

# Rider Handbook



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## Chakota Therapeutic Riding Program Values

**Integrity:** Our motivation to be part of Chakota-TRC comes from a common mission, and so we act with honesty and sincerity in all our interactions within Chakota-TRC. With our focus always on our Riders, we carefully protect individual and Rider confidentiality. We maintain a belief that the program is bigger than any one of us, and we avoid conflicts of interest and any behavior that would come from selfish or ulterior motives.

**Quality:** Our commitment to Chakota-TRC is expressed in our standard of excellence in all we do. We strive to provide the best of everything – instructors, facilities, horses, equipment, volunteers and staff. Knowing we are never too good to try harder – learn more – open new doors – search for new answers, we are constantly seeking ways to improve ourselves and our program. We accept that patience is an important part of the process of individual progress.

**Respect:** We show consideration and honor for persons, animals, and property, and do everything in our power to preserve the honor and integrity of the person, animal, and property. All individuals who are affiliated with Chakota-TRC will respect life, creatures, and the earth. None of us is above another. We are all equals. We are all Riders. We are all teachers. We hold admiration and open-mindedness to the possibilities that someone or something can bring into our lives – an acknowledgement that everything serves a purpose and is precious.

**Team Work:** We are all working toward a common goal, and in that work we are responsible and accountable toward one another and toward Chakota-TRC. Our work ethic is that no job is too small – no person too big. We are hardworking, dedicated individuals who work together and are willing to go above and beyond when required. We recognize that everyone has a gift to give; we rely on each other and can be relied upon at all times. We have the ability to, when required, compromise with others to achieve the common good.

**Caring:** Caring means Compassion, Accountability, Respect, Integrity, Nurturing, and Giving. When we care, we have a true concern for the health and well-being of others and of all life; we see the world through eyes other than our own. Our sensitivity to the needs of others results in active caring, in going outside ourselves and wearing “someone else’s skin.” The concern and love we have for people and all life envelopes Chakota-TRC and create an environment that rejuvenates the souls of all who come here.

**Accepting:** We have the ability to accept others’ ideas, solutions, creativity, and differences with an open mind and heart; we suspend judgment, bias, and pre-conceived expectations in our dealings with our Riders and with others. We look for the ability in people, not the disability. We celebrate differences and search for common good.

**Safety:** The prevention of accidents and ensuring the security of persons, animals, and property is a priority for all who are associated with Chakota-TRC. Everything is questioned; every detail is attended to; every person places safety first in all activities. Chakota-TRC provides a non-threatening environment where trust is of paramount importance. Rules and guidelines for safety are followed at all times, checks and balances are in place, and safety education is continuously provided and expected of all staff and volunteers.

**We Expect all members of Chakota-TRC to uphold these values – Thank You!**

## **Introduction**

Welcome to Chakota-TRC! We're glad you have become a part of our family. We strive hard to make all our Riders comfortable and welcome. We have put together some information that will help explain the rules and procedures of Chakota-TRC. In this handbook you will find information on lesson schedules, payments, proper clothing, weather conditions and other miscellaneous information. If you have any unanswered questions, please feel free to call Kay for an answer.

Chakota-TRC is a not for profit organization dedicated to providing therapy on horseback to people with physical, developmental, social and emotional disabilities.

**You must realize, using a horse in therapeutic riding sessions involves potentially dangerous situations. Although all measures are taken to reduce those risks, there is always a chance of injury and even death. We ask you to weigh those risks carefully before starting classes.**

## **Lesson Information**

Currently, lessons run Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday. Once a time is mutually agreed upon for your lesson, you will ride at the same time every week. If there is a cancellation, we may, on occasion, call and ask if you can come earlier. If it fits into your schedule, that's great. If not, you do not need to feel obligated to come earlier, your lesson will run at its regular time.

Riders should arrive 15 minutes prior to lesson time in order to get their helmet on, check in with the instructor, use the restroom if necessary, etc. Riders who arrive more than 15 minutes late for their lesson will not be allowed to ride, unless prior arrangements have been made with us.

A parent or guardian is required to remain on the Chakota-TRC property during the lesson. No Rider drop-offs are permitted.

Lessons generally run for 45 minutes. We allow one hour for each lesson. This allows us time to tack/un-tack horses in a calm fashion. This does not mean lessons run for an hour. Chakota-TRC reserves the right to end a class earlier at the instructor's discretion.

Horsemanship starts on the ground. Grooming, tacking, mounting and dismounting are equally important as riding. Time will be spent learning each of these skills in addition to horseback riding. This time is included in the lesson time.

