

Freedom Ride Participant Handbook

Our Mission

Freedom Ride is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to enriching the lives of children and adults with disabilities in the Central Florida area through therapeutic horseback riding and related activities. We believe in the power of the horse to build confidence, physical strength, emotional well-being, and joy for all participants.

Welcome Message

Welcome to Freedom Ride! We're so happy you're here. Our barn is a place where people and horses work together to build strength, confidence, and unforgettable memories. Whether it's your first time around horses or you're returning for another session, we can't wait to share in your journey.

- Participant Registration Information, Photo Release, and Emergency Medical Treatment Authorization
- Participant Liability Release Form
- Statistical Survey (used only for grant and funding purposes)
- Participant Questionnaire
- Medical Release Form (completed by a doctor, including rider height, weight, and diagnosis)-only needed for therapeutic riding

All forms should be updated annually to comply with accreditation standards and insurance requirements.

Program Overview

New Participant Evaluation: A one-time \$75 non-refundable fee applies. Evaluations help us determine skill level, abilities, and class placement. Placement is based on horse availability, instructor and participant availability, and skill level of participant.

Therapeutic Riding Lessons: Taught by PATH International certified instructors, lessons focus on safety, riding skills, and personal growth. We use games, activities, and tailored instruction to improve balance, mobility, strength, and confidence. We use a team of 1-3 volunteers per rider to assist during lessons for the therapeutic riding program

Policies for Riders Only

Rider Limitations

All horses have height and weight limits to ensure their health and the safety of the rider. Each horse has a maximum weight of how much they can carry, which will include rider and tack. These limits are determined by the Barn Manager. Certain medical conditions may require additional precautions or may prevent participation. A physician-completed Medical Release Form is needed before starting lessons and should be updated annually.

Clothing Requirements

Riders should wear long pants (breeches, jeans, leggings) and closed-toe shoes. Boots with a small heel are preferred. No skirts, dresses, dangling jewelry, or unsafe accessories. ASTM-SEI approved helmets are needed and will be provided if the rider does not own one.

Quick Reference Guide

- Lesson Fee: \$75/class
- New Participant Evaluation: \$75
- Required Forms: Signed Handbook and No-Show Policy
Therapeutic Riding Participants Only: Medical Release for Physician Use Only (if previous one on file has expired), Registration Forms (only for new participants)
- Clothing: Long pants, closed-toe shoes, helmet if riding
- Cancellations: 24-hour notice needed
- Contact: 407-293-0411 | info@freedomride.com

Billing & Payment

Freedom Ride subsidizes the cost of therapeutic riding lessons through fundraising, grants, and scholarships. We keep fees modest to make our services accessible.

- Payment Details:
 - New Participant Evaluation Fee: \$75 non-refundable, due at evaluation.
 - Lesson Fee: \$75 per class, billed in advance for the entire session. Payment should be received before the first class.
 - Weekly payments are available upon prior arrangement with the office.
 - Payment is needed for all absences, excused or unexcused.
 - Accepted payments: checks, money orders, credit cards (in-office or online via our website).

Scholarships

Limited scholarships are available. Applications should include proof of income and be submitted before the session begins. Awards are based on a sliding scale aligned with Federal Poverty Guidelines.

No-Show and Cancellation Policy

We're so glad you've chosen to participate in our programs! These policies help us make sure every participant—and every horse—gets the best experience possible.

- Please arrive at least 5 minutes before your scheduled session time so we can check you in and process payment.
- Riders: If you are more than 10 minutes late, you may not be able to ride as it can disrupt the flow of the class.
- Mental Wellness Participants: If you arrive more than 10 minutes late, your instructor will decide whether to extend or end your session on time.
- If you will be absent, please give us at least 24 hours' notice by calling 407-293-0411. If no one answers, leave a message—our instructors cannot check cell phones during lessons.
- For sudden illness, call as soon as you know you can't make it—no later than 15 minutes before your session.
- More than 2 absences or more than 1 no-show in a session may mean we need to offer your spot to someone on the waiting list.
- Scholarship Participants: More than 1 no-show may result in losing your scholarship and eligibility for future scholarships.
- There are no refunds for missed classes. Payment for the session is expected regardless of absences or no-shows. This includes cash, card, Step Up Scholarship, and Freedom Ride Scholarships
- If Freedom Ride cancels due to weather or other reasons, we'll try to schedule a make-up class at the end of the session. If that's not possible, you'll receive credit for the missed class.

