



# VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

## WELCOME TO PROMISE RANCH

**We are happy to have you onboard!**

Volunteers are the backbone of the Therapeutic Riding program. Their continued efforts and commitment are crucial to the success of our program. They not only help with the physical need for horse leaders, but provide the students with the best learning and therapy environment - as their friends, role models, and an extension of the instructor. Most importantly, volunteers provide the safety needed to conduct a program such as this. Promise Ranch Therapeutic Riding relies on the participation of dedicated volunteers to help facilitate daily lessons in a safe and supportive environment. Each of our riders requires the assistance of one to three volunteers in order to achieve their goals. In addition to lesson/therapy session volunteers, we need people to work “behind the scenes” helping with facility maintenance, fundraising, marketing, volunteer recruitment and coordination, office management, and other vital operations. If you’d like to be part of our “behind the scenes” team, please send an inquiry to [volunteer@prtr.org](mailto:volunteer@prtr.org).

We hope your experience at Promise Ranch will bring you satisfaction, personal growth, and fulfillment. Your spirit of volunteerism is a valuable asset and a “thank you” is just not enough to express our appreciation for your time and talents. We welcome you as a member of the team! Please do not hesitate to share your opinions and questions with us in order to help our volunteer program be an enriching experience for you.

Please note, the minimum age for volunteering at Promise Ranch is 16 years old.

## HOW TO CONTACT US



6230 E Highway 86, Franktown, Colorado



[\(303\) 817-6531](tel:(303)817-6531)



[volunteer@prtr.org](mailto:volunteer@prtr.org) or [info@prtr.org](mailto:info@prtr.org)



<https://www.prtr.org/>



<https://www.facebook.com/promiseranchtherapeuticriding/>



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>About Promise Ranch</b>                                  | 3  |
| Our Mission Statement                                       | 3  |
| Our Vision Statement  | 3  |
| Our Code of Conduct   | 3  |
| Nondiscrimination Policy                                    | 4  |
| General Safety Policies                                     | 4  |
| Facility Policies   | 4  |
| <b>Volunteering Basics</b>                                  | 5  |
| Volunteering Requirements                                   | 5  |
| How to become a volunteer                                   | 5  |
| Before you get started                                      | 5  |
| When to arrive for class                                    | 5  |
| Name badges   | 6  |
| Volunteer Sign in /Out                                      | 6  |
| Attendance & cancellations                                  | 6  |
| Weather cancellation policy                                 | 6  |
| Dress code & appearance policy                              | 7  |
| Communication & Questions                                   | 7  |
| Emergency procedures  | 8  |
| Horse safety  | 9  |
| <b>About PATH International</b>                             | 10 |
| <b>What is Therapeutic Riding and who benefits from it?</b> | 10 |
| Disabilities  | 10 |
| <b>Promise Ranch Programs</b>                               | 11 |
| Equine assisted programs                                    | 11 |
| Outpatient therapy programs                                 | 12 |
| <b>How to get involved as a volunteer</b>                   | 13 |
| <b>Volunteer Positions</b>                                  | 13 |
| Horse handlers  | 13 |
| Side walkers  | 13 |
| Landscaping & Ranch Maintenance                             | 13 |
| Volunteer Recruitment & Administration                      | 13 |
| Fundraisers   | 14 |
| Special Events support                                      | 14 |
| Camp helper   | 14 |
| General chores support                                      | 14 |
| Head walker job description                                 | 15 |
| Side walker job description                                 | 15 |
| The Do's and Don'ts of side walking                         | 16 |
| The hierarchy of support for side walkers                   | 17 |
| <b>Your first day at Promise Ranch</b>                      | 18 |

## ABOUT PROMISE RANCH

Promise Ranch is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization that provides equine assisted activities and therapies (EAAT) for children and adults with disabilities and/or other therapeutic or rehabilitative needs. We offer adaptive / therapeutic riding and horsemanship lessons, hippotherapy treatment sessions, nature-based occupational, speech and mental health therapy services, and horsemanship for veterans. Promise Ranch is a center member of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship Int'l. (PATH Int'l.) and a facility member of the American Hippotherapy Association (AHA). We are located in Franktown, CO.



### OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Promise Ranch helps our clients minimize disability and maximize ability through the provision of individualized, safe, high-quality, and effective equine-assisted and nature-based therapies and activities.

### OUR VISION STATEMENT

Our vision is to serve and empower our community, including those with differing abilities, veterans, and families through healing with animals and the experiential nature of the ranch.

### OUR CODE OF CONDUCT

- Respect for the communities we work with and serve.
- Integrity in our actions.
- Responsibility for our decisions and their consequences.

