

PATH 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. It is important as an instructor 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, equine-assisted learning guidelines, adaptive tack guidelines and considerations for centers with regard to the 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 annually a 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.

PATH Intl. Backriding Position Statement

Background: In past editions of the *PATH Intl. Standards for Certification and Accreditation Manual*, guidelines have been published for the practice of backriding. The practice of backriding and these published guidelines have been questioned by PATH Intl. members as to whether they reflect best practice in equine assisted activities. After extensive research of organizations worldwide as to their position on backriding, the standards task force recommends the backriding guidelines published in the PATH Intl. Standards Manual be removed so that PATH Intl. does not appear to encourage or condone an activity that is considered unsafe for instructors, participants, volunteers and equines.

It is proposed that the following statement be published in the PATH Intl. Standards Manual and on the PATH Intl. website, and be included in the PATH Intl. Registered Instructor Onsite Workshop materials, as representing the position of PATH Intl. in respect to the activity of backriding.

Backriding is a technique infrequently used in therapeutic horsemanship in which two people are mounted on an equine at the same time – one backrider and one participant. Backriding was intended to facilitate riding position and skills of participants in a therapeutic riding lesson with a goal of learning horsemanship skills.

Backriding activities are not the same as tandem hippotherapy (T-HPOT). T-HPOT is a treatment strategy in which the therapist/health professional sits on the equine behind the client in order to provide specific therapeutic handling as part of an integrated treatment protocol. A therapist is not typically part of a therapeutic horsemanship lesson. If it is determined that a participant is unable to support him/herself sufficiently to participate in therapeutic horsemanship, he/she should be referred to a therapist. Backriding activities also differ from interactive vaulting activities, where two students, who meet specific requirements, may be on the horse at the same time.

Due to the increased risk of injury to the equine, the backrider, sidewalkers and the participant, backriding is not recommended to be used in therapeutic horsemanship programs.

- Currently, there is no empirical evidence that backriding techniques can improve riding skills in participants in a therapeutic horsemanship program.
- Backriding causes increased stress to the equine.
- Backriding increases the risk of injury to the equine, the backrider, sidewalkers and the participant. In the event of an emergency, backriding can be extremely dangerous for the participant and backrider.
- Backriding may not be covered by insurance.

