

# Participant Handbook



Mind, Energy, Spirit, Attitude



*Updated: April 2020*

Promoting self-esteem, self-confidence, social interaction  
and physical independence through equine-assisted activities.





M.E.S.A. Therapeutic Horsemanship  
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Dear Participant,

Welcome to M.E.S.A. Therapeutic Horsemanship!

M.E.S.A. Therapeutic Horsemanship, Inc. is a non-profit program aimed at providing equine-related therapy activities to individuals with disabilities within Sublette County, Wyoming and its surrounding communities. The philosophy of M.E.S.A. is to establish an atmosphere of support, cooperation and respect in an equestrian environment in order to improve self-esteem, confidence, and an appreciation for the challenges that each individual faces within the community.

Our equestrian services will strengthen the Mind, Energy, Spirit, and Attitude of each participant, their families, and our community. This will be accomplished through certified riding instructors, allied health care providers, educators, and community volunteers. We adhere to the values of teamwork, integrity, respect, empathy, and joyfulness in all that we do

M.E.S.A. strives to provide fun, educational and safe experiences to all our participants. We feel to accomplish this goal we must communicate with you as a participant or the parent of a participant, to create a clear expectation of your experience with us. Please find enclosed in this handbook an explanation of our organization's policies as well as information to help you make the most of your experiences with us.

Warm Regards,

Carla M. Sullivan  
Executive Director



# MISSION, VISION & VALUES



## PURPOSE:

The purpose of M.E.S.A. Therapeutic Horsemanship, Inc. is to provide equine-related therapy activities to individuals with disabilities within Sublette County, Wyoming and its surrounding communities.

## MISSION:

The mission of M.E.S.A. is to promote physical independence, self-esteem, confidence, and social interaction through equine-related activities and therapies.

## VISION:

The philosophy of M.E.S.A. is to establish an atmosphere of support, cooperation and respect in an equestrian environment in order to improve self-esteem, confidence, and an appreciation for the challenges that each individual faces within the community. Our equestrian services will strengthen the Mind, Energy, Spirit, and Attitude of each participant, their families, and our community. This will be accomplished through certified riding instructors, allied health care providers, educators, and community volunteers.

## VALUES:

We adhere to the values of teamwork, integrity, respect, empathy, and joyfulness in all that we do.

# Policies and Procedures

## REGISTRATION POLICY

- All paperwork must be received/updated before lessons will be provided. Information remains current for one calendar year. It is the participant's responsibility to ensure that information changes are relayed to the M.E.S.A. office.
- Paperwork must be updated annually.

The Registration Packet contains the following:

- Liability Waiver
- Participant Information Sheet
- Participant's Medical History
- Physician's Release
- Authorization for Emergency Medical Treatment
- Media Consent and Dismissal policy

## PROGRAM AGE & WEIGHT LIMITS

These age and weight limits have been set to ensure properly fitted equipment and to keep you and our resources safe.

### Therapeutic Riding

Riding Age: 3-21 years, existing participants may continue to ride past 21 years of age.

Rider's Weight Limit: 185 lbs.

## SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Graduating High School participants may submit an application to continue their education beyond high school. Contact the MESA office for more information. Application deadline is April 1st each year.

## RESTROOMS

Restrooms are available at the entrance of the Pinedale Rodeo Grounds. There is a restroom in the tack room of Sullivan's Arena. Restrooms in the Big Piney Ag Center are located on the north-western corner of the building.

A wash station is available near the MESA horse trailer at the Pinedale Rodeo Grounds.

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Problems should be handled immediately, confidentially, and directly between the parties involved and M.E.S.A. staff. Parents and participants who feel that their concerns are not being addressed may contact the Board Chairman, Marilyn Jensen at 37-537-5456.

## PETS

Pets are NOT permitted on the M.E.S.A.'s center lesson area. Service animals are permitted but must be on a leash.

## FIRST AID KIT

There is a first aid kit inside the M.E.S.A. Trailer attached to the all directly across from the doorway . In order for any M.E.S.A. employee to administer first aid, a medical consent form must first be signed.

## TRANSPORTATION

Participants who are not independent,(i.e. unable to dress, eat, use the bathroom independently, or self monitor their behavior) will need to bring an aid with them during their transport and lesson who will act as the individual's aid. All youth are required to have a parent or guardian present throughout each lesson.

## SICKNESS POLICY

Because of the potential for illnesses to spread, we would like to advise you of the following:

For the protection of staff and participants, if you or your child have or are exhibiting any of the following symptoms in the last 24 hours, we ask that you please refrain from participating in our programs or activities:

- Fever
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Nausea
- Diarrhea
- Earache
- Congestion
- Cough
- Runny nose

Many of our participants have compromised immune systems, and exposure to viral and/or bacterial infection could have serious consequences. If M.E.S.A. determines that a participant is too sick to participate, parents or emergency contacts of that person are responsible for picking them up within a reasonable period of time, after notification of the sickness.

