



2025 Participant Handbook

Equine Programming



EquiCenter fosters growth, wellness, and educational opportunities for people of all ages and abilities through the power of equestrian, horticultural, and outdoor experiences.

Welcome to the EquiCenter! The purpose of this handbook is to share our policies and procedures. Our current class schedule, contact numbers, attire requirements, and general rules are included.

Throughout the year, there are needs for updates and changes. We ask that you visit our website, www.equicenterny.org, for any current or anticipated changes that occur.

There are many opportunities for you to become involved in our program. As we are a not-for-profit organization, you can help support us by volunteering in areas such as facilities, administration, special events, operational needs, and our lesson program. Please contact Debi Houliares at DHouliares@equicenterny.org, Volunteer Director, to see how you can get involved.

1. EquiCenter Contact Information

Barn Phone: 585-624-7777

Fax: 585-684-7863

General Email: Info@equicenterny.org

Senior Director of Programming

Sara McLaughlin: SMcLaughlin@equicenterny.org 585-624-7777

Senior Director of Operations

Lindsay Alberts: LAlberts@equicenterny.org 585-624-7777

Volunteer Director

Debi Houliares: DHouliares@equicenterny.org 585-624-7777

Executive Director

Katherine Hatch: KHatch@equicenterny.org 585-624-7777

Finance Assistant

Mark Anderson: MAnderson@equicenterny.org 585-624-7777

PATH Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructors

Lindsay Alberts, LVT (Mentor): LAlberts@equicenterny.org

Debi Houliares (Mentor, ESMHL): DHouliares@equicenterny.org

Sara McLaughlin (Mentor): SMcLaughlin@equicenterny.org

Joan Maher: JMaher@equicenterny.org

Katie Hurlburt (Mentor): KHurlburt@equicenterny.org

Sam Schaubroeck (Mentor): SSchaubroeck@equicenterny.org

Molly Ryan: MRyan@equicenterny.org

Susan Gilson: SGilson@equicenterny.org

Audrey DiMatteo: ADimatteo@equicenterny.org

Heidi Vahue: HVahue@equicenterny.org

Julia Hess: JHess@equicenterny.org

Evelyn Van Arsdale: EVanarsdale@equicenterny.org

Abby Brengle : ABrengle@equicenterny.org

Amberlea Atwood AAtwood@equicenterny.org

PATH Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning

Colleen Mcdonough : CMcdonough@equicenterny.org

Phil Wytrwa; PWytrwa@equicenterny.org

Michael Murphy: MMurphy@equicenterny.org

PATH Equine Assisted Learning

Betsy Whitehouse: BWhitehouse@equicenterny.org

All of our instructors hold a PATH (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International) certification. For more information on PATH please visit their website at www.pathintl.org

2. Cancellation Policy

We are unable to give credits for missed lessons except those listed below. Your lesson slot is yours for the duration of the session and given no rider is alike (i.e., requiring a particular horse, instructor, volunteer support, etc.) we cannot offer your missed lesson slot to any other participant. Although we are not able to offer credits for common illnesses, as a courtesy to our staff and volunteers, who are attempting to remain healthy, we ask that the participant stay home when they are exhibiting symptoms of respiratory or gastrointestinal infections, such as cough, fever, sore throat, vomiting or diarrhea. It is your responsibility to call the barn phone (585-624-7777) ASAP if you need to cancel to provide volunteers and staff advanced notice of your absence.

Credits will be provided for the following absences:

- **Medical Credit:** Missed lesson for a major medical absence such as anything requiring medical attention or a doctor's visit.

- **Scheduled Credit:** An absence that was communicated before the start of the session. We can take off the volunteers and arrange the staff and horse's schedule when we are made aware of an absence before the start of the session. We allow up to one scheduled credit per session.
- **Weather Credit:** If EquiCenter cancels your lesson due to weather conditions or if the driving conditions in your area are declared a "warning" by the weather channel then we will issue you a credit.
 - If one or more local schools (i.e. Pittsford-Mendon, HF-L, Victor) are closed due to weather, lessons may also be canceled. If the weather is borderline contact us at 585-624-7777.
 - Adaptive riding lessons may be changed to non-mounted horsemanship lessons when the temperature is above 90 degrees or "feels like" over 95 degrees AND when the temperature is below 15 degrees or "feels like" less than 0 degrees.
- **EquiCenter or Instructor Credit:** Anytime EquiCenter cancels your lesson.

Credits must be used within one year of issuance.