#### **We are committed to:**

- Acting honestly, truthfully and with integrity in all our transactions and dealings
- Avoiding conflicts of interest
- Appropriately handling actual or apparent conflicts of interest in our relationships
- Treating our grantees fairly
- Treating every individual with dignity and respect
- Treating our employees with respect, fairness and good faith and providing conditions of employment that safeguard their rights and welfare
- Being a good corporate citizen and complying with both the spirit and the letter of the law
- Acting responsibly toward the communities in which we work and for the benefit of the communities that we serve
- Being responsible, transparent, and accountable for all our actions; and
- Improving the accountability, transparency, ethical conduct, and effectiveness of the nonprofit field

## **NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY**

Promise Ranch Therapeutic Riding (PRTR) does not, and shall not, discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in any of its activities or operations. These activities include, but are not limited to, hiring, and firing of staff, selection of volunteers and vendors, and provision of services. We are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our staff, clients, volunteers, subcontractors, and vendors.

Promise Ranch Therapeutic Riding is an equal opportunity employer. We will not discriminate and will take affirmative action measures to ensure against discrimination in employment, recruitment, advertisements for employment, compensation, termination, upgrading, promotions, and other conditions of employment against any employee or job applicant on the bases of race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

## **PROMISE RANCH GENERAL SAFETY POLICIES**

In order for everyone to get the most out of their experience at PRTR, we strive to provide the safest possible conditions before, during, and after your sessions. Please review the following important policies:

1. Minors must be supervised at all times. Please do not leave children unattended or allow running, screaming, or loud noises at the barn.
2. Family members and other guests should not approach, touch, or feed any horses without permission.
3. Upon arrival, during a session, and upon leaving, please remain quiet and respectful of sessions in progress.
4. Family members and other guests must stay clear of the mounting area during mounting and dismounting procedures, unless assisting.
5. Family members and other guests should remain outside of the riding area, unless assisting. Assistance from a caregiver should only happen with instructor permission.
6. Participants should wait for their instructor prior to approaching and beginning work with their horse.

## **PROMISE RANCH FACILITY POLICIES**

- 1) Ranch hours are:  
Monday – Saturday from 9am to 6pm; exceptions are made for late sessions, clinics, or workshops.
- 2) Please do not 'visit' the ranch without permission.
- 3) Drive slowly (10mph or less) while on Promise Ranch property.
- 4) NO SMOKING, no exceptions.
- 5) NO WEAPONS, no exceptions.
- 6) Drugs and alcohol are prohibited; being under the influence of drugs or alcohol while on PRTR property will result in dismissal.
- 7) ONLY service dogs are allowed; dogs must be identified as such, on leash and supervised at all times.
- 8) DO NOT leave horses unattended when tied; the only places you may tie your horse(s) are at the cross ties, ties, hitching posts, in the wash rack, and to your trailer.
- 9) Clean up after yourself and your horse(s).
  - a) This includes the workshop /garage, all common areas and cross ties, hitching posts, trailers, arenas, round pen, driveway, and parking area.
  - b) The arena and round pen should be cleared of all obstacles/ props, and cleaned of manure.
  - c) Trash should go in the trash or recycling containers provided in the shop.
- 10) Shut off arena lights when you exit the arena if you are the last person.
  - a) Please only use the arena lights if really necessary.
- 11) Keep all gates closed at all times.
- 12) Please turn cell phones to silent and refrain from answering it during an ongoing class.

# VOLUNTEERING BASICS

## Volunteering Requirements

- The minimum age for volunteering at Promise Ranch is 16 years old.
- Volunteers must be in good health and able to be physically active, mentally alert.
- Volunteers must have a positive attitude and be able to adapt to change and be flexible.
- Volunteers must be able to tolerate heat, cold, dust, and wind.
- Volunteers may be asked to help with barn work, getting horses ready for class, and other duties around the center.
- Volunteers must be able to work independently with minimal staff supervision.
- Volunteers must possess the ability to follow directions and take instruction.
- Promise Ranch will conduct a background check on every new volunteer.

## How to become a Volunteer

Sign up online to become a Promise Ranch volunteer:

- Go to our website [prtr.org](http://prtr.org)
- Select the chapter "volunteer"
- Sign up on VSP (Volunteer scheduler Pro) and provide your information
- Once your request has been processed you will receive an email with further information
- Before you can start supporting our operational business, you will have to attend orientation and side walker training (sign up in VSP or wait for further information from the volunteer coordinator)

## Before you get started

We require all volunteers to sign the following documents during the orientation training:

- Volunteer Release of Liability
- Photo Release form
- Privacy policy
- Cancellation policy
- Facility policy

## When to Arrive for Class

We require our volunteers to plan for a minimum of 15 minutes before and after your scheduled class begins/ends, in order to have the horses and facility ready for the class, unless told otherwise by your instructor.

