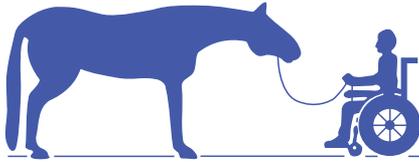


# Crossroads Center, Inc. Program Handbook



## *For Riders, Parents, and Volunteers*

**The mission of Crossroads Center** is to enhance the lives of individuals with disabilities through horseback riding. We provide equestrian programs that are designed to encourage all participants to reach their personal physical and/or emotional potential in a safe, caring, and challenging environment.

**Crossroads is a non-profit organization.** We are extremely gratified to have strong community support, both financially and from all the volunteers that make our programs possible. No rider is turned away due to financial hardship.

**The center is located at the Ronnie Delay Arena**, 8.5 miles east on Road 4 (formerly Bluebell Road) from the six-way intersection on Highway 54. Lessons are held in an indoor arena, generally from April to November, with a break during August.

### **Rena Cross, Executive Director**

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18252 Road 4, Liberal, Kansas 67901

Facebook – Crossroads Therapeutic Riding Center  
Website -- [www.crossroadsctr.org](http://www.crossroadsctr.org)

**Crossroads Center, Inc.**  
**is a member of PATH International, the accrediting body  
for therapeutic riding in the United States. Our center  
adheres to their safety standards and policies.**

Crossroads is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization that offers children and adults with disabilities the benefits of equine assisted activities. No rider is turned away due to financial hardship. Participants are accepted into the program as space becomes available. There is no charge for Crossroads services, but we encourage participants and their families to participate in our many fundraising activities. If you would like to make a cash, tax-deductible donation to Crossroads Center, you can mail your donation to Crossroads Center, 18252 Road 4, Liberal, Kansas 67901.

This organization is governed by a Board of Directors. The center is staffed by an Executive Director, Rena Cross. Volunteers assist in all the lessons and chores around the arena.

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

*Please Read Carefully*

**Riders that fail to notify Crossroads Center about missing their weekly class will lose their reserved time slot and will have to wait for a new opening to occur.** We understand that riders will miss classes due to uncontrollable circumstances, so be sure to notify the center if you will be absent. If you will be unable to attend for an extended time, please let us know so that we can allow another participant to benefit from the riding program.

Riders that fail to notify the center prior to their absence for two class sessions will lose their time slot and have to reapply for admission into the program.

# Acceptance into the Program

Potential participants must fill out an application and have current medical forms on file. The director will review the applications and make a determination about the suitability of our riding activities for the participant. Participants may be required to meet with center staff to determine if the Crossroads program will have a positive impact on the rider.

- A rider must weigh less than 20% of an available horse's weight. (for example, a horse weighing 1,000 lbs. would not be asked to carry more than 180 lbs.)
- A rider must be evaluated by the director. The director must conclude that program participation will have a positive impact on the rider.
- A rider must not exhibit conditions that are contraindicated as noted in the PATH Standards. This is for the safety of the rider.
- A rider must be recommended by a licensed health professional such as a Physician or Therapist.
- A rider must provide the center with updated health and permission forms annually.

## Appointment Times

After a client has been accepted into the program, the center director will assign a weekly appointment time. Lessons generally last for 30 minutes. It is extremely important that you notify the center if you cannot keep your appointment. Please leave a message on the arena answering machine as soon as possible. We have scheduled volunteers to work during your riding time, and we want to use our staff and volunteers as efficiently as possible.

## Cancellation

Crossroads will cancel lessons if the temperature is above 95 degrees. Check the National Weather Service for the most accurate temperatures. We will cancel for severe weather warnings or other unforeseen events. The center director will contact clients and post closings on Facebook. Please call the center if you have questions.

**Medical and Information Forms:** Medical and information forms **must be updated annually**, or whenever there is a change in the client's status or contact information. Forms are kept in the Crossroads office, and are confidential. In the event of a medical emergency, the client's medical release form will accompany the client to the hospital or be provided to the EMT staff. Clients that do not update their information will be considered inactive and will not be able to participate until their records are updated.