In Summary:

- Due to the demands of the schedule, make-up lessons are not possible.
- Please call if you cannot make your scheduled time as soon as possible (24 hours is ideal) so that we do not have horses, volunteers, and instructors waiting for you.
- Two "no calls" or "no shows" in a session may result in you being asked to forfeit your spot to someone on the waitlist.
- No monetary refunds or credits are given for missed lessons with exceptions detailed above.

3. Billing

The full session is billed to all self-paying participants at the start of each session. It is your responsibility to inform us of any changes to contact information or who will be responsible for payment. If you have self-directed funds available please see below for billing procedures.

For **Self-Directed Billing** only:

- Agencies will not reimburse EquiCenter for any missed lessons.
- Direct billing on your behalf is a courtesy we extend to our families with the understanding you are responsible for the payment of any balance that is not covered by Self Directed funds. This includes but is not limited to, lessons that are not attended (other than for reasons noted as credits above in Section 2), lack of available funds in your budget, not properly completing any request for payment to the FI, or if you do not notify us of a change of FI/agency.

4. Registration

- A one-time \$35 orientation fee will be collected at your evaluation.
- Due to PATH regulations, we must receive complete registration forms annually. This includes the physician's statement.
- All paperwork must be complete and all payments must be made before any student is considered officially registered.
- Continuing registration forms are due one month before the start of each new session. A \$25 late fee will be applied to all registrations received after the deadline.
- Continuing registration forms should contain all of your days and times of availability. If you do not have at least three scheduling options we cannot guarantee you a lesson slot.

- The time reserved for each lesson includes time for mounting and dismounting, horsemanship, and discussions.
- If the payment for the session is not collected by the end of the session, the participant will not be able to register for future sessions until the balance is paid.

5. Fees

We take pride in the care we provide to our herd of 35+ horses. Maintaining this high standard of care comes at a cost of approximately \$225 per lesson. We are fortunate that the difference between the cost of providing lessons and the fees we charge is offset by generous donor gifts and a team of 200+ volunteers.

Adaptive Riding (*we are not able to accommodate all selections every session*)

- Group 1 Hour: \$59 per lesson
- Semi-Private 1-hour: \$70 per lesson
- Semi-Private 45 minute: \$64 per lesson
- Private 1 hour: \$91 per lesson
- Private 45 minute: \$80 per lesson
- Private 30 minute: \$70 per lesson

Unmounted Horsemanship

- Semi-Private 1 hour: \$52 per lesson
- Semi-Private 45 minute: \$46 per lesson
- Semi-Private 30 minute: \$41 per lesson
- Private 1 hour: \$72 per lesson
- Private 45 minute: \$62 per lesson
- Private 30 minute: \$52 per lesson

We encourage those who are in financial need to reach out for a scholarship application. EquiCenter will do its best to accommodate as many requests as possible.

6. Attire

- All students will wear approved ASTM safety helmets while mounted or when working around the horses. We have a selection available for you to borrow while riding or you may purchase your own at any local CountryMax store or online at www.doversaddlery.com or www.statelinetack.com. Helmets must be purchased within five (5) years due to PATH regulations.
- Wear appropriate closed-toe shoes. Boots with a low heel and smooth sole are recommended for all students who use stirrups.
- Long pants are required. Stretch pants or breeches are most comfortable.
- In cold weather, wear layers and make sure the student has gloves that will enable them to grip the reins. If the rider does not utilize reins, mittens are appropriate.
- In hot weather wear “breathable” clothing to avoid overheating. Sunscreen and a cold drink are encouraged!

7. Safety Rules

- EquiCenter is a non-smoking facility. Smoking is only permitted in your personal vehicle in the big parking lot. Take all butts with you – no littering.
- Park in designated areas.
- Abide by the speed limit (10 mph). Our lessons and exercise riders frequently go on trail rides and fast moving vehicles are a safety hazard to both horses and humans.
- We must receive complete registration forms annually for any program.
- Firearms are prohibited on property at EquiCenter.
- Alcohol and illegal drug use is prohibited. EquiCenter reserves the right to reschedule or cancel your lesson if we feel there are safety concerns due to impairment.
- EquiCenter’s hours of operation are from 8am–8pm. Please call ahead to schedule any visits outside of your lesson or volunteer time.

