



Great and Small

# Participant Manual

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## About Us

### **Mission**

Great and Small provides Equine-Assisted Activities and Therapies (EAAT) to children and adults of all ages affected by a range of physical, developmental, emotional, and learning disabilities. Through a supportive and therapeutic engagement with horses we strengthen and empower our participants, helping them develop their full potential.

### **History**

Great and Small was founded in 1998 by Sarah Phelps with one horse and four riders. It operated out of several boarding facilities before finding a permanent home at the Rickman Farm Horse Park in 2004. The Rickman Farm is leased from the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNCPPC). Great and Small is a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation, not a government program.

### **PATH International**

The Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.) was formed in 1969 to promote equine-assisted activities and therapies (EAAT) for individuals with special needs. Its mission is to change and enrich lives by promoting excellence in equine-assisted activities and therapies. PATH provides instructor certification and facility accreditation programs as well as educational resources for its members. **Great and Small is recognized as a PATH International Premier Accredited Center (PAC).**



## Program Descriptions

**Therapeutic Riding:** Therapeutic riding is an adaptive sport for those who need specific instruction, facilities, or assistance to participate in horseback riding. It is intended to be both educational and recreational in nature. Benefits of therapeutic riding include improvements in balance, core strength, motor planning, confidence, communication, and social interaction. Lessons are taught by a PATH Intl. certified therapeutic riding instructor. Depending on the participant's needs, the instructor may be assisted by up to three volunteers to ensure the safety and success of the participant. Independence is encouraged to the degree that is safe and appropriate for each participant and may include learning to care for the horse before and after lessons. Private and semi-private lessons are available, depending on scheduling availability and participant goals and needs.

**Equine Assisted Learning (EAL):** Great and Small offers "ground" horsemanship lessons to participants interested in learning skills related to horse health and care, horse handling, barn maintenance and equine body language. This program allows participants to form a unique bond with the horse by learning how to communicate and work with the horse on the ground and does not typically include riding the horse. Other benefits include improved strength, coordination, confidence, self-esteem and social skills.

**Inclusive Summer Camp:** Recognizing the benefits of inclusive programs for children both with and without disabilities, Great and Small offers inclusive summer camp. Camp programming includes activities such as daily riding, horse care, horse-themed games and crafts. In addition to being lots of fun, camp provides children with and without disabilities with personal growth opportunities.

## Affiliated Therapy Services

Great and Small contracts with licensed therapists who incorporate work with equines into their treatment strategies in the following capacities:

**Hippotherapy:** Hippotherapy is a treatment strategy used by physical therapists, occupational therapists, and speech-language pathologists. The movement of the horse provides graded sensory input and vestibular stimulation among other benefits and is used to improve functional outcomes. Therapists may use hippotherapy as one part of an integrated treatment program. A hippotherapy treatment team includes the participant, the therapist, a PATH Intl. certified professional and up to three volunteers.

**Equine-Facilitated Psychotherapy:** Equine-Facilitated Psychotherapy (EFP) is an experiential form of therapy that involves horses. Horses' sensitivity to subtle changes in their environment make them perfect partners for mental health professionals who work with clients to foster a wide range of life and coping skills. In this interactive process, a licensed mental health professional collaborates with a PATH Intl. Equine Specialist and suitable equine(s) to address psychotherapy goals set forth by the mental health professional and the client.

## Program Policies and Procedures

### Application Process

1. Read and understand the Participant Manual.
2. Complete and submit the [Participant Application](#) and have the [Medical History and Physician Statement](#) completed and signed by a physician.  
Note: Applications are not considered complete until all portions have been received.
3. You will be contacted to schedule an evaluation.
4. After evaluation, the staff will determine if EAAT is appropriate for the potential participant and if so, which program and lesson format is the best choice to support the participant's goals and meet his/her needs.
5. Participants will be added to the schedule or placed on the waitlist, depending on availability.

### Participant Eligibility

Participants must have a current physical, cognitive or social-emotional diagnosis to be eligible for our general programs. We will also consider admission for those with a diagnosis pending.

#### Age

The minimum age for therapeutic riding is 4 years (48 months). The minimum age for hippotherapy is 2 years (24 months). There is no maximum age.

#### Weight

Riders must weigh less than 200 pounds for mounted activities. This is for the safety of our participants, volunteers and staff, as well as the protection of our horses. Individual equines may also have a designated weight limit lower than 200 pounds. We cannot safely manage riders over 75 pounds who are unable to sit up unaided while holding the surcingle handle.

#### Precautions and Contraindications

The major precautions and contraindications to mounted equine activities are listed on the first page of the Medical History and Physician's Statement form. Each applicant will be individually screened for physical and behavioral precautions and contraindications, and further information may be requested. If the movement associated with therapeutic riding will cause a decrease in the participant's function, an increase in pain or generally aggravate a participant's medical condition, it is not the activity of choice.

