



## **Rider Handbook**

**April 2021**



## Welcome!

Cloud Dancers is a 501C3 non-profit organization that does not receive any city, state or federal funding. We are responsible for earning or raising 100% of our operating budget through donations from individuals and businesses, fund raising events and grants.

Cloud Dancers is a member center of **PATH International** (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International). As such, Cloud Dancers complies with PATH Int'l standards for safety, precautions, and contraindications. Our instructors are PATH certified. For more information on PATH visit **[PATHintl.org](http://PATHintl.org)**.

## Staff/Volunteers

- Karen Molony, Equine & Facilities Manager and Head Instructor
- Louisa Roberts, Program Coordinator
- Sandy LaBarbera, Volunteer Coordinator

For the safety of all riders, trained volunteers, under the guidance of PATH certified instructors, work as Horse Leaders and Side Walkers in all lessons. If parents are interested in becoming volunteers, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Sandy LaBarbera at [volunteer@clouddancersthpa.org](mailto:volunteer@clouddancersthpa.org). More information about our Staff and Board can be found on our web site.

## Web/Facebook/Instagram

You can find the application packet and other helpful information on our website, [www.clouddancersthpa.org](http://www.clouddancersthpa.org). Find us on Facebook for regular updates, related media, and pictures of our students and families. Fun pictures can also be seen on our Instagram site.

## What is Therapeutic Riding?

Therapeutic riding uses activities with horses for the purpose of contributing positively to the cognitive, physical, emotional and social well-being of individuals with disabilities. There are four therapeutic riding classifications—therapy, education, sport, and recreation & leisure.

Currently, Cloud Dancers practices in recreation and leisure with plans to incorporate therapy by licensed health professionals, such as Occupational and Physical therapists at a later date. Our PATH certified instructors design and implement activities with horses that address cognitive, behavioral, psychological and physical goals, as well as teach skills in riding, vaulting or ground work. Personal pride and improved self-esteem come from accomplishing new tasks and learning new skills. The pure enjoyment of the horse-human bond brings joy and pleasure along with new friendships and relationships.



Individuals with disabilities that may respond positively to therapeutic riding include people with Down Syndrome, Autism, MS, paralysis, amputations, ADD, ADHD, developmental delays, Cerebral Palsy, brain injuries, strokes, drug or alcohol abuse, depression, hearing and vision impairments and other disabilities.

## Riding Activities

Cloud Dancers adapts safe and fun riding techniques to individuals with a variety of disabilities. Certified Instructors develop goals, with input of riders and/or parents/guardians that meet needs for developing core and muscle strength, increasing physical flexibility and balance, improving fine motor skills, enhancing communication and listening skills and more. Teens and adults will experience riding in trail courses and dressage patterns. For younger rider needing to improve fine motor skills, activities on a horse could include retrieving stuffed zoo animals from corral fences and barrels and taking them back to the zoo in the center of arena. Games with colors and shapes may enhance communication and listening skills. Playing red light, green light on horseback focuses on following directions. Flexibility, balance and core strength may show improvement from the rhythmic gait of a horse being similar to the human gait. Guiding a horse requires good posture with heads up and eyes in the direction you want to go. During lessons riders also learn about horse care and anatomy, grooming and tacking.



## Eligibility

Riders must be at least five (5) years of age and under 185 lbs. Due to the nature of riding and other equine-related activities, there may be individuals for whom our program is deemed inappropriate or contraindicated according to PATH Standards. Our staff provides initial and ongoing evaluations for prospective and active riders and reserves the right to determine that continuance in the program for a given individual is inappropriate.

## Application Process

- Riders or parents or guardians must complete the online Application Packet once each year, along with obtaining current physician's statements. When registering for your first year there is a \$25 non-refundable Evaluation Fee.
- Prospective riders will receive an interview and evaluation with our Program Coordinator and an instructor to determine eligibility and best placement.
- Riders will have the opportunity to sign up for specific sessions throughout the year.
- If a rider registers for a session that has already begun, the cost will be pro-rated.
- Schedule preferences are taken into consideration, but our primary goal is to group riders of similar ability or skill level to allow for more quality instruction.