- Do not visit the horses without permission and supervision. Do not hand feed the horses.
- No pets are allowed on the property. The only exception to this is a certified service dog or therapy dog. EquiCenter must be notified in advance if you are bringing your dog. Approved dogs must remain on leash at all times and you may be asked to stay in specified areas. You may not be able to take part in all programs with a service/therapy dog. Dogs are not allowed in the barn or near the horses. Please be aware that there may be therapy dogs on site so please keep dogs separated from other dogs as well as 50 feet away from any horse.
- Do not enter the farm, greenhouse or North Barn without permission.
- Do not enter the house without permission.
- EquiCenter serves a variety of populations. Please be respectful and help to keep this a therapeutic environment for all.
- Your family members and friends are encouraged to visit. When lessons are in progress or horses are out, all visitors must remain in the designated spectator area.
- We encourage you to take photographs; however it is always best to ask staff permission prior to using a flash. Also make sure the volunteers and any other participants around are ok with their picture being taken.
- EquiCenter staff will maintain a professional relationship with participants and ask that all participants do the same.

8. Weight Policy for Adaptive Riding

Each horse has a set weight limit that they can carry which is based upon their size, age, confirmation, and health history. To keep our horses comfortable and continuing to thrive, we have implemented a pre-session weigh-in.

We will ask you to weigh in by the registration deadline of each session if you intend to sign up for the next session. This will help us to make the appropriate horse pairings for the upcoming session and create a schedule that balances out each horse's workload to the best of our ability.

We appreciate this may be a sensitive topic so the scale will be located in our office and your instructor or a staff member will be the only one assisting you. Since we are considering all the tack and rider weight on top of the horse, you will keep your helmet, boots, and jacket on. If the participant is unable to stand on a scale we ask you to provide a doctor's note or copy of a recent exam with a weight that is within the last 3 months. Decisions regarding a participant's clearance to ride will be based on the availability of a suitable horse relative to the height, cognition, and balance of the participant.

Weight Policy - For the safety of our horses, riders and volunteer's, the accepted maximum weight for a rider is generally limited to 200 pounds. If a rider's weight is right at 200lb, we may ask for a current weight every session. The student or parent may bring a doctor's note with a current weight or use the scale provided at the barn. If a rider is over 180 pounds they must be able to transfer on and off a horse independently. Decisions regarding a participant's clearance to ride will be based on availability of a suitable horse relative to the height, cognition, and balance of the participant.

9. Contraindications to Adaptive Riding

Unfortunately riding is not an appropriate activity for everyone, and we may occasionally decline services for individuals for whom riding is contraindicated. As a PATH Premier Center (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International), we must follow PATH guidelines. Some examples are listed below:

- Children under two (2) years old
- Moderate to severe osteoporosis
- Atlantoaxial Instability (AAI) in Down Syndrome
- Complete spinal cord injury above T-6
- Coxarthrosis
- Uncontrolled seizures
- Limited Head/Neck Control
- Uncontrolled abusive behavior
- Hypotonia to the point where they are unable to maintain an upright seated position

10. Reasons for Student Dismissal (including caretaker/guardian)

Possible reasons for dismissal include but are not limited to:

- Failure to obey posted safety regulations
- Inappropriate or unsafe behavior
- Two (2) no-call no-show for scheduled lessons
- Violating any of our posted safety rules
- Posing a safety risk to our students, volunteers, staff or horses

- Any other reason or behavior identified by staff to be inappropriate or detrimental or potentially detrimental to safety or lesson conduct.

11. Reasons for Visitor or Guest Removal

Equicenter may dismiss any guest/ visitor.

Possible reasons for dismissal include, but are not limited to:

- Failure to obey posted safety regulations
- Inappropriate or unsafe behavior
- Violating any of our posted safety rules
- Posing a safety risk to our students, volunteers, staff or horses
- Any other reason or behavior identified by staff to be inappropriate or detrimental or potentially detrimental to safety or lesson conduct

12. Volunteers

These committed individuals make lessons at the EquiCenter possible. They help with lessons, horse care, administrative duties, fundraisers, and numerous other areas that assist in making our lessons of high quality and affordable. EquiCenter thanks you in advance for your valuable time.

Interested parents and caregivers, who would like to volunteer, please contact EquiCenter at 585-624-7777 ext 3 or email DHouliares@equicenterny.com.

2025 Session Schedule

Session 1 2025

- 13 week session from January 6th – April 13th
- Mid session break week from February 17th – February 23rd (No Lessons)

BREAK WEEK April 14 – April 20th (No lessons)

Session 2 2025

- Nine (9) week session from April 21st – June 29th
- Mid session break week from May 26th – June 1st (No Lessons)

BREAK WEEK June 30th – July 6th (No Lessons)

Session 3 2025

- Eight (8) week session from July 7th – August 31

BREAK WEEK September 1st– September 7th (No Lessons)

Session 4 2025

- 14 week session from September 8th – December 21st
- Mid session break week from November 24th – November 30th (No Lessons)