Mounting and dismounting may take up to twenty minutes due to special needs of our Riders.

### **Reasons for terminating classes early include:**

- **Behavioral problems**
- **Horse problems**
- **Extreme hot or cold weather**
- **Threatening Weather**
- **Rider Fatigue**
- **Shortage of Volunteers**

We do everything possible to avoid canceling classes, but we *will not* risk the safety of our Riders by conducting an unsafe lesson.

Please try to remember that these adjustments are made for the safety of both the Rider and the volunteers and staff.

**Our full riding season begins in early April and ends mid-November. We *do not* ride on major legal holidays (i.e. Memorial Day, 4<sup>th</sup> of July, Labor Day). If the holiday lands on a Sunday, the following Monday will be honored and classes canceled. Chakota-TRC does take scheduled breaks throughout the season. These breaks will be posted on the bulletin boards in advance.**

## **Attendance**

There is nothing worse than having a barn full of volunteers, and no Riders to teach. Our volunteers are GOLDEN, and we ask you to respect their time and dedication to Chakota-TRC. If you need to cancel a lesson, please **TRY** to provide 24 hours' notice. We understand emergencies arise, but please give us as much time in advance – so we can cancel our volunteers as early as possible.

**If you cannot make your lesson:**

- Please notify Kay 24 hours in advance when possible
- **IF calling within 4 hours of class – please notify Program Director (618-806-1563)**
- Makeup lessons are NOT guaranteed
- No refunds are provided when Riders don't call and don't show up
- **We realize special circumstances such as illness and surgeries do arise – we ask that you notify Kay of any extended absence as soon as possible**

If a Rider misses more than three sessions without advance notice, they may lose their riding spot. **Or**, if a Rider has excessive absenteeism (for reasons other than surgery or major medical issues) there is again, reason for dismissal. Thank you ahead of time for your cooperation!

## **Class Cancellation & Emergency Procedures**

Occasionally we will need to cancel classes in the case of sick instructors, inclement weather, or a shortage of volunteers. We do everything possible to avoid a volunteer shortage, but we **will not** risk the safety of our Riders by conducting an unsafe lesson.

**If weather is a condition for cancellation we will post a message on the office phone saying that we have made the decision to cancel by 1:00 P.M. and 8:00 A.M. for Saturday lessons. *It is your responsibility* to call and check for class cancellations when weather poses a threat.**

### **Weather conditions forcing us to cancel classes include:**

- **Severe thunderstorm/tornado warnings for Clinton county**
- **Temperatures less than 40 degrees**
- **Temperatures over 90 degrees**
- **Extremely high humidity conditions**
- **Severe lightning or severe storm conditions**

Calls regarding lesson cancellation (for reasons other than weather) will be made as soon as possible. Occasionally Chakota-TRC may cancel classes due to using the grounds for fundraising functions. In this case, advance notice will be given and a credit will be applied to your account. The items listed above are only guidelines.

### **Emergency procedures for weather, if riding:**

- **Riders will be dismounted at nearest gate – helmets remain on**
- **Horses will be left in arena**
- **All Riders, family members, volunteers and staff will meet in the main aisle of barn near the wash bay**

### **Emergency procedures for fire:**

- **In case of fire all Riders, volunteers and staff will evacuate to the nearest exit**
- **We will meet in the covered arena, accounting for all heads at that time**

## **Registration**

Each Rider will be given paperwork to fill out prior to the start of the riding season. Riders from the previous year have the first opportunity to register. Paperwork must be returned by the date of request.

**If forms are not returned on time you will lose your spot, as Riders on the waiting list will be contacted.**

- Each Rider is expected to fill registration paperwork annually. In addition, there will be a non-refundable \$20.00 late registration fee.
- Evaluations will be conducted on all new Riders. The evaluation will be scheduled by the Program Director.
- The Program Director will schedule lessons and notify all Riders of their lesson time/day.

## **Fees & Billing**

Chakota-TRC charges a modest fee of \$25.00 per lesson, but the actual cost per Rider is many times higher. We consider that all Riders at Chakota-TRC are riding on *partial* scholarships. Chakota-TRC strives very hard to keep lesson fees low, and so we are very appreciative and in need of timely payments and regular contact with the office if there is a problem making a payment.

