

PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK



PROMISE LANDING FARM

Promise Landing Farm is a creative engine for inclusivity, engaging community members with and without disabilities in meaningful interactions with each other and their equine partners to foster a community where everyone is valued and included.

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WELCOME TO PROMISE LANDING FARM!

Our Vision is to create a community where people of all abilities share the healthy benefits of camaraderie and horsemanship while learning more about the positive energy of people with disabilities.

Promise Landing Farm, Inc. provides inclusive equine-assisted services (EAS) to adults and children with and without physical, developmental, emotional, and learning disabilities, as well as veterans and underserved members of the community. We are a PATH International Premier Accredited Center and a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

About PATH International

PATH Intl. was founded in 1969 as the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA) to promote safe and effective therapeutic horseback riding throughout the United States and Canada. Today, PATH Intl. has 873 member centers and nearly 8,000 individual members in countries all over the world, who help and support almost 69,000 men, women and children--including more than 6,700 veterans--with special needs each year through a variety of equine-assisted activities and therapies programs. PATH Intl.'s mission is to lead the advancement of professional equine-assisted activities and therapies by supporting their members and stakeholders through rigorously developed standards, credentialing and education.

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BENEFITS OF OUR PROGRAMS

Equine assisted services help people achieve an enhanced and improved quality of life. Based on input from the individual, as well as doctors, therapists, teachers, and family members as appropriate, the participant's individual goals are designed to complement any ongoing therapy or education. The benefits of equine assisted services are threefold:

1. *Physical* - The three-dimensional motion of the horse provides the rider hip, back and core action that simulates natural walking. Riding relaxes and strengthens muscles and improves body tone, posture, balance, joint mobility, and coordination. Horsemanship skills learned on the ground and in the barn also help to build strength and endurance.
2. *Emotional* - Contact with horses and horsemanship training provides a non-competitive setting for learning. New abilities, self-discipline, and improved concentration build self-confidence and promote emotional well-being. Participation in our programs can also foster a foundation of trust and emotional connection between both animals and humans alike.
3. *Social* - Horseback riding nurtures a positive self-image. Riders experience independence and a sense of being part of a team. It is an opportunity to interact with other riders and their teams, building relationships that will further enhance their positive self-image.

Program Descriptions:

INCLUSIVE RIDING PROGRAM

Promise Landing Farm serves children and adults with and without a variety of mental, physical, and emotional challenges. Our inclusive riding program is dedicated to teaching horsemanship and riding skills that promote independence, intellectual engagement, and physical strength. Our lesson plans are adapted to fit each individual's unique goals and needs. Riding skills begin with the basics and follow a specific and sensible progression to create balanced and well rounded riders.

Every lesson is taught with an emphasis on communication, task analysis, specific praise, and lots of how's and why's to ensure understanding and to build upon cognitive and social-emotional skills. With these criteria in mind, weekly lesson plans are designed with a focus around one or two riding skills and include games and activities to reinforce the skill, as well as opportunities for social interaction among riders.

EQUINE-ASSISTED LEARNING (EAL)

Equine-assisted learning (EAL) sessions at PLF are individual or group unmounted horsemanship programs designed to produce confident and knowledgeable equestrians by teaching horse handling, behavior, feeding, grooming, health, and barn management. Goals are tailored to the specific needs and interests of the person or group, with a particular emphasis on inclusion and universal design.

Policies and Procedures:

APPLICATION AND EVALUATION PROCESS

1. Review the Participant Manual.
2. Complete and submit the Participant Application. (online form, or paper copy available upon request)
3. Obtain and submit a Physician Statement completed by the participant's physician.
4. Our staff will reach out to schedule a meet and greet and farm visit.
5. After meeting the potential participant and reviewing the application, our staff will determine if EAS is appropriate and if so, how we can best meet the needs and goals of the participant.
6. Our staff will then contact the participant to schedule a lesson time or add them to our waitlist, depending on availability.
7. The first lesson is a mounted evaluation to determine the comfort level and needs of the participant while riding. The first "evaluation" lesson is billed separately. After the evaluation lesson, if the participant and instructor agree to continue lessons, then the participant will be billed for the remainder of the session.

REGISTRATION AND WAITLIST

Participants who have been active in Promise Landing Farm programs in the past year are given the opportunity to register for the upcoming session before new participants. If you apply for a session and are placed on our wait list, we will contact you as soon as a space opens up. You will only be placed on the waitlist after submitting the required paperwork. Our wait list operates on a 'first come, first served' basis.

