



THE RIGHT STEP, INC.

THE HEALING POWER OF HORSES

A PATH Intl. Premier Therapeutic Riding Program

Our Mission:

To improve the lives of people with disabilities through the healing power of horses.

Welcome to The Right Step, Inc., a non-profit 501(c)(3), PATH Intl. Premier Accredited therapeutic riding program founded in 2008! Our PATH Intl. certified instructors teach basic riding and horsemanship skills in an adaptive manner to meet each client's individual needs. Our program benefits our clients physically, socially, cognitively, and emotionally with the help of horses and volunteers who are trained to work with clients of varying abilities.

The purpose of this handbook is to share our policies and procedures so that The Right Step, Inc. can provide the most effective therapeutic riding lessons and equine-assisted learning possible and make your experience with us the best it can be. By reading this handbook and being an active participant in lessons, you will get the most out of your experience. We look forward to working with you!

Information, waiver, and policy forms must be completed **before** you begin your experience with The Right Step, Inc.. These forms will be emailed and can be filled out via PandaDocs.

Additional health-related forms are required for all mounted activities. These forms can be downloaded and printed from our website or emailed to you as a PDF upon request. Due to the sensitive nature of medical information, please have the client's physician fill out and sign a hard copy of the physician's statement form by hand.

- [Client Medical History and Physician's Statement](#)
- [Health Care Provider Letter](#)

Mail or hand-deliver forms to:
Samantha Sykes, Program Director
programdirector@therightstepinc.org
The Right Step, Inc.
PO Box 721
Littleton, CO 80160-0721

ALL client forms must be completed BEFORE riding and updated annually.

Program Information:

New Client Evaluations

These are scheduled **after** receiving completed forms. The medical release that must be completed, signed, and dated by the client's physician may be brought to the evaluation ride. A new client evaluation is a very important part of our program. It allows our certified instructors to determine a client's base skill level, abilities, appropriate horse, volunteer needs, and the most suitable lesson time available in our schedule. It also allows us to determine if the potential client would benefit from therapeutic riding and be safely mounted on a horse. After we complete an evaluation, we can determine if there is a place in the schedule for a new client.

Scheduling

Once an evaluation is complete, the Program Director will take the scheduling preferences of the client into account when placing them into lessons. However, we cannot guarantee the day or time that they prefer will be available. Clients at The Right Step, Inc. are placed into the most appropriate private or group lesson according to abilities, goals, needs, and ages.

If there is no opening that fits a client's needs, they will be placed on a waiting list. The office will contact them as soon as a space becomes available.

Therapeutic Riding Lessons

Lessons are taught by PATH, Intl. certified therapeutic riding instructors and provide each client a unique experience. Teams of 1-4 trained volunteers per client assist during each lesson. Clients participate in tasks and games that encourage physical strengthening, cognitive improvement, and socialization while learning basic riding skills.

Instruction is tailored to fit each client's specific needs and to help improve their strength, balance, mobility, and confidence during the riding experience. The emphasis is on developing riding skills in a safe and fun environment. Specific goals are set for each client based upon input from the client, their parents or guardians (if applicable), their physician, and their therapists.

Continued Participation in the Program

Instructors perform ongoing assessments to determine the benefit of therapeutic riding. During these assessments, the instructor will also determine if a client still requires our specialized services. If it is determined that a client's riding and other skills have progressed beyond the need for a therapeutic riding program, the client has the option of continuing non-therapeutic riding lessons with our host barn, Denver Equestrians Riding School. Conversely, if it has been determined that a client is not benefitting from therapeutic riding or has developed a condition that is a contraindication to therapeutic riding, the client will be dismissed from our program.

Policies and Procedures:

Rider Limitations

The Right Step, Inc. has a client rider weight limit of 180 pounds. The weight limit may be less for clients requiring a full transfer and will be at the instructor's sole discretion. Therapeutic horseback riding may not be a suitable activity for certain individuals, and therefore every client must have their physician complete and sign the Client's Medical History and Physician's Statement. **Should the physical condition of the client change at any time** (for example, because of surgery, changes in seizure activity, a new injury or diagnosis, pregnancy, etc.), **The Right Step, Inc. must be notified immediately**, and an updated Physician's Statement form must be completed and turned in to the Program Director. All forms must also be updated annually.

Certain conditions require additional precautions when on or around horses, and some conditions are contraindications to riding. We follow the guidelines established by PATH, Intl. A list of these conditions is found on the Medical History & Physician's Statement Form. Most activities have some type of precautions and guidelines for participation. Therapeutic horseback riding is no exception. All clients must have reached the age of four before beginning lessons.

Clothing

For both evaluations and lessons, riders should wear long or short-sleeved shirts (no tank tops, no spaghetti straps) and long pants such as riding breeches, jeans, or leggings to prevent leg chafing. Skirts or shorts may NOT be worn for lessons. Boots with a rounded, closed-toe and a small heel (between ½" and 1 ½") are the safest form of footwear. However, any shoes with a closed toe and heel are acceptable. It is recommended that clients learning more advanced skills and participating in more independent activities wear paddock boots with half chaps, tall boots, or western boots.