Please note that the times in VSP refer to the actual start of a therapy class.

### Example:

|                      |         |
|----------------------|---------|
| Class start:         | 11:00am |
| Side walker arrival: | 10:45am |
| Head walker arrival: | 10:40am |

### **Side walker:**

Before class: please arrive at a minimum of 15 minutes prior to the start time of a class and wait in the arena for the instructor to arrive with the client. Wait for further instructions from the therapist.

After class: follow instructions from the therapist (i.e. help remove ground poles or cones used in class from the arena, remove manure, sanitize helmets used by clients, etc.).



### **Head walker:**

Before class: Please arrive no later than 20 minutes prior to the start of the class in order to get the horse in from the pasture and do a basic grooming (therapists might make the clients groom again as part of the therapy class).

After class: please untack the horse unless told differently by the instructor, clean the tack & store away, then take the horse back out.

## Name Badges

Different name badge colors are assigned depending on the role of the volunteer. Please always wear your name badge while working at the facility.

-  Horse Leader
-  Side Walker

## Volunteer Sign In/Out

Upon arrival, volunteers are required to sign in with our Volunteer Hours Log Book, put on their name badge, and check the daily schedule for their assignment. At the end of their service, name badges are returned and volunteers sign out.

Recording attendance is necessary for awarding volunteer riding incentives, writing recommendations for schools and employers, applying for grants, board reports, and most importantly to be accountable for all individuals on the property in the event of an emergency. Volunteers may track their own volunteer hours if desired. Please allow up to 5 days to fulfill requests for a record of service or written letter of recommendation.

## Attendance & Cancellations

Commitment and consistency are vital to the success of our therapy classes. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of your commitment and consistent attendance as a volunteer at Promise Ranch.

If you are unable to attend the classes you have signed up for, please inform both your Instructor and the Volunteer Coordinator (Miriam Dudley) via email at [volunteer@prtr.org](mailto:volunteer@prtr.org) as soon as you know you will be absent from class. If an emergency arises, please call or text the Instructor right away.

Please also notify the volunteer coordinator about future planned absences (i.e. vacation) as soon as possible.

If your Instructor needs to cancel class for any reason (emergency, weather, etc.), they will send out a text to all scheduled volunteers as soon as possible. Please let us know if you cannot receive text messages. Promise Ranch reserves the right to cancel lessons based on the availability of instructors, volunteers, and/or horses. Further, any factor or situation considered by Promise Ranch staff to be a threat to the safety of students, volunteers, staff, or horses is reason for cancellation.

## Weather Cancellation Policy

Lessons will be cancelled if any of the following conditions occur:

- The low temperature or wind chill for the day is 25 F degrees or lower
- The high temperature or heat index for the day is 95 F degrees or higher
- The following conditions exist one hour prior to lesson time:
  - Winds exceeding 25 MPH
  - Tornado warnings, severe rain, hail, snow, or thunderstorms
  - Hazardous driving conditions
  - Arenas are unsafe due to melting snow on the roof or poor footing

\*In the event of extended closures, lessons will be cancelled until the Equine Manager determines the suitability of the horses to return to work.

Please note: Our volunteers come from near and far, so if driving is hazardous in your area, please do not feel obligated to attend your regularly scheduled volunteer shift and let us know immediately.

When in doubt about whether or not to attend your volunteer shift you may email [volunteer@prtr.org](mailto:volunteer@prtr.org).

## Dress Code and Personal Appearance Policy

### Why does dress code matter?

We want to be professional

- Your appearance can create a positive or negative impression that reflects directly on you, our culture, and our organization as a whole

We want to be safe and protect ourselves from injury

- While volunteering at the ranch, you may encounter biting insects, ground wasps, rattle snakes, uneven terrain, horse hooves, and more

We want to be comfortable, but practical

- All clothes must be appropriate for working in a ranch/outdoor environment, with children and adults with disabilities, and with horses and other farm animals

We want to be respectful of the sensibilities of others

- All clothes must be clean, neat, and non-revealing. Discernible rips, tears or holes, and offensive or inappropriate designs/images aren't allowed



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Jeans, riding pants, or other <u>opaque</u> pants that cover the ankle</li><li>▪ Polo shirt, button-up shirt, or t-shirt</li><li>▪ Hard-soled, closed-toe, and closed-heel shoes/boots</li><li>▪ Work/riding gloves are recommended</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Low-cut/revealing tops</li><li>▪ Spaghetti-strap tank tops</li><li>▪ Short shorts (above mid-thigh)</li><li>▪ Baggy clothing</li><li>▪ Non-sturdy footwear (such as TOMS or Crocs)</li><li>▪ Steel toe boots</li><li>▪ Loose, long, dangling jewelry</li><li>▪ Perfumes, colognes etc.</li></ul> |
|---|--|

### Please remember to dress appropriately for the weather:

- Bring warm layers, hats, and gloves in winter
- Bring sunglasses, hats, and sunscreen in the summer
- This is Colorado – be prepared for any and all weather events
- Remember to bring water

## Communication and Questions

While you are volunteering...

