

# Volunteer Handbook



## Center for Adaptive Riding

Enriching lives through the power of the horse.

### Welcome!

Physical Address:  
6505 Bonde Lane  
Reno, NV 89511

Mailing Address:  
550 West Plumb Lane  
Suite B #137  
Reno, NV 89509

Tel: (775) 329-1839

Email: [info@adaptiveriding.org](mailto:info@adaptiveriding.org)

Website: <https://www.adaptiveriding.org/>



## Welcome New Volunteers!

Message from our Executive Director:

Volunteers drive the programs at the Center for Adaptive Riding (CAR) and are indispensable at all levels of our organization. CAR believes that every volunteer contribution is immeasurable in its value for our organization and ultimately, for our participants. No matter which position you may choose to volunteer at CAR, you are an integral part of the team and are greatly appreciated. While some may share skills in horsemanship, others may share leadership skills and an understanding and acceptance with helping participants seek fulfillment in their lives. Volunteers also bring many new ideas and insights to the programs and frequently enlist their friends to help. Chances are that if you ask a volunteer at CAR what they have gained, they will answer, more than they have given.

The information in this manual is designed to assist you with understanding some of CAR's policies and procedures. Our goal is to provide you with the necessary training and guidance to make your volunteer experience as safe and enjoyable as possible. This handbook includes information about volunteer duties and best practices, populations which we work with, our equines, and how you can help provide meaningful sessions for your participant.

Thank you for your interest in volunteering at CAR – we look forward to working with you!

*Nikki Landa*

Executive Director

[nikki@adaptiveriding.org](mailto:nikki@adaptiveriding.org)

775-329-1839



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>WHO WE ARE .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>WHAT WE DO .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Why Equine Assisted Services? .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Adaptive Riding aka Therapeutic Riding.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Stable Moments .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Girl Scouts .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES AND EXPECTATIONS.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>General Qualifications.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Commitment and Volunteer Cancellations.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Lesson Schedule and Cancellations .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Communication &amp; Questions.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Physical Considerations.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Serious Misconduct by a Volunteer .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Personal Relationships with Participants .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Injuries .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Facility.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Visitors .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Children &amp; Dogs .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Smoking, Alcohol &amp; Other Substances .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Horse Discipline .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Feeding &amp; Touching the Equines.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Riding the Equine.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Constructive Feedback &amp; Whistleblower Policy.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Reassignment &amp; Dismissal Policy .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Status as a Volunteer/Volunteer Agreement.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Volunteer Screening.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Anti-discrimination Policy .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Anti-harassment Policy .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Maintenance of Active Volunteer Status.....</b>	<b>10</b>



Code of Ethics .....	10
Confidentiality .....	11
<b>VOLUNTEER POSITIONS .....</b>	<b>12</b>
Barn Team .....	12
Equine Care Team .....	12
Horse Leader .....	13
Side Walker .....	13
Instructor Assistant .....	14
Other Volunteer Roles.....	14
<b>THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE.....</b>	<b>15</b>
What to Wear .....	15
When You Arrive.....	15
While You Are Volunteering .....	15
When You Leave .....	16
<b>SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES .....</b>	<b>17</b>
Safety Around Horses.....	17
Location of Emergency Equipment.....	17
Medical Emergencies .....	17
Severe Weather, Natural and Man-Made Disasters.....	18
Evacuation Plan .....	18
<b>SUMMARY OF VOLUNTEERING: DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1: UNDERSTANDING CAR PARTICIPANTS .....</b>	<b>20</b>
When You Meet a Person with a Disability .....	20
Using “People First” Language.....	21
Working with Disabilities .....	21
<b>APPENDIX 2: UNDERSTANDING EQUINE BEHAVIOR.....</b>	<b>23</b>
Equine Senses .....	23
Equine Instincts .....	23
Equine Body Language .....	24
Communicating with Equines .....	25



## WHO WE ARE

The Center for Adaptive Riding (CAR) began in a backyard in Washoe Valley, NV in 2007 with a mother, a daughter with disabilities, a horse, and a dream. Uniting the love of a child with special needs and a horse was the foundation of our center. In 2009, CAR was granted 501(c)3 non-profit status. The organization expanded the program and in 2015, moved to Horseman's Park in the City of Reno and in early 2021, further expanded and relocated to an 8-acre ranch in Southwest Reno. In 2023, CAR moved to the current location on Bonde Lane. The larger facility and covered arena allows CAR to further expand, meeting the needs of additional participants. The staff and volunteers work hard to make sure that CAR remains a Premiere Accredited Center in Northern Nevada.

Since 2007, CAR has been empowering people of all abilities through equine-assisted services. Furthermore, we pride ourselves on being a Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH) International Premiere Accredited Center and are one of only two in the state and the only one located in Washoe County. PATH Intl. is a membership organization that fosters safe, professional, ethical and therapeutic equine activities through education, communication, research and standards. The association ensures the standards are met through an accreditation process for centers and a certification process for instructors. PATH Intl. Centers have an exemplary safety record and are recognized internationally as leaders in the field. As a premier accredited center, we are required to abide by over 100 standards that act as guidelines for programming, equine care, volunteer management and instructors. Every instructor employed by CAR is PATH Intl. Certified, which is to help ensure that the highest levels of quality of instruction and safety precautions are met.

CAR is governed by a 5–9-member Board of Directors.

In order to operate, CAR relies on community support. In 2022, we had over 100 volunteers donate 4,875. We absolutely could not run our program without volunteers, who are an integral part of the backbone of our organization. We cannot express enough how grateful we are to have you interested in joining our team and to help us support our community. We look forward to sharing many magical moments with you.

***Our Mission is to Empower People of all Abilities  
through Equine-Assisted Services.***

## WHAT WE DO

### Why Equine Assisted Services?

1. Physical Benefits

An equine's movement has a dynamic effect on a rider's body. Underlying all therapeutic riding activities is the rhythmic movement of the equine. As the equine moves, the rider's balance is challenged. In most cases, the rider's attempt to rebalance causes muscles to contract and relax, thus leading to improved posture, muscle control, balance, muscle tone and strength. Furthermore, it has shown to provide greater range of motion, decreases in spasticity, encouragement of improved hand-eye coordination, and a reduction of abnormal movement patterns.

2. Sensorial Benefits

Interacting with equines either on the ground or in the saddle, places the participant in a sensory-rich environment with new sights, smells, sounds and tactile input. For example, a smooth-gaited equine with a consistent tempo can provide the necessary input to help a rider establish rhythm, whereas an equine with a choppy gait or heavy footfalls may be able to provide a rider with stimulation, which can help organize and integrate sensory input.

