



“Where horses are living mirrors empowering positive change”

# **VOLUNTEER MANUAL**



# Welcome to Stable-Spirit

We are thrilled you want to be a volunteer at Stable-Spirit. Our volunteers are the backbone of our program. Stable-Spirit needs volunteers to assist in caring for the horses, maintaining the facility, assisting with fundraisers, and helping with Hippotherapy. It can take up to three volunteers to assist a client on a horse for Hippotherapy. These sessions are always conducted on Wednesdays.

There are many volunteer opportunities at Stable-Spirit, and we are confident you will find something you enjoy. Whether you become a side walker, horse handler, groom horses, or just muck, or clean, every hour you donate to Stable-Spirit helps our clients move closer to improved health and greater independence.

You will find everything you need to know to volunteer in this manual. You can also go to our website [www.stable-spirit.org](http://www.stable-spirit.org) for more information.

We thank you, and honor you, for your willingness to give of your time and your heart to our clients and horses.

Due to the nature of our work with horses and people circumstances will arise that require changes to the guidelines outlined in this manual per the Executive Director.

Katie Durio,  
Executive Director  
Stable-Spirit



## **OUR VISION**

Stable-Spirit provides services to as many who are in need as possible with the resources available. Stable-Spirit serves clients through several modalities: Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP), Equine Experiential Development (EED), Equine Comfort Care (ECC), Hippotherapy, and SpiritHorse Therapeutic Riding. Our goal is to one day provide these services free of charge to anyone in need. This goal will be achieved with excellent teamwork, good planning, well-trained volunteers, willing horses, inspired associates, conscientious instructors, and a steady resolve to accomplish the overall mission.

## **OUR MISSION**

Stable-Spirit's mission is to provide the community with opportunities that provide positive mental, physical, and emotional health through professionally guided interaction with horses. Stable-Spirit strives to improve the quality of life for persons with mental health needs and disabilities through the use of horses. Our goal is to improve the overall wellness of the individual, increase their confidence, and promote independence while providing EAP, EED, ECC, Hippotherapy, and Therapeutic Riding as appropriate. Our organization is a non-profit organization created to provide these services to individual clients in Southeast Texas as well as related educational and therapeutic programs. This is done through a well-staffed and financially stable organization working with local medical, educational, public, and social agencies and professionals.



## **FIVE FORMS OF SERVICES**

### **EQUINE ASSISTED PSYCHOTHERAPY (EAP)**

In EAP, an Equine Specialist and Licensed Mental Health Therapist, involve horses in experiential activities on the ground in a non-threatening way. This technique is highly effective because the horses have a keen awareness of body language and will mirror the feelings and intentions of others in their environment. They provide a neutral medium for transference, capture and hold attention, rapidly break down defense barriers, provide immediate, honest non-judgmental feedback and magnificently reflect the inherent beauty of life itself.

### **EQUINE EXPERIENTIAL DEVELOPMENT (EED)**

In EED, an Equine Specialist and Success Coach involve horses in experiential activities on the ground with a focus toward relating interactions with the horses to interactions in the organization or in life. It is amazing how the horses' response to participants reveals strengths and weaknesses thus offering a powerful experiential opportunity to determine what is needed to effect positive change. EED can enhance management, leadership and communication skills; team and confidence building; as well as goal setting.

### **EQUINE COMFORT CARE (ECC)**

In ECC, participants have the opportunity to experience the healing aspects of being around a horse. Benefits include, but are not limited to, building trust and confidence, finding inner peace, and improving self-esteem.

### **HIPPOTherapy**

The benefits of hippotherapy were recognized as early as 460 BC. Specially trained physical, occupational and speech therapists use this medical treatment for clients who suffer from a variety of physical dysfunctions including cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, developmental delay, brain injury, stroke, autism, and learning and language disabilities. Specific riding skills are not taught, but a foundation is developed to improve neurological function and sensory processing. The foundation can then be extended to a wide range of daily activities. Horseback riding gently and rhythmically moves the rider's body like a human gait that can improve balance, posture, functionality, mobility, and muscle strength.