Lessons will be billed monthly. Your bill will be emailed to you each month. Fees are due within 15 days of the billing invoice. If a situation arises that you are unable to make a payment within the 15 days, we ask that **you please contact the office** immediately to address a payment plan and options. If payment is not received within 30 days the family will be contacted by the office and your cooperation and communication is vital to a successful outcome. If the account becomes more than 45 days late, **with no attempt to contact the office, the Rider will not be allowed to continue riding until contact with the office is made and a plan is in place.**

Riders with overdue bills will not be sent paperwork for the new riding season, until the payment is received or the office has been contacted and a plan is in place.

Please keep in mind that the bulk of the money earned to support the program comes from fundraising and private donations. Chakota-TRC receives NO state or federal funding. The money generated by lesson fees generally is under 10% of the total budget. Although we now have one paid employee, 95% of the work is still done by volunteers!

## **Riderships**

Chakota-TRC offers a Ridership fund for anyone who cannot afford the \$25.00 lesson fee, either on a full time or temporary basis. Any individual participating at Chakota-TRC is eligible to apply for a Ridership.

To apply for a Ridership:

1. A Ridership application can be obtained in the office. Applications are to be completed and returned no later than March 15<sup>th</sup>. Riderships are awarded at the beginning of each riding season on a first come, first serve basis. Funding will be provided as long as there are adequate funds available and that Ridership qualifications are met.
2. Ridership eligibility is based on free lunch school program or eligibility for food stamps.
3. Each individual Ridership will be reviewed for hardship cases.
4. All Ridership Riders are asked to pay a fee of \$10.00 per lesson, if possible.
5. All applications will receive a letter notifying them of acceptance/no acceptance prior to the start of the riding season.
6. If a Rider receives a Ridership the following procedure applies:
  - Any class missed without advanced notice will be charged a \$15.00 fee for the first and second occurrence. If a Rider misses a third lesson without advanced notice, they will be asked to leave the program.

**All families are encouraged to get involved with either fundraising or special work projects at Chakota-TRC in order to help the program keep fees low and the program strong! Your help and support is greatly appreciated – Thank You!**

## **Rider Qualifications**

At Chakota-TRC we choose to follow the guidelines and recommendations of PATH International. For your information we are enclosing a few very general guidelines that may limit some Rider's participation with our program. Please remember that many variables go into making the decision, including (but not limited to) the safety and appropriateness of Rider, horse and volunteers. All of these components must be met to ensure a quality lesson. From time to time, one or more of these areas may not be an appropriate match, in which case the Rider's eligibility may be reviewed.

**Weight:** The general rule of thumb is that a healthy, fit horse can carry 20% of its weight with a balanced, centered Rider. This means that an average 1,000 lb. horse can carry 200 hundred pounds – if the Rider is balanced and organized. This is generally a problem for most of Chakota -TRC's Riders. If a Rider is unbalanced, the weight ratio maybe reduced to 10% of the horse's body weight. Depending on the weight, height and riding ability, all Riders must be matched with appropriate horses and volunteers.

**Height:** Although there are no formal guidelines for height, this can be an issue of concern. If a Rider's height or torso height becomes out of proportion to the size horse required to safely accommodate a Rider, a review will be in order.

**Behavior:** The instructor has the final decision when a Rider's behavior becomes a distraction or safety issue. If a behavior cannot be managed safely on a regular basis, the Rider may be asked to switch instructors or be asked to leave the program.

**Medical Changes:** If a Rider's medical condition changes and it is assessed that those changes could make riding a contraindication, riding may be discontinued.

Once again, these are just a few of the issues that may impact a Rider's eligibility at Chakota-TRC. We will be glad to share the PATH guidelines with you at your request. We always do our best to accommodate Riders and their individual needs. However, please note that some of these issues may be out of our control and we cannot compromise the safety of all involved.

### **Reasons a Rider May be Removed from the Program:**

- Weight or height changes that make riding inappropriate or unsafe
- Change in physical conditions that make riding inappropriate or unsafe
- Behavioral issues that cannot be managed safely
- Lack of appropriate horses, volunteers, and/or staff for that Rider's needs
- Failure to uphold the Chakota -TRC values
- Perpetual lateness and/or missing lesson

It is the right of Chakota-TRC to decline eligibility to a Rider if we do not have the staff, volunteer or horse expertise needed to ride a Rider safely for all involved. Chakota -TRC does reserve the right to refuse lessons to anyone having a physical or developmental disability that could make riding a life threatening situation.

## **Surgery and Illness**

Please notify Chakota -TRC office as soon as possible if there will be an extended absence due to illness or surgery. We may be able to fill that slot temporarily allowing someone from the waiting list an opportunity to ride.