Participant Eligibility:

AGE AND WEIGHT REQUIREMENTS

Individuals must be 4 years (48 months) of age or older to participate in our adaptive riding program. There is no maximum age limit.

For participant, staff, volunteer, and horse safety, participants involved in mounted activities may not exceed 250 lbs. We offer unmounted opportunities for those who exceed the weight limit or are contraindicated from riding for other reasons.

PRECAUTIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS

An extensive list of precautions and contraindications to equine-assisted services are available on the Physician Statement portion of the rider application. PLF reserves the right to refuse, discontinue, or modify activities offered to any participant on the basis of a change in status that causes some or all equine-assisted services to become unsafe for the participant.

Riding Participation Criteria:

- ❖ Able to sit symmetrically with torso upright and legs astride the horse during dynamic movement
- ❖ Able to maintain head and neck position independently in proper alignment with dynamic movement
- ❖ No physical or behavioral contraindications
- ❖ Current signed and dated paperwork on file, including Participant Application, Physician's Statement, and Annual Update Form
- ❖ Complete an intake assessment where trained staff evaluate eligibility
- ❖ Benefit physically, emotionally, socially and/or cognitively from service provided at Promise Landing Farm, Inc.
- ❖ Able to tolerate wearing an ASTM-SEI certified riding helmet
- ❖ Able to accommodate the movement of the horse without pain
- ❖ Adequate range of motion in hip(s) to sit astride a horse
- ❖ Able to indicate or express pain or discomfort
- ❖ Behavior that is safe for self, horses, and others

Participant Eligibility or Dismissal

Eligibility for participation in PLF's programs is based upon an individual's ability to participate meaningfully and safely, provided the necessary resources are available, including an instructor, horse, volunteers, and class availability which meets the individual's needs. As a PATH Intl. Premier Accredited Center, PLF fully ascribes to the Precautions and Contraindications as recommended by the Medical Committee of PATH Intl. Therefore, our staff provides initial and ongoing evaluations for all prospective and active participants. Due to the nature of adaptive riding and other equine assisted services, there are individuals for whom PLF's programs may be deemed inappropriate during the evaluation process and who are not accepted for enrollment or are not eligible to continue in PLF's programs. This determination is made on the basis of physical, behavioral, and other limitations including PATH Intl. safety guidelines.

Individuals accepted into PLF's programs are required to follow PLF's rules and procedures and take part in periodic progress reviews. During these reviews, or as a result of unusual occurrences during a program session, the PLF staff may find that continued participation for a given individual is inappropriate or contraindicated. For this reason,

PLF reserves the right to discontinue services when it is deemed to be in the best interests of PLF and/or the individual concerned.

No participant will be dismissed without the opportunity to discuss the reasons for dismissal. The participant may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to withdraw from lessons at Promise Landing Farm. Notice of such a decision should be communicated with as much notice as possible. With the exception of immediate medical concerns, session fees are nonrefundable.

GUEST DISMISSAL

We ask that all guests abide by the Promise Landing Farm rules and procedures and conduct themselves in a safe and reasonable manner. Guests who violate Promise Landing Farm rules or display behavior that is unsafe for themselves, participants, staff, equines, or other animals may be asked to leave the premises.

General Rules:

1. Barn hours are 9AM-7PM. The barn is closed on Sundays.
2. All individuals handling or riding a horse must sign a liability release form. Guests are not allowed in paddocks or stalls.
3. **NO smoking or vaping anywhere on the property.**
4. **At PLF Headquarters:** All pets (including therapy animals and emotional support animals) must be leashed and contained at all times. Any animal that causes a disruption will not be invited back to the farm.
At the Melwood Recreation Center: Visiting pets are not allowed. Only working service animals may be on the property.
5. The speed limit on the property is 10MPH.
6. Children 13 and under must be supervised by an adult at all times.
7. Closed-toe, closed-heel footwear is required in the barn and at all times when handling horses.
8. Do not feed anything, including treats, to any of the horses at any time. If you wish to bring treats such as carrots or apples for the horses, please give them to a staff member.
9. If you move something, please put it back. If you open it, close it (doors, gates, etc.). If you turn it on (water, lights, heaters, etc), turn it off. If you use it, replace it. If something breaks or needs attention, please let management know.
10. Designated handicapped parking spots are reserved for individuals with valid handicapped parking tags only.
11. Private offices, the tool room, outbuildings, and any other designated areas are **OFF LIMITS**.
12. All participants, guests, staff, etc. must maintain an inclusive, friendly, drama free environment at all times. Any issues should be addressed directly to PLF management.

