

# PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK



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## **WELCOME**

Welcome to Charleston Area Therapeutic Riding!

CATR is located at 2669 Hamilton Road, Johns Island, SC 29455

Phone: 843-559-6040

Website: [www.catr-program.org](http://www.catr-program.org)

## **HISTORY**

Originating in 1991 with a handful of volunteers teaching lessons to just three students, CATR was the first *nationally accredited* therapeutic riding program in South Carolina. CATR currently serves over 140 students with the help of more than 100 trained volunteers! Small group and individual therapeutic horseback riding instruction and educational horse care activities are offered to children and adults with a variety of disabilities. Instruction is uniquely designed for people with cognitive, physical, and emotional disabilities. Programs take place six days a week at the farm located on Johns Island.

## **MISSION**

Charleston Area Therapeutic Riding, Inc. (CATR) empowers children and adults with disabilities to enjoy more active and fulfilling lives through therapeutic horsemanship.

## **PATH INTERNATIONAL**

PATH International is a non-profit organization, headquartered in Denver, Colorado, that exists to promote Equine Assisted Activities and Therapies for individuals with disabilities.

Formed in 1969, PATH International members are individuals and centers that participate in Equine Assisted Activities and Therapies (EAAT). Individual members are volunteers, riding instructors, riders with disabilities and their families, physicians, therapists, teachers, researchers and concerned individuals. The PATH Intl. centers are the heart of the EAAT community as they bring together all the necessary individuals, horses, equipment and program knowledge. PATH Intl. centers range from small, one-person programs serving a half-dozen riders to large operations with several instructors serving programs that are designed to benefit everyone involved in EAAT. [www.pathintl.org](http://www.pathintl.org).

## **PATH INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION**

Accreditation ensures that the center follows the PATH Intl. standards for safety and best practice in EAAT. The center staff employs a self-check system to ensure that all applicable standards are in compliance while preparing for a site visit by two Certified Center Evaluators. The site visit includes a review of all standards that apply to the specialty areas with which the center participates, and renders a determination as to the accreditation status. PATH Intl. centers must renew their accreditation every five years. CATR is PATH Intl. Premier Accredited Center.

## **PATH INTERNATIONAL INSTRUCTOR CERTIFICATION**

The Instructor Certification Program provides criteria for competency and a process to recognize levels of capability for PATH Intl. instructors to achieve professional certification. Three levels of certification are available: Registered, Advanced and Master Instructor. All CATR instructors are PATH, Intl. certified.

## **BENEFITS OF EQUINE ASSISTED ACTIVITIES AND THERAPIES**

Equine Assisted Activities and Therapies (EAAT) offer many benefits to individuals with a variety of disabilities. The horse's constant rhythmical movement stimulates the student's whole being, causing them to react with all their senses to a live animal. In the area of physical benefits, sitting on a horse provides a broad base of support combined with subtle input that can be regulated according to the student's needs. The horse's movement relaxes tight muscles and stimulates muscle tone, allowing for improved posture, coordination, balance and range of motion. Specific cognitive and socialization skills improve through the use of EAAT (including unmounted activities) when the focus is on education and behavior. The psychological effects for individuals who participate are demonstrated by increased motivation, heightened self-esteem, stronger confidence and obvious joy!

## **CATR PROGRAMS**

### **THERAPEUTIC RIDING**

Therapeutic riding uses equine-oriented activities for the purpose of contributing positively to the cognitive, physical, emotional and social well-being of individuals with special needs. Therapeutic riding provides benefits in the areas of health, education, sport and recreation and

leisure. Experiencing the motion of a horse can be very therapeutic. Because horseback riding moves the rider's body rhythmically in a manner similar to a human gait, riders with physical disabilities often show improvement in flexibility, balance and muscle strength. In addition to the therapeutic benefits, horseback riding also provides recreational opportunities for individuals with disabilities to enjoy the outdoors.

