

# Policies, Procedures and Barn Rules Handbook



## Our Mission

Our equine assisted services 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 participants the best possible experience. We use the latest teaching techniques to help our participants learn, and only use instructors that are PATH Intl. certified and certified therapists in both their specific field and through the American Hippotherapy Association. Our employees and our volunteers are our driving force, and without them, what we do would not be possible.

## Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch

Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch was founded in 2012 by Kate Vasquez, with a mission to serve those with special needs of all kinds in Kendall, Bexar and other surrounding counties through equine assisted services. The 100-acre property that the facility was built and sits on was solely purchased and provided for the life changing mission that OTR carries out each day. Starting as a one-woman small operation of 1 barn, 1 dirt arena, a few rescue horses and 4-5 lessons per week, OTR quickly grew to meet the needs of the community over the years. OTR now currently offers year-round programming and the facility furnishes 3 barns, 3 sand arenas and a wheelchair mounting ramp, as well as staffs 3 instructors, 3 therapists, 16 equine partners and 5 other vital part time team members, not to mention our many incredible selfless volunteers. Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch is also overseen by a Board of Directors with at least 5 officers and 10 advisory board members.

OTR is a Certified PATH Intl. Member Center. PATH Intl. exists to promote equine-assisted services for individuals with special needs. PATH Intl. serves as the credentialing organization for accrediting centers and certifying instructors and equine specialists internationally. By being a member center, Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch follows standardized policies and procedures which ensures the safety, management, education, and accountability of all programs offered at OTR.

Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch offers equine assisted services to children and adults with physical, cognitive, and emotional challenges in San Antonio, Boerne, and the surrounding areas. Individuals who benefit from our services have diagnoses such as Cerebral Palsy, Autism, Down's Syndrome, ADD/ADHD, Fragile X, Multiple Sclerosis, Stroke, Developmental Delays, emotional and cognitive disorders, as well as speech, hearing and vision impairments.

Our programs include Adaptive Riding, Equine Assisted Learning, Speech Therapy and Occupational Therapy incorporating Hippotherapy, and Interactive Vaulting. All lessons are conducted by PATH Intl. certified instructors and licensed therapists also certified through the American Hippotherapy Association.

## Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch Programs

**Adaptive Riding:** Adaptive riding is a recreational activity for individuals with disabilities focused on teaching horsemanship skills, specifically through riding, in ways that are adapted to meet the needs of the individual. Lessons are taught by PATH, Intl. Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructors. Benefits of adaptive riding are seen in the lives of our clients in the areas of education, health, leisure, sports and recreation. Participants must be at least 4 years old to participate in Adaptive Riding.

**Equine Assisted Learning:** Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) sessions at Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch (OTR) are completely ground based (no riding) and can consist of learning to connect with a horse through grooming, leading, lunging, round pen work, and much more. Our EAL program is centered on the concept that by building a working relationship with a horse, any participant can develop important skills that can translate to all aspects of their daily lives. Participants may have opportunities to ride as instructor decides.

**Occupational Therapy & Speech Therapy incorporating Hippotherapy:** Licensed Speech Language Pathologists or Occupational Therapists utilize the movement of the horse to meet therapeutic goals with the participant. Certified professionals, both in their fields but also through the American Hippotherapy Association (AHA), conduct therapy sessions on horseback utilizing the movement of the horse as a treatment tool to engage sensory, neuromotor and cognitive systems to promote functional outcomes. Participants must be at least 2 to participate in this program.

**Interactive Vaulting:** Interactive vaulting, also known as therapeutic vaulting, combines independence and teamwork, teaches individuals to respect the horse, encourages social interaction, builds confidence, introduces all gaits within a little period of time, and offers individualized instructions while mounted. It also improves the way a rider sits on a horse as well as rhythm, balance and coordination. While it is not always offered as its own program here at OTR, we can incorporate it into the other programs to create more opportunities for growth and learning.

