

NARHA/EFMHA Integration

FAQs



For NARHA Staff/Committees Outreach, July 27, 2009

Key Message

EFMHA and NARHA will fully integrate their vision, membership and programs such that the mission of the Association is fully realized.

After years of leading the way through innovation and organization of leadership in the fields of equine facilitated learning (EFL) and equine facilitated psychotherapy (EFP), the board of directors of the Equine Facilitated Mental Health Association and the board of trustees of NARHA are excited and proud to announce a full integration of EFMHA members, programs and its volunteer leadership with NARHA. Currently EFMHA is a section of NARHA and maintains a separate committee structure and board of directors

FAQs

1. Why is this integration taking place?

a. EFMHA, its members and programs are flourishing and prospering! As a reflection of that growth, resources including the efforts of the NARHA professional staff have already been fully “integrated” for years. Every NARHA department: i.e. certification, events, membership, marketing, etc., currently works and will continue to work on behalf of the mental health section in close communication with committees, task forces and work groups.

b. It has become increasingly apparent that equine facilitated learning is taking place in every situation in which humans and horses are partnered. From the moment humans domesticated the first horse, the remarkable and sentient equine has played a unique part in the well being and productivity of man. In modern society where the call for these creatures to provide labor is called upon less, humans still long for the connection—the animal/human bond which manifests between the two creatures. The typically positive outcomes of this bond present themselves in innumerable, transforming ways at NARHA centers and in mental health and learning environments. For instance, activities which teach kindness and awareness of trust or asking someone to push the boundaries of his or her comfort zone for the desired progression of a skill-set demonstrate the types of obvious overlap between the modalities which heretofore have been officially unrecognized.

c. This integration is the result of a natural progression of events mirroring a global propensity for inclusion and technology providing for the globalization of the world’s population. Recently while re-examining the EFMHA mission statement, core values and tagline, it was proposed that EFMHA adopt the tagline of NARHA. The mission and core values of the two separate associations are nearly crafted identically or are at very least decidedly complementary. The NARHA Standards for Certification and Accreditation already include the value and benefits of EFMHA which are represented through the inclusion of excellent, field-tested standards for EFP with precautions and contraindications and psycho-social guidelines. Soon there will also be a certification for the individual interested in becoming an Equine Specialist, the individual responsible for horse-handling knowledge and techniques during EFP and EFL sessions. An EFMHA leader was recently quoted as saying, “As we tried to separate ourselves, it muddled up our conversations and integration adds clarity!”

2. What are the key objectives associated with the integration?

a. Whether teaching riding, driving, interactive vaulting or conducting a hippotherapy session, each NARHA Certified Instructor, therapist, volunteer, or other session participant will be educated to recognize, and engage in the moments where EFL is taking place and be able to maximize the positive outcomes for their session participants. Through this means, the EFMHA mission, “to advance the field for individuals who partner with equines to promote human growth and development so that its members, clients and equines can succeed and flourish,” impacts a broader and larger number of participants than ever before. For the first time globally this new way of approaching the equine-assisted activities and therapies environment, in which the *whole person* is being served through partnering with the *whole horse*, will ultimately benefit more equines and humans than ever before. This innovative way of looking at things will also educate the public and industry about the fact that EFL is not specifically nor solely applied in a clinical, mental health setting.

3. As separate associations, have either EFMHA or NARHA been unsustainable?

a. On the contrary! The growth of membership and the popularity of the programs provided by the membership in relation to the ever-increasing diversity of the populations served have prompted the integration of resources to preserve the outstanding work done by EFMHA, and to continue the development of this burgeoning and fascinating field under the umbrella of equine assisted activities and therapies.

b. Additionally having EFMHA representation on all NARHA committees moving forward (such as the Finance Committee) will only lend further professional expertise to the sustainability and prospering of all disciplines.

4. Will EFMHA’s commitment to the role of the horse be eclipsed?

a. As demonstrated by NARHA’s equine management and facilities standards, equine welfare has always and will always be an important directive of NARHA. The committee representation of EFMHA members on all of the NARHA oversight committees will ensure this essential component of the EAAT equation is never inadvertently overlooked, ignored, or lost.

5. How have the founders and past-presidents of EFMHA embraced this integration?

a. A series of conference calls were attended between the integration steering committee and a targeted group of stakeholders and individuals who have helped make the equine-facilitated mental health field the burgeoning and popular success it is. Without the efforts and foundation laid by these innovative professionals, this full-scale integration and application of mission would not be possible. They have paved the way for more individuals to benefit from their knowledge and experience than ever before thought possible.

6. What will become of the EFMHA budget?

a. The NARHA Finance Committee is currently working with the Integration Steering Committee to make these important decisions, as well as set processes and procedures.

