

# Calvin Center Equestrian Programs Participant Handbook

## Getting Started

Prior to entering the program, all students (recreational or therapeutic) must complete the initial application, all medical paperwork and participate in an assessment. Once paperwork has been completed and received by office, you will be contacted by Kate, our Equestrian Director, to set up a time for the assessment ride. Paperwork can either be brought in person or mailed to 13550 Woolsey Road Hampton, GA 30228 or may be emailed to Kate@calvincenter.org.

*\*Please note that PATH Intl., our accrediting agency, has determined some conditions may be contraindicative to riding. If such conditions are present and Calvin Center believes it is unsafe for a student to ride, the student will not be allowed to participate in the riding program.*

Please wear close-toed shoes and long pants to assessment.

Riders who have taken more than one year off from riding will be required to complete a new assessment prior to reentering the program.

Once the initial assessment is completed, we will make a program recommendation for the rider and will move forward into scheduling a lesson. If an opening does not currently exist, then we will put the rider on a waiting list, and you will be notified as soon as an opening becomes available. Riding sessions are typically offered Tuesdays – Saturdays.

## Programs

Calvin Center offers a variety of programs described below. At the time of your assessment, staff will discuss which programs are most appropriate for the rider. Programs are offered for riders ages 5 and up. There is no upper age limit as long as age related contraindications are not present.

Therapeutic Riding Program: Therapeutic Riding lessons are provided for children, youth and adults with cognitive, emotional, and or physical disabilities. These lessons focus on teaching a riding skill while simultaneously improving communication, social skills, physical abilities, stamina and life skills. Horse leaders and side walkers may be provided as needed, to allow the participant to progress as safely and independently as possible. All lessons are conducted by PATH (Professional Association for Therapeutic Horsemanship) Intl. certified riding instructors or instructor in training and are typically group sessions with one instructor teaching 2 to 4 Participants.

### Summer Camps

Day and overnight horse camps are offered in the month of June for elementary and middle school children. Reach Out Camp is offered to therapeutic riding participants.

### Horses & Warriors

This program is for veterans and active-duty military and happens every Friday from 11am-1pm.

## Paperwork policies

The following paperwork is required:

- Prior to participation in any Equestrian Activity (ground, mounted or assessment), a liability release and photo consent must be signed by all participants. All staff must also sign photo consent.
- Rider application, as well as a physician signed medical release, and code of ethics must be completed prior to a recreational or therapeutic riding assessment.
- For all participants with Downs Syndrome: prior to riding
  - Doctor must confirm a negative cervical x-ray for atlantoaxial instability
  - A yearly medical examination including a complete neurological exam that shows no evidence of AII (atlantoaxial instability)
  - Certification by a physician that examination did not reveal AII or focal neurologic disorder
    - Note: with continuation of mounted activities, annual certification from a physician must be completed specifying that the participant's physical examination reveals no signs of AII or decrease in neurologic function
  - Rider application, as well as a physicians signed medical release, and code of ethics must be completed prior to a therapeutic riding assessment.

For on-going activities such as riding lessons, an annual paperwork update must be completed prior to the rider's first session of the new year, including a new medical release for therapeutic riding participants. Paperwork updates will be e-mailed to participants upon registration for their first session of the year.

All therapeutic riding participants will be assessed on a bi-annual to annual basis to ensure class placement, horse assignments, and volunteers' layers of support are appropriate.

Submission of other paperwork such as IEP's and therapy evaluations is encouraged, as these assessments are a beneficial part of lesson planning. **Riders with outdated forms will not be allowed to participate.**

**RIDERS WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO PARTICIPATE IN PROGRAM ACTIVITY UNTIL ALL REQUIRED PAPERWORK HAS BEEN SIGNED and TURNED IN.** Instructor or designated volunteer will check for paperwork prior to the beginning of first lesson of session.

## Payment Policies

**Payment is required prior to registration for any program. At the first lesson of each session, instructor or staff will confirm that payment (or payment arrangements) has been made. Riders who have not paid will not be allowed to ride. All payments can be made on -line through our portal prior to arrival.**

**Assessments:** no charge

**Therapeutic and Recreational Riding lesson tuition:**

**Group Lessons:** (minimum of 2 riders; approx. one hour/ session)

- \$300.00 for 6 weeks

**Private lessons:** ( Approx. ½ hour/ session )

- \$390.00 for 6 weeks

A monthly payment plan is available with a \$50 surcharge.

Calvin Center will not bill third party payers. An invoice can be provided to parent/guardian or participant, but it is participant's responsibility to ensure that invoice is submitted to appropriate party and paid promptly. If this is the case, proof of invoice and responsibility for payment form must be submitted prior to first lesson.

**Any Participant (in any program) with an outstanding balance from the previous course will not be allowed register for the next session until the balance on the account has been paid**

**All Participant fees that are past due by 30+days or are not paid according to the previous payment arrangements, will be assessed a minimum of \$20.00 charge per month to cover administrative expenses on the balance.**

If a participant needs to drop out of a Course without finishing the nine weeks, a \$50 fee will be assessed on top of the session fee unless it is medically necessary. No refunds or credits towards a future session will be given for dropping out of class.