3. Emotional Benefits

The success of overcoming fear and anxiety can help a participant realize self-worth and increase self-esteem. The ability to achieve riding skills can also have a positive effect on a rider's self-perception and awareness, emotional control, self-confidence and independence. The relationships that may develop among participants, volunteers, equines and staff are an integral part of a positive emotional experience. Learning horsemanship skills, while working independently or with a team, can provide excitement and a sense of achievement.

4. Cognitive Benefits

Equines can provide many of our participants with the motivation to learn something new. The repetition of patterned movements that is required to manage an equine, can help sharpen reflexes and aid in the development of learned skills, tactile awareness and sensory integration, improved application of direction, sequencing, patterning and motor planning.

5. Social Benefits

Equine-Assisted Services (EAS) can provide many opportunities for participants to interact with peers, staff, volunteers and equines. Assigned activities require the participant to problem-solve, stay on task and follow through with reaching goals. Being involved with EAS as a participant can help create shared interests and experiences, which in turn can lend to building social foundations and friendships. This can increase experiences, and improve overall quality of life.



## **Adaptive Riding aka Therapeutic Riding**

CAR's Adaptive Riding program focuses on teaching riding skills to participants with disabilities as young as 4 years of age. Our PATH International-certified therapeutic riding instructors work with the riders to participate in a recognized sport and to develop independence and skills that can carry over to their everyday lives. Thanks to the equines, many riders are able to experience a freedom of motion and ability that they otherwise would not.

In addition to the therapeutic benefits, horseback riding also provides a recreational opportunity for individuals with disabilities to enjoy the outdoors. Adaptive riding contributes positively to the physical, cognitive, emotional and social well-being for individuals with disabilities.

Adaptive riding lessons are offered year-round in sessions that are generally 8-12 weeks. There are morning, afternoon and evening sessions, Tuesday – Saturday.

## **Stable Moments**

CAR is working with Washoe County Children's Services to provide this program. It is an equine-assisted mentorship program serving children in our Foster Care System, many of whom have endured complex trauma.

## **Girl Scouts**

CAR works with Girl Scout troops in our area to assist Girl Scout members in obtaining their Horsemanship Badge.



## **VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES AND EXPECTATIONS**

The Center for Adaptive Riding (CAR) could not operate without dedicated volunteers – they are the backbone of the program. Without the extra sets of hands to help participants sit tall or to groom and care for horses, it would be nearly impossible to operate our programs. Generally, a team of two or three people is required to serve every participant for most adaptive riding lessons, so your time is invaluable.

CAR takes considerable care and effort to find, train, and retain excellent and motivated volunteers. CAR offers ideal volunteer opportunities for adults and young people. Volunteers are dedicated people from all walks of life who work as part of our team to give people with all abilities the opportunity to experience the power of the horse.

### **CAR's Volunteer Philosophy:**

- At CAR, we are committed to creating opportunities for our community to be involved in our work and mission.
- Our volunteers who give their time, energy and talent are essential to our ability to meet our goals and serve our community.
- We strive to create a positive experience for our volunteers. We value your ideas and suggestions.
- We want our volunteers to be challenged and engaged. Feel free to let us know if you would like to be trained for additional volunteer assignments.
- We understand that social interaction is part of the reason to volunteer. We welcome groups that wish to volunteer together.
- We are grateful for all the work done by our volunteers. We understand that our program could not function without you. CAR is committed to showing our appreciation in a variety of ways.

### **General Qualifications**

At CAR there is an opportunity for everyone! Certain tasks require equine experience but with others, it does not. Many of our volunteers begin with little or no experience, but through hands-on educational opportunities, have become fine equine handlers.

### **Volunteer Age Limit:**

- Minimum age with adult supervision: 10 years old.
- Minimum age without adult supervision: 14 years old.
- Minimum age for Side Walking: 14 years old.
- Minimum age for Horse Leading: 16 years old.
- All age limits are at the discretion of the Executive Director/Program Director.

To ensure program safety, all horse leaders, side walkers and barn team members must be physically capable of performing all tasks assigned. If you have physical limitations or





limitations of any other kind, please inquire about other volunteer opportunities. We ask that you keep us informed in regards to what you can and cannot accomplish.

### **Commitment and Volunteer Cancellations**

Adequate support is critical in order to serve our participants and equine friends. CAR requests that lesson volunteers commit to a minimum of one (1) lesson each week (same day and time) for the length of a session (generally 8-12 weeks), although we understand there are times when you are unavailable or emergencies arise.

Volunteers are critical to the success of our programs. When you commit to your volunteer role, your support is truly needed in order to serve our participants. Please reserve canceling your scheduled day and time for emergencies only. Please notify the Executive Director/Program Director at least 24 hours in advance if you are not able to make your scheduled time so that a replacement may be found.

### **Lesson Schedule and Cancellations**

CAR offers programs in the mornings, afternoons, and evenings. There are no lessons on Sundays and Mondays or during all major holidays. Sessions are generally 8-12 weeks with a two week break between most sessions.

At CAR, lessons are rarely canceled due to weather conditions with our indoor arena. If participants are unable to participate in mounted activities due to weather conditions, alternate ground-work programming may take place. In the event that CAR must close due to inclement weather, a participant cancels or other circumstances, we will make every attempt to notify volunteers of such circumstances in advance of their scheduled volunteer time.

CAR reserves the right to cancel lessons based on the availability of instructors, volunteers, and/or equines. Furthermore, any factor or situation considered by staff to be a threat to the safety of participants, volunteers, staff, or equines is reason for cancellation.

### **Communication & Questions**

If at any time, your volunteer role or responsibilities are unclear, please direct questions to the Executive Director/Program Director, an instructor, or other staff member. Volunteers should always follow the direction of supervising barn staff, instructors, and other staff members.

During lessons, the instructor is responsible for each participant, equine and volunteer. All directions from the instructor should be followed, including the assignment of participants, equines and volunteers, mounts/dismounts and lesson structure. To ensure everyone's safety, it is important to adhere to the instructor's directives. If you have additional comments, concerns or questions, you may contact the Executive Director/Program Director.

Please keep CAR up to date with all of your contact information (email, phone number, address, etc.). The primary means of providing information to all volunteers is via email.

## **Physical Considerations**

Volunteer roles such as horse leading, side walking and barn team, at times, can be physically demanding. It is important that you inform staff if you have a health condition that may prevent you from meeting the physical requirements of your position responsibilities, which may include lifting up to 50 pounds or walking in varying terrain for over an hour. If you feel that the role of a lesson or barn volunteer may be too physically demanding, there are many other volunteer opportunities that may be better suited for your needs.