7. What will become of the EFMHA committees structure and members?

a. For several years it has been a priority to make sure EFMHA was represented on NARHA volunteer committees and the board of trustees. That policy will be expanded and individuals are currently being identified and recruited for additional positions on committees, task forces, and work groups. Their inclusion will be vital as their knowledge and expertise are called upon to bring this full integration to fruition “at the barn.”

8. How does the integration relate to the overall vision for NARHA and EFMHA?

For the first time globally this new way of approaching the equine-assisted activities and therapies environment in which the *whole person* is being served through partnering with the *whole horse*, will ultimately benefit more equines and humans than ever before.

9. What's next?

a. EFMHA and NARHA have experienced tremendous growth over the previous years and have found similar challenges related to the names of the associations. Neither name accurately reflects the full scope of services provided. For NARHA, the words North American, riding and handicapped were no longer accurate, acceptable or appropriate. The association presently is known simply by the acronym of NARHA. EFMHA faced a similar challenge in that not all services provided by its members are working in a traditional mental health and healing environment. For instance, equine-assisted professional and human development offerings are becoming more popular and the guidelines for those non-clinical, educational settings are not reflected in the confines of a clinical, mental health model nor in the name of the Equine Facilitated Mental Health Association.

In order to project a correct and current image of the important work being done by members at NARHA centers and elsewhere around the world, a new association name will be researched which will encompass all of the disciplines represented under the NARHA umbrella, a more inclusive name which will more accurately reflect the mission of changing and enriching lives by promoting excellence in equine-assisted activities.

b. In May of 2009 the EFMHA Board of Directors, NARHA Board of Trustees and NARHA Staff developed a timeline and processes for how the integration will progress. Over the next 12 to 18 months, the NARHA Board of Trustees will include a full representation of previous EFMHA board members. A separate EFMHA Board of Directors will no longer be required. NARHA oversight committees and task forces will also always include representation from EFMHA volunteer leaders.

10. What does this integration mean to me?

- a. I am an EFMHA Founder or long-time EFMHA stakeholder
- NARHA has revered the bold, smart, caring people who created and nurtured the interest in EFP and EFL that was made manifest in the formation of EFMHA in 1996. That work will only be welcomed and more broadly applied by individuals in all EAAT professions as a result of the integration. The influence of the founders and stakeholders will now influence the organization as a whole!
 - An EFMHA leader was recently quoted as saying, "As we tried to separate ourselves, it muddled up our conversations and integration adds clarity!"
- b. I am a NARHA/EFMHA section member
- Many decisions about the processes and procedures will be rolled out and announced to the membership over the next 12-18 months. All members will be updated regularly on the developments. As always, the association welcomes all feedback from its membership. With approximately 7,000 it's impossible that everyone will always agree with every choice or decision made, but the association will request your input frequently through out this integration process.
 - Currently we can announce that the integration will deliver a far broader and more inclusive network of professionals from which one will be able to draw wisdom, ideas and solutions.
 - All association newsletters (including the mental health and learning publication) will be available to every member providing yet another stream of valuable education from EAAT industry experts.
- c. I am a committee member and play a role in EFMHA and/or NARHA volunteer leadership

- EFMHA representation will be included on all NARHA committees moving forward. This natural progression had already begun as the associations continued to flourish and it will only lend further professional expertise to the sustainability and prospering of all of the EAAT disciplines.

- d. I am a representative or member of an outside organizations
- Whether your relationship has been with NARHA or EFMHA in the past, you can count on continuing a strong and mutually supportive working relationship during the integration of NARHA and EFMHA, and beyond.
- e. I am a part of a NARHA member center with EFP/EFL programs
- There will be no direct changes. Currently we can announce that the integration will deliver a far broader and more inclusive network of professionals from which one will be able to draw wisdom, ideas and solutions.
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- f. I am a part of a NARHA member center with no EFP/EFL program
- There will be no direct changes. Currently we can announce that the integration will deliver a far broader and more inclusive network of professionals from which one will be able to draw wisdom, ideas and solutions.
 - Many decisions about the processes and procedures will be rolled out and announced to the membership over the next 12-18 months. All members will be updated regularly on the developments. As always, the association welcomes all feedback from its membership. With approximately 7,000 it's impossible that everyone will always agree with every choice or decision made, but the association will request your input frequently through out this integration process.
- g. I am a NARHA Certified Instructor what if anything will change for me?
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 - Many decisions about the processes and procedures will be rolled out and announced to the membership over the next 12-18 months. All members will be updated regularly on the developments. As always, the association welcomes all feedback from its membership. With approximately 7,000 it's impossible that everyone will always agree with every choice or decision made, but the association will request your input frequently through out this integration process.

11) Will NARHA members play a role in the selection of a new association name?

- Absolutely!
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