13. All participants, guests, volunteers, and staff must conduct themselves in a manner that strives for safety of both humans and animals at all times.

ANNUAL UPDATE OF PARTICIPANT PAPERWORK

In order to comply with PATH Intl. Standards and protect the safety of our participants, staff, and volunteers, PLF must update all participant information annually. The annual Participant and Physician update forms are due at the start of each new calendar year or the first session of the new year.

It is the responsibility of the participant or participant's legal guardian to ensure paperwork is current. Failure to comply will result in a temporary suspension from all PLF programming until paperwork is updated. All participant paperwork is available on our website or by request.

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

At Promise Landing Farm, confidentiality in regard to all personal information about participants, volunteers, and staff is essential. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to, personally identifiable information including surnames, telephone numbers, addresses, and medical information. In EAS sessions, staff may provide volunteers with confidential information on a need-to-know basis for safety purposes. Volunteer training includes a specific discussion about the PLF Confidentiality Policy and volunteers are required to sign a confidentiality agreement. Promise Landing Farm will not release any information regarding participants to outside sources without written approval from the participant or their legal guardian.

Program Participation:

SCHEDULING

Programs at PLF are organized by season into multi-week sessions. A current session calendar is available on the website or upon request. Participants placed into a session should expect to come for lessons at the same day and time each week for the duration of the session. Inclusive riding lessons are scheduled Tuesday through Saturday in 60 minute time blocks.

Once participants have completed the mandatory paperwork and have been evaluated and approved by PLF staff, they will be contacted by PLF staff to schedule an appropriate day and time for the duration of the session. The final schedule will be sent out via email no later than one week prior to the start of the session.

FEES AND BILLING

Inclusive riding lessons are priced at \$70/hr for a private lesson and \$55/hr for a semi-private lesson and are billed by session. Invoices will be sent out once we receive your paperwork and you are scheduled for the session. The invoice will have a link to pay online via credit card or ACH payment, or you may pay with cash or check on the first day. Participant fees must be paid in full prior to the first lesson unless alternate arrangements are made with the Executive Director.

Financial Assistance:

We offer financial assistance for those who qualify. If you need financial assistance, please contact our Executive Director, Rachel Neff, rachel@promiselandingfarm.com directly, and she will work with you from there.

SCHOLARSHIPS AND OUTSIDE FUNDING

LISS Grants:

Current participants applying for LISS funding should make a request for documentation to the Executive Director at least one week (7 days) before the materials are due.

New participants should submit a completed Rider Application (including a signed Physician Statement) and receive an evaluation prior to requesting LISS funding for services at Promise Landing Farm. Receiving LISS funding does not affect wait list position or eligibility determinations.

Other Outside Funding:

We can work with a variety of third-party payers to fund services, including Self-Direction and Wounded Warrior Project. If this applies to you, please contact us directly for more information.

ATTIRE

All riders must wear properly fitting, ASTM-SEI approved helmets while mounted. For biosecurity purposes, all riders are strongly encouraged to provide their own helmets. Loaner helmets may be available – please inquire during registration.

All participants must wear closed-toed, closed-heel shoes. Hard-soled shoes or boots with a heel are ideal for riding but sneakers are acceptable. All PLF saddles are equipped with safety stirrups. Riders should wear long comfortable pants: jeans, leggings, sweatpants, or riding breeches are all acceptable options. Pants should not be so tight that they restrict the rider's movement. Jewelry and similar accessories should be kept to a minimum.

Participants should check the weather before their lesson and dress appropriately. Layers are recommended as temperatures on the farm often fluctuate. In warmer weather, it is recommended to wear light colored clothing and sunscreen. If a participant is not adequately dressed for the weather, the instructor may choose to adapt the lesson for the safety of the participant.

ARRIVAL AND OBSERVATION

General Arrival Procedures:

Upon arrival, participants and their family members or guests should wait for their instructor at the grooming area. Instructors will meet participants there. During the lesson, family members or guests may observe at the designated observation areas in the lounge or outside the perimeter of the arena. Any children under the age of 13 need to be supervised by a parent or guardian at all times. Photography is permitted as long as it is not interfering with the lesson or startling the horses.

