Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship
International Standards as They Apply to Instructors

Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International standards are not only important to centers that go through accreditation but are also very important to the ongoing work and daily activities of instructors. Standards provide guidance to instructors to strive toward best practices. If instructors do not know and understand the standards of the industry, they could be putting their participants at risk. Take the time to know your standards!

• With understanding of the standards, an instructor will be more likely to provide services that are in compliance with these standards. An introduction, history and process information can be found early in the Standards Manual. With this knowledge, an instructor can then take part in the development of standards or propose a change to a standard if it is needed.

• As an instructor, understanding the accreditation process will assist centers (accredited or not) to be compliant with and have awareness of standards. Instructors are typically involved with and assist their programs through the accreditation process. The second section of the Standards Manual is an overview of standards as they apply to centers and the purpose of accreditation.

• Core standards are the basics. As an instructor it is important to understand not only the equine welfare and management and facility standards but also the administrative and business standards. Don’t depend on others to make sure standards are followed; it is part of the job as instructor. Abiding by core standards will encourage instructors to provide a high level of service while ensuring the safety of the participants.

• Activity standards are for those offering, piloting or considering adding an activity: mounted, driving, interactive vaulting and/or ground. Becoming familiar with the activity standards is necessary before deciding to offer that new activity or to pilot a program. A center must be sure that the facility and staff meet the activity standard requirements.

• Service standards are for those offering, piloting or considering adding a program: hippotherapy, and/or equine-facilitated psychotherapy. Becoming familiar with the service standards is necessary before deciding to offer the new service or to pilot a program. A center must be sure that the facility and staff meet the service standard requirements.

• Field test standards are an area where an instructor can make a difference. Providing feedback on the field test standards will help to shape potential future core, activity or service standards.

• Instructors are generally responsible for the daily use of many forms. Forms and specialty forms are available in the Standards Manual as a resource.

• As a professional in the equine-assisted activities and therapies industry, an instructor needs to be articulate about the industry, the services offered (based on each individual’s scope of practice) and the resources available. The glossary provides the accurate and appropriate industry terminology.

• The guidelines include information for: helmet use, alternative helmet use, non-use of helmets in interactive vaulting, equine first aid kit, equine-facilitated psychotherapy guidelines, backriding guidelines, equine-facilitated learning guidelines, adaptive tack guidelines and considerations for centers with regard to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
• When trying to make sense of the medical release forms, an instructor should reference the precautions and contraindications. Precautions and contraindications provide information put together by experts in the field (including therapists and doctors) to help professionals know when a participant’s condition is contraindicated for riding or therapy or when a participant and instructor need to proceed with caution.

The *Standards Manual* can help instructors make decisions, educate others and become more effective in providing a high level of service. Instructors sign an annual Code of Ethics, which includes: professional competency, integrity, honesty, confidentiality, objectivity, sound judgment, public safety and compliance. It is an instructor’s responsibility to be knowledgeable about not only the industry standards but also the guidelines and tools that are available to help the instructor do his/her job safely and effectively.