

Policies, Procedures and Barn Rules Handbook



Our Mission

Our therapeutic horsemanship programs help those with special needs reach their highest potential, gain self-confidence, and self-esteem, through equine-oriented activities in a safe and positive hill country environment. As a non-profit organization, we strive to give our horses the best care, while working to expand and provide our students the best possible experience. We use the latest teaching techniques to help our students learn, and only use instructors that are Path Intl. certified and possess wonderful interaction abilities. Our employees and our volunteers are our driving force, and without them, what we do would not be possible.

Participation

All volunteers must have a signed and dated Volunteer Enrollment packet before they are permitted to participate. Forms must be updated annually.

Recognizing that equine-related activities hold inherent risks, all new and returning participants/volunteers will be evaluated and trained by our Path Intl. certified instructors to ensure the safety of all participants, volunteers and horses.

It is the responsibility of the participant or the participant's parent or guardian(s) to inform Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch of any changes in the participant's medical, physical, mental, or behavioral status. A participant is defined as an Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch client, volunteer, or staff member.

Horseback riding is contraindicated for some conditions/individuals. Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch follows the Path Intl. guidelines for precautions/contraindications for physical restrictions of riding.

- Volunteers must be 14 years or older to participate in classes.
- Volunteers under the age of 14 must be directly supervised by a parent or guardian. No exceptions.

Dress Code

A volunteer's or student's attire and appearance should be appropriate for safe equestrian activities. For your safety and comfort, please dress as follows:

1. Wear appropriate shoes - **closed-toe shoes only**. Tennis shoes and boots are suggested for volunteers and preferably riding boots for students or a hard-soled shoe with heel. No open-toed, excessive heel, steel toed, cleats, high rubber treaded or dress shoes are permitted.
2. Wear comfortable pants.
3. Shorts must be fingertip length or longer.
4. Wear T-Shirts or Long-sleeve shirts that are weather appropriate. No low-cut tops.
5. Helmets are provided for students, instructors can give recommendations of where to purchase approved riding helmets if desired. Helmets must be ASTM-SEI approved for equestrian use. Instructors can provide more information if desired.
6. No jewelry or other items that can get caught on a rider or horse is allowed (i.e. necklaces, charm bracelets, etc.)

7. Hats and sunglasses are recommended for volunteers, as long as it will not be disruptive to the student.
8. Sunblock is recommended during all sessions.
9. Sweatshirts, coats and gloves are recommended during Fall and Winter Session.
10. Long hair must be pulled back. For riders, long hair is recommended to be pulled back into low ponytails or braids, as to not interfere with the riding helmet.
11. No cell phones are permitted in the arena. If there is an important phone call you are waiting for, please notify the instructor ahead of time so arrangements can be made. In the event of an onsite emergency, instructors always have their phones that can be used to place an emergency call.
12. No food items! (i.e. gum)

For Vaulting Students (In addition to other standards required):

13. Recommendations for footwear include: lightweight canvas shoes, aqua socks, gymnastic or vaulting shoes.
14. Snuggly fitting clothing.

Punctuality

All volunteers/parents/students are required to contact Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch in the event of running late to a riding lesson.

Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch asks that every riding student arrive 10-15 minutes prior to his or her scheduled riding lesson. This allows the student to have the needed time for preparation before their scheduled riding lesson time.

Horse handlers are to arrive 30 minutes prior to the lesson start time.

Sidewalkers are to arrive 15 minutes prior to the lesson start time.

The policies and procedures of Cancellations, Punctuality and Attendance are based upon the fact that Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch is completely reliant upon volunteers. Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch always takes volunteers' time into consideration and is truly grateful for their help! Without volunteers we could not do what we do!

Off-Limits Areas and Emergencies

Off Limits Areas

The following areas are off limits to all Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch students and guests:

- All Pastures
- Mini Barn
- Any other gated off areas

These areas are off limits for your safety and the safety and health of our animals. Areas will be marked with a restricted access sign, and require permission from Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch staff before entering.

Emergencies

In the event of an emergency at Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch, phones are located in the office and have emergency information posted above them. Staff members will also have a cell phone that can be used to call 911 in the event of an emergency.

REMEMBER:

- Remain Calm.
- Get to Safety.
- Call 911.
- Do not hang up unless told to by the dispatcher, they may need more information from you.
- Tell the dispatcher that all lights and sirens must be turned off to avoid frightening the horses, which can lead to further injuries.
- Do not move an injured person unless they are in imminent danger!

Please take the time to review the barn evacuation diagram that is posted in the barn. Copies of the evacuation diagram and full emergency procedures handout are available upon request.

Dismissal Policies

Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch Policy for the Dismissal of Volunteers/Guests

Volunteers or guests may be asked to leave the facility/program for several reasons, including, but not limited to:

- The use of alcohol or illegal drugs at the facility or at any events hosted by Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch.
- Coming to the facility under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.

