



### **Our Mission:**

To improve the lives of people with special needs through the healing power of horses.

### **Our Motto**

Horses Give Us Wings, comes from Isaiah 40:31 King James Version (KJV)

**31 But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.**

### **Client Handbook**

Welcome to Sherlock Farms Therapeutic Riding, a PATH Intl. member therapeutic riding center. Our PATH, Intl. certified instructors teach basic riding and horsemanship skills to clients of all ages and disabilities as a means of helping them to gain independence in daily living. Our program is designed to benefit our clients physically, socially, and emotionally with the help of horses and volunteers who are trained to work with clients of varying abilities.

The purpose of this handbook is to share our policies and procedures so that SFTR can provide the most effective therapeutic riding lessons possible and make your experience with us the best it can be. By reading this handbook and being an active participant in your lessons, you will get the most out of your therapeutic riding experience. We look forward to working with you!

The following forms are required to be completed before you begin your experience with SFTR.

- Client Information Form
- Client Health History Form
- Client's Medical History & Physician's Statement
- Liability Waiver
- Authorization for Emergency Medical Treatment
- Acknowledgement of Receipt of Privacy Practices
- Policy and Procedures for the Rights of Clients

**Client forms must be complete before riding and updated annually.**

## **Program Information**

### **New Client Evaluations**

These are scheduled after receipt of the application fee and completed forms, including the medical release that must be completed, signed, and dated by the client's physician. A new client evaluation is a very important part of our program. It allows our certified instructors to determine a client's base skill level, abilities, appropriate horse, volunteer needs, and the most suitable lesson time available in our schedule. It also allows us to determine if the potential client would benefit from therapeutic riding and can be safely mounted on a horse or if ground activities are more appropriate. It is only after we complete an evaluation that we can determine if there is a place in the schedule for a new client.

### **Scheduling**

Once an evaluation is complete, the Program Director will take scheduling preferences of the client into account when placing him/her into lessons. However, we cannot guarantee the day and/or time that he/she prefers will be available. Clients at SFTR are placed into the most appropriate private or group lesson according to their abilities, goals, needs, and ages.

If there is not an opening that fits a client's needs, he/she will be placed on a waiting list. The Program Director will contact him/her as soon as a space becomes available.

### **Therapeutic Riding Lessons**

Lessons are taught by PATH, Intl. certified therapeutic riding instructors and provide each client a unique experience. Teams of 1-4 trained volunteers per client assist during each lesson. Clients participate in tasks and games that encourage physical strengthening, cognitive improvement, and socialization while learning basic riding skills. SFTR reserves the right to teach a unmounted lesson when deemed necessary to address a specific skill, goal, or due to inclement weather.

Instruction is tailored to fit each of our client's specific needs and to help improve his/her level of strength, balance, mobility and confidence during the riding experience. The emphasis is on developing riding skills in a safe environment that is both therapeutic and fun. Specific goals are set for each client based upon input from the client, his/her parents or guardians (if applicable), his/her physician, and his/her therapists.

### **Continued Participation in the Program**

Instructors perform ongoing assessments to determine the benefit from therapeutic riding. During these assessments the instructor will also determine if a client still requires our specialized services. If it is determined that a client's riding and other skills have progressed beyond the need for a therapeutic riding program, the client has the option of continuing non-therapeutic riding lessons with our host barn, Sherlock Farms.

## **Policies and Procedures**

### **Rider Limitations**

SFTR has a client rider weight limit of 250 pounds. The weight limit may be less for clients requiring a full transfer and will be at the sole discretion of the instructor. Therapeutic horseback riding may not be a suitable activity for certain individuals and therefore it is necessary for every client to have his/her physician complete and sign the Client's Medical History and Physician's Statement. Should the physical condition of the client change at any time (for example because of surgery, a new injury or diagnosis, pregnancy, etc.), SFTR must be notified immediately and an updated Physician's Statement form must be completed and turned in to the Program Director. All forms must also be updated annually.

Certain conditions require additional precautions to be taken when on or around horses and **some conditions are contraindications to riding**. We follow the guidelines established by PATH Intl. A list of these conditions is found on the Medical History & Physician's Statement Form. Most activities have some type of precautions and guidelines for participation and therapeutic horseback riding is no exception.