If at any time, you are unclear regarding your volunteer role or responsibilities, please direct questions to the Volunteer Coordinator, an instructor, or staff member. During lessons, the instructor is responsible for each rider, horse, and volunteer in the lesson. All directions from the instructor should be followed, including the assignment of riders, horses and volunteers, mounts/dismounts and lesson structure. For the safety of all, it is crucial to adhere to the instructor's decisions. In the barn, the barn staff is responsible for each horse and volunteer. All directions from the barn staff should be followed including preparation of the horse for lessons, assignment of volunteers, and tasks to be completed. Always ask if you are unsure of anything or do not feel comfortable completing a task.

## Emergency procedures

In the event of an emergency, everyone needs to be familiar with the proper procedures.

All Instructors are CPR and First Aid certified.

1. Listen to the instructor for directions! This is very important to prevent further chaos. Do not take matters into your own hands. Stay focused on your job.
2. Emergency information will be provided in the arena and office. This will include a human First Aid kit, an equine First Aid kit, and a list of phone numbers, facility address, and directions to provide to the emergency dispatch. A designated person will be sent to call 911, if needed.
3. In the event a rider falls, do not panic. Stay calm and listen for instructions. Keep other students on their horses if in a group lesson. Horse leaders will lead all horses to “parking places” at the end of the arena farthest away from the rider who has fallen. Side helpers will keep riders calm and distracted. In the event that emergency vehicles need to be called, all riders will be dismounted and escorted back to their parents or caregivers.
  - a. If you are leading the horse that a rider has fallen from, make sure the rider is not entangled in the tack and the tack is not impeding the horse’s movement. Once the rider is cleared and unsafe equipment removed, immediately move the horse away from the fallen rider and away from any other riders and horses. Side walkers for this rider will stay with the student until further instructions are given.
4. In the event of severe storm or weather emergency, riders will be dismounted if riding is deemed to be unsafe. One side-helper for each student will immediately remove students from the riding area. The other side-helper will un-tack the horse quickly and quietly. Horse leaders will keep horses in-hand. DO NOT TIE horses in this case. As soon as all tack is removed and riders are safe, horses will exit the arena and be put away.