**Confidentiality:** All client information is considered confidential and will only be shared with staff and volunteers as needed. Clients or guardians must fill out a confidentiality agreement prior to participation.

**Riding:** Every rider has different needs, and the Crossroads instructor will develop a lesson plan to fit each participant based on their medical information and personal goals. There are physical, psychological, educational, and social benefits to be gained through participation in a therapeutic program. You or your child will develop riding skills and learn about horses. Riding is also an enjoyable recreation activity that improves quality of life.

## **Safety Equipment / Procedures**

**Helmets:** Anyone, including staff and volunteers, participating in a mounted activity must wear an ASTM approved helmet. The instructor will fit the client initially, and the correct size will be noted on the rider class sheet in the office. Make sure the helmet does fit correctly each time, as different helmets will vary slightly.

**Tack:** Instructors will select the appropriate saddle or surcingle to be used by each rider. Riders must use safety stirrups unless they are wearing appropriate riding boots. This applies to all riders, including staff and volunteers.

**Horse:** Riders will generally be assigned a primary mount,

but this may vary due to scheduling or horse health issues. Riders will be instructed in safety procedures for working with their horse. Only the instructor, or someone designated by and under the supervision of the instructor, will be permitted to mount or dismount a rider.

**Mounting Ramp:** Riders will be mounted from the ramp. Children should not be allowed to play on the ramp.

**Riding Attire:** We suggest that riders wear loose, comfortable long pants when riding in a saddle. It is recommended that all riders wear sturdy, closed toe shoes with a heel. Riding boots are preferable, but not required. Riders must use a safety stirrup if they are not wearing riding boots. **NO SANDALS.**

## Hazards

### Fire

- In case of fire, clients, volunteers, and parents will be evacuated from the building immediately to meet at the trash bin on the east side of the building.
- Fire extinguishers are located by the office and main door.
- If a client is mounted, the client will be dismounted at the Instructor's direction.
- A call will be made to 911. The caller will stay on the phone until released by the operator.
- Horses will be evacuated to the Cross residence south of the building.
- Personnel will clear the parking area for the fire fighters if possible.

### Weather

- Riding lessons are cancelled if the temperature is over 95 degrees, or extremely cold. Check the National Weather Service for temperatures.
- The Director will make a decision about weather cancellations and post this information on Facebook.
- Riding will be cancelled in the event of Severe Weather Warnings.
- We cannot ride during electrical storms. Lessons may be postponed

until the storm passes, or cancelled if necessary.

- In case of a tornado, take shelter in the Cross residence basement, south of the arena.
- If lessons are held during a Severe Weather Watch, center staff will stay alert in case a Warning is issued. Lessons will be cancelled in the event of a tornado or thunderstorm warning, and the Director will evacuate the arena.

### **Minor First Aid**

- First Aid will be provided by certified personnel.
- First Aid kit is located in the office.

### **Traffic / Parking**

- Please park in designated areas. Areas close to the main door are reserved for those with physical disabilities.
- Please use caution when entering or leaving the parking area. Children may be present.

### **Emergency Situation**

If an emergency situation arises while riders are mounted, the rider should be dismounted in the ring. Please follow the instructor's directions. The Horse Leader should hold the horse's head, while the Side Walkers or other staff assist the rider in dismounting.

**Smoking is absolutely prohibited at Crossroads outside or inside the arena.** You may smoke inside your vehicle.

**Cell phones** should be silent inside the arena to avoid startling the horses.

**Photography** – please ask before taking any photographs. Some clients do not wish to be photographed. Avoid using flash photography, as some horses do not like this.

**Alcohol is prohibited at Crossroads.** Please do not drink before a lesson.

**Gate** into the riding ring should be closed when a rider is mounted in the ring.

**Pets** – please leave your pets at home.

**Service Dogs** – Service dogs should remain in the seating area or in vehicles (weather permitting) while their rider is mounted in the ring.

**Restricted Areas** – Please do not enter office or storage areas without permission. Do not allow children to enter these areas.