## General Safety Guidelines

- Respect ALL people and animals.
- If you are not a rider please stay in the Viewing area during lessons for your comfort and safety.
- Non-rider children must be with an adult at all times.
- Please honor the 5-mph speed limit.
- Parking for most is in front of the office.
- Parking in front of the Barn is reserved for students with limited mobility.
- Other horses are boarded within the Center. Please do not wander in areas to the south and west of the Barn and do not touch, feed or interact with these horses.
- Throw trash or recyclables in appropriate receptacles.
- Use soft voice, avoid loud noises and be gentle around the horses.
- Smoking is not permitted on Center property.
- Please do not bring dogs or other pets into the Center.
- Yelling, abusive language, or aggressive actions will not be tolerated.
- Please do not hand feed Cloud Dancers' horses any food or treats as it encourages undesirable behavior.



## Lesson Etiquette

- Participants are encouraged to arrive early for each lesson to receive the greatest benefit from their lesson time.
- If you know **more than 24 hours in advance** that you can't make your lesson, notify our Program Coordinator at [programs@clouddancersthp.org](mailto:programs@clouddancersthp.org) or at 505-926-1426. If **less than 24- hours notice** of cancellation call your instructor's cell phone. Please be respectful of instructors' and volunteers' time as they are scheduled around lesson times.

## New Mexico Equine Liability Act

All participants or guardians must sign Cloud Dancers' liability release before participating in any equine- related activities. As stated in Section 2 of the New Mexico Equine Liability Act "The legislature recognizes that any persons who participate in or observe equine activities may incur injuries as a result of the numerous inherent risks involved in such activities" and in section 4A "No person, corporation, or partnership is liable for personal injuries to or for the death of a rider that may occur as the result of the behavior of equine animals while engaged in any equine activities."

## Riding Attire/What to Bring to Lessons

- Bring a water bottle and appropriate environmental protection for **you and your rider**, such as sunscreen, hat, damp neck scarf, bug repellent, coat, or gloves depending on weather.
- All riders are required to wear an ASTM/SEI approved riding helmet with the chin strap secured when working with or around horses.
- Riders may bring their own ASTM/SEI approved helmet or use one provided by Cloud Dancers.
- For riding wear long pants (i.e., jeans or riding breeches) and closed-toe shoes, heels preferred (i.e., boots).

- No heavy perfumes or dangling jewelry.

## Lesson Fees

Our policy is for payment for any session to be made in advance of the first class of that session. We understand that this may be difficult when a third-party payer is involved; however, in these situations we do require a guarantee of payment prior to the first class. Payments may be made on-line (programs/sessions-payment/) or checks may be mailed to Cloud Dancers Billing, PO Box 14058, Albuquerque 87191 or given to an instructor at the Barn. Clients will be charged \$30 for returned checks and may be put on "credit card only" basis for more than one returned check.

Fees will vary depending on the length of the session offered:

	3 Weeks	4 weeks	8 weeks
1-hour group lesson	\$117	\$155	\$310 Up to 4 riders in group
30-minute private lesson	\$120	\$160	\$320
1-hour private lesson	\$180	\$240	\$480

There are no refunds of missed/unused lessons. Normally, riders are registered for entire Sessions. If a rider is approved to start mid-session, fees will be pro-rated.

If you receive funding from an outside third-party source (i.e., Carrie Tingley Hospital Foundation, Centennial Care, Mi Via, etc.), it is your responsibility to request payment from the funding source in a timely manner (prior to the beginning of a session). Failure to provide written verification of funding sources, budget amounts and periods, and applicable codes to Cloud Dancers could result in discontinuance of services.

## Financial Assistance - Scholarships

Cloud Dancers offers scholarships (when funds are available) to families who are income eligible. Income and eligibility requirements are outlined on our web site. If you feel you qualify, please complete the online application, gather income verification materials and contact our Program Coordinator for an interview at [programs@clouddancersth.org](mailto:programs@clouddancersth.org) or 505-926-1426.

