



Rider Handbook

March 2022



Welcome!

Cloud Dancers is a 501C3 non-profit organization that does not receive any city, state, or federal funding. We are responsible for earning or raising 100% of our operating budget through donations from individuals and businesses, fund raising events and grants.

Cloud Dancers is a member center of **PATH International** (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International). As such, Cloud Dancers complies with PATH Int'l standards for safety, precautions, and contraindications. Our instructors are PATH certified. For more information on PATH visit PATHintl.org.

Staff/Volunteers

- Karen Molony, Equine & Facilities Manager and Head Instructor
- Ilyse Gold, PATH Certified Instructor
- Louisa Roberts, Program Coordinator
- Sandy LaBarbera, Volunteer Coordinator



For the safety of all riders, trained volunteers, under the guidance of PATH certified instructors, work as Horse Leaders and Side Walkers in all lessons. If parents are interested in becoming volunteers, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Sandy LaBarbera, at volunteer.cloudancersthpa@gmail.com. More information about our Staff and Board can be found on our web site.

Web/Facebook/Instagram

You can find the application packet and other helpful information on our website, www.cloudancersthpa.org. Find us on Facebook for regular updates, related media, and pictures of our students and families. Fun pictures can also be seen on our Instagram site.

What is Therapeutic Riding?

Therapeutic riding uses activities with horses for the purpose of contributing positively to the cognitive, physical, emotional, and social well-being of individuals with disabilities. There are four therapeutic riding classifications—therapy, education, sport, and recreation & leisure.



Currently, Cloud Dancers practices in recreation and leisure with plans to incorporate therapy by licensed health professionals, such as Occupational and Physical therapists at a later date. Our PATH certified instructors design and implement activities with horses that address cognitive, behavioral, psychological and physical goals, as well as teach skills in riding, vaulting or ground work. Personal pride and improved self-esteem come from accomplishing new tasks and learning new skills. The pure enjoyment of the horse-human bond brings joy and pleasure along with new friendships and relationships.

Individuals with disabilities that may respond positively to therapeutic riding include people with Down Syndrome, Autism, MS, paralysis, amputations, ADD, ADHD, developmental delays, Cerebral Palsy, brain injuries, strokes, drug or alcohol abuse, depression, hearing and vision impairments and other disabilities.

Riding Activities

Cloud Dancers adapts safe and fun riding techniques to individuals with a variety of disabilities. Certified Instructors develop goals, with input of riders and/or parents/guardians that meet needs for developing core and muscle strength, increasing physical flexibility and balance, improving fine motor skills, enhancing communication and listening skills and more. Teens and adults will experience riding in trail courses and dressage patterns. For younger rider needing to improve fine motor skills, activities on a horse could include retrieving stuffed zoo animals from corral fences and barrels and taking them back to the zoo in the center of arena. Games with colors and shapes may enhance communication and listening skills. Playing red light, green light on horseback focuses on following directions. Flexibility, balance and core strength may show improvement from the rhythmic gait of a horse being similar to the human gait. Guiding a horse requires good posture with heads up and eyes in the direction you want to go. During lessons riders also learn about horse care and anatomy, grooming and tacking.



Eligibility

Riders must be at least five (5) years of age and under 185 lbs. Due to the nature of riding and other equine-related activities, there may be individuals for whom our program is deemed inappropriate or contraindicated according to PATH Standards. Our staff provides initial and ongoing evaluations for prospective and active riders and reserves the right to determine that continuance in the program for a given individual is inappropriate.

Application Process

- Riders or parents or guardians must complete the online Application Packet once each year, along with obtaining current physician's statements. When registering for your first year there is a \$25 non-refundable Evaluation Fee.
- Prospective riders will receive an interview and evaluation with our Program Coordinator and an instructor to determine eligibility and best placement.
- Riders will have the opportunity to sign up for specific sessions throughout the year.
- If a rider registers for a session that has already begun, the cost will be pro-rated.
- Schedule preferences are taken into consideration, but our primary goal is to group riders of similar ability or skill level to allow for more quality instruction.