## **Serious Misconduct by a Volunteer**

Although it is not possible to provide an exhaustive list, the following are examples of conduct that would end your volunteer relationship with CAR:

- Dishonesty
- Coming to CAR under the influence of alcohol or drugs or possessing, distributing, or selling drugs on CAR property
- Possessing weapons, ammunition, or stolen property on CAR premises
- Sexual harassment or other illegal harassment
- Verbal or physical violence on CAR property
- Abusing, destroying or willfully damaging CAR property
- Abusing or in any way mistreating the equines at CAR
- Disclosing confidential information about CAR, a staff member, another volunteer, or a program participant
- Theft or other criminal acts
- Violating safety practices or conduct that creates a safety or health concern
- Conduct which negatively affects overall morale

## **Personal Relationships with Participants**

It is common for volunteers to form close relationship with their assigned participants. It is also common for participants to share personal information with their volunteers. For some participants, this may be the only place in which they feel safe enough to share. It is important to remember the professional limitations of your role as a volunteer. We encourage you to listen but ask that you avoid sharing your opinion or giving advice. If the participant discloses to you that they are in danger of harming themselves or others, that they are being harmed by others, that they have been abused or you are the witness of abuse, please do not discuss the circumstances with the participant or anyone else. Notify the instructor immediately and follow instructor directives.

Remember that our participants may be struggling with emotional challenges and it is wise to keep firm personal boundaries. Sharing phone numbers, evolving a relationship outside of the program, etc. is allowed; however, we strongly urge you to maintain a professional relationship,



therefore limiting the risk of a participant misunderstanding your intentions. Engaging in a romantic relationship with a participant is strictly forbidden.

## **Injuries**

All injuries must be reported immediately to staff and an Incident Report must be completed by all who were involved. Please notify staff immediately of any safety concerns you may have, including the behavior of program equines.

## **Facility**

Please respect posted off-limit areas. The private home and neighboring properties are off limits. All gates are to be kept closed and latched at all times. If you see an open gate, please close it. If you are leaving the property after dark, you are responsible for ensuring that the barn doors are closed. Unless approved by staff, all volunteers should leave the property at the end of the last lesson of the day.

## **Visitors**

CAR enjoys having visitors. Please make an appointment. When available, a staff member will be happy to guide you through the facility. All visitors are required to sign a Release of Liability waiver located in the lounge. Visitors, participants, and caregivers should not enter the barn unless they have the express permission of a staff member and can be supervised at all times.

When lessons are in progress or equines are out, visitors are required to remain in designated spectator areas and should always enter and exit through designated entrances or exits.

## **Children & Dogs**

Children of volunteers or siblings of participants must have an adult who is not volunteering directly supervise them at all times.

For the safety of the equines and participants, dogs are not allowed on the property. This includes in a parked vehicle. Please leave your pets at home where they will be safe and comfortable while you perform your volunteer duties.

## **Smoking, Alcohol & Other Substances**

CAR is a NON-SMOKING facility. For the safety, health, and pleasure of all who spend time at the ranch, smoking is not allowed at any time while on the property, including in a parked vehicle.

The consumption of alcohol prior to and/or while at CAR is prohibited, except for during approved events. The use of marijuana and/or illegal substances prior to and/or while at CAR is strictly prohibited. CAR reserves the right to dismiss anyone from the property and to take appropriate action against anyone who is suspected of being under the influence.



## **Horse Discipline**

CAR acknowledges the kind and generous spirit of the equine, respects the equine's unique physical and psychological needs, and strongly advocates the kind and humane treatment of the equine at all times. Without their willingness to partner with us, we would be unable to offer adaptive riding, or other related programs, to our participants.

Volunteers, participants and guests are prohibited from using physical discipline on program, leased, or equine on trial. Physical discipline may include, but is not limited to, slapping horses using an open hand or closed fist, smacking, punching, pinching, kicking, biting, hard jerks using the lead line, bit, or cross tie, using any object to hit or strike the equine as a disciplinary measure or any other cruel behavior towards the animal. Additionally, any training method, mounted or unmounted, that causes extreme or consistent fear, could potentially injure, is over the equine's ability level or is inappropriate for the therapeutic setting, will not be tolerated. All issues regarding equine behavior or discipline are to be managed by staff, who will determine the appropriate course of action. This policy applies to any volunteer, participant or guest who is involved with CAR, in any capacity.

Individuals found to be in violation of this policy will be asked to cease such action and will be asked to meet with CAR staff. CAR reserves the right to immediately dismiss anyone who is caught using physical discipline on program, leased, or equine on trial.

## **Feeding & Touching the Equines**

Hay and grain are only to be fed to equines by designated CAR staff or trained volunteers. Feeding treats and/or hand feeding equines anything at CAR is strictly prohibited. This helps discourage nipping.

Please remember equines are sentient creatures that can experience overstimulation. Please be cognizant of this and try to reserve touching the equine for our participants. We ask this of you in order to help preserve our equines' well-being and longevity in our programs.

## **Riding the Equine**

The riding of equines by volunteers is limited to times planned and approved by CAR. Only experienced and approved volunteers may ride CAR equines.

## **Constructive Feedback & Whistleblower Policy**

CAR encourages constructive feedback from all aspects of our organization. Verbal feedback can be provided to the instructors, staff, or board members directly. Written feedback can be done via email. We will review the feedback and take appropriate action, redacting names where appropriate. You will be informed of the status of your feedback by a staff member. Positive feedback is highly encouraged!



We encourage staff and volunteers to come forward with credible information on illegal practices or violations of adopted policies of the organization. We will protect the individual from retaliation and identify to which staff, board members or outside party information can be reported.

### **Reassignment & Dismissal Policy**

Not everyone is a good fit for every volunteer position. If the Executive Director/Program Director feels a volunteer is mismatched with their position, dependent upon circumstances, the following steps will be taken:

1. If there has been a complaint by a participant or family member/caregiver, the Executive Director/Program Director will investigate the complaint to determine its validity. If the complaint is determined to be valid, the following will occur:
  - a. If the incident has caused injury to a participant, volunteer, staff member or equine, the Executive Director/Program Director may immediately dismiss the volunteer who caused the injury. The Executive Director/Program Director also has the option of reporting the incident in writing and placing it in the volunteer's file. This document will serve as the first step toward dismissal from our program.
  - b. If the incident did not cause injury, verbal counseling will serve as the first step toward dismissal. The incident will be reported in writing and placed in the volunteer's file.
  - c. If CAR staff witnessed an incident that caused them concern, the Executive Director/Program Director will provide counseling as above.
2. In the event that a volunteer has previously been counseled on an incident and a second incident has occurred, the Executive Director/Program Director will counsel the volunteer and the volunteer will either be immediately dismissed from their position or may be offered the following alternatives:
  - a. Volunteering in a position that does not involve direct participant and/or equine contact
  - b. Resigning from volunteer staff
3. If the Volunteer accepts a transfer to a different position, any written documentation of incidents will remain in their file. Any additional incident by the volunteer is cause for immediate dismissal from the program, by the Executive Director/Program Director.