## Lesson Schedules

Lessons are normally offered on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturdays. Hours will vary, but most occur between 1:00 and 7:00 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays and from 8:00 am to noon on Saturdays. When you sign up for a session, you will be asked your preference for hours and days and we will do our best to match your needs with groups of riders with similar abilities and instructors' availability.

## Lesson Cancellation Policy

- Lessons are normally held rain or shine.





- If cancellation is initiated by Cloud Dancers, we will do our best to schedule a makeup lesson or, when necessary, refund the cost for the cancelled lesson.
- If you need to miss a lesson, please give at least 24 hours' notice to your instructor, either by cell phone message or text.

## **Change of Information, Health or Medication**

Riders or their parents or guardians must inform Cloud Dancers immediately of any changes in health status, conditions or medications. This includes, but is not limited to, changes in weight, medications and dosages, revised diagnoses, medical interventions, surgeries, etc. In case of accident or injury, Cloud Dancers will follow your directives in your registration materials. Please notify us immediately of any changes to that information.

Changes in personal or contact information should also be reported to our Program Coordinator at [programs@clouddancersthp.org](mailto:programs@clouddancersthp.org).

## **Confidentiality**

Staff and volunteers are responsible for maintaining confidentiality of any information pertaining to Cloud Dancers' riders.

## **Communications**

Our Program Coordinator or Instructors will communicate with students or parents/guardian on a regular basis about progress or issues that may arise during lessons. If you have any concerns, questions or issues, please contact your instructor or Program Coordinator immediately. Students or parents who feel their concerns are not being addressed may contact our Equine and Facilities Manager/Lead Instructor, Karen Molony at (505) 235-8358.



## **Covid 19 Protocol**

COVID 19 has changed everyone's lives in the way we work, play and interact. Cloud Dancers has adapted its procedures to keep riders, instructors, volunteers and visitors as safe as possible. Thank you for adapting to these Guidelines.

### **Guidelines for returning to Riding Lessons**

Three major factors have guided our decision-making process during the Coronavirus epidemic--the prevention of the spread of COVID 19 and the health and well-being of our riders, volunteers and staff. In other words, what is in the best interests of the greater good.

We will discuss specific behaviors, underlying medical conditions and degrees of physical contact and support needed, with parents and guardians to determine which riders can return during the first phase of re-opening and those who are safest returning at a later date.

Our first group of riders to return are those who face the least risk:

- No underlying medical conditions that could be a risk to themselves and/or to others.
- Require the least amount of support and physical contact for mounting, dismounting and riding (normally only one volunteer needed, the horse leader).
- Has the ability to follow-through on directions and new protocols of wearing a mask, social distancing, and disinfecting hands.
- Does not have body fluids coming from the facial area which could be a risk to others (i.e., drooling, runny nose, sneezing).

All other factors being equal, the Group 2 riders are those requiring two volunteers (a leader and a side walker) and more physical contact and assistance in mounting and dismounting. Group 3 riders require close physical contact with a full-time hold and guidance throughout the entire process of mounting, dismounting and riding, three volunteers (leader and two side-walkers), and whose medical condition could be easily compromised.

Riders not meeting criteria for riding at this time may be given opportunities for some ground activities.

### **Protocol for Preventing the Spread of COVID 19**

- If you or a family member have a fever, a runny nose, cough or shortness of breath, please **STAY HOME**.
- If you have recently traveled out-of-state please notify our Program Coordinator or Instructor.
- In accordance with State mandate, all persons **must wear masks** that reach above the nose, below the chin and completely cover the mouth and nostrils.
- If applicable, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow. Throw used tissues in the trash and immediately use hand sanitizer.
- Do NOT touch your face.
- Social distancing of 6' and group sizes of no more than ten will be followed as required by State mandate.
- Hand sanitizer stations have been set up in the porta potty and in Viewing area.
- There will be no hugging or hand shaking. Close personal contact should be avoided.
- Touching of railings/gates surrounding the arena should be avoided as much as possible.

### **Protocol Specific to Riders and Families/Visitors**

#### **Rider Requirements**

- If you know you cannot make your lesson because of illness or any other reason, and it is **more than 24 hours** in advance of your lesson notify our Program Coordinator at

[programs@cloudDancersthp.org](mailto:programs@cloudDancersthp.org) or call and leave message at 505-926-1426. If notice is less than 24 hours please call your instructor and let her know the circumstances for your absence.