## Scholarship Policy

Calvin Center may be able to offer financial assistance to families and individuals who qualify and cannot afford the program tuition if funds are available. **Funds are not unlimited and completion of an application does not guarantee receipt of a scholarship.** Receipt of a scholarship for one session does not guarantee receipt of scholarships for future sessions. Scholarships are based on financial need and the following guidelines apply.

- A Scholarship Application Form must be completed and approved prior to the start of riding session. Balance due must be paid at first lesson or applicant will be ineligible for future scholarships.
- A scholarship committee will review all completed applications. If necessary a meeting will be arranged with a member of this committee to review your application with you.
- Final determination of a scholarship given will be based on the demonstrated financial need of the rider's family and the funds available.
- Failure to attend three or more lessons (excused or unexcused) in a nine-week session or two or more lessons in a six-week session will result in loss of future scholarships.
- A receipt of one scholarship does not automatically guarantee future scholarships.
- Scholarship recipients will be required to participate in a "work to ride" program each session (see attached chart). Failure to complete required volunteer hours during session will result in loss of future scholarships.
- Scholarship applications must be completed annually. Scholarships will be reviewed at the end of each session to determine continued eligibility.
- Scholarships in excess of 50% will be reserved for therapeutic riding students.

It is important to emphasize that scholarship funds are limited and scholarships are a privilege not a right. Receipt of scholarship will be based on income guidelines. Extenuating circumstances should be noted on application.

## **Cancelation/Make up lesson policy**

Riders pay tuition for a session. Our schedules try to accommodate at least one week to provide for at least one make-up ride. If a make -up day is not available, then the missed ride will be rolled into the next scheduled session with tuition to account for the missed ride.

In an effort to notify volunteers and staff cancellation must be made by contacting Kate/Equestrian Director directly 24 hours prior to scheduled lesson to receive credit for a make-up ride. Cancellations made less than 25 hours will be at the discretion of the Equestrian Director to whether credit will count. NO SHOWs will not receive credit for make-up rides.

Lessons will happen rain or shine in all kinds of weather. **Unless you receive a call from the Calvin Center, there WILL be a lesson!** If there is lightning, a ground lesson may be substituted for a mounted lesson. If a student chooses not to attend due to cold, heat or rain, there will be no make up lesson.

## **Tardiness**

Participant tardiness: Any time a Participant is late their lesson time will be decreased accordingly in order for the schedule to remain intact. **In fairness to other students in a group lesson, if a Participant is 15 or more minutes late for a lesson they will NOT be allowed to ride for that lesson and no make-up will be given.**

Calvin Center running late: Any time the Calvin Center program is running late (as we will at times) we will do our best to get back on schedule We will offer the Participants their full session time although this may include an overlap in lessons (e.g. one class cools out their horses while the next class warms up).

## **Lesson Structure**

Calvin Center believes that skills on the ground are equally important to those in the saddle. Group lessons are approximately 60 minutes and a typical lesson includes approx 10 minutes of initial grooming and tacking, approx. 40 minutes of mounted riding time and approx. 10 minutes of untacking and horse care at the end of the lesson. As a part of their lesson, riders may learn skills such as blanketing, tack care, arena set up or feeding. Riders who choose to spend extra time on ground skills (e.g. brushing horse) will NOT be granted a longer lesson time. Private lessons will follow the same format however time may be slightly abridged to a 45 minute lesson due to the direct level on independent service.

It is up to the instructors' discretion to decrease the length of a session for any reason including the following: Rider fatiguing, rider medical issues, rider complaining of discomfort, rider behavior issues, horse fatiguing or other horse related problems.

If a horse problem occurs we will attempt to complete your session time, if possible, on another horse. Instructors will evaluate each individual rider needs, horse and weather situations and continue the lesson in the safest most effective way.

**\*\*\*\* We would highly encourage all parents to attend volunteer training. Because our program relies heavily on volunteers there is always the chance that we may have volunteer no-shows or**

**cancellations. It is very helpful to the instructor to know that we have trained parents able to step in for absent volunteers. This will also enable your rider to continue with their mounted session as planned.**

If there are not enough volunteers, or horses available to conduct a safe riding lesson a ground/grooming lesson may be offered in place of the riding session.

If there are unsafe weather conditions (e.g. lightening) a ground lesson may be substituted for a mounted lesson.

### **Scheduling lessons:**

Lessons are schedule once/week on Tuesdays through Saturdays.

To provide quality lessons for all students, riders will be assigned a riding level at their initial assessment and must sign up for a lesson time that matches their riding level.

As riders progress, they will have the opportunity to “level up” to the next skill level which may require selecting a new lesson time.

At the beginning of each new session, current riders will have the option to keep their lesson time. Skipping a session of lessons will result in forfeiture of reserved lesson time.