## Further Considerations

**Consideration will also be given to whether staff and volunteers are able to safely manage the participant in any situation, including an emergency dismount.** Requirements for therapeutic riding include:

- Physically able to sit symmetrically with torso upright and legs astride the horse during dynamic movement
- Physically able to maintain head and neck position in proper alignment with dynamic movement
- Able to sit independently without sidewalker support
- Able to accommodate the movement of the horse without pain
- Adequate range of motion in hips to sit astride
- Tolerate wearing an equestrian safety helmet
- Ability to indicate/express pain or discomfort
- Behave in a manner that is safe for self, horse and others
- Benefit physically, emotionally, socially and/or cognitively from services provided

## Participant Discharge

It is at the discretion of the Center and Program Director to accept or remove a participant from the program. Participants who do not adhere to the rules and procedures or meet the guidelines for eligibility are subject to dismissal. Possible grounds for dismissal may include, but are not limited to:

- Conduct endangering another participant, staff, volunteer, horse or themselves
- Consistent failure to follow safety procedures with respect to the horses
- A gain in weight above the center weight limit or the weight limit of an appropriate equine
- Failure to provide notice for three or more missed lessons in a riding session
- Achieving a proficiency in riding such that the participant would be better served in a traditional riding program for riders who do not have disabilities
- A change in medical condition which indicates it is no longer safe or beneficial for a participant to continue.

No rider will be dismissed without an opportunity to discuss the reasons for dismissal with the Center and Program Director. The rider may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to withdraw from classes at Great and Small. Notice of such a decision should be communicated as soon as possible. With the exception of immediate medical concerns, session tuition is non-refundable.

## Confidentiality Policy

In the course of EAAT, staff will provide volunteers with confidential information about the participant **only** on a need-to-know basis. Volunteer training includes a specific discussion of confidentiality and the importance of not divulging diagnosis, progress reports, and other private information to any outside party. Great and Small will not release any information regarding a participant to outside sources (such as caseworkers, therapists, etc.) without written permission from the participant or participant's legal guardian.

## Annual Update

To comply with PATH Intl. standards and provide for our own communication needs, Great and Small **must** annually update all participant information. The annual Returning Rider Update form and Physician Update form are due at the beginning of the Fall Session (September); or prior to resuming participation in EAAT if the participant was inactive during the Fall Session.

All minor participants who reach the age of majority (18 years of age) must complete a new full set of paperwork unless they have a court-appointed guardian who is the same parent/guardian who signed the original paperwork.

**It is the participant/participant family responsibility to be sure paperwork is current.** Failure to comply will result in a temporary riding suspension until paperwork is made current. All of the participant paperwork is available on Great and Small's website: [www.greatandsmallride.org](http://www.greatandsmallride.org).

## Program Participation

### Attire

#### Helmets

All participants must wear ASTM-SEI approved headgear while mounted. Helmets are available at the barn or riders may bring their own. Instructors must approve privately owned helmets for condition and fit.

#### Footwear

Hard soled shoes or boots with a heel are ideal for riding, but sneakers are acceptable. There are riding boots available in the office for students to use. Sandals, crocs, ballet flats and open-toed shoes are not permitted.

#### Other Clothing

Participants should dress appropriately for existing weather conditions so they can be comfortable during lessons. Layers are recommended, as the weather at Great and Small may be different from the weather at your home, school, or workplace. In the summer, sunscreen, bug spray, and a water bottle may be appropriate. Long pants are strongly recommended year-round for rider comfort. Jewelry should be kept to a minimum as it could get caught on the horse's equipment.

## **Arriving for a Lesson**

Participants and family members should wait for the instructor in the lounge area of the Great and Small office. For safety reasons and for consideration of others, visiting the barn and/or observing lessons is not permitted unless attended by a staff member. Participants should be properly attired (footwear & helmet) and ready to meet the instructor or therapist at designated lesson time.

## **Observing a Lesson**

Family members and caregivers may observe from the office or in the indoor arena area immediately outside of the office. Lessons in the outdoor arena can be observed from grassy area next to the outdoor arena. If the presence of observers is distracting to the participant(s), the instructor or therapist may request that observers relocate to the office.

For the safety of our participants, volunteers, and guests, all children must be under the supervision of a parent/adult at all times. Noise and lots of activity can be distracting to participants and frightening to the horses. Children should be encouraged to play quietly, and they are welcome to enjoy the toys in the office. Playing on the mounting ramp is strictly forbidden. For the comfort of our equines and safety of visitors, barn visits must be supervised by a staff member.

## Weather

Great and Small follows Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) for weather-related delays and closures. A delay cancels all lessons before noon. An early release cancels all lessons after noon. A cancellation of school cancels all lessons on that day. Great and Small may cancel lessons for extreme heat or extreme cold in the winter and summer months.

**WINTER:** If the actual temperature for Boyds, MD (20841) is forecast to be 25 degrees or less at the time of your lesson, the lesson will be cancelled.

**SUMMER:** If the actual temperature for Boyds, MD (20841) is forecast to be 95 degrees or more at the time of your lesson, the lesson will be cancelled.

