



# **Special Equestrians, Inc.**

**A PATH Int. Premier Accredited  
Therapeutic Riding Center**

**Parent/Caregiver/Participant Handbook**



**PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK**  
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# **WELCOME TO SPECIAL EQUESTRIANS**

## **Welcome to Special Equestrians!**

We are a nonprofit organization providing therapeutic horseback riding and equine assisted activities to children and adults with disabilities in Lee, Hendry, Charlotte, and Glades counties since 1987. Special Equestrians has been a United Way Partner Agency since 2003. Special Equestrians is a volunteer run organization which is affiliated with the PATH, Intl. (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship). We adhere to the association's therapeutic teaching techniques and safety standards in every aspect of our programs and services. Our instructors have extensive backgrounds in horsemanship and are certified by PATH, INTL.

## **Therapeutic horseback riding**

Therapeutic riding and equine assisted activities are designed to improve both mental and physical abilities. This improvement is accomplished with exercises that improve the rider's automatic balance, stimulates, and stretches muscles, flexes joints, and strengthens postural responses. Eye and hand coordination is improved in learning to guide the horse, while the natural movement of the horse replicates human walking. The program also offers riders social, educational, and recreational experiences. Some of our participants reach the level of achievement where they are riding a horse independently. For other participants, simply holding the reins is a significant goal. Some participants may be taking part in our un-mounted program, where they learn about the nature of horses, how to care for them and how to understand them, which in turn leads to self-awareness and confidence. All successes, whether big or small, are important milestones in our participants' lives.

## **Our Horses**

Special Equestrians owns the horses who work at our center. Our horses are selected for their condition, gentleness, and suitability for our therapeutic riding program and equine assisted activities. Each horse receives training and conditioning by the staff, instructors, and a select group of volunteers.

## **Volunteers**

Volunteers participate in every aspect of the program. They lead horses, support riders as side-walkers during the lessons, care and feed the horses, maintain the barn, serve on the board of directors, and assist in fundraising activities. The program is always in need of new volunteers.

## **Fees**

The therapeutic riding program is divided into six-week sessions. For our therapeutic riding classes, there are seven consecutive sessions with a month off in the summer. The cost per class is \$25. **A fee of one hundred fifty dollars (\$150.00)** a session is charged per rider, rain, or shine. Invoices will be sent electronically and are due upon receipt. For private lessons and other equine assisted activities, there will be a different fee structure. Please ask your instructor for this information.

## **Completion of Forms**

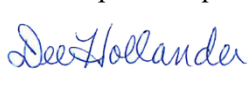




The forms in the participants packet must be completed before someone can be considered for one of Special Equestrians' programs. The application packet is on our website at: <http://www.specialequestrians.net>.

Participants will fill out an information update form annually. Medical history and physician release will be filled out every two years, except for participants with Down syndrome. Persons with Down syndrome must get the medical forms completed annually. New medical forms may also be requested at the discretion of the head instructor.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