- Smoking at the facility.
- Mistreatment of the horses or other animals at Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch.
- Persistent disruption of staff during lessons or special events.
- Verbal or physical abuse, sexual harassment or other inappropriate behavior toward participants, volunteers and or staff members.
- The use of vulgar language, inappropriate jokes, or disrespectful language.
- For frequent missed volunteer times, without prior notification or explanation
- Any other behavior that is deemed inappropriate by a facility director.
- Breach of confidentiality of other participants.

Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch has strict confidentiality guidelines regarding the right to privacy for all individuals involved with the program. This confidentiality policy extends not only to program participants and their diagnosis/special needs and any sensitive information, but also extends to protect the privacy of others involved with the program including volunteers and staff. It is extremely important that volunteers and staff respect the individual circumstances of those involved with the program. Please do not take the issues of our participants or personal information regarding other individuals beyond the facility. For full confidentiality policy, please refer to the Confidentiality Policy and Agreement.

The riding instructors will handle all dismissals. The Program Director will be informed of the situation and will be part of the decision-making process whenever possible. A written reason for dismissal will be recorded and placed in the individual's file. The grounds for dismissal will be discussed with the individual, parents or guardians in private. An appeal may be filed in writing and will be reviewed by the Program Director. The Program Director will review the appeal and pass a final decision, this decision will be final.

Attention! The following rules apply to everyone who visits, participates, volunteers, or works at Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch. Please read and familiarize yourself with all rules and relay information to anyone who may come with you to the barn.

Barn Rules and Safety

No...

- Dogs permitted
- Running in the barn or around the horses.
- Throwing/tossing anything in or around the barn and/or horses.
- Yelling at any human or horse to get their attention or communicate.
- Use of alcohol and/or illegal drugs on grounds or during Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch events.
- Coming to the grounds under the influence of alcohol and/or illegal drugs.
- Smoking ANYWHERE on the property.
- Disrespect of others verbally or physically (human or horses).

Do Not...

- Enter animal enclosures/pens/stalls/arena without employee permission and supervision of an authorized adult.
- Give horses extra hay unless instructor has given permission.
- Feed treats if you have not been cleared by instructor.
- Show up unannounced (access will not be granted if we do not know you're coming).
- Put away a sweaty horse (rinse them off until they are cool to the touch).

Never...

- Bridle a horse without permission first from the instructor.
- Cinch or tighten the girth. An instructor will perform this task.
- Ride alone on trails or off the property.
- Take your frustration or anger out on the horse.
- Take a chance; if you are unsure (ASK!).
- Use the ATV without permission (Absolutely no one under 18 may use the ATV).

Always...

- Supervise all children during your time on the grounds.
- Treat horses and others with the upmost respect and courtesy.

- Encourage others to do their best.
- Ask questions if you do not know the answer.
- Close every door/gate you open and lock it behind you.
- **Wear a helmet! (No Helmet = No Ride).**
- Wear closed-toed shoes.
- Dress appropriately and wear hats/sunscreen.
- Let someone know where you are and where you plan to be.
- Pick up after yourself (leave the place you used as clean as or cleaner than when you came).
- Drink lots of water and take breaks.
- Be alert and aware of your surrounding and the horse's attitudes.
- Report all incidents and hazardous conditions to a staff member as soon as possible.
- Pick out feet and brush horse thoroughly before AND after using the horse.

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Compliance of Requirements

I/We have read and understand this document and will abide by all rules and regulations at all times. If a parent or guardian is signing on behalf of a minor, they take full responsibility for carrying out these policies with the minor(s) listed below. I/We understand that if these rules are broken, I/We may be asked to leave immediately, per the instructor's discretion, and may be found to have grounds for dismissal. Any questions or concerns can be answered by a Director during operating hours, opentrailranch@gmail.com or 210-367-8248.

_____	_____
Printed Name of Participant	Signature of Participant/Parent/Guardian

Date	
Minor(s) _____	_____

Return to Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch before first day of participation

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY AND AGREEMENT

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Items covered by this policy include, but are not limited to:

- Taking photos without permission.
- Approaching a student or volunteer of Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch without their initiation.
- Discussing a student or volunteer's personal information with people unaffiliated with Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch.

Participants have the right to have their information released to themselves or a receiver of their choosing. Participants may request an information release form from Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch that may be filled out and returned to a staff member, so that their information may be released.

Cut along dotted line and return lower half to Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch Staff

I have read and understand the Confidentiality Policy and Agreement, and will abide by all conditions in the policy. I understand that if these rules are broken, I may be asked to leave immediately, per the instructor's discretion, and may be found to have grounds for dismissal.

Signature: _____

Date: _____