Before returning to lessons or activities:

- The participant must be free of fever, vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours without suppressants.
- The participant must remain at home until 24 hours have elapsed since the first dose of prescribed antibiotics.
- The participant must stay home until the results of a throat culture are known.

### COVID POLICY

Please refer to the supplemental MESA COVID-19 Policy for new policies and procedures during the pandemic. A brief outline of the policy includes:

- Washing hands and/or using sanitizer upon arrival to the lesson site as well as immediately before the lessons.
- Remaining in your car until it is time for your lesson.
- Participants will have their own helmet and assigned reins.
- Participants and their family members will adhere to the local Health Official's guidelines regarding travel and self-quarantine.
- A risk/benefit assessment will be discussed prior to admission into the lesson program.
- Only parent/guardian or adult is to accompany the participant minimizing the number of people at the lesson site. Observers are asked to stay in their own car, if possible.
- Parents may bring their own chair to have in the observation area if outside.
- Participants will wear masks while unmounted and near others.
- Participants will follow grooming, tacking & untacking procedures to ensure the cleanliness of the equipment.

### EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN

M.E.S.A. has in place an emergency response with local authorities. Please reference the Emergency Response Plan that is posted at the M.E.S.A. horse trailer.

### LATE POLICY

Please call the program directly if you will be late!!

Private Lessons – If you are more than 15 minutes late and we have not heard from you, your lesson will be canceled without refund or make-up. If you will be more than 15 minutes late and contact the program directly, we will provide a lesson for the time remaining. Please note that due to a shortened lesson time, the lesson may be modified. Example: Student may not get on the horse but could receive an unmounted lesson in stable management.

Group Lessons – Group lessons will start on time. If you will be late and we have not heard from you, your lesson will be canceled without refund or make-up. If you can arrive within 15 minutes of start time and contact the program directly, you may join the group if possible. Please note that it may not always be possible to join the group. Example: If there is no one available to supervise the student while tacking up the horse.

If you no show/no call for three consecutive lessons, the remainder of your lessons will be cancelled and you will no longer be eligible for scholarship funding.

### MAKE-UP LESSONS

Make-up lessons for individual lessons may be available for \$20.

No shows are not eligible for make-ups.

There are no make up lessons for group lessons.

\* Exceptions to this policy include medical emergencies and highway closures. Questionable weather does not warrant a credit or refund for a canceled lesson.

### M.E.S.A. CANCELLATION POLICY

M.E.S.A. may cancel lessons due to weather, highway closures, or other unforeseen circumstances. In the rare event that we cancel a lesson, the policy is as follows: Session Lessons – M.E.S.A. will provide a make-up lesson if possible. If the student is unable to attend the offered make-up lesson(s), no credit or refund will be issued.

### PROGRAM POLICIES & BARN RULES

- Make-up lessons are not offered for group lessons.
- We cannot accommodate any riders over 185 lbs. Participants over this weight limit are invited to participate in unmounted activities such as groundwork lessons.
- Riders with a disability or emotional/behavioral challenges must be between the ages of 3 and 21 to participate. They may continue to participate after the age of 21 if they were in the program before they turned 21.
- Helmets must be worn by all students at all times when working with or around the horses.
- All people while on horseback must wear ASTM-SEI approved helmets.
- Appropriate riding attire must be worn when working with the horses: long pants (no holes), boots or hard soled shoes, sleeved shirts and proper headgear. Modest, functional clothing please.
- Respect instructors (both riding and equine) and cooperate with directions.
- All children should be supervised by an adult when on the premises.
- Only authorized personnel are allowed in the stalls, teaching arena, pastures, or on the mounting ramp.
- No running in the area.
- No loud noises around the horses.
- No glass in the area.
- Smoking is allowed ONLY in the parking lot area.
- No unleashed pets on the grounds. Only service animals are permitted near the M.E.S.A. lesson areas.
- Please do not bring young children or siblings unless they are participating in the program.

### LESSON DETAILS

Group lessons are 45 minutes in length and are offered in five to six week sessions. Group size is limited to four. Private lessons are 30-45 minutes in length and are also offered in six week sessions. In both group and private lessons, participants are taught basic grooming and horsemanship skills.

Please carefully read the following policies and the attached skill level progression sheet. We feel that it is important for you to understand the policies that allow us to provide quality lessons to all our riders. The skill level progression sheet is a tool we have developed to provide an outline of what a student will learn throughout their experience at M.E.S.A. The skills progression also allows us to manage the risk involved with horseback riding and still offer a level of challenge to our riders. In conjunction with this skills progression sheet, report cards are used as a communication tool to keep you informed of you or your rider's progression.