### **Family and Friends**

You are welcome to bring family and friends. Parents are responsible for their children, and should supervise children closely. Care must be taken not to startle the horses. Children should not play on the mounting ramp while riders are mounting horses. Visitors should remain quietly seated while classes are in session.

### **Before Your Ride**

Try to remain physically active throughout the week. Gentle stretching exercises at home will help you improve your flexibility and stamina. Ask your instructor about helpful exercises.

### **During Your Ride**

Please let your instructor know if you become overly tired or need to take a rest break. Riding often does cause some slight discomfort as you learn to use new muscles, but you should not experience pain.

### **After Your Ride**

Take some time following your ride to relax and chat with staff and clients. If you would like to bring a treat for your horse, you may feed the treat in the horse's stall in a feed pan. Please ask staff to assist with treats. We do not hand feed our horses. A warm bath will help to relax your muscles following the ride. If you are stiff the next day, get some gentle exercise to loosen stiff muscles.

# Volunteers

Anyone can become a Crossroads volunteer. We have many different opportunities. All volunteers must have the appropriate forms on file. Parents or family members that wish to assist with lessons must complete the volunteer forms. The minimum age for a volunteer is 14. Volunteers under the age of 18 must have a parent or guardian sign their forms for them.

## Volunteer forms

You must have all the required volunteer forms on file. Please let us know if any of your information changes. You will be asked to review your information annually and update it if needed.

## What to wear

If you are working around the horses, boots are highly recommended. **DO NOT WEAR SANDALS** or any open-toe shoe. Be sure to wear boots or closed toe shoes that are sturdy and safe. If you are working as a horse leader or side walker, you will walk a lot.

Earrings should be avoided. Necklaces and bracelets can also be a hazard. It is possible that your jewelry could get caught on a rider or piece of tack and cause injury.

Please use good taste in selecting your clothes. Old and worn is OK (we are working with horses!), but avoid anything too revealing or with questionable wording or images. As a Crossroads volunteer, you are representing our organization. We want to make sure we present a professional appearance.

## Safety helmets

**SAFETY HELMETS ARE REQUIRED FOR ANYONE PARTICIPATING IN A CROSSROADS CENTER MOUNTED ACTIVITY.**

This includes staff and clients. Helmets must meet or exceed ASTM regulations. This is a PATH mandatory standard.

## Stirrups

All riders must wear proper riding boots unless they are using

safety stirrups. (stirrups with the rubber bands or western stirrups with a basket) **This means NO athletic shoes or street shoes can be worn when riding with a standard stirrup.** The instructor is responsible for making sure riders have the correct footwear/equipment. Staff and volunteers must also follow these rules when riding.

### **Keep your appointment**

We rely heavily on our volunteers. If you have to cancel, be sure to let us know as soon as possible so that we can make other arrangements. We do understand that volunteers have other commitments. If we don't have enough people for a riding session, it throws everything off, so try to let us know in advance if you will miss a session.

If the temperature is above 95 degrees, we will cancel. We will post on Facebook if we cancel riding. Generally, we offer lessons for six weeks, Monday through Wednesday, and then have two weeks off. There will be no riding in August.

### **Who does what**

Rena Cross, Crossroads Executive Director, is the ultimate authority. When in doubt, ask. Safety is extremely important. If you see something that needs attention during a lesson bring it to the instructor's attention.

**Instructor.** The instructor plans the lesson, and is responsible for how the lesson is carried out. The instructor will assign jobs and let you know what to expect. The instructor is responsible for safety checks and mounting and dismounting. The instructor makes sure the rider has a correctly fitted helmet and that the stirrups and rider footgear are correct. After the lesson is over, the instructor may ask for your input.

**Horse Leader.** The horse is the leader's primary responsibility and should be where attention is focused. The instructor will direct the leader. Do not turn around and watch the rider while you are leading the horse. Be sure to hold the lead rope correctly. **NEVER WRAP THE LEAD AROUND YOUR HAND.** At the halt, stand to the side and slightly in front of the horse, facing the horse's head. Wait for the rider's instructions if appropriate. Let the instructor know if you notice any problems with the horse.

