

Risk Management - staff & volunteer training issues

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Over the years, equine assisted therapy experiences have played an important role in the development of self-confidence, self-esteem, and physical skills for challenged individuals. This contribution to a client's development goes beyond what can typically be provided by the school system, the family or non-horse related therapy. We cannot allow the fear or reality of potential litigation to limit us in providing growth experiences for our participants. Staff and volunteer training is essential in developing a safe and effective treatment team.

It is important that your training program addresses the following issues:

1. Each volunteer and staff member is "the center"

Every action of every volunteer and staff member performing assigned duties can be viewed as an action by the center. The center is ultimately responsible for each and every action.

2. Actions must be "reasonable", not perfect

No one expects that volunteers and staff will never make mistakes. But the expectation is that you will act as a reasonably prudent person would act under the circumstances.

3. Center staff and volunteers are "in loco parentis"

While supervising participants, center personnel often act in place of the parent. You are expected to provide the same level of care and supervision as a reasonable parent would provide. When making decisions about participant supervision, ask yourself: what would a reasonable parent do in this situation?

4. Enforce policies and procedures.

Take your training program seriously. Follow procedures and policies with diligence. Enforce regulations.

You have chosen to work in a field that can have a profound influence in the life of participants. Be diligent. Work hard. Keep your perspective. Your efforts will be rewarded.