- Riders must wear masks– if unable to tolerate a mask, riders will not be able to return at this time.
- Instructors and volunteers will carry hand sanitizer, tissues and empty baggies for used tissues in the event riders need to lower masks to clean their face after a cough or sneeze. Used tissues will be placed in empty baggies, sealed & thrown away in the trash. Riders and volunteers will use hand sanitizer prior to raising the rider's mask and after replacing the mask.
- Riders with their own helmets must wear at every lesson and take home after each lesson. You may want to consider disinfecting helmets at home prior to returning the following week.
- Riders without their own helmets will be assigned a helmet that they will be required to wear the entire session. Helmets will be labeled with rider's name and will be given to the rider by a volunteer at the beginning of each lesson. Volunteers will collect these helmets at the end of each lesson, wipe with disinfectant and return to the appropriate labeled shelf in the tack room until the rider's next lesson.
- Riders must bring their own water.

#### **Center Usage by Riders/Families**

- Riders and families will be met by a volunteer who will squirt everyone's hands with hand sanitizer. Hands must be rubbed briskly together until dry.
- Riders will then be guided to the breezeway in the Barn where volunteers will assist in putting on their helmet and escorting or directing them into the arena or ramp area.
- Immediately following sanitizing of hands, family members will proceed to the Visitors Viewing area. Social distancing must be maintained.
- To meet State mandates for social distancing families are limited to two people only (Rider and one adult).
- Riders, families and visitors are not permitted to enter or linger in the Barn, the feed room or inside tack room.
- Upon completion of lesson and dismounting, volunteers will assist riders with removal of helmets if needed, and provide hand sanitizer to disinfect their hands.
- Cloud Dancers' helmets will be given to a volunteer for disinfecting and return to tack room.
- Families should proceed to the hand sanitizer station in the Visitors Viewing area to sanitize their hands and leave with their rider.
- Hand sanitizer stations are available in visitors' viewing area and in porta-potty.
- Sanitize hands after using porta potty.

#### **Grooming/Tacking Horses**

During our initial opening riders may or may not be grooming or tacking their horses. Depending on the status of COVID there may or may not be some groundwork with horses at the beginning of each lesson. Upon completion of groundwork, the instructor will assist riders in mounting in the mounting area.

#### **Physical Contact with Instructors/Volunteers**



Safety of riders is a #1 priority of all Cloud Dancers staff and volunteers and none of our protocols for COVID 19 will interfere with that priority. We will, however, try to do things that prevent us from having close face to face encounters with riders. Both riders and staff/volunteers will wear face masks. When safe and possible, mounting and dismounting assistance will be from the rear or to the side of rider, rather than face to face. Staff and volunteers will wear small aprons where they will keep hand sanitizer, a small pack of tissues, and empty baggies for used tissues, just in case.

### **Protocol for Reporting Symptoms and/or COVID 19**

Contact our Program Coordinator, Louisa Roberts, at 505.926.1426 immediately to report symptoms of COVID 19 (fever, a runny nose, cough or shortness of breath). Self-quarantine until you have spoken with your medical professional, determined testing options, met CDC requirements to discontinue home isolation and are confirmed healthy to return to lessons.

If you have tested positive for COVID 19, immediately contact Louisa Roberts, our Program Coordinator at 505.926.1426. We will notify local health officials immediately, along with anyone who has been in contact with this individual, while maintaining confidentiality consistent with HIPPA and other applicable federal and state privacy laws. In accordance with CDC requirements, we may temporarily close for a day or two, and will wait 24 hours to clean and sanitize all exposed areas of our Center. Staff or volunteers exposed will be asked to self-quarantine.

### **More Questions?**

Contact Louisa Roberts, Program Coordinator at (505) 926-1426  
or [programs@clouddancersthp.org](mailto:programs@clouddancersthp.org)

**Have fun and enjoy your time with Cloud Dancers!**

**Thank you for your interest in our programs.**