### **THERAPEUTIC RIDING**

Under the direction of instructors certified through SpiritHorse Therapeutic Riding Center, therapeutic riding provides equine-assisted healthcare, which is one on one lessons, with the use of specific methods developed for each disability, and to assist riders in reaching their full potential through interaction with horses.



## **BENEFITS OF HORSES**

- Build self-esteem, independence, and confidence
- Channel aggressive behavior or hyperactive behavior into constructive activity
- Increase self-awareness and self-regulation
- Capture and hold attention
- Rapidly break down defense barriers
- Provide immediate, honest, non-judgmental feedback
- Increase muscle tone
- Improve gross and fine motor skills
- Experience the three-dimensional movement of the horse which provides hip and back action that simulates a person's natural walking gait and cannot be duplicated in a clinical setting
- Enhance balance and posture
- Stimulate the cardiovascular system
- Improve compliance and ability to follow directions
- Magnificently reflect the inherent beauty of life itself
- Develop a meaningful and positive relationship with the volunteers and a strong bond with the horses

In Hippotherapy, every student has his or her own individualized set of goals and objectives established by the Kids Therapy. The Therapist develops goals for each student and each session. Goal plans are executed and then evaluated after the session to monitor the student's progress.



## WORKING WITH INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Each of us at one time in our lives will have a disability – whether from an illness, injury, or old age. A disability is nothing more than a body part – be it arm, leg, organ, or brain – that does not work properly or at all. Individuals with disabilities do not want to be treated any differently than you or I. Respect, friendship, and acceptance – these are the qualities that our participants seek from us and from the world in general.

When working with individuals with disabilities, simply follow the Golden Rule: Treat others as you would want to be treated if you were in their situation:

- *Be friendly and accepting.* Our participants are people just like you and me.
- *Respect our participants.* Many of them have faced hardships that you and I cannot imagine. Their courage and strength are to be admired, not pitied.
- *Speak directly to the participant.* No one likes to be referred to in the third person. Your attention should be focused on the rider, not on the people around them. If the participant has difficulty communicating, their caregiver or instructor will help facilitate communication.
- *Offer assistance when asked or needed, but don't overwhelm them with help.* Independence is always our goal for our participants.
- *Choose words with dignity.* Avoid phrases such as crippled, deaf, dumb, stricken with... Describe and think of our participants in terms of their personality or interests, rather than their disability.
- *Be patient.* Give our participant's time to process their surroundings. Speak slowly and clearly when needed. Learn to listen with your eyes and instincts as well as your ears.

Being around an individual with a disability or unique need may be a new experience to you. You may be overwhelmed at first with things you have never seen before or do not understand. This is a natural reaction. Allow yourself to get to know the participants. They do not look upon themselves with pity or sadness, and they don't want you to either. Stable-Spirit is a place of strength, joy and hope. Working with individuals with disabilities can be one of the most rewarding experiences of your life. Allow yourself the opportunity to share in our participants' joy and accomplishments.



## WORKING WITH HORSES

Horses can be unpredictable animals.

Horses are “flight” animals that can become startled by sudden movements or noises.

Horses are “herd” animals and often feel the need to return to their group when frightened.

Horses have sharp peripheral vision but cannot see directly in front or behind their bodies. Always acknowledge your presence when approaching a horse by speaking calmly. Never run up or jump in front of a horse as this could cause them to spook. Always approach the horse at the shoulder so he can clearly see you.

## HANDLING HORSES

- *Talking to a horse.* Always speak to a horse in a calm, soothing and/or assertive voice. Never yell or raise your voice to a horse.
- *Approaching a horse.* Speak to the horse before approaching to avoid startling him. Approach a horse from the side, never from the rear, so the horse can see you approaching. Never run up to or after a horse.
- *Walking behind a horse.* There are two techniques to pass behind a horse: 1. Walk a least six feet away and around; 2. If you are not able to allow six feet, then keep a hand on the horse’s rump and talk to him as you slowly and steadily walk behind as close to the horse as possible. This eliminates the risk of the horse being able to kick you.
- *Petting a horse.* Pet a horse by placing a hand on his shoulder or neck, not on the nose or face. The horse’s nose is a sensitive spot, and some horses may be head shy.
- *Watch your feet!* While a horse is very sure-footed by nature, it may accidentally step on a human’s foot when balancing itself or turning around. Always be aware of where your feet are when working closely beside a horse. If a horse steps on your foot, do not try to pull your foot out from under the horse’s foot. Rather, reposition the horse so that he removes his foot from yours.



