



Iron Horse and Iron Horse Therapy

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Volunteer Manual

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About Us

Our Mission Statement: The mission of Iron Horse is dedicated to empowering children and adults with special needs through equine-assisted activities, one ride at a time.

What we do: We offer children and adults the opportunity to work with and learn to ride horses, and can accommodate those with special physical or emotional needs and circumstances.

Safety: The safety of our students and their families as well as that of our staff, volunteers and horses is of the utmost concern at all times.

Volunteer Code of Ethics

Iron Horse seeks to provide a therapeutic, professional, beautiful, safe and peaceful environment for students, visitors, staff members, volunteers and horses. The purpose of this code of ethics is to provide volunteers with an ethical and responsible framework from which we serve.

As a volunteer, I will:

1. Listen carefully to the Iron Horse staff members and recognize that they follow certain procedures for a reason.
2. Respect my fellow volunteers.
3. Participate in volunteer training and assist other volunteers as needed.
4. Bring to the attention of the Iron Horse staff any issues that I believe will have an adverse effect on the organization or those we serve.
5. Help curtail any negative conversations, rumors or gossip.
6. Always strive to leave how to be a more effective volunteer while also assisting the staff in improving the volunteer program.
7. Notify the staff if I cannot physically do something that is asked of me.

As a volunteer, I will not:

1. Criticize fellow volunteers and staff members or their opinions.
2. Use the organization for my personal advantage or that of my friends or relatives.
3. Discuss confidential issues with anyone not involved with those issues.
4. Mistreat horses or any other animals on the property.
5. Take pictures of Iron Horse students

As a volunteer, I agree to adhere to and to be responsible for maintaining the above Code of Ethics

Barn Rules

1. Please drive slowly (5mph max); we love our students, horses, and dogs.
2. No smoking anywhere on the premises.
3. Direct access to any horse must be supervised by one of our instructors.
4. Closed-toe shoes are required when working with horses.
5. Safety stirrups or boots are required when on a horse.
6. Helmet is required when riding.
7. No “horse play” in the barn (roughhousing).
8. Parents must supervise all students who are not in a lesson.
9. No outside dogs allowed.

Volunteer Program

Children 10-13 may volunteer under special circumstances. Volunteers may discontinue their service at any time, but advance notice is greatly appreciated. Iron Horse has the right to discontinue the service of any volunteer who fails to follow the code of ethics or breaches confidentiality. Attending volunteer orientation is required for all who wish to volunteer.

Volunteer Position Descriptions

Barn Volunteers

Individuals seeking to volunteer for barn chores will need either, significant horse experience or to complete horsemanship training at Iron Horse. A basic evaluation will be done to test our level of horsemanship skills before you are allowed to volunteer at the barn. Barn volunteers will only be scheduled during times when a staff person is present and available to supervise them, regardless of age or experience. Barn volunteers may clean feed buckets, help feed and water the horses, help with turning horses out to pasture or bringing them in, clean tack, or work on projects around the barn.

Horse Handling: When a volunteer is leading a horse, their sole responsibility is the horse. They will give verbal feedback to the instructor as to how their horse is feeling in different situations. An evaluation will be completed by an instructor prior to anyone being approved to lead a horse.

Sidewalking: When a volunteer is sidewalking, their sole responsibility is the rider to which they are assigned. They must pay attention to their rider by watching their balance and expressions. The instructor may request the sidewalker to walk with their hands down beside them, or walk with a hand hold on the student. The ideal position for a sidewalker is to stay between the rider's knee and hip and about 4-6 inches away. Sidewalkers must be physically capable of holding the sidewalker position for 30 minutes at a time involving walking and/trotting with their rider for periods of time.

Administrative Volunteers

The duties may include making copies, file paperwork, audit files, complete data entry or do other tasks necessary for operation of the program.

Fundraising Volunteers

Iron Horse will have several fundraisers each year as well as other events. All events require planning, donation solicitation, set up, and clean up.