Please refer specifically to <https://weather.com/> since different weather stations often report slightly different temperatures. We will make every effort to contact you if we are cancelling due to cold weather. Other cancellations may be made due to severe thunderstorms, tornado warnings and other local weather patterns that make it unsafe to hold lessons. For cancellations initiated by Great and Small, participants will receive a text message and email with notification of the cancellation.

Great and Small reserves the right to cancel lessons based on the availability of instructors, volunteers, and/or horses. Further, any factor or situation considered by Great and Small staff to be a threat to the safety of students, volunteers, staff, or horses is reason for cancellation.

## Dogs

Great and Small is a horse farm, not a dog park. You are encouraged to leave your dog at home. Should you choose to bring your dog to Great and Small, it must be in the car or on-leash and outside the buildings at all times. Any dog that causes a distraction will be asked to leave. Decisions of the staff are final.

Service animals are welcome. At times when they are not working, they should be appropriately supervised by someone on the ground.

## **Dismissal of Guests from Center Activities**

Guests are welcome to observe at any time that staff is present. A guest is defined as anyone who is not a participant, staff member, or volunteer. Since the safety of our participants, volunteers, horses, and staff is of paramount importance, there may be occasions when a guest must be dismissed and/or told to leave the premises.

A guest may be told to leave the premises immediately if, for example, he/she:

- Threatens the safety of others;
- Is disruptive or abusive;
- Is not in compliance with Great and Small policies;
- Fails to properly follow established safety procedures;
- Is in possession of a weapon;
- Mistreats any animal or person at Great and Small;
- Acts or speaks inappropriately or dangerously;
- Is under the influence or in possession of alcohol or drugs;
- Is under age and is using or in possession of tobacco or related materials;
- Is smoking anywhere on the entire 100 acres of the Rickman farm;

## **Attendance, Fees & Payment Information**

### **Session Schedules**

Great and Small conducts four sessions each year (fall, winter, spring, summer). Sessions range from 8 – 14 weeks, depending on the time of year. Each session is followed by a week for make-up lessons, if needed. Rolling admission may be available for new participants, but is not guaranteed.

### **Fees**

Fees are dependent on the type of service, session format (private or semi-private), and duration (30 or 60 minutes). A current fee schedule is available upon request.

### **Billing**

Participants will be billed in advance of the session via an emailed invoice. Payment is due at the beginning of the session unless alternate arrangements are arranged with Center Director. Cash, check, and ACH transactions are preferred payment methods. Credit card payments can be arranged and carry a 5% transaction fee. If you need to make alternate payment arrangements, please contact our office. We work with a variety of outside funding sources including LISS and DDA. We are happy to work with you to meet the requirements of your outside funding source.

## **Cancellations, Refunds & Make-ups**

Every lesson requires the coordination of volunteers, staff, and horses. For this reason, it is important that you/your family member make every effort to attend lessons on time and as scheduled. Great and Small charges participants approximately 1/3 of what it actually costs to offer the service. Therefore, every participant is receiving an automatic scholarship! To continue to offer services at affordable rates, we have instituted the following cancellation policies:

### **Scheduled Absences**

Each participant is allotted 1 scheduled advanced-notice absence per session, which is eligible for a make-up. If you know at the beginning of the session that you/your family member will miss a specific date, please let us know in advance so we can schedule the make-up. Participation is billed by the session and cannot be prorated.

### **Unscheduled Absences**

If you must miss a lesson due to a last-minute illness, injury, or other emergency, please notify the office as soon as possible. Unscheduled absences will not receive a refund. If cancellation notice is made at least 24 hours prior to the unscheduled absence, the lesson is eligible for a make-up lesson (max. 1 total make-up per session). Missing 3 or more lessons within a session without providing 24 hours' notification to the office can result in dismissal from the program. Likewise, missing 3 or more sessions without providing any notification to the office ("no shows") can result in dismissal from the program, whether the absences occur within one session or over a longer period of participation.

### **Make-up Lessons**

Riders are eligible for 1 make-up lesson per session. The week immediately following the session is reserved for make-up lessons. Make-up lessons will be scheduled at the rider's regular time slot during the make-up week.

### **Cancellations by Great and Small**

In the event that Great and Small must cancel lessons due to weather or facility emergencies, you/your family will be given a credit towards a future session in the amount of your lesson. Should you not plan to participate in a future session, the cancelled lesson will be refunded. Participants without a scheduled absence may choose to make up the cancelled lesson during the make-up week.

### **Late Arrivals**

Participants who arrive up to fifteen (15) minutes late may still have a lesson, but the lesson will end at the regularly scheduled time. Participants who arrive more than fifteen (15) minutes late will not be able to ride that day. Alternate activities are at the discretion of the instructor.

## **Session Registration**

Current participants are given the opportunity to register before new participants are accepted into the program each session. "Current" is defined as having participated in our programs within the past year. We make every effort to continue to offer lesson times on the same day and time from session to session, but this is subject to change based on scheduling availability. Registering early (by the deadline) provides the best assurance of getting your preferred day and time.