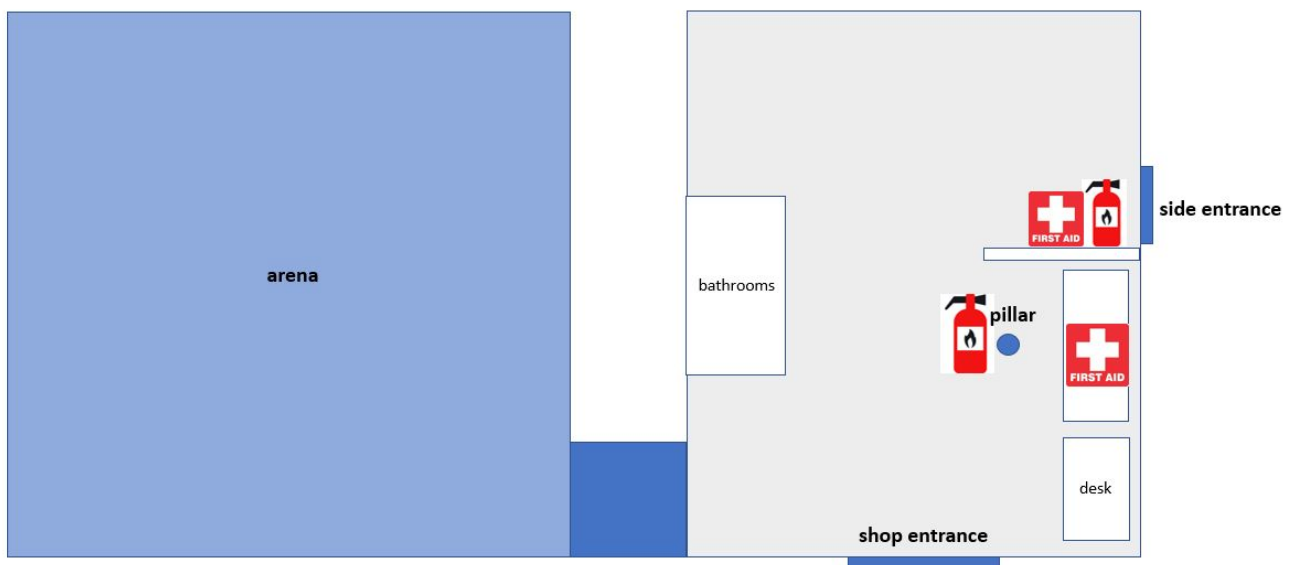


First Aid kits are in the shop to the right of the side entrance door and on the cabinets on the opposite side of the bathrooms



Fire extinguishers are in the shop to the right of the side entrance door and on the pillar (see directions below)

### Promise Ranch floor plan:







## IMPORTANT CONTACTS

In an emergency call **911**

Promise Ranch is at  
6230 E Hwy 86, Franktown, CO 80611

### **Promise Ranch Contacts:**

Lexie Gilbert - Facility & Equine Manager – cell: 602-999-9471

Jamie Mondrow - Director of Programs – cell: 720-314-4339

### **Horse Safety**

Horses are large animals – we trust them with our own safety when riding and handling them. It is important that we handle them properly to ensure our own safety, as well as the safety of our riders and the horses themselves.

Important note: Only volunteers who have attended the horse leader training are allowed to handle our horses. Detailed instructions on horse handling, leading, and tacking /grooming will be given in the dedicated volunteer training for horse leaders / head walkers.

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Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.), a federally-registered 501(c3) nonprofit, was formed in 1969 as the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association to promote Equine-Assisted Activities and Therapies (EAAT) for individuals with special needs. With nearly 4,800 certified instructors and equine specialists and 873 member centers, nearly 8,000 PATH Intl. members around the globe help almost 69,000 children and adults--including more than 6,700 veterans and active-duty military personnel--with physical, cognitive and emotional challenges, finding strength and independence through the power of the horse each year. In addition to therapeutic riding, our centers offer a number of therapeutic equine-related activities, including hippotherapy, equine-facilitated mental health, driving, interactive vaulting, competition, groundwork and stable management. More recently, programs offer services in human growth and development to serve wide-ranging audiences for such educational purposes as leadership training, team building and other human capacity enhancement skills for the workplace and for daily use.

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Therapeutic riding programs, like Promise Ranch, offer horseback riding opportunities to students who may not be able to participate in such activities at a regular riding stable. Our students have disabilities ranging from cognitive and behavioral, to physical; and often have a combination of several impairments. Horseback riding helps these students in many ways. Riders learn communication skills, cooperation, and acceptable social behaviors, as well as care and responsibility for another being. Horseback riding exercises and strengthens muscles, improves tone and stamina, increases balance, and helps relax tightness and spasticity. Horses provide a type of therapy that cannot easily be explained or reproduced by humans.

### DISABILITIES

At Promise Ranch we teach people with disabilities of all types, and although many have similarities, we need to remember that each student has their own set of unique abilities and restrictions.

#### Definitions

It is important that we do not define a student by their impairment, disability, or handicap. Understanding these terms and their meanings will help us understand our students.

**Impairment:** is a descriptive term referring to the loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical structure or function. The loss or abnormality may result from disease, genetic disorder, accident, or environment.




**Disability:** is any restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity in the manner or way considered normal function. An impairment causes a functional challenge (disability).

**Handicap:** is a disadvantage for a person that either limits or prevents the fulfillment of a role that is normal for that person. Usually a handicap is social in nature and has external causes. It affects relations with peers and society. It can be caused by lack of opportunities, environmental barriers, or social attitudes. Most handicaps can be lessened or eliminated – this is what we strive for!

**Equine assisted programs**

Promise Ranch proudly provides Equine Assisted Activities and Therapies (EAAT) for children and adults with disabilities and other therapeutic or rehabilitative needs.