### **Status as a Volunteer/Volunteer Agreement**

Your status as a volunteer is at the will of both you and CAR. That means that there is no promise by either you or by CAR that your volunteer tenure will continue for any set period of time. You may quit at any time, for any reason, or no reason, with or without notice and CAR may end the volunteer agreement with you at any time, for any reason or no reason, with or without notice. As a volunteer at CAR, you will receive no financial compensation or company benefits.



## **Volunteer Screening**

All prospective volunteers must complete a CAR Volunteer Application. Prospective volunteers will be screened in person or via telephone and are expected to attend a Volunteer Orientation. Volunteers will receive training specific to the position that they will assume, prior to assignment. All volunteers will be asked to submit to a background check at the expense of the volunteer.

## **Anti-discrimination Policy**

CAR is committed to maintaining an environment that is free of discrimination. CAR will not tolerate discrimination by staff, volunteers, participants, guests, or vendors based on sex, color, race, national origin, religion, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, or other protected status. Incidents of possible discrimination should be reported to CAR management immediately.

## **Anti-harassment Policy**

CAR is committed to maintaining an environment that is free of illegal harassment. We will not tolerate illegal harassment of our volunteers by anyone including CAR staff, other volunteers, participants, guests, or vendors.

Illegal harassment consists of unwelcome conduct, whether verbal, physical or visual, that is based on a person's legally protected status, including sex, color, race, religion, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, or other protected status. Illegal harassing conduct by a volunteer that creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment is strictly prohibited and may result in termination of the volunteer agreement.

If you believe that you have been subjected to any form of illegal harassment by anyone associated with CAR, you are encouraged to promptly tell the person that the conduct is unwelcome and ask them to stop the conduct. If the unwanted behavior continues, promptly inform the Executive Director/Program Director of CAR.

## **Maintenance of Active Volunteer Status**

Volunteers are considered "Active" if they have volunteered at least once during a 12-month period. Exceptions to this guideline may be made at the discretion of CAR.

## **Code of Ethics**

The purpose of the Code of Ethics is to provide volunteers with an ethical and responsible framework from which to serve. The code applies to all aspects of the organization: services, organizational structure and communication among volunteers, staff, participants, the public and the Board of Directors.

As a Volunteer, I will:

1. Listen carefully to CAR staff members.
2. Respect my fellow volunteers.



3. Respect and support the decisions of staff and board members in regard to the success of the program.
4. Stay well informed about developments and policies relevant to my volunteer responsibilities and CAR policies and procedures.
5. Participate actively in volunteer trainings and assist other volunteers when they join CAR.
6. Bring to the attention of the Executive Director/Program Director any issues that I believe will have an adverse effect on the organization or those we serve.
7. Help curtail any negative conversations or rumors.
8. Positively represent CAR in the community.
9. Consider myself having ownership of the organization and do my best to ensure that it is well maintained – keeping safety and quality of service in mind.
10. Always strive to learn how to be a more effective volunteer.
11. Comply with the Policies and Expectations outlined in this Volunteer Handbook.

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 the advantage of my friends or relatives.
3. Discuss confidential issues with anyone not directly involved with those issues.
4. Interfere with the duties of staff members or undermine their authority.

All volunteers share the responsibility of maintaining the Code of Ethics. If this responsibility is not being upheld, a private discussion regarding concerns will be arranged in the attempt to rectify the situation. If repeated attempts have been made to rectify a volunteer's non-compliance with the Code of Ethics or should a severe violation of the Code of Ethics occur, prompt action will be taken to remove or suspend the individual from service.

### **Confidentiality**

CAR a professional organization and is bound by a policy to maintain confidentiality of information regarding our participants, staff, and volunteers. Any personal information, which you may have acquired through your work at CAR, must not be shared.

Specific diagnoses and information about participants are confidential. Volunteers may acquire details about participants, either through caregivers or the participants and it is important to remember that such information should be treated confidentially and should not be discussed casually or in public places. Additionally, photography of participants or volunteers is not permitted without written authorization from CAR.



## VOLUNTEER POSITIONS

### Barn Team

Position Summary: Assist CAR with tasks that need to be completed around the facility, including but not limited to stall/paddock cleaning and filling water buckets/troughs.

#### Position Duties:

- Clean the stalls, runs, paddocks and barns
  - Including cleaning waterers and sweeping aisleways.
- Ensure compliance with all CAR policies.
- Work as a team with staff and volunteers.

#### Qualifications:

- Capable of performing all tasks assigned.
- In order to be unsupervised, volunteers must be at least 14 years of age.
  - Children between 10 and 14 are welcome to volunteer with supervision by a parent or guardian.
- Mature, dependable, and responsible.
- Able to frequently sit, stand, walk, bend and lift up to 50 pounds.
- Able and willing to perform position duties under extreme weather conditions.

### Equine Care Team

Position Summary: Assist with equine training and equine care.

#### Position Duties:

- Perform equine conditioning as directed by the Executive Director/Program Director, including lunging, round penning, grooming, and bathing.

#### Qualifications:

- Capable of performing all tasks assigned.
- Volunteers must be at least 16 years of age with horse experience.
- All volunteers must pass a Horse Handling Assessment prior to volunteering.
- Mature, dependable, and responsible.
- Experience working with horses.
- Able to frequently sit, stand, walk, bend and lift up to 50 pounds.
- Able to physically react with agility and swiftness to maximize safety of the rider and manage the equine.





## **Horse Leader**

**Position Summary:** Responsible for the equine before, during, and after a lesson. Horse Leaders will prepare the equine for the lesson, lead the equine during the lesson, put the equine away after the lesson, and correctly put away tack and equipment.

### **Position Duties:**

- Arrive one hour prior to assigned lesson time.
- Groom and tack equine as directed by instructor.
- Aid in mounting by leading the equine to the appropriate site.
- Lead the equine for the rider as specified by the instructor.
- Maintain safety in the arena by keeping the equine at a safe distance from other equines, people, fences and other objects.
- Follow instructor directives at all times.
- Take the equine back to the appropriate stall or pasture after lesson.
- Work as a team with staff and volunteers.