## Therapeutic Riding Skill Level Progression

### Level 1

- Lead the horse with assistance
- Groom horse with assistance
- Tack horse with assistance
- Identify basic parts and order of tack
- Hold reins correctly
- Walk/Halt transitions
- Maintain basic position

### Level 2

- Lengthen and shorten reins
- Perform balancing exercises at walk
- Perform basic steering (large & small circles and change of direction)
- Introduce 2 point with assistance
- Walk without stirrups
- Posting at walk with assistance
- Follow basic instructor directions
- Emergency stop position
- Introduce ring etiquette

### Level 3

- Identify parts of tack
- Developing ability to trot with assistance
- Maintain correct position while trotting with assistance
- Maintain correct 2 point while trotting with assistance
- Steer independently at walk with spotter
- Demonstrate appropriate horse spacing
- Recognize horse body language

### Level 4

- Developing the ability to post at trot in rhythm with assistance
- Position of leg is stable and correct
- Developing a separation of seat and hands (does not use reins for balance)
- Steer independently at walk
- Developing ability to trot independently
- Perform schooling figures independently at walk
- Understand one rein pull stop
- Change direction through diagonal, circle, or middle of a circle
- Perform 10m & 20m circles independently at walk
- Demonstrates ring etiquette

### Level 5

- Can independently groom and tack
- Maintains correct leg position while trotting in 2pt and posting
- Demonstrate proper ring etiquette while trotting

- Can perform school figures at walk and trot
- Developed separation of hands and seat (not balancing on reins)
- Can trot independently
- Identify correct posting diagonal
- Developed ability to post in rhythm
- Maintain correct hand & arm position at walk and trot
- Understands correct length of rein

### Level 6

- Can independently choose correct saddle, needed padding and girth
- Can increase and decrease speed at trot
- Can sit the trot
- Developing use of leg aids at walk
- Can ride with a bridle
- Can trot obstacle course
- Can independently ride on a trail

### Level 7

- Can canter on lunge line while maintaining correct position
- Can adjust own stirrups and girth unmounted
- Knowledge of how to warm up and cool down horse at walk and trot
- Can bridle their own horse
- Demonstrate leg aids at walk
- Developing leg aids at trot

### Level 8

- Perform lateral movements at walk and trot
- Canter independently
- Canter a 20m circle
- Perform sitting and 2pt at canter
- Can ride ANY horse in the program
- Know correct leads
- Can canter a course of poles
- Perform all transitions
- Canter obstacle course
- Can adjust own stirrups mounted

### Level 9

- Be able to perform a training level dressage test or similar pattern
- Able to ride horse straight with bend in corners
- Can perform all these skills on ANY appropriate horse in the program
- Able to bend on circle around inside leg
- Can get a horse supple at all three gaits
- Can canter on lunge without stirrups
- Can adjust own girth mounting.



## Dismissal of a Participant from the M.E.S.A. Program

All terms listed below are for the benefit and safety for all the participants, staff, volunteers, and horses in the program. Dismissal of a participant from the M.E.S.A. program may occur due to any of the following reasons:

- The inability of the program to sufficiently meet the participant's needs physically or mentally including, but not limited to: not having sufficient volunteers, scheduling conflicts, or not having appropriate horses.
- The presence of contraindications for the chosen activity
- If a participant becomes a danger to themselves, our staff, or our horses
- If a participant displays uncontrolled negative behavior that has potential to be unsafe
- The participant displays the inability or unwillingness to follow directions related to safety

## Precautions and Contraindications for Equine Assisted Activities and Therapies

This is only a brief list to provide some examples, please contact the M.E.S.A. for more detailed information.

Precautions: The presence of a precaution requires additional investigation, such as contacting the physician, therapist, or mental health professional before accepting a participant into a program.

### Precautions

- Challenging behaviors
- Medical equipment
- Spinal Curvature, fixation/fusion
- Seizures
- Sensory limitations
- Fatigue levels
- Paralysis below T-6
- Poor balance
- Medications
- Allergies

Contraindications: The presence of a contraindication makes equine-assisted riding activities inappropriate for a person due to health or safety concerns.

### Contraindications

- Lack of physician's release for EAAT
- Weight over 185 lbs.
- Inability to communicate pain
- Persistent primitive reflexes
- Females with indwelling catheters
- Insufficient spinal mobility to accommodate the movement of the equine
- Adults who are unable to sit unassisted on a flat surface with a back rest
- Children under 3 years old
- Atlantoaxial Instability
- Poor head control
- Low skin integrity on weight bearing surfaces
- Complete spinal cord injury above T-6



*M.E.S.A. Therapeutic Horsemanship, Inc.*

## *Participant Handbook*

*Mind, Energy, Spirit, Attitude*

All terms listed in the Participant Handbook are for the benefit and safety for all the participants, staff, volunteers, and horses in the program. I have read the manual and understand the policies and procedures of the M.E.S.A. Therapeutic Horsemanship program.

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