Inclement Weather

Lessons are not automatically cancelled because of rain. Weather can differ across areas, so please check with Freedom Ride before assuming closure.

Barn Safety

1. All students who are not considered “responsible for themselves” should not be left unattended at any time and must be accompanied by a parent or adult guardian until the student is escorted by the instructor or volunteer to their lesson.
2. A parent or adult guardian must be present during the entire riding lesson for all participants under the age of 21.
3. A parent or adult guardian must be present during the entire lesson for all non-verbal participants.
4. Freedom Ride reserves the right to extend our supervision policy to other participants as deemed necessary.
5. Participants and parents must wait at the gate, bleachers or picnic table until their lesson time. Instructors/volunteers will escort participants past the viewing area.
6. Parents/Guardians and visitors are not permitted in the barn area, arena (unless asked to assist by instructor), or past the bleacher area unless escorted by instructor/volunteers.
7. A safety helmet must be worn at all times during riding lessons. Freedom Ride has helmets available for use in our barn, or you may purchase your own at a local tack shop.
8. Participants, parents, visitors, volunteers and staff are REQUIRED to always wear closed toe shoes when in the barn and around the horses. If participant is under the age of 21, parent or guardians should also be in close toed shoes in the event they are asked to assist with their child. Individuals that arrive on property without the proper foot attire will not be allowed in the viewing area.
9. Remember this is Florida! Participants should be properly hydrated and protected from the elements. Cool wrap bands, sunglasses, jackets, etc. can be worn by the participants as long as they do not prevent lesson activities.
10. At Freedom Ride we DO NOT hand feed our horses. If a participant wishes to bring treats, they may give them to the horse in a bucket with permission from their instructor and within the confines of their season time.
11. There are no pets allowed on Freedom Ride property. Emotional support animals are not permitted. Service dogs are permitted in accordance with ADA guidelines.
12. Any bleeding or open sores must be covered with a bandage, or the participant cannot attend that session.
13. Please be sure to advise the instructor of any medical changes such as recent seizures or illness that may affect their ability to participate.
14. We ask that parents/guardians please refrain from coaching participants from the sidelines during their sessions. It is important their focus remains on the instructor and assisting volunteers.
15. Please make sure that any visitors you bring (including siblings, other family and friends) are kept under your supervision. No climbing/sitting/standing on the fence, no shouting or loud voices, no running around the riding arena, barn or parking lot, etc.
16. Our instructors are always available to answer any questions you have regarding you or participants. Please understand that they may not be available directly before or after the lesson but can set up a day/time to address your thoughts.
17. All phones and other electronic devices on our premises must be put on silent and or not on speaker. This is a distraction to our sessions.
18. ABSOLUTELY NO SMOKING ALLOWED AT THE FREEDOM RIDE FACILITY.
19. We ask that everyone treats instructors, volunteers, staff, and horses with respect. Any abusive behavior or serious rule violations will result in dismissal from the property.

Acknowledgement Page

Acknowledgment of Receipt and Understanding

I, the undersigned, acknowledge that I have received a copy of the **Freedom Ride Participant Handbook**. I have read, or had read to me, the contents of this handbook, including but not limited to:

- Program information and participation requirements
- Billing, payment, and scholarship policies
- Barn safety rules and procedures
- No-show and cancellation policies
- Clothing and equipment requirements
- Participant conduct and behavior expectations

I understand and agree to abide by all policies, procedures, and safety rules contained in the handbook. I understand that these policies are in place to protect the safety and well-being of all participants, staff, volunteers, visitors, and horses.

I further understand that failure to follow these rules and policies may result in my removal, or the removal of my child/dependent, from the Freedom Ride program.

Participant Name (Please Print): _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Name (if participant is under 18 or requires a legal guardian):

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Date: _____