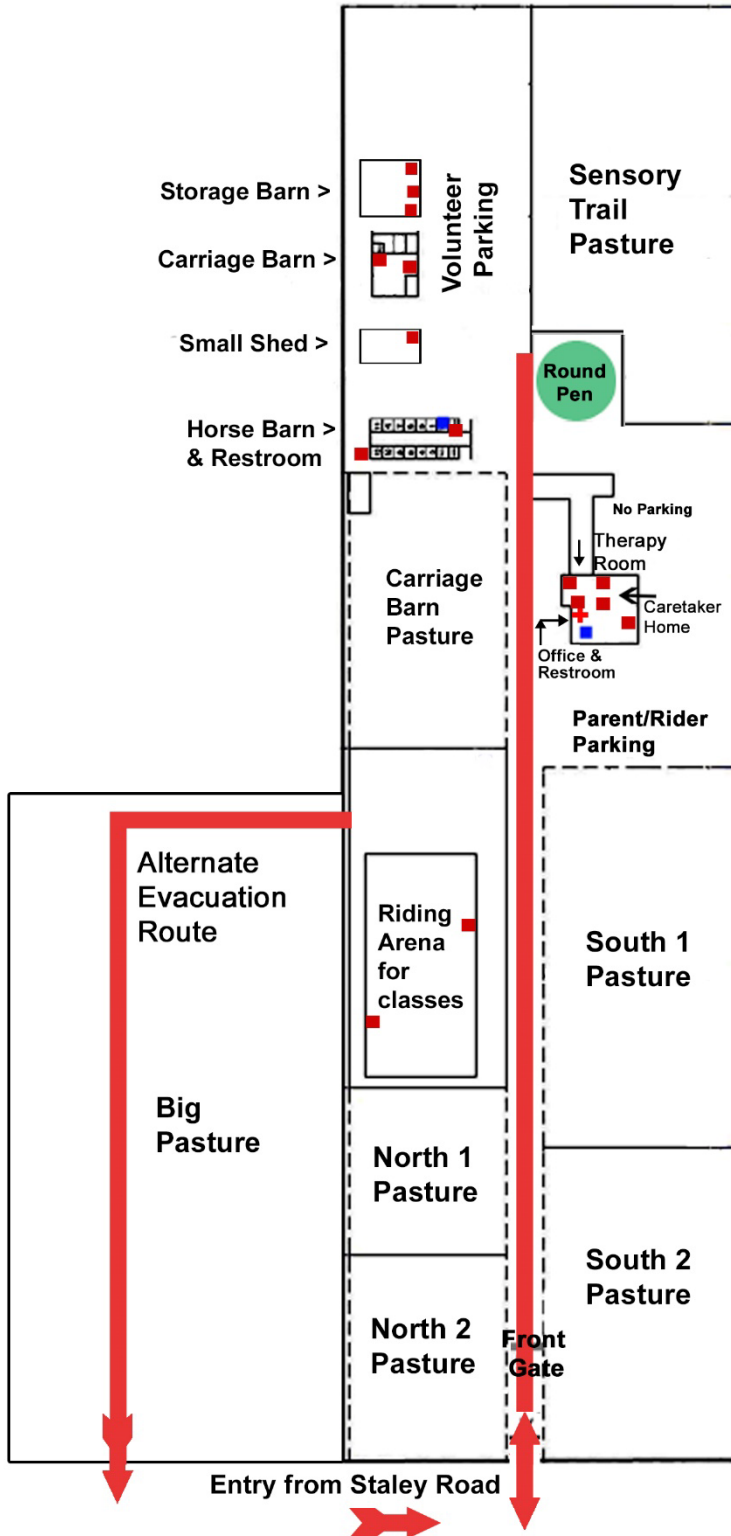
1. Please **check in** when you arrive.
2. It is imperative to the success of our center that we have updated contact information on file. We send out lots of emails with information and class cancellation. Please send any contact information changes to [Lisa.Coy@specialequestrians.net](mailto:Lisa.Coy@specialequestrians.net) AND [spequestrians@gmail.com](mailto:spequestrians@gmail.com).
3. **We must be notified of All absences at least 24 hours before your scheduled lesson time. Please call, email, or text Special Equestrians or your instructor.** Our instructors, volunteers, and horses are scheduled around each lesson. Any participant who has two or more “No call – no Show” days in a session will be dropped from our program. Calling after the lesson has been taught is considered a “No call – No show.”
4. **Any participant, at the discretion of the instructor, having three absences in one session may be removed from the schedule and their time slot will be replaced with a participant from our long waiting list.**
5. **Any scholarship participant having two absences in one session may have their scholarship revoked.**
6. Riders that will not be able to come back right away for the September session but are planning to come before on at the second session will be liable for payment for holding their spot.
7. You will receive an invoice for tuition payment. Payments are due at the beginning of a 6-week upon receipt.
8. The attire for riders is:
  - Sturdy closed toed shoes or boots
  - **Long** pants (not slick)
  - An ASTM/SEI Equestrian Riding Helmet.
  - Jewelry should not be worn during the class
9. No gum chewing or cell phone use during classes.
10. Special Equestrians has a weight limit of 180 lbs. Weight limitations may differ for persons requiring a full weight transfer and will be at the discretion of the instructor. If a person is above the weight limit, therapeutic carriage driving, or ground activities may be a good choice for equine assisted activities.
11. Horseback riding may not be a suitable recreational activity for certain individuals and therefore it is necessary for you to have your physician complete and sign the Physicians release/Rider medical history form. Should the physical condition of the rider change at any time, Special Equestrians is to be notified immediately and a new Physicians release form must be completed and filed with the office. After the physician’s release form is received by the office, Special Equestrians will determine if the applicant can safely participate in program activities.
12. A student arriving more than fifteen minutes late after class is scheduled to begin, or if the arena gate is already closed and mounted activities have started, will not be able to participate in the lesson. If there are extenuating circumstances for your tardiness, it is the instructor’s discretion if you will be allowed to participate in the lesson that day.