Clients should avoid wearing jewelry. Long dangling necklaces and earrings will not be allowed during lessons. Clients must wear properly fitting ASTM-SEI certified riding helmets that are less than five years old according to the manufacturing date printed in the helmet. As of May 2020, **all clients are required to purchase and use their own helmets**. Helmets can be purchased through our host barn, Denver Equestrians Riding School, at local tack stores, or through reputable online sources such as Dover Saddlery, SmartPak, and State Line Tack.

The Right Step, Inc. has a "store" of donated used riding gear that we provide to our clients at no cost. Please ask to be shown what is available.

Inclement Weather

Please do not assume that lessons will be canceled due to bad weather. This is Colorado; wait a minute, and the weather will change! However, we will cancel lessons if the temperature is expected to be below 20°F or above 100°F or if road conditions make access to the barn unsafe. Our Program Director will monitor the weather and email or text by 6:00 pm the night

before in the event lessons need to be canceled. We also realize that weather conditions around the Denver Metro area can vary considerably. You will not be penalized for canceling lessons because of weather conditions-just let us know as soon as you can. Your safety is paramount. Otherwise, we look forward to seeing you at the barn!

Lesson Cancellations by The Right Step, Inc.

Although we strive never to do so, The Right Step, Inc. reserves the right to cancel lessons at any time when we feel they could not be conducted safely. Reasons may include, but are not limited to: adverse weather conditions, instructor illness and a sub not available, an inadequate number of volunteers available to assist, or lack of an appropriate equine to meet the needs of a client.

The Right Step, Inc. Calendar

The Right Step, Inc. operates year-round on a three-session schedule. These three sessions run from January to May, June to August, and September to December, with two-week planned breaks in December/January, May, and August. This allows our horse and human staff much-needed vacation time. Aside from planned session breaks, we close for the following holidays:

New Year's Day, Easter, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.

We may also close on occasion for special events at the barn.

Safety Rules and Barn Policies

1. All clients who are not considered responsible for themselves must be accompanied by a parent/guardian or caregiver until the instructor or volunteer escorts the client to their lesson.
2. A parent/guardian must be on the property during the entire lesson for all clients under 18.
3. A parent/guardian must be on the property during the entire lesson for all non-verbal clients.
4. The Right Step, Inc. reserves the right to extend the parental/guardian supervision policy to other clients as deemed necessary.
5. A well-fitting riding helmet that meets ASTM-SEI requirements must be worn at all times during lessons.
6. Clients should be properly hydrated and protected from the elements. The arena is neither air-conditioned in the summer nor heated in the winter. Clients may wear cool wrap bands, jackets, hats & gloves as long as they do not prevent lesson activities.
7. At The Right Step, Inc., we DO NOT hand feed our horses. Clients wishing to bring treats may give them to the horse in a feed tub at the instructor's discretion. Do not feed horses not owned or leased by The Right Step, Inc.
8. Only dogs belonging to Denver Equestrian Riding School staff are allowed on the property. No other dogs or animals, except service animals, are allowed on the property.
9. Any bleeding or open sores must be covered to ride.

10. Please be sure to advise the instructor of any medical changes, such as recent seizures or illnesses that may affect riding ability.
11. Please refrain from coaching or speaking with clients from the sidelines unless prompted by the instructor. Their focus must remain on the instructor and volunteers.
12. For your safety, **close-toed shoes are required for anyone** entering the arena, stalls, barn aisles, or anywhere else horses go on the property. This includes parents, caregivers, guests, and visitors. Anyone wearing open-toed shoes will be asked to remain in the office or upstairs viewing loft.
13. Please make sure that any visitors you bring (including siblings, other family, and friends) remain under your supervision at all times. No climbing/sitting/standing on the gates or fences, no shouting or loud voices, no running around the riding arena, barn, parking lot, etc. Parents and visitors are encouraged to use the designated lesson viewing areas. Guests are subject to the same rules and policies as our volunteers.
14. Our instructors are happy to answer any questions you may have. If they are not available directly before or after the lesson, they can set up a day/time to address your thoughts. Instructors cannot answer questions during the lesson as their full attention must be with the clients.
15. If you must use your cell phone, please move away from the lesson area.
16. DENVER EQUESTRIANS RIDING SCHOOL IS A NO SMOKING AND DRUG-FREE PROPERTY (including all forms of e-Cigarettes).

Thank you for following our basic safety rules. Safety is our number one priority!

ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY

The Right Step, Inc. has a policy of zero tolerance for any of the following behaviors from any of our volunteers, employees, clients, and guests. Any of the following will result in immediate dismissal from the program:

- 1. Inappropriate or abusive behavior towards others.**
- 2. Failure to follow established safety procedures.**
- 3. Use of alcohol, marijuana, or illegal drugs during lessons.**
- 4. Abuse or mistreatment of equines or other animals at the facility.**
- 5. Theft of anything from clients, other volunteers, Denver Equestrian Riding School, or The Right Step, Inc.**

If the behavior is serious, the person involved will also be reported to the appropriate authorities.