### **Qualifications:**

- Capable of performing all tasks assigned.
- Volunteers must be at least 16 years of age with horse experience.
- All volunteers must pass a Horse Handling Assessment prior to volunteering.
- Mature, dependable, and responsible.
- Experience working with horses.
- Able to frequently sit, stand, walk, bend and lift up to 50 pounds.
- Able to walk for more than 1½ hours in varying terrain.
- Able to physically react with agility and swiftness to maximize safety of the rider and manage the equine.

## **Side Walker**

**Position Summary:** Assist participants in the lesson.

### **Position Duties:**

- Arrive 15 minutes prior to assigned lesson time.
- Greet participants and assist with helmet fitting.
- Aid instructor and horse leader during mounting, riding, and dismounting.
- Walk beside the rider to provide stability assistance, as needed.
- When appropriate, support instructor by relaying directions to the rider.
- Follow instructor directives at all times.
- Aid instructor in setting up the arena for lesson and clearing the arena after lesson.
- Work as a team with staff and volunteers.

### **Qualifications:**

- Capable of performing all tasks assigned.



- Volunteers must be at least 14 years of age.
- Mature, dependable, and responsible.
- Able to frequently sit, stand, walk, bend and lift up to 50 pounds.
- Able to walk for more than 1½ hours in varying terrain.
- Able to physically react with agility and swiftness to maximize safety of the rider.

## **Instructor Assistant**

Position Summary: Assist instructors in ensuring the safety of participants and volunteers by being another “set of eyes and ears” during lessons and other therapeutic services.

### Position Duties:

- Assist the instructor by observing all activity in the arena during a lesson or other therapeutic service. Immediately report concerns.
- When appropriate, support instructor by relaying directions to volunteers and/or participants.
- Help maintain safety in the arena.
- Always follow instructor directives.
- Aid instructor in setting up the arena for lessons and clearing the arena after lessons.
- Work as a team with staff and volunteers.

### Qualifications:

- Capable of performing all tasks assigned.
- Volunteer must be at least 18 years of age.
- Mature, dependable, and responsible.
- Able to walk for more than 1½ hour in varying terrain.
- Able to physically react with agility and swiftness to maximize safety of all involved.

## **Other Volunteer Roles**

We are always looking for volunteers who can assist CAR in multiple ways, including but not limited to:

- Support for “handyman” duties such as minor facility repairs.
- Support for landscaping duties, such as weeding, watering, planting, etc.
- Support for cleaning duties, such as dusting, vacuuming, sweeping, taking out trash, etc.
- Support for administrative duties, such as mailings, photocopying, filing, word processing, answering phones, data processing, fundraising, grant writing, and special events.

*Note: The above statements are intended to describe the general nature and level of work required for specific volunteer roles and are not intended to be an exhaustive list of all responsibilities, duties and/or skills that may be required. CAR holds the right to terminate volunteers who do not meet the requirements and responsibilities set forth or if the volunteer violates policies or the code of ethics.*



## THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

### What to Wear

Volunteers should dress suitably to the weather and in clothing appropriate for equestrian activities.

#### What TO Wear:

1. Comfortable clothes.
2. Long pants (ex. Jeans, riding breeches, or other comfortable pants) when riding.
3. Closed-toed shoes or boots that are comfortable and provide adequate foot protection.

#### What NOT to Wear:

1. Clothing, hats, or jewelry that restrict movement or vision or that can be grabbed by a participant or equine (i.e. Dangling earrings, big necklaces).
2. Excessively tight or baggy clothing.
3. Overly revealing clothing (i.e. spaghetti straps, low cut tops, strapless or sheer tops, bare midriffs, short shorts).
4. Clothing with inappropriate slogans or decals.
5. Sandals, flip-flops or soft-toed shoes such as ballet shoes or Crocs.
6. Perfumes and scented lotions.

### When You Arrive

*Volunteer Sign In:* Sign into the Log Book and pick up your name badge, located in the lounge. Volunteers are required wear their name badge. Check the daily schedule. Schedules are located in the tack room, in the lounge, and on the corkboard outside of the lounge. The tack room schedule is the most likely place to find additional notes and requests from instructors.

*Communication:* Never hesitate to ask staff members questions pertaining to your equine or your rider. If you have any major concerns or questions, we ask that you bring it to the attention of the Executive Director/Program Director. Never perform a task for which you have not been trained.

*Parking:* When volunteering, please park your vehicle in a designated parking spot in the lot. Parking spots nearest the barn entrance are reserved for accessible parking. Do not park off of the property in the neighborhood.

*Food and Drinks:* A water dispenser, refrigerator and microwave are located in the lounge. Volunteers are welcome to bring food and drinks. Please label any items placed in the refrigerator with your name and date. The refrigerator will be cleaned out weekly.

### While You Are Volunteering

Please treat your volunteer commitment as if it were your profession. You are a vital member of our team. The following tips are aimed at supporting your success!



- Arrive on time and properly attired.
- Please do not bring your cell phone into the arena. The lounge is available to temporarily store your personal items.
- Introduce yourself to your participant and the other members of your volunteer team if you don't already know them.
- Attend exclusively to the needs of your assigned participant or equine.
- Respect equines and participants. Leave corrections to the instructor.
- Learn along with your participant. Each lesson is an opportunity to learn something new.
- Enjoy yourself! An anxious volunteer can cause tension for the equine and/or the participant. Enthusiasm is contagious.
- Be empathetic. Try to understand your participant and their challenges and develop a rapport. However, avoid mothering, caretaking and over-sentimentality.
- The participants are there to perform to the best of their ability and we are there to foster their independence and encourage them to take healthy risks and thrive.
- Be patient and sensitive. A considerable amount of patience may be needed to adjust to a participant's rate of progression. Learn to work with your participant's pace of communicating and responding.
- Act in accordance with CAR and PATH International policies and procedures.

### **When You Leave**

*Documentation of Hours:* Before you leave the property, all hours should be documented in the Log Book located in the lounge. Each volunteer should log hours each time they volunteer at CAR. An accurate record of volunteer hours serves as evidence of community support and will help CAR qualify for grants and funding.

If you are receiving credit for volunteering through service organizations or community service, you will need to bring your forms and have the Executive Director/Program Director or Instructor sign them at the end of each volunteering session. Only hours that are documented can receive official credit.



## **SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

An emergency is defined, for our purposes, as any unexpected occurrence or set of circumstances resulting in a real or potential safety hazard, demanding immediate attention. Before there is an emergency, be sure you are familiar with general safety procedures.