Your Special Equestrians' Riding Instructors,

				
Dee Hollander 239-470-2378	Amy Oxendine 239-940-1602	Diane Shaw 612-306-7618	Suzanne Renwick 814-460-2800	Mike Freeman 239-671-8743

# Special Equestrians - Map & Evacuation Routes

5121 Staley Road, Ft. Myers, FL 33905  
239-226-1221



Please drive very slowly as you enter the Special Equestrians property.  
**Our speed limit is 5 mph and it is enforced!**

Volunteers park in the area in front of the carriage barn and in the part of the parent parking farthest from the road. Do not block the front of the storage barn or the carriage barn. Parking close to the arena is reserved for our participants.

If you have walking difficulties, you may park close to the barn or the house, but please don't block anyone in.

The office is on the side of the house next the parent/rider parking. Please enter our office from the front of the house. Our Farm Caretaker lives in the other side of the house. The garage door is for our Caretaker's entry.

There is a door leading to the **ADA Restroom** on the west side of the house, next to parent and rider parking.

**The main evacuation route is the paved road that runs down the center of the property.**

**Fire Extinguishers are located in 15 places & are marked with a red square symbol.**

**+** First Aid & AED Machine

**■** Fire Extinguisher Symbol

**—** Evacuation Route Symbol

**■** Restroom Symbol

## **SPECIAL EQUESTRIANS' SAFETY RULES & REGULATIONS**

For Special Equestrians to protect its participants and visitors, as well as for insurance purposes, we request that you follow this set of rules. These rules are designed to ensure the **safety** of our participants, parents, caregivers, visitors, volunteers, and staff. Thank you for your cooperation.

1. Please drive very slowly as you drive down the road into Special Equestrians. There are humans and horses walking on and beside the road.
2. The instructor always requires your complete attention. In case of emergency, everyone will follow the directions given by the instructor.
3. Participants must stay with their instructor and their group.
4. **DO NOT WALK BEHIND THE HORSES**
5. Participants and parents may not enter the stable area unless they are accompanied by a designated volunteer or staff member.
6. Participants must be accompanied by a parent or caregiver when they go to the restroom.
7. Participants must wear ASTM equestrian helmets, long pants (jeans or riding breeches) and closed-toe hard-soled shoes or boots with a heel (no gym shoes or fashion boots). Yoga pants or exercise pants are not allowed. These pants are slick and will cause the rider to slip in the saddle.
8. Helmets must also be worn when riding, during un-mounted activities, and in the barn.
9. Remember, this is Florida. Riders should be properly hydrated and protected from the elements. Cool wrap bands, sunglasses, jackets, etc. can be worn by the rider if they do not prevent lesson activities.
10. Any bleeding or open sores must be covered with a bandage, or the rider cannot attend that lesson.
11. Please be sure to advise the instructor of any medical changes such as recent seizures or illnesses that may affect their riding abilities.
12. Please refrain from coaching or speaking with your rider from the sidelines. It is important that their focus remain on the instructor and the assisting volunteers.
13. Participants wishing to provide gifts/treats to horses are encouraged to make an annual holiday gifting campaign donation through our Website Wish List, purchase an Amazon Wish List item, or place ONE precut carrot, apple, or celery stalk cut in two-inch pieces in the basket at the welcome desk. Treats will be given to horses at the caretaker's discretion either by horse leaders after the last class of the day or at mealtime.
14. Children are not allowed to play on the fence, mounting ramp, mounting blocks, gates, or in the ditches.
15. Running, shouting and/or horseplay are not allowed.
16. Do not touch the pasture fence tape or wire. It is electric and it will give you a shock.
17. No chewing of gum when riding horses.
18. Riders will stay in the viewing area until it is their time to ride. They will be taken up the ramp for mounting by the instructor or trained Staff.
19. All participants are to be supervised by their caregivers, guardians, or parents, until the instructor begins the class.
20. **NO PETS ARE ALLOWED ON THE SPECIAL EQUESTRIANS PROPERTY.**
21. The swimming pool area is OFF LIMITS.
22. Special Equestrians is a Smoke-Free Facility. No smoking of any kind is allowed on our property.
23. Abusive behavior, lack of respect for volunteers, staff or horses, or any violation of Special Equestrians rules will result in immediate dismissal from our property.