For the safety of everyone on the farm, parents and visitors may not congregate in the barn or in the pathway leading from the barn to the arena during lessons and/or without staff present. Running in the barn, climbing fences, playing on the mounting ramp, and loud noises are forbidden. Do not enter the arena unless permitted by a staff member.

Cancellations, Refunds, and Make-ups:

CANCELLATION POLICY

Promise Landing Farm is able to operate year-round thanks to our indoor arena and stable facilities. However, there are circumstances in which we may have to close due to weather conditions or other factors. Below is a detailed outline of our cancellation policy:

1. Cancellations by Promise Landing Farm
 - a. In the event that Promise Landing must cancel due to weather or other emergencies, the participant will receive a make-up lesson during make-up week. Should the participant already have a make-up lesson scheduled due to an excused absence, the participant will receive a credit towards a future session in the amount of the lesson.
2. Cancellations by Participants
 - a. All Participant Cancellations: Sessions are scheduled and billed as blocks and are not prorated. Refunds will not be issued for participant cancellations. Missing three or more lessons may result in dismissal from the program.
 - b. Scheduled Absences: As soon as you become aware that you/your family member will miss a specific date due to an unavoidable conflict (medical appointment, vacation, etc.), please contact the Program Director so that we can plan accordingly. Absences scheduled in advance are eligible for make-up.
 - c. Unscheduled Absences: If you need to cancel a lesson due to illness, injury, or other emergency, please notify us as soon as possible. Absences called in at least 12 hours before the lesson time are eligible for make-up.
 - d. **COVID-19 Cancellations: Any participant who is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or lives with someone who is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 must immediately cancel their lesson and follow the directions of their medical professional. There is no penalty for canceling lessons due to**

symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, isolation following diagnosis of COVID-19, or quarantine following exposure to someone diagnosed with COVID-19. These missed lessons will be eligible for make-up or future credit.

3. Make-up Lessons
 - a. **Participants are eligible for one make-up lesson per session.** There is a “Make-Up Week” immediately following the last week of the session built into the schedule. If a make-up is needed, it will be scheduled during the participant’s usual time slot during the make-up week. If you have an excused absence and are unavailable for your usual time slot during make-up week, please notify the Program Director as soon as possible so that alternate arrangements can be made.
4. Late Arrivals
 - a. Participants who arrive up to 20 minutes late may still have a lesson, but their lesson will end at the regularly scheduled time. Participants who arrive over 20 minutes after their scheduled lesson time will have their lesson canceled.

Weather & Safety

INCLEMENT WEATHER CONDITIONS

Promise Landing Farm generally follows local school districts for weather-related closures. (Prince George’s County Public Schools for PLF Headquarters, Charles County Public Schools for PLF @ MRC). PLF programs also may be canceled in cases where current or approaching weather conditions may impact the safety of our participants, volunteers, or horses. If classes are canceled, text and phone notification will occur as early as possible to all affected persons.

Promise Landing may substitute unmounted horsemanship instruction for part or all of a scheduled riding lesson in cases of adverse weather, such as extreme temperatures or active thunderstorms, where riding may become hazardous. We try to maximize riding time when the weather is good and save the equally important ground lessons for when the weather does not cooperate. We know that some of our participants thrive on keeping to a set of structured activities and coming to Promise Landing but not riding may be difficult for them. If you are concerned about this possibility, please talk with your instructor to make a plan.

SAFETY PROCEDURES – PLF HEADQUARTERS

In the event that a shelter-in-place is required, all persons on the farm will be instructed to shelter in one of three interior rooms in the barn: the feed room, boarder tack room, or bathroom closest to the indoor arena.

In the event of a building evacuation, such as a fire or earthquake, all persons on the farm will meet at the red fencepost at Paddock 4.

SAFETY PROCEDURES – PLF AT THE MELWOOD RECREATION CENTER

In the event that a shelter-in-place is required, all persons on the farm will be instructed to shelter in the Creative Arts building.

In the event of a building evacuation, such as a fire or earthquake, all persons on the farm will meet in the parking lot.

GENERAL SAFETY INFORMATION

All PLF instructors are CPR/First Aid certified and trained to implement and follow specific procedures in the event of an emergency or imminent danger. In any emergency situation, we ask that you not leave the premises until you have been accounted for.

If you have any questions regarding Promise Landing policies and procedures, contact Program Director Emily Hanna at emily@promiselandingfarm.com or MRC Site Director Caitlin Martin at caitlin@promiselandingfarm.org.

THANK YOU!