# **VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT**

## **RESPECT ALL PERSONS:**

Abusive, suggestive, or inappropriate actions or language will not be permitted.

## **RESPECT ALL ANIMALS:**

Refrain from loud, abrupt noises, actions and behaviors that may startle the horses. Abusive actions or language toward the horses will not be permitted.

## **RESPECT ALL PROPERTY:**

Inappropriate use of Stable-Spirit facilities, equipment or land will not be permitted.

# **NAMETAG COLORS**

- **Red** – Stable-Spirit Associates
- **Yellow** – Kids Therapy
- **White** – Volunteer
- **Purple** – Level One Volunteer
- **Blue** – Level Two Volunteer
- **Green** – Level Three Volunteer
- **Orange** – Level Four Volunteer





## **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

### **HORSE CARE:**

- Groom horses.
- Pick horses' hooves.
- Pick up manure from the stalls, arenas, paddocks, and pastures.

### **FACILITY MAINTENANCE:**

- Clean tack.
- Sweep and clean tack and feed areas.
- Repair sheds, equipment, or fencing.
- Clean feed buckets on fences.
- Pick up manure from the stalls, arenas, paddocks, and pastures.
- Trim limbs and/or branches in pasture and around fences.
- Clean restrooms

### **HORSE HANDLER (for Hippotherapy):**

Maintain a constant awareness of, and/or control over, the horse while at the same time paying attention to the actions of the rider and the direction of the therapist. Because the horse handler's responsibility is the horse, the horse handler will have little interaction with the participant. In a hippotherapy session, the horse handler will remain in control of the horse throughout the session. The horse handler remains in constant awareness of the horse's movement and behavior and is prepared to step in to take control of the horse at all times.

### **SIDE WALKER (for Hippotherapy):**

Maintain constant safety awareness, while providing physical and motivational support to the rider. In a hippotherapy session, the side walker assists the therapist in the physical manipulation and support of the participant. These sessions tend to be very "hands on."

### **SPECIAL EVENTS:**

Assist in the planning and execution of special events and various fundraisers.

### **SKILL BASED VOLUNTEERING:**

This category is for those volunteers that have a specific skill set they would like to offer to Stable-Spirit. Examples could be photography, graphic design, clerical, sewing, carpentry, plumbing, electrical etc. If you see a need and can fill that need, let's talk.



## FACILITY RULES

*NOTE: Horses are considered a prey animal. Horses may instantly become unpredictable if scared or confused. They had rather take flight than fight due to their extremely strong survival instincts. Always use caution around all horses.*

1. Safety is always paramount at this facility.
2. Before volunteering at the facility ensure there is another Upper-Level Volunteer or the Director or Assistant Director on the premises.
3. Never work with a horse without supervision unless you have been through the Volunteer Orientation.
4. Stop, look, and listen. Use caution around horses. No running, screaming, or unruly behavior at the facility, please!
5. Never stand directly in front of or behind a horse.
6. Parents, you are responsible for the conduct of your children at this facility.
7. Hippotherapy Volunteers will do all Grooming and Tack Up in the designated areas. Never use a bridle for tying.
8. Never leave a tied horse alone.
9. Treat all equipment with care and return to the proper place after use.
10. Dress appropriately.
11. No animals (other than those living on the property) are allowed on the premises of the facility during sessions (except Service Animals).
12. No bikes or skateboards are allowed.
13. No alcoholic beverage or smoking allowed on the facility property.



## EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

1. On a cell phone, call 911 and give the operator your cell phone number.
2. State your name and the nature of the emergency and victim's condition.
3. Stay on the line with the 911 operator for instructions.
4. Stay calm and provide directions to the ranch if required (see below).