Volunteers are responsible for knowing and following all safety rules, emergency policies and procedures as indicated, supporting all efforts to promote safe working conditions, making full use of safety equipment, immediate reporting of any unsafe working conditions or behaviors and knowing the location of first aid kits, fire extinguishers, emergency exits, and emergency and evacuation plans.

In an emergency situation, it is important to remember to stay calm, reassure participants and take direction from the instructor. It is the instructor's responsibility to manage the emergency and any required first aid. Volunteers may be called upon to assist.

When volunteers represent CAR at off-site events, and an emergency occurs, volunteers are expected to follow the instructions of staff from the host facility.

### **Safety Around Horses**

- Speak in a low, calm voice before approaching an equine to avoid startling them.
- Introduce yourself by letting the equine sniff your hand.
- Approach an equine from the side so that they can see you. Never approach them from the rear.
- Do not run – sudden movements can scare an equine, especially young or inexperienced equines.
- You can be hurt by an equine, even if they don't mean to hurt you.
- Do not duck under the equine's neck or lead rope.
- Do not walk directly behind the equine or stand directly in front of them.
- Remember to pass through doors and gates before the equine.

### **Location of Emergency Equipment**

- Telephones for emergency use are located on the wall outside of the office.
- First Aid Kits are located in the lounge.
- Fire extinguishers are located by the main door at the front entrance of the barn and outside of the office.

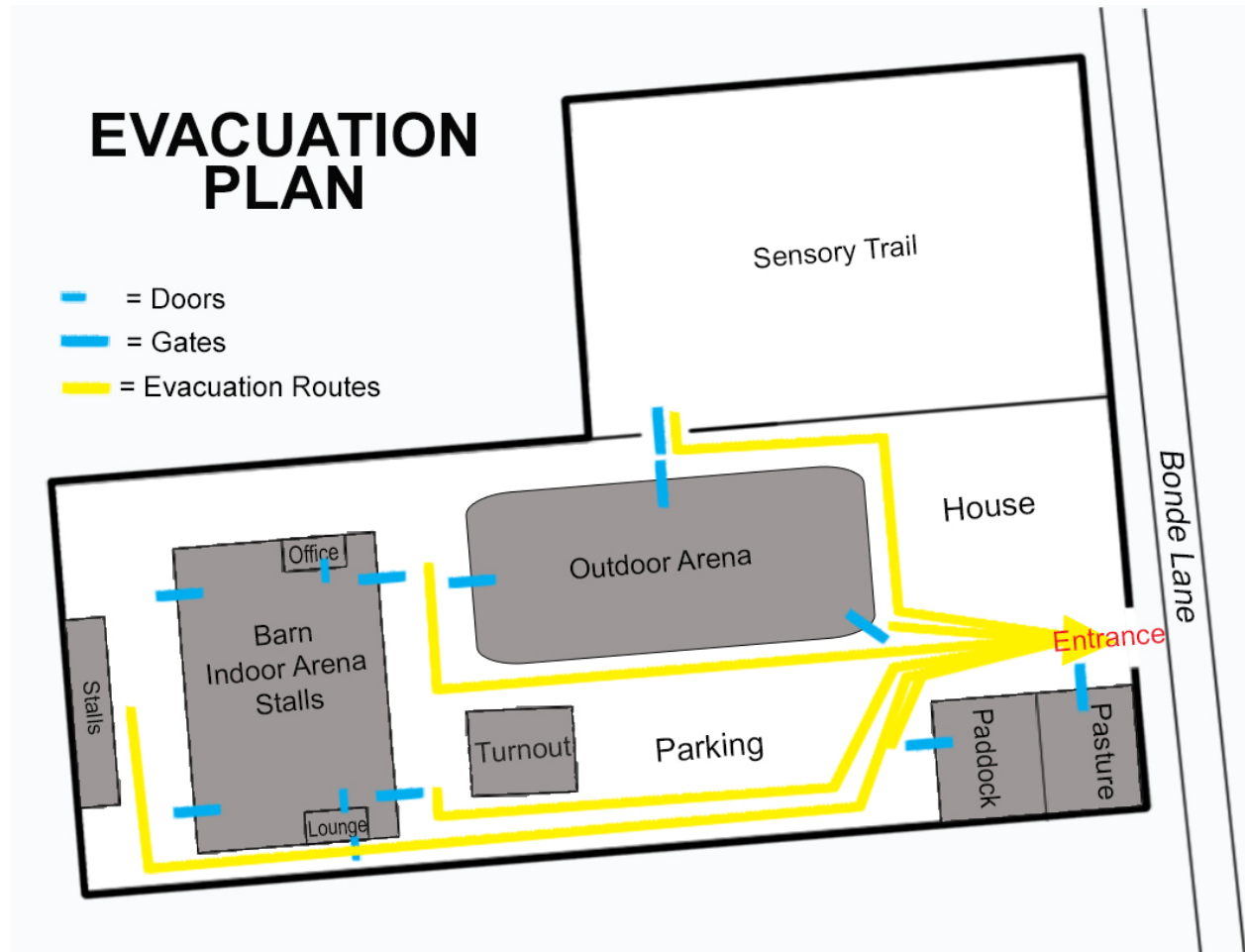
### **Medical Emergencies**

Staff must be notified of any injury or medical emergency and are responsible for managing the emergency including: evaluating the scene, determining if additional medical assistance is required and providing any required first aid. An Incident Report must be completed by staff and involved individuals for every incident. In the event of an emergency, volunteers may be asked to call for emergency medical assistance.

## Severe Weather, Natural and Man-Made Disasters

In the event of sudden severe thunder storms, high winds, or natural disasters such as fire, flood, earthquake, or power outage, program activities will be discontinued. Please take direction from the instructor regarding escorting participants and guests to a safe meeting place and for the safe placement of equines.