If the absence is due to surgery, a Rider will be allowed to begin riding again only after the surgeon has completed the Physician Release Post Surgery Form. This is available from the office if you do not have a copy. PATH guidelines may prevent a Rider from returning even if the physician has signed off.

Riders will not be allowed to ride while wearing a cast on any extremity. A Physician Release Post Surgery Form must be completed if a Rider has had surgery and/or worn a cast.

## **Proper Clothing**

Chakota-TRC recommends that Riders dress in a safe and appropriate manner for riding. That should include the following:

- Helmets (Helmets are provided, but you may purchase your own.)
- Long Pants (even in hot weather)
- Sturdy hard sole shoes (lug sole hiking shoes or steel-toed shoes are NOT recommended)
- Long socks
- Mittens or gloves in cold weather
- Long hair pulled back in low ponytail

Proper riding equipment is expensive – therefore, we do not require it. We do, however, ask that you follow our recommendations both for your safety and comfort.

Chakota-TRC will provide a helmet for all Riders; however, we strongly recommend purchasing one of your own. This will provide you with maximum fit and eliminate health concerns.

## **Volunteers**

Simply put, we could not operate Chakota -TRC without the help of our volunteers. It takes over 50 volunteers *per week* to provide our Riders with safe and challenging lessons. You are strongly encouraged to learn the names of the volunteers that work your lesson so you can thank them from time to time. Our volunteers are very special people – without their time, dedication and commitment there would be no Chakota -TRC! Please respect their time and remember to thank them throughout the year – thanks!

## **Therapists**

Chakota -TRC is fortunate to have an experienced occupational therapist on staff. The Chakota-TRC team is very interested in making our Riders lessons productive as possible. If you would like to have your personal therapist observe, please see your instructor to schedule a visit.

The personal therapist is welcome at each lesson; however, the Chakota -TRC riding instructor is the main instructor and is in control of the class session(s).

Fees charged by any personal therapists are the sole responsibility of the parents or guardians. Chakota -TRC holds no responsibility for any therapist charges.

## **Fundraisers**

It takes approximately \$50,000 annually to operate Chakota -TRC. Over 80 % of the operating expenses are funded by contributions made from generous individuals, corporations and grants. Chakota -TRC receives less than 15% of its operating income from lesson fees. In addition it receives no state or federal funding.

In order to help offset costs, we ask each Rider and their family to become a bigger part of our fundraising team. It is our hope that each Rider (and/or his/her family) try and raise \$100.00 per year. This can be done in conjunction with our annual fundraisers or on a private basis.

If you find it awkward or impossible to raise the \$100.00 in cash donations, there is always the opportunity to volunteer “manpower” hours at the farm. There are always lots of jobs to do at the farm, such as knocking cobwebs, cleaning offices/bathrooms, painting, weed-whacking fence lines, repairing stalls, and fencing, etc.

## **Miscellaneous**

Please check the bulletin boards outside the bathroom and your parent/Rider mailbox each week. We are constantly posting upcoming events and information you may find interesting and/or important. There is a suggestion box available near the entrance to the barn. We welcome your input. If you want to get involved please contact the office for more information.

The mounting area is a small and dangerous area. We insist that anyone not directly involved in the mount or dismount stay behind the barrier.

We ask that all parents support their children – but please do not “critique” your child while their lesson is in session. The riding process is very difficult and although your “comments” may be legitimate, they are usually not helpful at the time. In order to enforce this and maximize our safety, we ask that parents and siblings wait outside the fence. We have had several episodes of horses being “spooked” by parent or a sibling running about. Please do not be offended. Remember that our goal is to make each class as safe and successful as possible.

Due to our facility having limed child care area, we have to insist that all siblings be under direct supervision at all times during lessons, with parent or in our cabin child care when available.

## **Conclusion**

We encourage all of you to get involved! We offer lots of opportunities and always welcome your input. Chakota-TRC operates with team effort and the bigger the team the better. As we continue to grow and make changes, we will need increased support from more and more people. Any extra time and involvement you can give will be greatly appreciated.

**Thanks for being a part of the Chakota-TRC Family!**

**Chakota-TRC - Rider Handbook Compliance Form**

I have received a copy of the Chakota-TRC - Rider Handbook. I understand the rules, responsibilities, and guidelines as stated in the handbook.

I agree to abide by these rules and guidelines as stated in the handbook.

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RIDER SIGNATURE

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PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE REQUIRED

**Thank you for reading this document.**

**Please sign and return this page to the Chakota-TRC office staff.**