**Side Walker.** Your responsibility is to the rider. If the horse makes a sudden move, you must be prepared to go with the rider. This means you have to stay focused at all times. You will learn a variety of positions, depending on the rider's balance and stability. Some rider's don't require any physical contact. Others may need quite a bit of assistance. Be sure to let the instructor know if your arm gets tired, as we can switch sides. If you are going to move away from the rider, the instructor will come and take your place so that there is always someone next to the rider. If you need to move away from the rider for any reason, let the instructor know first.

You may be asked to help in a variety of ways, such as helping a rider with foot position or in learning to guide the horse. Be sure to let the instructor know if you feel uncomfortable about anything you are asked to do. Training sessions will be scheduled as needed for volunteers.

There will be times during the lesson where socializing needs to be more limited so that the rider can focus on the lesson. Please let the instructor know if you have any safety concerns that need to be taken care of during the lesson. At the end of the lesson, let the instructor know if you have any suggestions for next time.

### **Arena Gate**

The arena gate must be closed any time a rider is in the arena.

### **Fire Emergency**

In case of fire, everyone must evacuate the building immediately. Meet up by the dumpster on the east side of the building in the parking area. Call the fire department and stay on the line with them until they have all the information they need. There are fire extinguishers located by the office and main door.

### **Weather Emergency**

Please stay alert during threatening weather. Keep the radio on in case weather warnings are issued. Lessons will be cancelled during thunderstorm and tornado warnings. Should a tornado approach, take shelter in the Cross home basement south of the arena.

## **Personal Injury**

If a major injury should occur, call 911 first. Stay on the phone until you have completed giving the operator all the information needed. The center address is posted next to the phone. Instructors are trained in CPR and First Aid, and they will determine what actions to take next. The First Aid kit is in the office. Once the victim is taken care of, put the horses in their stalls if needed. Riders must be safely dismounted if needed. Clear the way for the ambulance. Keep everyone as calm as possible.

Volunteers and clients have emergency forms on in the office. These should be provided to the EMT's or taken to the hospital, unless the victim's parent or guardian is there to provide treatment authorization.

## **Parking**

Don't park directly in front of the doors, as these areas are for the clients.

## **Confidentiality**

Please be aware that all client information is considered confidential and is not to be shared. You must sign a confidentiality agreement.

## **No Smoking**

Barns and smoking don't go together, so please don't smoke at Crossroads. Some of our riders have smoke allergies, so we must avoid smoke exposure. You are a role model for our child riders, so please don't smoke. (You can smoke inside your car.)

## **Cell Phones**

Please turn off your phones while in the arena building.

## **PATH Certified Instructor**

Would you like to become a certified instructor? You can find out more by speaking with Rena Cross or Susan Copas, or by visiting the PATH site. (See the links page on our website.) There is an online study and test, instructor-in-training component, CPR certification, and an on-site teaching demonstration and riding test involved in obtaining certification.

# Donation of Horses

Occasionally Crossroads Center, Inc. will accept the donation of a horse for the program. Once the donation of the horse has been accepted by Crossroads, the horse becomes the sole property of the center. If the horse cannot be used in our riding program, the center will find a new home for the horse or may return the horse to the owner.

**Horses doing this kind of work are very special.** They have to be attentive and enjoy a great deal of interaction with their human team. They must remain calm and tolerate all kinds of equipment and games. The horse must be physically sound. In assessing the suitability of a horse, these areas will be considered:

- Size of the horse
- Age of the horse
- Behavior traits of the horse
- Health of the horse

**If a horse exhibits unwanted behavior, the horse will be schooled to correct the behavior.** If the horse is deemed inappropriate for the program, the horse will be removed from the program permanently.

## **The Screening Process will include**

- Mounting and dismounting procedures
- Introduction to ramp, wheelchair, or other assistive equipment
- Leading from either side at the walk and trot
- Side walkers working closely on both sides
- Tolerance of games and special equipment