## Benefits of Equine Assisted Services

**Physically:** The motion of the horse mimics the human gait, enabling riders to improve in many ways. The sensory input from the movement also assists participants to achieve functional outcomes by improvement in:

- Posture
- Flexibility
- Sitting, standing and walking balance
- Muscular strength, tone and endurance
- Fine and gross motor skills

**Cognitively:** The movement of the horse as well as the relationship with the horse encourages participants to see improvement in:

- Increased concentration levels
- Ability to articulate emotions
- Sequential thought processing
- Developing spatial awareness
- Participation in and outside of lessons
- Speech and language

**Socially and Emotionally:** Working with horses provides opportunities for riders to connect with the equines and others. This is seen through improvements through:

- Development of trust
- Self-confidence
- Relationship building with equines, instructors and volunteers
- Sense of joy and pride
- Self-awareness and self-reflection
- Increased empathy
- Awareness of how actions affect oneself and others
- Social interaction and team work

## Participation

All volunteers/staff must have a signed and dated registration packet before they are permitted to participate/work. 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/staff member'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. No jewelry or other items that can get caught on a rider or horse is allowed (i.e. hoop earrings, charm bracelets, etc.)

6. Hats and sunglasses are recommended for volunteers, as long as it will not be disruptive to the student.
7. Sunblock is recommended during all sessions.
8. Sweatshirts, coats and gloves are recommended during Fall and Winter Session.
9. Long hair is recommended to be pulled back.
10. 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.
11. No food items! (i.e. gum)

### **Scheduling**

We utilize Sign Up Genius for scheduling volunteers. Upon attendance of a training you will be added to the sign up. It will be sent out to your email address on a weekly basis, allowing you to sign up whenever best suits your schedule. In the case of inclement weather, we will contact you as soon as a decision is made. If you need to cancel, you may do so by text, email or through the Sign Up Genius. Volunteers must commit to notifying the volunteer manager as soon as possible if illness or time conflicts prevent them from performing their assigned duties. This notification is necessary so that a substitute may be found prior to the lesson. Remember, the participants count on volunteers in order to be able to ride.

### **Punctuality**

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

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

Side walkers 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 participants and guests:

- All Pastures
- Mini Barn
- Any other gated off areas
- Feed Room - unless authorized by staff

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/Staff/Guests

Volunteers, staff 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.

## **Barn Rules and Safety**

**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.**

### **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 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.

# Policies, Procedures and Barn Rules Handbook

## 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](mailto:opentrailranch@gmail.com) or 210-367-8248.

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Printed Name of Volunteer/Staff/BOD	Signature of Volunteer/Staff/BOD
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Date

Minor(s) \_\_\_\_\_

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

## CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY AND AGREEMENT

Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch has strict confidentiality guidelines regarding the right to privacy for all individuals involved with the program. This 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.

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

- Taking photos without permission.
- Approaching a **participant** or volunteer of Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch without their initiation.
- Discussing a **participant's** 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.

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\*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:** \_\_\_\_\_



Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch

28710 Boerne Stage Road, Boerne, TX 78006

210-367-8248

## Registration and Release

### Participant Information

Volunteer \_\_\_\_\_ Staff \_\_\_\_\_ BOD \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Mrs. Ms. (Circle One) Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_, TX Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile/Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

In the Event of a Cancellation the Best Number is: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ How Did You Hear About Us?: \_\_\_\_\_

### If Minor (Under 18) or a Dependent Adult, Parent /Guardian Please Provide the Following Information:

Parent \_\_\_ Guardian \_\_\_ Caregiver \_\_\_

Mr. Mrs. Ms. (Circle One) Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Home/Cell \_\_\_\_\_

Address/City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

### Authorizations:

**Photo Release:** Open T.R.A.I.L. Inc. or persons authorized by Open T.R.A.I.L. Inc. may use and reproduce any and all photographic, video, or other audiovisual materials taken of me/my child/my ward for promotional materials, social media platforms, educational activities, or for any other use for the benefit of the program.