### **Participant Eligibility:**

**The Calvin Center Therapeutic Riding Program offers services to individuals with cognitive, physical and emotional special needs.** Eligibility for participation in Calvin Centers programs is based solely on an individual’s ability to participate meaningfully and safely, provided the necessary resources are available including: an instructor (certified), horse (size and temperament) , volunteers and class availability that meets an individuals needs.

As a PATH Intl. Premier Accredited Center, The Calvin Center Therapeutic Riding Program ascribes to the Precautions and Contraindications as recommended by the PATH Intl medical Committee as well as the PATH Intl’s Professional Standards. If such conditions are present and Calvin Center believes it is unsafe for a student to ride, the student will not be allowed to participate in the riding component of its program.

#### **Age:**

Children ages four and up may participate in therapeutic riding ( see above eligibility note). There is no upper age limit for adults, unless age related degenerative conditions provide contraindications or a doctor does not approve of riding.

#### **Inclement weather (heat, cold, rain, etc.)**

Calvin Center is grateful for a covered arena and barn and well-shaded trails including the sensory trail, which allow lessons to take place in all kinds of weather. Unless you hear directly from a Calvin Center staff, lessons will continue and should not be canceled due to heat, cold, rain or other weather. **Should rider choose not to attend lesson, no refund or make up will be granted.** If Calvin Center cancels lessons due to weather, lack of volunteers, or for other unavoidable reason, Calvin Center will provide make up for the missed lesson.

## **Participant Dismissal & Discharge Policy**

It is at the discretion of Calvin Center Staff to accept or remove a Participant (rider or volunteer) from the program. Participants who do not adhere to the rules and procedures or meet the guidelines for eligibility are subject to dismissal or discharge. Possible grounds for dismissal may include, but are not limited to: conduct endangering another Participant or staff or the horse, conduct endangering themselves, consistent failure to follow safety procedures with respect to the horses & facility, frequent cancellations or no shows or the development of a contraindicated condition or the deterioration of a condition to the point horseback riding is no longer beneficial or could be harmful to the rider or where safety for the rider or others has become a concern.

Participants (rider or volunteer) at Calvin Center shall have no history of inappropriate behavior with fire or any tendencies or history of abuse or violence directed toward other people or animals. Calvin Center reserves the right to deny services to any individual based upon concerns for the applicant's safety and/or the safety of the horses, volunteers, staff, facility, or for other reasons in accordance with PATH Intl. operating center guidelines.

No Participant will be dismissed without an opportunity to discuss the reasons with Equestrian Director and, as appropriate, executive director.

## **Weight Limitations for All Participants**

Decisions regarding participation will be based on the availability of a suitable horse related to the height, weight, cognition and balance of the participant. The weight limit may be lower as determined by available equines and the ability of staff and volunteers to safely support the participant at the time services are requested. Calvin Center staff will evaluate the participant's weight and physical abilities to determine if riding is a safe and appropriate activity based on available equine, staff and volunteers.

## **Attire**

Close-toed shoes (NO CROCS!) must be worn at the barn at all times. Long pants are highly recommended, avoiding slick materials such as jogging pants. An ASTM/SEI approved (manufactured in the last five years) helmet must be worn at all times when mounted. If rider does not have own helmet, Calvin Center will provide one.

## **Children**

Children under the age of 14 must be monitored and in direct vision of the adult at all times while at the facility. Please review the barn rules with your children prior to arriving at the barn.

Parents are responsible for their child before and after lesson. If children are left unattended, riders may be charged for a second lesson.

## **Dogs and other Animals**

Dogs and other animals are not permitted at the barn except for the equestrian director's dogs. The director's dogs may be on site to provide training for the horses in the event a service dog is needed. Service animals will only be allowed with pre-approval and will always remain on a leash. If at any point the service animal shows aggression to any participant/volunteer/ guest at Calvin Center the service animal

will be asked to leave property or be restrained in car ( weather permitting). Emotional Support animals are not allowed at the barn.

### **Barn Rules:**

- Always wait in designated area until staff or assigned volunteer tells you to proceed and enter the barn, tacking area or arena
- Helmets are required for all mounted activities
- Long pants (strongly suggested) and closed toes shoes are required when working with horses
- No harm to people, horses or property will be tolerated
- Do not feed horses out of your hands. Please use bucket or dish
- Do not climb over gates, stalls or fences
- Do not walk under horses neck
- Approach a horse only with staff or designated volunteer permission
- Do not enter areas designated **off limits**
- Return equipment to its proper place
- No smoking on property
- No firearms on property
- Follow pet policy
- Only trained volunteers are allowed to help with lessons and classes
- Volunteers should not bring young/untrained children to the barn. All children not participating in the program must be supervised
- An approved adult Must supervise all volunteers under the age of 14

### **Questions**

- Scheduling questions/concerns/absences should be directed to the Equestrian Director
- Questions about a student's progress or lesson should be directed to the instructor and/ or Equestrian Director
- Billing questions should be director to the Equestrian Director
- All staff can be reached at the Calvin Center office number: 770-946-4276

**Thanks so much for your interest in our program; we look forward to working with you !!**