No-Show and Cancellation Policies

1. Please arrive on time or a few minutes early for your lesson. If you arrive more than 15 minutes late, your lesson will be considered a client “no call, no show.” You may not be able to ride. You will be billed for that lesson.
2. Our instructors and volunteers set aside time in their busy days to teach and help. By letting us know that you will be absent, we can let our instructors and volunteers know so that they can plan their days. If you will be absent, please call our Program Director at 720-893-0650 as soon as possible. If you get voicemail, PLEASE leave a message. If desired, missed lessons can be made up on a different day as your and our schedule permits.
3. You **will be charged** for lessons missed or canceled without prior notice.
4. Please notify The Right Step, Inc. as soon as possible in the event of illnesses or other unforeseen emergencies.
5. If you will be out of town during the month, please contact the Program Director. You will not be expected to pay for those missed lessons. However, if you fail to inform us in advance, you will be charged.
6. Excessive absences (3 or more) or no-shows (more than 1) may disqualify the client from being scheduled for the next month, and the client may be placed on a waiting list for the next month.
7. Clients who receive scholarships or sponsorships and have more than one no-show will be subject to forfeiting the scholarship or sponsorship and becoming ineligible for future scholarships or sponsorships.
8. If The Right Step, Inc. must cancel a lesson due to weather or other circumstances, we will make every attempt to schedule a make-up lesson within the month if your and our schedule permits. You will not be charged for the canceled lesson.

PLEASE don't be a “No-show, No-call.”

These cause:

- unnecessary tacking and untacking of horses
- inefficient use of instructor and volunteer time
- open time slots that other clients could have used

Billing and Payment Policy

The Right Step has taken great care in setting client fees for our lessons. Our fees help cover our costs for the horses, facility, instructors, insurance, etc. We fundraise to cover our costs completely. The information below sets forth the billing and payment policies of The Right Step, Inc.

New Rider Application Fee: A one-time, non-refundable fee of \$25 will be added to your first invoice.

New Rider Evaluation Fee: A fee of \$75 will be added to your first invoice.

Therapeutic Riding Lesson Fee:

Group lesson (2-4 clients): \$65 per lesson, per client

Private lesson: \$75 per client

Ground-Based Horsemanship (non-riding) Lesson Fee:

Group or private lesson: \$30 per lesson, per client

Other Programs through The Right Step, Inc.:

A Mother's Heart - A group, ground-based equine-facilitated program for Mother's of children with disabilities: \$15 per client

Horses Helping our Helpers-A group, ground-based equine-facilitated program for First Responders and Front-line workers: \$5 per client

Riding and Groundwork for Veterans - Group or private lessons: 10 free lessons for those registered with the Wounded Warrior Project

Billing and Payment:

Lesson fees are billed after the close of each month for all lessons taken during that month. Invoices will be emailed the first week of the following month and are due within 30 days. Clients who are more than 60 days in arrears on their accounts may not be scheduled for lessons until their accounts are brought up to date.

Credit card payments may be made by following the link on your invoice to the QuickBooks Merchant Center.

Checks should be made out to "The Right Step, Inc." and put in the payment box at the barn or mailed to The Right Step, Inc., PO Box 721, Littleton, CO 80160-0721.

Do not give payments to instructors. Physical payments (cash or check) can be left in our secure payment box by the mounting ramp. Please include a receipt for any cash payments.

Email Mike Flower, Bookkeeper, bookkeeper@therightstepinc.org, with questions on invoices.

Financial Assistance:

We provide scholarships for clients who would otherwise be unable to afford lessons. A limited number of scholarships are available that cover half the cost of lesson fees. An application must be completed and approved prior to the first scheduled riding lesson. Scholarships are renewed annually. Clients are billed in full for all lessons taken prior to scholarship approval.

Returned Checks

Your account will be assessed a \$50 return check fee for each check returned to us. This fee and your invoice balance must be paid before lessons may be continued.

Thank you for choosing to ride at The Right Step, Inc.!

The instructors and volunteers at The Right Step, Inc. want to make your time spent with us enjoyable, fun, and rewarding. Please give us your feedback, positive and negative. Let us know how we are doing and what we can do to improve your experience with us. Thank you!

Please sign and return this form with your other client forms. Thank you!

By signing below, I agree that I have read and understood the policies and procedures of The Right Step, Inc.

Client name: _____ Date: _____

Please Print

Signature: _____

Client, Parent or Legal Guardian

Printed Name: _____

• Please send me a Scholarship Application : _____

Comments: _____

Return this and all forms to:

Program Director, The Right Step, Inc., PO Box 721, Littleton, CO 80160-0721

Questions? Email programdirector@therightstepinc.org or call 720-893-0650.