



EQUINE-
ASSISTED THERAPY

Volunteer Handbook

*Together, we are
“changing lives one hoof print at a time”*

Main Facility:
3369 Hwy 109 Wildwood, MO 63038

Satellite Facility:
13525 Clayton Road Town and Country, MO 63141

How To Contact Us:

Main office
314-971-0605
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Our Mission:

At Equine Assisted Therapy we are all about heart to hoof connections. We believe in the power of horses to open doors to personal breakthroughs for individuals facing emotional, physical, and mental challenges. It is our mission to create life enriching horsemanship experiences that uplift and empower our participants to enhance their well-being.

Equine-Assisted Therapy, Inc. is a 501C3 non-profit

Missouri Equine Liability Law: Under Missouri Law, an Equine Professional or any employee thereof, is not liable for an injury to or the death of a participant in equine activities resulting from the inherent risks of equine activities pursuant to the revised statutes of Missouri R.S. MO.537.325

Safety Rules

The following guidelines have been developed for your safety. Please follow all of these rules while at our facilities. Failure to follow these rules can result in your dismissal from our facilities and our programs.

1. NO SMOKING ON OUR PROPERTY!
2. EAT prohibits the possession, sale, consumption, or being under the influence of alcoholic beverages, marijuana, or any illegal drugs by employees, contract workers, or volunteers while on the premises of EAT in Wildwood or any satellite location; other than EAT planned events/fundraisers as stated in our drug and alcohol policy.
3. All weapons must remain in vehicles.
4. Do not feed horses or any other animals on the property.
5. Outside animals are not allowed on the property unless pre-approved by the Wildwood Office Team. Certified service animals are allowed, notify the Wildwood Office Team beforehand.
6. All children must be directly monitored by an adult at all times while on property. This adult must not be involved in any other activity.
7. Interacting with all animals is done at your own risk please monitor children.
8. All phones must be turned to silent or vibrate when on property. Do not answer your phone when in the arena working with a participant or horse.
9. Clean up after yourself and throw away your trash.
10. Do not arrive earlier than 30 minutes before your scheduled shift or class.
11. Volunteers may bring visitors pending approval from the Wildwood Office Team.
12. Only scheduled leaders, tack captains, and instructors are allowed inside the gates of the arena. Participants and sidewalkers must wait outside the gate of the arena until asked to enter by the instructor.
13. Only tack captains, instructors, barn buddies, maintenance team, and staff are allowed to enter into pastures. Leaders are only allowed

to enter pastures when actively helping one of the people previously mentioned.

14. Only instructors are allowed to put bitted bridles on.

15. The instructor is ultimately responsible for all aspects of the class from the first horse brought into the arena until the last horse is taken out and put in the appropriate pasture. Please listen to and follow all directions given by the class instructor.

Rules apply to all EAT staff, volunteers, participants, families, and visitors

Dismissal Policy

EAT reserves the right to dismiss any person from the facility and from the program if their behavior is putting themselves, a participant, staff, other volunteers, or the horse's mental or physical health in jeopardy, or there is failure to follow EAT's policies and code of conduct; or behavior as deemed inappropriate by the Executive Director or Staff.

Volunteer Attendance Policy:

Volunteers who cancel without 24-hour notice or no-show more than three times within a session may be moved to a stand-in, substitute, or removed from the schedule. We understand that emergencies happen, so please communicate as soon as possible if you can't make your shift. Your reliability helps ensure a great experience for our participants and horses!

Photographs and Video Policy

You are welcome to take photos, but any images or videos featuring other people, volunteers, or participants must be submitted to the EAT office team for review and approval to ensure proper photo releases are in place. The release grants EAT the right to share content, but not individuals outside the team. Once approved and shared on EAT's official pages, you may share it from there. Photos of participants cannot be posted directly by anyone outside the EAT team. Violation of this policy will result in removal of the post and could lead to dismissal from EAT's facility and program. Thank you for helping protect the privacy and safety of those at EAT.