### Evacuation Plan





## **SUMMARY OF VOLUNTEERING: DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

There is a lot of information to remember so please, always feel free to ask a staff member any questions that you may have. Below is a quick reference list of key points:

1. **Volunteer Age Limit:** The minimum age for a volunteer is 10 years old. Children under 14 must be supervised by an adult at all times. Volunteers must be 16 years old for some positions.
2. **Confidentiality:** Remember that personal information regarding anyone at CAR should be treated confidentially and should not be discussed casually or in public places.
3. **Attire:** Volunteers should dress suitably to the weather and season in clothing appropriate for equestrian activities. This includes close-toed shoes.
4. **Punctuality:** Side Walkers should arrive at least 15 minutes before the lesson starts. Horse Leaders should arrive at least 1 hour before the lesson starts to help get the equines ready.
5. **Cancellation:** If you must cancel, we ask that you call within 24 hours of your volunteer commitment so a replacement may be found.
6. **Name Badge and Sign In:** Upon arrival, volunteers are required to put on a name badge and sign into the Log Book in the lounge.
7. **Documentation of Hours:** Before leaving, all hours should be documented in the Log Book in the lounge.
8. **Conduct & Behavior:** Individuals involved with CAR are expected to conduct themselves in a cooperative and appropriate manner, at all times. You are representing our organization and your conduct, actions and words should reflect upon us in a positive manner.
9. **Learn to Assist:** Leave the instruction to the instructor. Effective volunteers know when to interact and speak, but also know when to be quiet. Avoid constant chatting with the participant or engaging in side conversations and keep focused on the goals of the lesson.
10. **Rule Abiding:** Make sure you follow all rules outlined in this Handbook. Encourage others to do likewise. Leading by example is powerful.
11. **Take Care of Yourself:** Don't burn out.
12. **Stay Hydrated:** Make sure you drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated. If, at any time, you feel you need a break because you feel dangerously overheated, immediately advise a staff member. Do not continue if you feel ill.
13. **Equine Treats:** CAR does not allow "treats" (carrots, apples, etc.) to be given to the equines.
14. **Children:** Children of volunteers or siblings of participants must have an adult who is not volunteering and who is directly supervising them, at all times.
15. **Dogs:** Dogs are not allowed to be brought to the property, including in a parked vehicle.
16. **Smoking:** CAR is a NON-SMOKING facility, including in a vehicle.
17. **Communication:** If you have a major concern or question, we ask that you bring it to the attention of the Executive Director/Program Director to discuss any issues.



## APPENDIX 1: UNDERSTANDING CAR PARTICIPANTS

### When You Meet a Person with a Disability

Working with individuals with disabilities may be a new experience for some volunteers. Please take the time to get to know your participant and direct questions to the instructor. Often, a major barrier for individuals with special needs is not the disability itself, but rather the lack of awareness and knowledge by others. Do not let fear and uncertainty keep you from becoming acquainted with people with disabilities. Above all, please treat individuals with respect; be considerate and sensitive to their needs.

Be yourself when you meet a person who has a disability. Remember that a person with disabilities is a human being just like yourself. Be a friend and treat them as an equal, regardless of ability.

Treat adults like adults. Showing pity or charity does not help anyone succeed in reaching their goals. Relax. If you are unsure about what to do, share that information and allow the person who has the disability and/or others to help lead the way.

If you become aware that a person with a physical disability may need assistance, ask them first if you may help. Do not assume that they do! If you offer your assistance and the person declines, do not insist. If your assistance is accepted, ask how you may best help and follow directions. Do not take over any situation.

One of the hardest aspects of volunteering is being able to stand back and allow the participant to do and figure things out for themselves. Lend a hand if asked or intervene if you see a potentially dangerous situation arising. Be patient. Try not to predetermine your participant's abilities. You may find yourself beautifully surprised by what participants are capable of accomplishing when nurtured in an appropriate way.

Keep your communication simple. Rephrase comments or questions for better clarity. Stay focused on the person as they respond to you. Allow the person time to tell you what they want.

Be supportive and encouraging. If a person wants to talk about their disability, they will choose to do so. Information about participants and their disabilities is **CONFIDENTIAL**.

Do not be over protective or over solicitous. Do not shower your participants with kindness or be overly-sympathetic. Do not give undeserved praise.

Enjoy yourself and your friendship with the participant. Their philosophy and good humor can be as inspiring to you as yours is to them.

Always ask a person who uses a wheelchair if they would like assistance before you help. Be respectful – a wheelchair is an extension of the individual's body space. Do not hang or lean on





them unless you have permission. Speak directly, and be careful not to exclude the person in the wheelchair from conversations.

## **Using “People First” Language**

Place the person before the disability. Say “person with a disability” rather than “disabled person.” Avoid referring to people by their disability. A person is not a condition.

Completely avoid emotionally laden terms such as “suffering with a disease”, “afflicted with” or “burdened by.” A person with a disability may “have” an illness or may be “challenged” by a condition but one should never assume that a person is suffering, burdened or afflicted.

Avoid using “us” and “them” language when speaking of people with disabilities versus people who do not have disabilities. Statistics have shown that most people will experience a disability at some point in their life. We are all people first.

## **Working with Disabilities**

### *Physical Disabilities*

Participants with a physical disability have an acquired or congenital physical and/or motor impairment such as cerebral palsy, spina bifida, muscular dystrophy, arthritis, developmental coordination disorder, amputations, genetic disorders, etc.

Tips for Volunteers: Do not make assumptions about what a person can or cannot do. A person with a disability is the best judge of their own capabilities. Do not push a person’s wheelchair or grab the arm of someone walking with difficulty without first asking if you can be of assistance. Never move someone’s aids without permission.

### *Cerebral Palsy*

This is a medical term denoting brain damage, so that messages for movement, from the brain to the limbs, are imperfect or misdirected and therefore the limbs may be weak, stiff, clumsy, constantly moving, floppy or any combination of these. Muscles involving speech, eye movement, swallowing and so forth, may also be involved.

### *Spina Bifida*

This is a birth defect in which the tissue surrounding the spinal cord does not close properly. Common symptoms include, paralysis, usually of the legs, and seizures.

### *Muscular Dystrophy*

This is a genetic defect in which muscles become progressively weaker and eventually are replaced by fat and connective tissue.

### *Multiple Sclerosis*

This is a disease that generally affects adults. Nerve transmissions are interrupted on their way to muscles, which results in varying levels of disability. Some of the primary symptoms are difficulty in walking, weakness of the legs and arms, and visual or speech problems.



### *Mental and Cognitive Disabilities*

Mental and cognitive disabilities are a group of disorders defined by diminished cognitive and adaptive development because of an abnormality of or damage to the brain. Participants might behave as if they were younger, have limited speech and understanding of speech, may learn slowly and require much repetition.

### *Learning Disabilities*

This term describes issues in the areas of speech, language, spelling, writing or arithmetic, which occur in children with average or above-average intelligence. They are not a result of visual, auditory or motor handicaps, emotional disturbance or environmental disadvantage.

### *Autism*

A broad-spectrum disorder ranging from mild to severe, which affects thought, perceptions and attention. Characteristics include: impairments in social interaction and communication; restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, and activities; impairments in the use of nonverbal behaviors such as eye-to-eye gaze and facial expressions; lack of social or emotional reciprocity; delays in or lack of the development of spoken language; impairments in the ability to initiate or sustain conversations with others; abnormal responses to senses such as sight, hearing, touch, balance, smell, taste, reaction to pain; deficits in gross and fine motor skills.

