulletin Case** at the right of stable entrance on wall. Parents, students and volunteers should review postings weekly as it will contain pertinent information concerning present and future EHRSC sessions, fundraising, and other events.

**Program Newsletter** "THE GIFT HORSE" is a periodic newsletter for participants sent via email and posted in the Bulletin Case at stable entrance. It includes program highlights, upcoming events and relevant program updates for participants, families, caregivers and involved professionals.

### **Lesson Sign-in Table**

As you enter the indoor riding area from the stable entrance, there is a table on your right. All volunteers and participants are required to sign in each week. A dated sheet is available on the table. Also, there is a dry erase board on the table that contains general information for all participants.

**Email updates** are provided to all participants by program coordinators as needed.

We have a **Facebook** page. Please send us a *friend request!*

Our program website is [www.EHRSC.org](http://www.EHRSC.org)

### **Participant Eligibility or Dismissal**

EHRSC offers services to individuals with special needs. Prior to participation, an assessment is conducted by an equine riding instructor. Eligibility for participation is based solely upon an individual's ability to participate in a meaningful and safe manner, provided that the necessary resources are available. Necessary resources include: an instructor, horse, volunteers and a class which meets an individual's needs. Financial consideration is not taken into account in determining the eligibility for participation. As a PATH Intl. center, EHRSC fully ascribes to the Precautions and Contraindications as recommended by the PATH Intl. Medical Committee as well as professional standards.

Due to the nature of equine assisted riding and other equine related activities, there are individuals for whom EHRSC programs are deemed inappropriate during the evaluation process, not accepted for enrollment, or ineligible to continue in EHRSC programs. This determination is made on the basis of physical, behavioral and other limitations. Individuals accepted into EHRSC programs are required to follow EHRSC rules, policies, procedures and guidelines and be subject to progress reviews. During these reviews, or as the result of unusual occurrences during a program session or lesson, the EHRSC staff may find that continuance in the program for a given individual is inappropriate. For this reason, EHRSC reserves the right to discontinue participation of an individual in its programs when it is deemed that such action is in the best interests of EHRSC, its horses, the volunteers, the individual concerned or other participants. EHRSC **reserves the right to decide when we are unable to serve an applicant due to unavailable resource(s) and/or safety concerns including PATH guidelines relating to contraindications for participation.**

**The Michigan Equine Activity Liability Act** is Public Act 351 of 1994 of the Michigan Compiled Laws. MCL 691.1663 , Sec. 3, provides, but is not limited to:

#### **Injury, death, or property damage; liability.**

##### Sec. 3.

Except as otherwise provided in section 5, an equine activity sponsor, an equine professional, or another person is not liable for an injury to or the death of a participant or property damage resulting from an inherent risk of an equine activity.

Except as otherwise provided in section 5, a participant or participant's representative shall not make a claim for, or recover, civil damages from an equine activity sponsor, an equine professional, or another person for injury to or the death of the participant or property damage resulting from an inherent risk of an equine activity.

## **Equine Limitations**

It takes a unique horse to become a part of the EHRSC program. A small percentage of trial horses actually become part of the program. No two horses are alike. Each horse offers specific benefits to our riders, who have their own needs and limitations.

Therefore, it is critical that we do not exceed each horse's weight limit and work schedule established by equine professionals. Our horses are given the highest ethical consideration. We try our best to serve our riders within the limits of our horses. EHRSC offers alternative activities such as carriage driving and stable management lessons to those for which we may not have a suitable horse for riding lessons.

## **Additional Program Information**

### **Volunteer Program**

We encourage you to consider volunteering in the program. If you are a parent with a child in our program, volunteering directly with your child may not provide the most effective riding experience for them. However we encourage you to assist another student or perform another volunteer role in the stable, office or assist with special events. Please see a staff member or contact the Volunteer Coordinator for more information.

EHRSC cannot operate without its trained volunteers. Volunteers must be at least 14 years of age to participate in the lesson program. All volunteers over the age of 18 are subject to a criminal background check prior to beginning service in the program. EHRSC will reject applicants who have been convicted of crimes involving violence, alcohol, theft and any other crime we feel poses a possible risk to any other participant, or horses. EHRSC reserves the right to reject the application of a volunteer or terminate a volunteer's service for any reason it deems appropriate.

**Board of Directors**— As a nonprofit corporation with 501(c) 3 tax exempt status, EHRSC is governed by a voluntary Board of Directors.

### **Annual Membership Meeting and Annual Report**

In September of each year, EHRSC holds its Annual Membership Meeting which includes elections for Officers of the Board and publishes its Annual Report for the prior fiscal year. We invite all EHRSC participants and volunteers along with family and friends to attend.



## RECEIPT AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF HANDBOOK

EHRSC defines a “participant” in the program as:

- 1) A student involved in an equine activity;
- 2) A parent, guardian or adult that is charged with the supervision, custody or control of a minor student involved in an equine activity; or
- 3) An adult or minor volunteer involved in an equine activity.

I, \_\_\_\_\_

(circle one) Signature of Parent / Guardian / Adult Participant / Volunteer

Have received a copy of the EHRSC Handbook on \_\_\_\_\_ (date).

I have read the EHRSC Handbook.

I acknowledge that I am a participant in the riding program and am subject to all terms, conditions, guidelines, rules and policies contained in the handbook.

I understand that EHRSC welcomes all questions, suggestions and concerns.

Minor Participant is: \_\_\_\_\_