Our PATH Intl certified riding instructors and occupational/speech/physical therapists offer the following programs:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Adaptive Riding</b></p> <p>Adaptive Riding (AR), formerly known as Therapeutic Riding, is a branch of Equine Assisted Activities and Therapies (EAAT) in which participants learn a “whole horse” approach to horsemanship and horseback riding skills. At Promise Ranch, AR lessons are provided under the direction of a PATH Int’l. certified therapeutic riding instructor and are tailored to meet each participant’s needs and desires. In addition to teaching the skills listed below (among many others), our instructors also include a variety of fun and educational games and activities that enhance each lesson experience.</p>   |    |
| <p><b>Hippotherapy</b></p> <p>Hippotherapy is a form of occupational, physical, and speech/language therapy in which a therapist uses the characteristic movements of a horse to provide carefully graded motor and sensory input. The movement of the horse is a means to a treatment goal when utilizing hippotherapy as a treatment strategy.</p>   |   |
| <p><b>Horsemanship for Veterans and Active Duty Service Members</b></p> <p>Our horsemanship class is open to both veterans and active duty service members of the U.S. armed forces. This class focuses on teaching horse behavior and psychology, safety around horses, as well as basic groundwork skills as a platform for further equine education, and as an exciting opportunity for experiential learning. Through meaningful individual and group interactions with our horses, participants will learn how to create safe, fair, and effective horse-human relationships, and may develop or improve important life skills such as self-awareness, self-confidence, verbal and non-verbal communication skills, and emotional regulation.</p> |  |

Our instructors and therapists work directly with our riders and their families to design goal-oriented lesson plans and plans of care. We are also happy to work with outside therapists, teachers, and counselors so that we can ensure consistency and goal-alignment for each and every rider.

Equine Assisted Activities and Therapies (EAAT) – an umbrella term that refers to any and all therapeutic equine activities. This term encompasses a variety of disciplines, including but not limited to hippotherapy, therapeutic riding, carriage driving, interactive vaulting, and equine facilitated learning.

## Outpatient Therapy Programs

These programs target individual and group treatment for pre-school, home-school, after-school, teens, transition age, adults, and families.

### OT

Occupational therapy on the ranch, with jobs that must be done regularly to maintain the land and the animals, can improve sensory processing and executive functioning skills, fine and gross motor skills, body-awareness, self-confidence and relationships with others.

### Speech

Individual and group sessions featuring nature-themed projects and activities are designed to emphasize social communication, expressive language and articulation.

### Counseling

Individual, family or group psychotherapy is aided by the experiential nature of the ranch, and equine- or other animal-assisted therapies. We specialize in interpersonal issues, addictions, trauma, grief and loss.



## HOW TO GET INVOLVED AS A VOLUNTEER

Please be aware that all volunteers must attend the respective volunteer training before starting in a specific role. Here is an overview of all volunteer positions we offer at Promise Ranch:

### VOLUNTEER POSITIONS

#### Horse handlers

Horse handlers are an integral part of every riding lesson and therapy session provided at Promise Ranch. Horse handlers are responsible for catching, grooming, warming up, and tacking the horse before the student arrives, or assisting the students with grooming and tacking in some cases. The horse handler controls and guides the horse during the lesson, ensuring the safety of the students and volunteers. The horse handler must be able to take direction from the instructor or therapist, allow the student to guide the horse when appropriate, but still maintain control of the horse at all times. Horse handlers must be safety minded at all times. Volunteers with horse experience are preferred for this position, however, horse handler training is available periodically for volunteers wishing to learn and move into this role.

Age Requirement: 16 and over

Physical Requirement: walk 60 min, jog short distances, and control horses at all times.

Time commitment: 1.5 hours per lesson

#### Side Walkers

Many of the students at Promise Ranch require the assistance of 1-2 side walkers to ensure their safety while mounted. Side walkers greet the students when they arrive until the instructor or therapist and horse are ready. Side walkers walk alongside the riders to ensure safety and help facilitate the lesson under the guidance of the instructor or therapist. Side walkers may be asked to demonstrate or help the riders with specific tasks, support or assist the rider physically, or facilitate games or activities as directed by the instructor or therapist. Side walkers may also be asked to assist with the mounting and dismounting of riders from the horse. Side walkers must be able to take direction from the instructors or therapists, work cooperatively with others, and be safety minded at all times. Side walking does not require prior knowledge or experience with horses and specific training will be provided.

Age Requirement: 16 and over

Physical Requirement: walk 60 min, jog short distances

Time commitment: 1hr 15min per lesson

#### Landscaping and Ranch Maintenance

We always welcome dedicated volunteers who are willing to help with barn chores and general ranch maintenance.

#### Volunteer Recruitment & Administration

Everyone is needed to help with volunteer recruitment. This is not a specific position in and of itself but something all volunteers (and supporters) can help with. Go and tell others about the wonderful experiences you have at Promise Ranch! For information and tools to help spread the word about Promise Ranch, please email [info@prtr.org](mailto:info@prtr.org).

We are also looking for a few people who are interested in making phone calls to current volunteers weekly to help organize and coordinate the volunteer schedule.