I hereby consent \_\_\_\_\_ I DO NOT consent \_\_\_\_\_

### Emergency Medical Authorization – This procedure will only be invoked if the emergency contact below is unable to be reached:

In the event that emergency medical aid/treatment is required due to illness or injury to me/my ward/my child, while being on the property or participating in riding or therapy originated at Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch, 28710 Boerne Stage Road, I authorize Open T.R.A.I.L., their directors, owner, instructors or employees to secure and retain medical treatment/transportation and to released medical information to appropriate medical personnel (if applicable). This Authorization included any treatment/procedure deemed lifesaving by the physician including x-ray, surgery, hospitalization or medication. *(If you do not consent, please provide written information on your desired procedures in case of injury or illness)*

I hereby consent \_\_\_\_\_ I DO NOT consent \_\_\_\_\_

### Liability Release:

I acknowledge the risks and potential risks of being around horses. I hereby, intending to be legally bound for myself, my heirs, and assigns, executors or administrators, waive and release forever all claims for damages against Open T.R.A.I.L. Inc., their directors, owners, operators, instructors and employees for any and all injuries, death or other losses that I/my child/my ward may sustain while participating in horseback riding, vaulting, driving or other related activities originating at or with horses boarded at Open T.R.A.I.L. Inc., 28710 Boerne Stage Road.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Participant Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Adult Participant/Parent/Guardian/Caregiver

**Under Texas Law (Chapter 87, Civil Practice and Remedies Code), an equine professional is not liable for any injury or the death of a participant in equine activities resulting from the inherent risks of equine activities.**

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Participant Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Adult Participant/Parent/Guardian/Caregiver

**Emergency Information**

Emergency Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile/Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Alternate Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile/Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

**Nearest Medical Facility is Assumed if no Information is Entered**

Emergency Facility: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

Physician's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Health Insurance Company: \_\_\_\_\_ Group ID or Other Identifying Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Volunteers ONLY Please Complete the Following Section:**

Please Check the Following Items that are Applicable:

\_\_\_\_ I will be volunteering with (Name of school/organization) \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_ I can walk for at least 60 minutes and jog short distances, such as, the length of the arena.

\_\_\_\_ I can hold my arm at shoulder height and support a modest weight, when switching arms as needed.

\_\_\_\_ I have the following limitation: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ I have a medical condition you should be aware of: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ I have owned 1 or more horses.

\_\_\_\_ I have experience riding: Western \_\_\_\_ English: \_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Please Describe any Experience with Disabled Individuals: \_\_\_\_\_

When will you be available for volunteering? You may add a time range or AM or PM.

Monday \_\_\_\_ Tuesday \_\_\_\_ Wednesday \_\_\_\_ Thursday \_\_\_\_ Friday \_\_\_\_ Saturday \_\_\_\_

Areas of Interest:

\_\_\_\_ Side Walker (Training session are held regularly)

\_\_\_\_ Horse Handler (Requires Side Walker Training Completion and Horse Handler Training Completion)

\_\_\_\_ Fund Raising or Event Planning

\_\_\_\_ Publicity

\_\_\_\_ Construction (Please Describe Skills): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Office Help (Filing or Microsoft Office skills required)

\_\_\_\_ Phone Calls (Volunteers and scheduling calls)

\_\_\_\_ Other (Please Describe): \_\_\_\_\_

**Background Check**

Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch requests that each of our volunteers/staff/BOD complete a criminal background check through CastleBranch. Please complete the attached form if you are 18 or older and we will be happy to submit the paperwork for you.  
Cost is \$10.

**T-Shirt Order**

Open T.R.A.I.L. Ranch takes pride in the appearance of all of our staff and volunteers. We ask that you wear a OTR shirt when coming to work in the barn or with our riders. The cost of the T-shirt is \$10. Please fill in the information below and return it with your registration packet and payment. Thank you.

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Volunteer/Staff/BOD T-shirt Order Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Best contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate quantity and circle size below:

Quantity:

_____Youth		S	M	L		
_____Adult	XS	S	M	L	XL	XXL