### **Clothing**

For both evaluations and lessons, riders should wear long pants such as riding breeches, jeans, or leggings to prevent leg chafing. Skirts or shorts may NOT be worn for lessons. Boots with a rounded, closed toe and a small heel are the safest form of footwear. However, any shoe with a closed toe and heel are acceptable. It is recommended that clients learning more advanced skills and participating in more independent activities wear paddock or tall boots.

Clients should avoid wearing jewelry. Long dangling necklaces and earrings will not be allowed during lessons. Safety helmets that meet ASTM-SEI requirements must be worn by all clients and, if necessary, will be provided, but purchasing your own helmet is preferred.

Local tack shops or feed stores, such as Tractor Supply or Arcola Feed, Carry appropriate helmets. Helmets can also be purchased online.

### **Inclement Weather**

Please do not assume that lessons will be cancelled due to bad weather. This is Texas; wait a minute and the weather will change! However, we will cancel lessons if the temperature is expected to be below 40°F or above 101°F. Our Program Director will monitor the weather and email and/or call by 6:00pm the night before in the event lessons need to be cancelled. Otherwise, we look forward to seeing you at the barn!

## **Lesson Cancellations by SFTR**

Although we strive never to do so, SFTR reserves the right to cancel lessons at any time when we feel they could not be conducted in a safe manner. Reasons may include, but are not limited to: adverse weather conditions, an inadequate number of volunteers available to assist, or lack of an appropriate equine to meet the needs of a client.

## **SFTR Calendar**

SFTR operates continuously year-round. We are closed Sunday and Monday and occasionally for horse shows or educational conventions. We are closed for the following holidays: New Year's Day, Easter, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.

## **Safety Rules and Barn Policies**

1. All clients who are not considered responsible for themselves must be accompanied by a parent/guardian or caregiver until the client is escorted by the instructor or volunteer to his/her lesson.
2. A parent/guardian must be on the property during the entire lesson for all clients under the age of 18.
3. A parent/guardian must be on the property during the entire lesson for all non-verbal clients.
4. SFTR reserves the right to extend the parental/guardian supervision policy to other clients as deemed necessary.
5. A safety helmet that meets ASTM-SEI requirements must be worn at all times during lessons. SFTR has helmets available but we prefer you purchase your own.
6. Clients should be properly hydrated and protected from the elements. The barn is neither air-conditioned in the summer nor heated in the winter. Clients may wear cool wrap bands, jackets, hats & gloves as long as they do not prevent lesson activities.
7. At SFTR we DO NOT hand feed our horses. Clients wishing to bring treats may give them to the horse in a feed tub at the instructor's discretion and within the time constraints of their lessons.
8. Dogs and other pets are not allowed on the property.
9. Any bleeding or open sores must be covered in order to ride.
10. Please be sure to advise the instructor of any medical changes such as recent seizures or illnesses that may affect riding ability.

11. Please refrain from coaching or speaking with clients from the sidelines unless prompted by the instructor. It is important their focus remain on the instructor and volunteers.
12. Please make sure that any visitors you bring (including siblings, other family and friends) remain under your supervision at all times. No climbing/sitting/standing on the fence, no shouting or loud voices, no running around the riding arena, barn, or parking lot, etc.. Guests are subject to the same rules and policies as our volunteers.
13. Our instructors are happy to answer any questions you may have. If they are not available directly before or after the lesson, they can set up a day/time to address your thoughts. Instructors are not able to answer questions during the lesson as their full attention must be with the clients.
14. If you must use your cell phone, please move away from the lesson area.
15. SHERLOCK FARMS THERAPEUTIC RIDING IS A NO SMOKING NO SWEARING AREA.

**Thank you for following our basic safety rules.**  
**Safety is our number one priority!**

### **ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY**

SFTR has a policy of zero tolerance for any of the following behaviors from any of our volunteers, employees, clients, and guests. Any of the following will result in immediate dismissal from the program:

- 1. Inappropriate and/or abusive behavior towards others.**
- 2. Failure to follow established safety procedures.**
- 3. Use of alcohol, marijuana, or illegal drugs during scheduled lessons.**
- 4. Abuse or mistreatment of equines or other animals at the facility.**
- 5. Theft of anything from clients, other volunteers, or SFTR**

If the behavior is of a serious nature, the person involved will also be reported to the appropriate authorities.