You can follow Equine Assisted Therapy on :

Facebook - facebook.com/eatherapy

Volunteer Facebook Group - facebook.com/groups/eatherapyvolunteers

Instagram - instagram.com/eatherapy_mo/

Volunteer opportunities

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with Equine-Assisted Therapy. We are excited to have you join our family and contribute to our mission!

At EAT, our participants are the heart of everything we do, which is why all volunteers start as **sidewalkers**. This essential role helps volunteers connect with our mission and understand the impact they have on our participants' lives.

Sidewalker

All sidewalkers are required to attend in-person, hands-on training at least once a year. Sidewalkers watch the training video and confirm completion by signing off on the volunteer application. Sidewalkers wear a white name tag to clearly identify their role.

Sidewalking is the most essential and needed position. Sidewalkers walk alongside participants on their horse during class to keep riders engaged, support balance, and assist with activities. Instructors direct sidewalkers to perform an ankle hold, thigh hold, or spot the rider. They may also be directed to assist with holding reins, throwing balls, or handling other objects and activities. Sidewalkers play a crucial role in helping participants enjoy their class. This position requires the ability to walk for 30-45 minutes on uneven ground, good listening skills, and an eagerness to learn.

After six weeks (one session) as a sidewalker, eligibility to attend **leader training** becomes available. Attending this training does not automatically result in becoming a leader in classes.

Horse Leader

All leaders attend leader training and are required to renew their training at least once a year to ensure consistent handling of EAT's horses. Leaders wear a blue name tag. As horse leaders, they are responsible for the horse before, during, and after class. Leaders ensure the horse completes warm-up exercises before the participant enters the arena. During class, they assist the participant with the movement of the horse based on the participant's individual needs. Leaders will assist the horse with lining up for both block and ramp mounts. Their role includes observing and remaining aware of the horse's physical cues at all times and reporting any unusual behavior in the horse to the instructor. The focus is not only on the horse but also on working together with the team during the class.

Tack Captain

Tack captains complete sidewalker, leader, and tack and grooming training. Tack captains are required to renew their leader training once a year. Eligibility for this position is determined by the Wildwood office team. Tack captains arrive at the barn at least an hour before classes begin and are responsible for bringing horses in from the pasture according to the class schedule. They groom and tack horses for each assigned class, ensuring all preparations are complete. After classes, tack captains untack the horses, return them to the correct pastures, and properly put away all tack.

Barn Buddy

The Barn Buddy position is a physically demanding volunteer role responsible for the daily care of horses, including feeding, watering, mucking stalls, and maintaining paddocks. To qualify, volunteers must complete Sidewalker and Leader training and have at least six months of volunteering experience with EATherapy. Eligibility is determined by Wildwood Office Team. The role requires physical fitness, including the ability to lift up to 50 pounds, work outdoors in various weather conditions, and perform tasks such as standing, bending, and stooping. Volunteers must demonstrate competency with horses according to EATherapy standards, commit to at least one shift per week, and have reliable transportation.

Maintenance Team

The maintenance team is open to individuals aged 16 and older, with eligibility for this position determined by the Wildwood office team. Most maintenance work occurs on weekdays and involves tasks that keep the 28-acre property in excellent condition. Responsibilities include mowing, weed whacking, harrowing, tree trimming, fence repair, landscaping, and other related duties. The team plays a vital role in ensuring our property remains safe, functional, and welcoming for all activities.

Greeter

Volunteers are eligible for this position as determined by the Wildwood office team. They greet participants, volunteers, visitors, prospective participants, and families at the main entrance of each facility, helping direct them to where they need to go. Greeters may also assist with light administrative work and cleaning duties.

Other Skills

Equine Assisted Therapy is always seeking volunteers to assist with daily facility maintenance, special events, and various tasks. Volunteers with expertise in event catering, landscaping, tiling, electrical work, concrete tasks, fencing, grant writing, plumbing, painting, printing services, gardening, office cleaning or other areas are invited to get involved. Contributions are essential in supporting the facility's operations and events.