## Fundraisers

Like most smaller nonprofit organizations, we always have room for people interested in helping with our marketing and fundraising efforts. This may include:

- Special event planning, preparation, and facilitation
- Grant writing
- Assisting in marketing and community outreach
- Researching and implementing new fundraising activities
- Donor relationship management

## Special Events support

Volunteers serve on event committees and assist with various fundraising events held throughout the year to benefit Promise Ranch.

## Camp helper

During the summer season, Promise Ranch organizes various summer camps for children. We are looking for volunteers to help the therapists facilitate the events and activities or support in organizational matters.

## General chores support

We are always looking for volunteers who are willing to help maintain our facility.

Typical tasks are:

- Sweeping the floors
- Emptying trash cans (incl. bathrooms)
- Wiping dust off of surfaces
- Sanitizing all door handles (incl. bathroom)
- Wiping down the bathroom sinks
- Watering the plants in the front barrel planters

| Role                              | Training required  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Horse Handlers / Head walker      | Minimum 10 classes of side walking experience required!<br>Trainings 1-3 are to be completed in this order: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Ground handling and grooming</li><li>2. Basic anatomy &amp; common issues</li><li>3. Saddle fitting &amp; tacking</li><li>4. Head walker training</li></ol> |
| Side walker                       | Orientation & side walker training   |
| Landscaping and Ranch Maintenance | Orientation & side walker training   |
| Volunteer Recruitment             | Orientation & side walker training   |
| Volunteer Administration          | Orientation & side walker training   |
| Fundraisers                       | Orientation & side walker training   |
| Special Events support            | Orientation & side walker training   |
| Camp helper                       | Orientation & side walker training   |
| General chores support            | Orientation & side walker training   |

## HEAD WALKER JOB DESCRIPTION

### General Leading – Be your horse’s partner and advocate!

- The main responsibility of a horse handler is safe control of the horse. This requires the handler’s undivided attention. He/she should always be alert, and have a constant awareness of the horse, the instructor/therapist, the rider, and the surrounding environment, including other horses.
- In a therapeutic (adaptive) riding lesson, the handler assists in guiding, stopping, and starting the horse without making the rider feel like simply a passenger; in a hippotherapy session, the handler executes direction given by the therapist, who carefully chooses paces, gaits, and arena patterns.
- In a riding lesson, the instructor will address the rider most of the time, so the handler must “read between the lines”. In hippotherapy, the therapist will typically address the handler directly.

## SIDE WALKER JOB DESCRIPTION

- As a side walker, your main role is ensuring the safety of your rider in routine lessons and therapy sessions as well as in case of an emergency. The rider is your primary focus.
- During a riding class or hippotherapy session, you will be walking alongside your rider and may be asked to provide physical support, assist the rider with completing a riding skill or playing a game, and/or reinforce instruction.
- Although your primary concern is with the rider, you must be comfortable around and aware of the horse at all times.
- Throughout the lesson or therapy session, stay at your rider’s knee whether performing a physical hold or not – do not drift back to the horse’s flank (danger zone!!!).
  - Drifting back, sideways, or forward away from the rider’s knee is not effective for providing stability, other assistance, or emergency response.
- Every few strides you should glance at your rider to check his/her position and comfort. Alert the instructor or therapist to any potential issues.
- Avoid leaning on the horse while providing physical support/assistance.
- Please keep chatting to a minimum with riders and other volunteers.
- Help your rider maintain focus on the instructor or therapist. Reinforce instruction and assist when necessary – don’t take away the challenge.
- Be patient; give your rider lots of time to process instruction before repeating or assisting.
- Never leave your rider to pick up dropped toys or equipment – always stay with your rider.
- Emergencies can and do happen with horses and riders. In the event of an emergency, only take the rider off the horse if instructed to do so.
- Please do not take calls or answer text messages during class. Additionally, we ask that your phone be placed on silent mode so that ringing and other alert sounds do not distract our riders and/or horses






### The 'DO's' and 'DON'Ts' of side walking

|    |       |
|---|--|
| Arrive on time to help with lesson/therapy session preparation                      | Start lessons/therapy sessions without staff   |
| Listen to and follow instructions provided by the instructor/therapist              | Mount/ dismount riders   |
| Prompt riders to use physical and verbal cues, as instructed                        | Attempt to adjust tac  |
| Alert instructor/therapist/horse handler to potential safety hazards                | Hang onto/hold riders or tack (unless asked)   |
| Physically help riders when instructed  | Distract your rider  |
| Communicate with other volunteers, horse handlers, instructors/therapists if needed | Teach your own lessons or override instructor/therapist                                  |
| Escort/spot riders at all times   | Chat excessively with other volunteers or the rider                                      |
| Ask if you are uncertain  | Touch horse during lesson unless necessary   |
| Clean up arena after class  | Leave rider unattended   |
|   | Look at or answer texts/calls while with a rider or horse                                |
|   | Pick up equipment from ground i.e. rings, bean bags used during an ongoing therapy class |