### *Seizure Disorder*

This is a birth disorder where there is a disruption of the transmissions of electrical signals in the brain. For many, medication can often help manage the seizures and allow for a better quality of life.

### *Traumatic Brain Injury*

This is damage to the brain caused by a direct blow to the head. The initial injury usually causes bleeding and bruising in the brain, which leads to permanent damage to the brain. Common symptoms include amnesia, confusion or concentration problems, dizziness or loss of balance, blurred vision, weakness or numbness in the arms or legs, agitation, slurred speech, ringing in the ears, headaches, and seizures.

### *PTSD*

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) results from exposure to an overwhelmingly stressful event or series of events, such as war, rape or abuse. It is a typical response for those who have been exposed to trauma. The events that lead to PTSD are typically extraordinary or severe and would lead almost anyone to distress. People with PTSD may re-experience the event through recurrent, intrusive recollections, recurrent distressing dreams of the event, acting or feeling as if the trauma were reoccurring and intense psychological and physiological responses to internal or external triggers.



## APPENDIX 2: UNDERSTANDING EQUINE BEHAVIOR

When developing relationships and working with equines, communication is key. It is critical in order to provide a safe environment for equine assisted services. Learning to understand equine senses, instincts and body language is a step toward predicting behaviors, risk management and fostering positive relationships.

### Equine Senses

*Smell:* The equine's sense of smell is thought to be very acute and it allows the animal to recognize other equines and people. Their sense of smell also enables them to evaluate situations.

*Hearing:* The equine's sense of hearing is thought to be very acute. The equine may combine their sense of hearing and sight to become more familiar with new or alerting sounds. An equine's experience of "hearing and not seeing" is often the cause of the fright/flight response. Forward ears communicate attentiveness and interest.

*Sight:* An equine's eyes are set on the side of the head. They have good (lateral) peripheral vision but poor frontal vision. Equines can see in front of and almost all the way around their bodies. They do have blind spots, such as directly behind and in front. Equines focus on objects by raising and lowering their head. The equine's visual memory is very accurate. Equines are thought to see well in the dark, due to the large size of their eyes. There is still controversy as to whether horses see color.

*Touch:* Touch is used as communication between equines and between equines and people. They can be extremely sensitive to touch by a person's hands or legs.

*Taste:* Taste is closely linked to the sense of smell and helps an equine distinguish what is palatable.

*Sixth Sense:* Equines have a "sixth sense" when evaluating the disposition of those around them. They can be hypersensitive in detecting the moods and energies of their handlers and riders. Often a therapy equine is chosen for their sensitive response to the participant. At times, personality conflicts between handlers and equines may exist.

### Equine Instincts

*Fright or Flight:* Equines would rather flee from danger than fight. A sudden movement or noise might cause an equine to flee. If flight is not an option, the equine could possibly turn to kick out or face the threat and rear, especially in a tight area, like a stall.

*Herd Animal:* Equines like to stay together in a herd or group. A herd generally consists of one or two dominant equines, with a pecking order amongst the other members. An equine may not like to be alone. If the equine in front of a line trots or canters, the equines that are following may attempt to trot or canter as well.

## Equine Body Language

### *Eyes:*

- Whites Visible: Anxious, angry.
- Half Closed: Tired, relaxed, sleeping.
- Wrinkled: Worried.
- Blinking: Processing information, thinking.
- Soft Eye: Gentle, relaxed, learning mode.
- Hard Eye: Tense, resistant.

### *Ears:*

- Turned Back: Focused on something behind, tired.
- Pointing Forward: Attentive, curious.
- Rigid Pointing: Fear, uncertainty.
- Droopy: Tired, sleepy, bored.
- Pinned Back: Threatening, aggressive, angry or warning.
- Pointing in Different Directions: Focused on two things at once.
- Rotating: Lots going on, curious, nervous, indecisive.
- Airplane Ears (drooped out to side): Depressed, drugged, unwell, sleeping.
- Neutral: Normal.

### *Muzzle, Lips and Nostrils:*

- Tight/Hard Lips: Anxious, tense.
- Wrinkled Muzzle: Nervous, worried.
- Licking/Chewing: Stress release, digesting ideas, acknowledgment.
- Drooping Lip: Relaxed, bored.
- Swishing/Mobile Muzzle: Curious, extroverted.
- Flared Nostrils: Nervous, excited, alert, working.
- Relaxed Nostrils, Soft Muzzle: Neutral, relaxed.
- Flapping Lower Lip: Unfocused, sensitive, or nervous.
- Open Mouth: Often seen in foals. "I'm a baby. Don't hurt me".

### *Head and Neck Set:*

- Low: Accepting, relaxed.
- High: Fear, anxiety, defiance.
- Level: Neutral, focused.

### *Tail:*

- Swishing: Annoyed, irritated, flies.
- Flagged: Excited, happy, playful, alarmed.
- High/Raised: Attentive, excited, happy.
- Low: Submissive.



- Neutral/Level: Focused, normal.
- Clamped Down: Fearful.

#### *Legs:*

- Pawing: Frustrated.
- Standing Square: Attentive.
- Hind Hoof Resting: Relaxed.
- Hind Leg Lifted: Warning, defensive.
- Stomping: Flies, mild irritation.
- Striking: Angry, threatening, fighting.
- Dancing Around: Nervous, excited, frightened.

### **Communicating with Equines**

#### *Your Eyes:*

- Look ahead. Direct your gaze in the direction you wish to go. The equine interprets this as leadership.
- Look toward the direction in which you wish to turn. This will be a simple pre-signal to the equine that they will be asked to change direction.
- Looking down toward the ground will signal to slow down or stop.

#### *Your Hands:*

- Try to move your hands slowly. Slow moving hands can help result in resistance free movements from the equine and fast-moving hands can result in quick, jerking movements.
- Lead equines with your hands in a natural, shoulder-width apart.

#### *Your Voice:*

- Talk to the equine. Many equines understand basic verbal cues.
  - If you use pre-signals, transitions will be smoother for our participants.
- In many cases, participants give verbal cues to their equines, to which the leader responds as well. It is imperative for learning, to allow the rider to cue their equine when to go and stop. This gives them a sense being capable of managing their equine.

#### *Your Feet:*

- In general, if you move your feet, an equine will move theirs.
- Try to be in sync with the equine as it promotes resistance-free handling.