Property Maintenance and Special Projects Volunteers

Iron Horse welcomes volunteer help in lawn maintenance, stick removal, fixing broken equipment, and special projects. Volunteers will only be scheduled to come when a staff member is present to supervise.

Frequently Asked Questions

What do I do when I arrive at Iron Horse the first time to volunteer? The gate code is 1438. Parking areas are clearly marked. Please log your hours in the sign in book located in the office.

Why do I have to sign in? Signing in is important as it will help us to track volunteer hours. This will help us to secure funding and to show potential donors the community support we have.

Can I become friends with the students/or their parents? Please refrain from give money or gifts to the students, do not offer rides or other personal favors, and avoid giving out personal contact information. You are cautioned to consider the consequences before connecting with students on any social media site. If you feel like a student and/or their family has a significant need, please talk to a staff member.

Will I be notified if a student cancels? You will be contacted by a staff member upon hearing a student has cancelled. If your student is cancelled, or does not show up, please ask a staff member if there is

What is the weather policy? Please do not assume the lesson is cancelled due to rain. If it is thundering and lightening, the lessons will be cancelled. If you feel like traveling from where you are to Iron Horse would be dangerous, please call or text the instructor.

Will I be told the student's reasons for participating in Iron Horse's program? Do not expect to be told the participant's circumstances for being at Iron Horse. The instructor will determine what information is necessary to share with you. Please do not ask prodding or inappropriate questions.

Can I take pictures of my students? Please do not take pictures of our students. This is very important! If you need photographs for a school project or to advocate for Iron Horse in the community, please ask a staff member.

Is there a dress code? Volunteers should not wear open-toed shoes, crocs, or sandals. Boots that offer foot protection is recommended. We advise against wearing dangling jewelry, perfume or loose, long hair. Your overall appearance should be professional.

How can I stay informed about Iron Horse's schedule and upcoming events? An email is sent out to volunteers that will announce the activities at Iron Horse. Volunteers will also be emailed throughout the month with requests for help. Liking us on Facebook is another great way to stay informed.

Most Common Disabilities

1. **ADHD:** A neurodevelopmental disorder. Problems with attention, hyperactivity and/or acting impulsively.
2. **Anxiety Disorders:** Excessive feelings of anxiety and fear. Could cause symptoms as a racing heart and shakiness.
3. **Autism:** Self-absorption and repetitive behaviors are characteristic, and are most often accompanied by profound communication by profound communication disorders. It is extremely important to gain and keep the rider's attention.
4. **Asperger's Syndrome:** Part of the autism spectrum, but may be highly intelligent and verbal. Characterized by difficulties in social interaction, as well as restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior. Often physical clumsiness and atypical use of language are common.
5. **Cerebral Palsy:** Non-progressive motor disorders with impairment of voluntary movement. Restricted movements in one or more limbs may be present.
6. **Down Syndrome:** Impaired mental ability with weak muscle tone.
7. **Dyslexia:** Difficulty learning to read fluently or comprehend the material being read, despite normal intelligence.
8. **Fetal Alcohol Syndrome:** Permanent central nervous system damage, especially the brain. Could cause poor memory, attention problems, impulsive behaviors, poor cause-effect reasoning, and distinctive facial features.
9. **Mental Retardation/Developmental Delays:** The learning process will be slow. Repetition is the best way for these riders to learn. Treat them as their age dictates.
10. **Multiple Sclerosis:** Muscle weakness, lack of judgment or in attention. Symptoms and characteristics vary. Avoid over fatiguing.
11. **Muscular Dystrophy:** Progressive degeneration of muscle strength with NO mental impairment.
Muscle strengthening is not possible. They will become overly tired easily.
12. **Reactive Attachment Disorder:** Significantly disturbed and developmentally inappropriate ways of interacting in most social settings.
13. **Seizures:** Many times, the rider may appear non-coherent or appear vacant immediately before the onset of a seizure. **Notify the instructor immediately.**
14. **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):** May develop after exposure to a traumatic event in which they experience intense fear, horror, or powerlessness.