### **INTERACTIVE VAULTING**

Interactive Vaulting is an activity that engages participants in a variety of movements on and around the moving horse and a static barrel. Participants practice gymnastic positions on the back of the horse and barrel. This dynamic environment offers movement, educational, social and creative opportunities. In addition, working in a group promotes teamwork, confidence and communication skills.

### **CONNECTING WITH HORSES**

Groundwork activities include any work with the equine that is unmounted. These activities can include grooming, tacking and untacking, leading, long lining and lunging. Participants can learn the nuances of non-verbal communication with the equine as well as strengthen their own motor planning skills, ambulation and core strength through any of these activities. This is an option for those who might not be able to participate in mounted activities as well as for those who are able to ride, but are looking for something new in their programs. All students should expect the possibility of up to two groundwork lessons per session due to horse availability or weather conditions.

### **VETERANS PROGRAM**

CATR's Veterans Program provides Equine Assisted Activities and Therapies to wounded military veterans in the Charleston area. Since starting this program in 2009, CATR has served individuals with multiple neuro-degenerative diseases, amputations, traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress. Motivated by contact with the horse, veterans engage in groundwork and riding.

### **PUBLIC SCHOOL GROUP**

CATR's Public School Program provides therapeutic riding to students from self-contained special education classrooms from public schools in Charleston, Dorchester and Berkeley Counties.

### **GROUP FIELD TRIPS**

In order to give more individuals, the experience of coming to the barn and interacting with our therapy horses, we have started offering Group Field Trips that are open to special education classrooms and other groups of individuals with special needs. These field trips can be customized to meet the needs of the group and involve greeting, grooming and learning about the horses.

## **INSTRUCTOR IN TRAINING**

CATR has a program to mentor individuals who are working toward their PATH Intl. Instructor Certification. As part of CATR's Instructor in Training Program students may participate in lessons taught by a developing instructor. The 'instructor in training' will be directly supervised by a PATH Intl. Certified/ CATR Instructor who will notify the student and his/her family, and introduce them to the Instructor in Training before the lesson. Thank you for supporting this important program.

## **ELIGIBILITY & PLACEMENT PROCESS FOR NEW STUDENTS**

### **ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

For all CATR programs, safety and maximizing therapeutic benefits are primary goals.

All CATR students:

- Have to be at least four years old\*
- May not have conditions that are contraindicated by PATH International
- Must have the potential to benefit from a CATR program
- Have to have current signed and dated paperwork completed

CATR students who participate in mounted activities cannot weigh more than 180 pounds

\*CATR may work with children as young as 3 years old with the assistance of a physical or occupational therapist who is trained in facilitating hippotherapy.

### **PLACEMENT PROCESS**

The first step in the placement process is to fill out and return the application packet, which includes:

- Rider's Registration (P1)
- Authorization for Emergency Medical Treatment (P2)
- Health History (P3)
- Rider's Medical History, Physician's signature required (P4)

**\*\*If no contraindications are present**, the applicant will be placed on the Prospective Student List. Students begin lessons in one of the CATR programs as scheduling permits.

When it is determined the schedule might permit full enrollment of a new student from the Prospective Student List, an evaluation is scheduled by the Program Coordinator. A team consisting of a CATR instructor, the Program Director, and when appropriate, a health professional (physician, physical therapist, occupational therapist, mental health professional etc.) will make the final determination of acceptance into the program.

For the applicant, the evaluation provides the opportunity to visit the facility and meet the staff. For the CATR staff, the evaluation determines whether or not the applicant is a candidate for one of the programs offered at CATR.

After being scheduled in the program, all new students will spend several weeks familiarizing themselves with their horse, and possibly a variety of horses, from the ground. This allows for both the horse and the rider to develop a connection built on trust before transitioning to mounted horseback riding. During the unmounted lessons a student will experience and learn about horse behavior, basic horse care and etiquette and behavior around horses. It is up to the instructor to determine the appropriate point in time to begin mounted lessons.

## **REGISTRATION FOR RETURNING STUDENTS**

A registration google form will be emailed to each student before the fall session. Spring Session schedule will stay the same as the fall schedule to ensure consistency for students.