### Telephone Numbers:

- Orange County Sheriff: 409-769-0292
- Rose City Marshal: 409-769-6809
- Orange County Emergency Services: 409-769-6241
- Orange County Fire Department: 409-769-8294
- Veterinarian: Dr. Harvey Schneiter: Office: 409-794-1339  
After Hours Paging Service: 409-794-2712

### Address: Stable-Spirit

295 Flamingo Street  
Rose City, TX 77662

(Corner of Old Hwy 90 & Flamingo Street)

### Driving Directions:

#### From Beaumont:

Travel on IH10-E towards Orange;

Take the first exit, after the Downtown exit, which is Old Hwy 90/Rose City (Exit 856);

Turn right onto Old Hwy 90 (BEFORE Bairds Bayou);

After you go over the Railroad tracks, stay to the left for a little over ½ mile;

Turn right onto Flamingo Road (there is a sign for Stable-Spirit on the right).

The physical address is 295 Flamingo Road.

#### From Orange:

Travel on IH10-W towards Beaumont;

Take the Rose City exit (Exit 858),

Stay on the Service Road all the way down and U-turn under the Neches River Bridge;

Turn right onto Old Hwy 90 (BEFORE Bairds Bayou);

After you go over the Railroad tracks, stay to the left for a little over ½ mile;

Turn right onto Flamingo Road (there is a sign for Stable-Spirit on the right).

The physical address is 295 Flamingo Road.



## CONTACT INFORMATION

Katie Durio	409-365-5277	<a href="mailto:katie@stable-spirit.org">katie@stable-spirit.org</a>
Executive Director		

Alice Webster	409-225-3566	<a href="mailto:alice@stable-spirit.org">alice@stable-spirit.org</a>
Assistant Director		

Laura McElhinney	409-656-8716	<a href="mailto:volunteer@stable-spirit.org">volunteer@stable-spirit.org</a>
Volunteer Coordinator		

**Get to Know our Board, Associates, and Horses by visiting our website at:**  
**<https://stable-spirit.org/>**



## RULES AND REGULATIONS

While providing our Participants, Volunteers, and Families with services, safety is a top priority. These Rules and Regulations, as well as our Facility Rules, are stated to help ensure safety, and we ask your assistance in making sure that everyone follows them. Please initial the line by each rule and sign and date at the bottom of this page.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. All Volunteers must complete the entire registration at [timecounts.org/stable-spirit](http://timecounts.org/stable-spirit). Volunteers will be required to sign a variety of forms, including but not limited to a photo release, liability release, HIPAA Confidentiality statement, and this Rules and Regulations form.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Volunteers who do Hippotherapy Sidewalking must be at least Sixteen (16) years of age and be physically able to walk and occasionally jog for short distances during the 30–60-minute sessions unless special permission is given by Executive Director.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Volunteers who do Hippotherapy Horse Handling must be at least Eighteen (18) years of age and be physically able to walk and occasionally jog for short distances during the 30–60-minute sessions unless special permission is given by Executive Director.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. All Volunteers must wear closed-toed shoes. Clothing should be appropriate for the season. No low-cut shirts or short shorts. Do not wear dangling jewelry.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Do NOT feed ANYTHING to the dog, cats, or horses!!!!
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Unsupervised children (under the age of 14) are not allowed at the facility at any time.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Park in the designated area along the fence in front of the Red Barn/ Office or in the area by the horse trailers. Please do not block another car. Please do not park in the back by the arenas/ sheds.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. As of September 2021, Texas enacted the following law: UNDER TEXAS LAW (CHAPTER 87, CIVIL PRACTICE AND REMEDIES CODE), A FARM ANIMAL PROFESSIONAL OR FARM OWNER OR LESSEE IS NOT LIABLE FOR AN INJURY TO OR THE DEATH OF A PARTICIPANT IN FARM ANIMAL ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING AN EMPLOYEE OR INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR, RESULTING FROM THE INHERENT RISKS OF FARM ANIMAL ACTIVITIES.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Copies of the Volunteer Manual and Volunteer Training Booklet are located on the black shelf in the Tack Room where volunteers sign in and in the Horse Grooming Stall, for all Volunteers to have access to and refer to if you have any questions.

I have read and understand what is written and agree to follow the rules and regulations set forth by Stable-Spirit. I understand and am aware of the Texas Equine Liability Act.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Volunteer, Parent, or Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name of Volunteer, Parent, or Guardian

NOTE: If volunteer is under the age of 18, a parent must sign and date for the minor.