All volunteers must be at least 14 years of age

A Walk Through of Volunteering at EAT

Volunteering at EAT is a rewarding experience that supports our programs, participants, and horses. This guide will help you navigate your responsibilities and expectations as a volunteer.

Time Commitment

We ask our volunteers to dedicate at least **1 hour per week during our 6-week session**. You can volunteer for one class or as many as you'd like. Consistency is crucial to the success of our programs, so we value reliable participation.

Arriving at the Barn: What to Expect

1. Plan Your Arrival Time:

- **Sidewalkers:** Arrive 10-15 minutes before your scheduled class.
- **Leaders:** Arrive 20 minutes early to warm up the horse.

2. Parking:

- Please avoid parking in the spots closest to the entrance. Reserve these and the handicapped-marked spots for our riders.

3. Entering the Barn:

- Use the main lobby door so the office team knows you're here.

4. Check In:

- Grab your name tag and check the posted schedule for any updates or changes.

5. Prepare:

- Wait in the designated waiting area until the instructor invites you into the arena.

What to Wear to the Barn

- Dress appropriately for the weather and the activities you'll be doing.
- Wear closed-toed shoes comfortable for walking on all terrains.

Recommended options:

- Muck or rain boots
- Hiking boots
- Riding boots
- Tennis shoes
- Avoid tank tops, short shorts, or half-shirts.
- Remove dangling jewelry (including smart Watches) to prevent safety issues.
- Jackets or coats must be zipped or buttoned while worn.
- In winter, gloves are recommended to keep your hands out of your pockets.
- We encourage wearing EAT gear and always bring your EAT-issued name tag.

What to Do If You Can't Make Your Scheduled Volunteer Time

If you cannot attend your scheduled session, notify the office team as soon as possible. Many of our participants rely on their regular team members being present. For planned absences, such as vacations, provide the dates in advance by:

- **Texting:** 314-971-0605
- **Emailing:** info@eatherapy.org

EAT Class Cancellations

If EAT cancels classes, you will be notified via text and asked to confirm receipt of the message. If we do not hear from you, we will make one more attempt to contact you by text or phone call.

Weather-Related Class Cancellation Policy

- **Heat:**
 - A heat advisory is in effect.
 - The actual temperature exceeds 80°F, and the combined temperature and humidity reach 150 or higher.
 - “Feels like” temperature is 95°F or higher.
- **Cold:**
 - A winter weather advisory is in effect.
 - The actual temperature is 20°F or below.
 - “Feels like” temperature is 15°F or below.
 - Rockwood School District cancels classes or after-school activities.
- **Tornado Sirens:**
 - If tornado sirens sound within a few hours of either morning or evening classes, that session (morning or evening) will be canceled, and you will be notified.
 - If tornado sirens sound in the morning but conditions clear in the afternoon, evening classes will proceed as planned.

Final Tips for a Successful Volunteer Experience

- Consistency and preparation help ensure a smooth experience for participants and horses.
- Follow the dress code to stay safe and comfortable during your volunteer time.
- Communicate promptly if you're unable to attend or if you have any concerns.

Working with Participants

At EAT, we respect and support each participant's unique learning style, pace, and personality, fostering an inclusive environment where everyone can thrive. As a volunteer, you play an important role in both the EAT family and the participant experience. EAT serves a diverse group of individuals, including children and adults with various challenges, and your contribution helps create a positive and rewarding experience for them.

Do's:

- Be yourself and talk to participants about the same things you would with anyone else: work, school, hobbies, animals, likes, dislikes, etc.
- Speak to them at their age. Always assume they can hear and understand you even if they are not able to respond.
- Be patient and go at the participant's pace, giving them ample time to respond.
- Laugh, have fun, and celebrate their accomplishments with them.
- Enjoy your time with the participant.
- Celebrate their progress instead of being overly critical or focusing on mistakes.

Don'ts:

- Refrain from staring or making judgments about the participant.
- Do not talk down to them or treat them as if they are incapable.
- Try not to interrupt or rush the participant when they are trying to express themselves.
- Do not make assumptions about their abilities or limitations.
- Avoid comparing participants to one another.