If changes need to be made, parents/students will inform the Program Director or Program Coordinator *as soon as possible* and all efforts will be made to accommodate the needs of the student.

Time slots for riding will be awarded on a first come, first served basis for all students. **Full payment for each session** is due on or before the first lesson of each session. Lesson fees must be paid on a timely basis to reserve the student's lesson time.

## **STUDENT RECORDS/ANNUAL PAPERWORK UPDATE**

Students are required to update their registration information and medical history forms annually. This paperwork is required to maintain our PATH International accreditation. Students are not permitted to ride without up-to-date forms.



## **CHANGE OF HEALTH OR MEDICAL STATUS**

Students must immediately inform their Instructor, **in writing**, of any changes in health or medication. This includes, but is not limited to, changes in weight, increased/decreased medication dosages, revised diagnoses, medical interventions, surgeries, etc.

## **POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

### **NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

Charleston Area Therapeutic Riding accepts students regardless of race, color, religion (creed), gender, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation or military status in any of its activities or operations.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY**

Student medical histories, diagnoses and related information are confidential and are only used by the Instructor to develop goal-oriented lesson plans. General information, as it relates to the success of the riding experience, is shared with volunteers on a need-to-know basis.

### **FEES AND SCHOLARSHIP POLICY**

CATR is a nonprofit organization. We raise funds to help reduce the cost of programs to our participants. The lesson fee is \$40 for students in group lessons (3 or more students), \$45 in semi-private (2 students), and \$50 for private (1 student). This amount only covers about 30% of the actual cost. CATR provides additional scholarships, based on a sliding scale, to anyone in need of financial assistance. If you are interested in the scholarship program, please let us know and we will send you an application form. Students register and pay by the session. Payment for the session is due before the session starts.

### **MAKING A PAYMENT**

Thank you for making a payment through one of three ways:

1. By credit card - Click <https://www.catr-program.org/student-payment> to go to payment page
2. By check - Deposited in the student payment box in the office
3. By check - Mailed to CATR, P.O. Box 146, Johns Island, SC 29457

Requests for special payment arrangements must be made prior to receiving services.

## **SAFETY STANDARDS**

CATR provides a safe environment for students, volunteers, visitors, staff and horses.

### **GENERAL**

- Keep speed to **10 mph** on the driveway.
- Use the designated parking spaces located next to the entry gate.
- Keep dogs leashed at all times and away from riding arena, tacking and mounting areas
- Enjoy any food or drinks in the waiting area. Please leave gum at home.
- Smoking or using tobacco (or e-cig) products on the property is not allowed
- Carrying any kind of weapon while on the property is not allowed
- Using, possessing or being under the influence of alcohol at any time while on the property is not allowed
- Using, possessing or
- being under the influence of illegal drugs at any time while on the property is not allowed
- Posing any health risk to others while on the property is not allowed
- **No treats are allowed to be given to any horses at any time**

### **STUDENTS – FAMILY – FRIENDS**

- All students must wear ASTM/SEI approved riding helmets with a chin strap secured when riding or working around the horse. All helmets worn by CATR students must be no more than 5 years old according to the date on the inside of the helmet.
- For student safety, appropriate footwear for horseback riding is important. This includes a sturdy-soled, ankle-high boot with a heel. The heel should be no greater than one inch. Shoes with bulky rubber soles do not move easily into and out of the stirrup and are therefore unsafe for horseback riding. Footwear for students with special physical needs will be considered on an individual basis.
- Appropriate pants for horseback riding include jeans, heavy cotton trousers, riding breeches or chaps over trousers.
- Students are encouraged to wear gloves, sweatshirts or jackets when needed. Hats are not permitted under helmets for safety reasons.