**Thank you for following our safety rules.  
Safety is our number one priority!**

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### **Discharge Policy:**

There may be instances where participants must be discharged from Special Equestrians, for the safety and/or well-being of the participant, the volunteers, staff, or equines.

### **Possible Reasons for Discharge:**

1. Participants who refuse to update their release by a physician and all required liability / information forms may be discharged from the program.
2. The participant's condition has significantly deteriorated, and they either refuse, or are unable, to obtain a physician's permission to resume activities at Special Equestrians.
3. Due to the weight carrying limits of our therapy equines as well as the availability and limitations of our volunteers, individuals weighing over 180 pounds may be discharged from riding until their weight has decreased to our weight limit. This rule is made to protect the health and soundness of the equines as well as the safety of the rider, volunteers, and staff.
4. Due to the limitations of our staff and volunteers, individuals that are aggressive toward people or animals and/or are unable to be controlled through their behavior are ineligible to ride and will be discharged from the program.
5. All riding/driving participants must be able to wear an approved ASTM-SEI equestrian helmet, long pants, and proper footwear. In rare instances, helmets that are not ASTM-SEI may be used, however they meet the PATH Intl. guidelines for Alternative Helmet Use. If a riding/driving participant continually refuses to abide by the rider attire policy, he (or she) will be discharged from the program.
6. The Participant will be discharged as outlined by PATH Int. contraindications.
7. The participant will be discharged if he/she purposely or inadvertently poses any safety risk to the volunteers, staff, participants, and/or equine partners.
8. The participant may be discharged if staff limitation disallows the center to properly manage occurrences that arise directly or indirectly by the participant.
9. The participant may be discharged for demonstrating abusive behaviors toward equines, other participants, volunteers, or staff members.
10. A participant may be discharged if they fail to adhere to the attendance policy as outlined in the Participant Handbook.
11. The participant may be discharged if the participant demonstrates unhappiness or if no benefits exist upon receiving services.
12. The participant may be discharged if the center cannot safely and effectively accommodate the participant's needs, or if participation, in general, would be harmful to the participant.

### **Discharge Procedure:**

The participant and/or legal guardian/caregiver will receive verbal and/or written notification of discharge.

The participant may be excused from classes before verbal and/or written notification is received.

### Parent/Caregiver/Participant Handbook Signature Page

This page must be signed and received by our office, for the participant to begin the programs and/or services offered by Special Equestrians, Inc.

Name of participant \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I have read this Parent/Caregiver/Participant Handbook. I agree to follow these policies and safety rules during my, or my child's participation in therapeutic riding or any other equine assisted activity at Special Equestrians.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Adult/Parent/Guardian Name (Print Neatly)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Adult/Parent/Guardian Signature

Executed this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_.  
Please make a copy of this page for us to keep in your file at Special Equestrians.

**Note: Signature of Parent/Guardian is REQUIRED if Participant is UNDER THE AGE OF 18 or is AN ADULT AND UNDER GUARDIANSHIP.**