## **No-Show and Cancellation Policies**

1. Please arrive on time or a few minutes early for your scheduled lesson. If you arrive more than 15 minutes late your lesson will be considered a client “no call, no show”. You will be billed for that lesson.
2. Our instructors and volunteers set aside time in their busy days in order to teach and help. By letting us know that you will be absent, we can let our instructors and volunteers know so that they can plan their days. If you will be absent, please call our Program Director, Sheri Holmes at 832-221-9066 as soon as possible. If you get voice mail, PLEASE leave a message.
3. There will be NO REFUNDS for lessons missed or cancelled by the client without prior notice. If we receive prior notice, lessons may be made up during the same calendar month. No-call, no-shows will not be rescheduled.
4. Please notify SFTR as soon as possible in the event of illnesses or other unforeseen emergencies.
5. If you will be out of town during the month, please contact the Program Director. You will not be expected to pay for those missed lessons. However, if you fail to inform us at least 48 hours in advance, you will be charged.
6. Excessive absences (3 or more) or no-shows (more than 1) may disqualify the client from being scheduled for the next month and the client may be placed on a waiting list for the next month.
7. Clients who are receiving scholarships or sponsorships and have more than 1 no-show will be subject to forfeiting the scholarship or sponsorship and becoming ineligible for future scholarships or sponsorships. (when scholarships become available. They are not at this time)
8. If SFTR must cancel a lesson due to weather or other circumstances, we will make every attempt to schedule a make-up lesson within the month. If our schedule does not allow for a make-up lesson, you will not be charged for the cancelled lesson.

### **PLEASE don't be a “No-show, No-call”.**

These cause:

- unnecessary tacking and untacking of horses
- inefficient use of instructor and volunteer time
- open time slots that could have been used by other clients

## **Billing and Payment Policy**

The Right Step has taken great care in setting client fees for our lessons. Our fees must cover our costs for the horses, facility, instructors, insurance, etc. The information below sets forth the billing and payment policies of The Right Step.

**New Rider Evaluation Fee:** There is a non-refundable fee of **\$50** required at the time of your new rider evaluation.

### **Therapeutic Riding Lesson Fee:**

Group or private lesson: Start at \$40 per 30 minute lesson and \$50 per 45 minute lesson.

### **Billing and Payment:**

Lesson fees are billed at time of services rendered or a client can choose to pay for 4 rides in advance at a 10% discount. Receipts will be emailed the first week of the month.

Credit card payments may be made at a cost of \$45 for a thirty minute lesson and \$55 for a 45 minute lesson.

Checks should be made out to Sherlock Farms and put in the box at the barn.

Do not give payments to instructors or volunteers.

There is a link to pay for your lessons on the website at [www.sherlockfarms.net](http://www.sherlockfarms.net) for your convenience.

### **Financial Assistance:**

We fundraise in order to provide scholarships for clients who would otherwise be unable to afford lessons. A limited number of scholarships are available that cover half the cost of lesson fees. An application must be completed and approved prior to the first scheduled riding lesson. Clients will be billed in full for all lessons taken prior to scholarship approval. Donors may also choose to sponsor specific riders. This is at the donor's discretion.

### **Returned Checks**

Your account will be assessed a \$25 return check fee for each check that is returned to us. This fee must be paid before lessons may be continued.

## **Sibling Participation in the Program**

SFTR offers lessons to siblings of clients through Sherlock Farms able bodied program . Some siblings will be able to ride with the client in a group lesson if not contraindicated. This option will be evaluated before a sibling/client lesson is planned.

**Thank you for choosing to ride at SFTR!**

The instructors and volunteers at Sherlock Farms Therapeutic Riding want to make your time spent with us enjoyable, fun, and rewarding. Please give us your feedback, positive and negative. Let us know how we are doing and what we can do to improve your experience with us. Thank you!

**Please sign and return this form with your other client forms.** Thank you!

By signing below, I agree that I have read and understand the policies and procedures of SFTR.

Client name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Please Print*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Client, Parent or Legal Guardian*

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Comments:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Return all forms to:  
Sheri Holmes, Program Director  
SFTR  
7317 Avenue P  
Santa Fe, TX 77510**

Questions? Contact Sheri at 832-221-9066  
[sherlockfarms@gmail.com](mailto:sherlockfarms@gmail.com)