- If not appropriately dressed and/or not wearing appropriate shoes, students may be offered a ground lesson.
- Upon arrival for lessons, riders and family members/caregivers are required to wait in the designated waiting area at the picnic tables outside of the covered arena for their instructor. Instructors will meet riders at this location to guide them to the grooming and riding area.
- Family members/caregivers and guests should use the observation areas outside the arenas to watch a lesson. Siblings and visiting children must be under the supervision of a parent/adult at all times.
- Visitors are always welcome during business hours in the observation area of the facility. If visitors would like more information about CATR or a tour of the entire facility, please arrange this with an Instructor in advance of your visit. You are responsible for your guests.

**The barn is a busy place during lesson times. For your safety and the safety of others, please do not congregate in the barn, in front of the barn, or in the pathway leading from the barn to the grooming, tacking and mounting area. These areas need to remain clear for staff and horses. Only staff and trained volunteers are permitted in the barn, paddocks, and arenas.**

## **ATTENDANCE**

### **STUDENT CANCELLATIONS**

We know there are times when students will not be able to attend their lesson. Please let us know of a cancellation **as soon as you can and if possible, no later than 2 hours** before a scheduled lesson. Remember that in addition to the instructor there are usually 2 or 3 volunteers who are scheduled and will be driving out to assist with a lesson, so canceling affects many individuals.

**To cancel call the office (843) 559-6040 or email [program@catr-program.org](mailto:program@catr-program.org).**

Lessons canceled by the student are not made up or reimbursed.

### **LATE ARRIVAL**

Participants arriving 15 minutes or more after the scheduled lesson time will not be able to participate in a mounted lesson. A ground lesson may be offered. Lessons missed due to late arrivals are not eligible for make-up.

## **No-Show (no cancellation)**

Participants who do not attend their assigned lesson time with no attempt to notify the instructor of cancellation will be considered a “No-show” for that lesson. Lessons missed are not eligible for make-up. **Three** “No-show” lessons in a single session will result in the student not being eligible to ride for the following session at the discretion of the Executive Director.

## **LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Students who are not able to continue to attend a scheduled lesson due to a medical, health or family hardship issue, may apply for a leave of absence. The request must be in writing with an attached note from a physician or licensed health care provider. Requests are reviewed and approved by the CATR Program Coordinator and upon approval, the remaining fees will be credited.

Students returning from a medical leave of absence will need to present a note from their doctor releasing the student to participate in their usual riding activities.

## **CATR CANCELLATION POLICY**

CATR may have to cancel lessons or close due to severe weather, a power outage or for any reason that may cause unsafe conditions. If this occurs, CATR will email and/or call students 2 hours before lessons or as soon as possible. When in doubt, call the office line at (843) 559-6040 for the most up-to-date information. One makeup lesson will be offered per session if CATR cancels. If a lesson cannot be made up, a credit will be made to the next session.

## **COMMUNICATION**

Any concern is best handled confidentially and directly between the student/parent/caregiver and their Instructor and/or the Program Director. Please call, 843-559-6040, email, [acain@catr-program.org](mailto:acain@catr-program.org), or make a request in person for a time to talk.

Electronic Newsletter - Each student/family receives this publication four times per year. It updates readers on past, present and future CATR and BEC happenings. Please advise your Instructor if you are not receiving our mailings.

INFORMATION BULLETIN BOARD in the Office - In the waiting areas there are bulletin boards reserved for information of interest to students and parents.

FACEBOOK- Please like CATR on Facebook for updates on the facility, student progress, events and more.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT**

As a Student, Family member, Caregiver, I will:

- Treat everyone with respect, patience, courtesy and consideration
- Respect the horses and other animals on the property
- Interact positively and respectfully on CATR social media sites

As a Student, Family member, Caregiver, I will refrain from:

- Humiliating, ridiculing, threatening, or degrading anyone while on the property
- Touching anyone in a sexual or inappropriate manner
- Using any discipline that frightens or humiliates anyone while on the property
- Using profanity while on the property

## **GROUNDNS FOR DISMISSAL**

Students/Families who cannot adhere to the rules and policies set forth in this handbook will be dismissed from all program activities at the discretion of the Executive Director.