## The Hierarchy of Support for Side walkers

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Independent</b></p>           | <p>No volunteer needed, or volunteer stands in center of arena</p>   |
| <p><b>Spot</b></p>                  | <p>Stay near the rider's leg but no holds – constantly ask yourself “am I close enough that if the rider were to fall off, I could catch them?” Your hands should be by your sides</p> <p><u>Use when:</u> the rider is progressing to independent riding; needs someone there just in case (slight balance issues, if horse makes unexpected movement, certain seizures); needs the moral support or additional focus/verbal prompts; needs a spot for mounting/dismounting</p>   |
| <p><b>Ankle Hold</b></p>           | <p>Hold behind the ankle, or with a thumb on top of the ankle to add some downward weight; hold the ankle, not the shoe (or the rider's heel/foot could come out of the shoe)</p> <p><u>Use when:</u> the rider's lower leg needs help staying in place; the rider needs only a little balance support (enough that some downward pressure on the ankle will keep them in place); the rider's feet tend to slide in the stirrups; a thigh hold would increase the rider's spasticity</p>   |
| <p><b>Thigh Hold</b></p>          | <p>Grip the front of the saddle and lay your forearm over the rider's thigh, without resting the elbow on the horse or saddle – it naturally acts as a clamp, especially if the horse suddenly goes forward quickly</p> <p>Side walker must make sure their grip is not too tight or interfering with the rider's posture, and that it's even on both sides – the volunteers' arms lie across the thigh in the same place on both sides – uneven location or pressure can cause a rider to lean</p> <p><u>Use when:</u> rider has poor balance and/or restricted use of their legs; rider feels very insecure; always use in an emergency regardless of the rider; in the mounting area; when adjusting stirrups; when you don't know the rider (always assume the most support then remove as needed)</p> <p><u>Don't use when:</u> thigh pressure increases the rider's spasticity</p> |
| <p><b>Thigh + Ankle Hold</b></p>  | <p><u>Use when:</u> all the reasons above + a thigh hold is not enough and the rider needs additional stability of the lower leg</p>   |

## *Your First Day...*

“Wow! This has been a lot of information to remember!” Once you get used to the routine at Promise Ranch, it really is quite easy. Always feel free to ask a staff member any questions you may have. This page has been provided as a quick reference to help you get started as a Promise Ranch volunteer.

### **When you arrive**

1. **REGISTER YOUR ATTENDANCE** in the Volunteer Hours Log Book (located on the table in the volunteer area).
2. **STORE YOUR BELONGINGS** in the cubbies provided. If you leave keys, jackets or other personal belongings, please remember that Promise Ranch is not responsible for loss of those items. When possible, items should be locked in your car.
3. **PUT ON YOUR NAMETAG.** If yours is missing, make a temporary one. It is very important to wear your nametag so others can identify you. Notify the Volunteer Coordinator if you need a new name badge so the appropriate color can be assigned.
4. **CHECK WHITE BOARD & CLIP BOARD FOR TODAY'S SCHEDULE.** Please remember to check for updates by reading Promise Ranch emails.
5. **TAKE NOTE OF OUR FLAG SYSTEM** (make sure to contact a member of staff on “yellow” or “red” days).

### **SIDE WALKERS:**

Please arrive at a minimum of 15 minutes prior to the start time of a class and wait in the arena for the instructor to arrive with the client. Wait for further instructions from the therapist

### **HEAD WALKERS:**

Please arrive no later than 20 minutes prior to the start of the class in order to get the horse in from the pasture and do a basic grooming (therapists might make the clients groom again as part of the therapy class).

### **Before you leave**

1. **HEAD WALKERS:** Please untack the horse unless told differently by the instructor, clean the tack & store away, then bring the horse back out.
2. **SIDE WALKERS:** Follow instructions from the therapist (i.e. help remove ground poles or cones used in class from the arena, pick manure from the arena, sanitize helmets used by clients, etc.)
3. **ALWAYS CHECK WITH INSTRUCTOR OR BARN STAFF BEFORE YOU LEAVE.** If the rider to whom you are assigned is absent, you may still be needed to help with other riders or the barn.
4. **RECORD VOLUNTEER HOURS** in the Volunteer Hours Log Book. Collect any personal belongings and return your nametag.

**THANK YOU for your volunteer service and commitment to Promise Ranch!**