General Safety Guidelines

- Respect ALL people and animals.
- If you are not a rider, please stay in the Viewing Area during lessons for your comfort and safety.
- Non-rider children must be with an adult at all times.
- Please honor the 5-mph speed limit.
- Parking for most is in front of the office.
- Parking in front of the Barn is reserved for students with limited mobility.
- Other horses are boarded within the Center. Please do not wander in areas to the south and west of the Barn and do not touch, feed, or interact with these horses.
- Throw trash or recyclables in appropriate receptacles.
- Use soft voice, avoid loud noises and be gentle around the horses.
- Smoking is not permitted on Center property.
- Please do not bring dogs or other pets into the Center.
- Yelling, abusive language, or aggressive actions will not be tolerated.
- Please do not hand feed Cloud Dancers' horses any food or treats as it encourages undesirable behavior.



Covid-19 Protocol

See our website <https://www.cloudancersthp.org> for up-to-date Covid-19 protocol and procedures.

Lesson Etiquette

- Participants are encouraged to arrive on time for each lesson to receive the greatest benefit from their lesson time.
- If you know **more than 24 hours in advance** that you can't make your lesson, notify our Program Coordinator at programs.cloudancersthp@gmail.com or at 505-926-1426. If **less than 24- hours notice** of cancellation call your instructor's cell phone. Please be respectful of instructors' and volunteers' time as they are scheduled around lesson times.

New Mexico Equine Liability Act

All participants or guardians must sign Cloud Dancers' liability release before participating in any equine- related activities. As stated in Section 2 of the New Mexico Equine Liability Act "The legislature recognizes that any persons who participate in or observe equine activities may incur injuries as a result of the numerous inherent risks involved in such activities" and in section 4A "No person, corporation, or partnership is liable for personal injuries to or for the death of a rider that may occur as the result of the behavior of equine animals while engaged in any equine activities."

Riding Attire/What to Bring to Lessons

- Bring a water bottle and appropriate environmental protection for **you and your rider**, such as sunscreen, hat, damp neck scarf, bug repellent, coat, or gloves depending on weather.
- All riders are required to wear an ASTM/SEI approved riding helmet with the chin strap secured when working with or around horses.
- Riders may bring their own ASTM/SEI approved helmet or use one provided by Cloud Dancers.
- For riding wear long pants (i.e., jeans or riding breeches) and closed-toe shoes, heels preferred (i.e., boots).
- No heavy perfumes or dangling jewelry.



Lesson Fees

Our policy is for payment for any session to be made in advance of the first class of that session. We understand that this may be difficult when a third-party payer is involved; however, in these situations we do require a guarantee of payment prior to the first class. Payments may be made on-line (<https://www.cloudancersthp.org/programs/sessions-payment/>) or checks may be mailed to **Cloud Dancers Billing, PO Box 10489, Albuquerque NM 87184** or given to an instructor at the Barn. Clients will be charged \$30 for returned checks and may be put on “credit card only” basis for more than one returned check.

Fees will vary depending on the length of the session offered. The current fee schedule can be found at <https://www.cloudancersthp.org/programs/class-fees-and-billing-policy/>.

There are no refunds of missed/unused lessons. Normally, riders are registered for entire Sessions. If a rider is approved to start mid-session, fees will be pro-rated.

If you receive funding from an outside third-party source (i.e., Carrie Tingley Hospital Foundation, DD Waiver (self-directed), etc.), it is your responsibility to request payment from the funding source in a timely manner (prior to the beginning of a session). Failure to provide written verification of funding sources, budget amounts and periods, and applicable codes to Cloud Dancers could result in discontinuance of services.

Financial Assistance - Scholarships

Cloud Dancers offers scholarships (when funds are available) to families who are income eligible. Income and eligibility requirements are outlined on our web site. If you feel you qualify, please complete the online application, gather income verification materials and contact our Program Coordinator for an interview at programs.cloudancersthp@gmail.com or 505-926-1426.

Lesson Schedules

When you sign up for a session, you will be asked your preference for hours and days and we will do our best to match your needs with groups of riders with similar abilities and instructors' availability.

Lesson Cancellation Policy

- Lessons are normally held rain or shine.
- If cancellation is initiated by Cloud Dancers, we will do our best to schedule a makeup lesson or, when necessary, refund the cost for the cancelled lesson.
- If you need to miss a lesson, please give at least 24 hours' notice to your instructor, either by cell phone message or text. **There are no refunds, credits, or rescheduling of missed/unused lessons.**

Change of Information, Health or Medication

Riders or their parents or guardians must inform Cloud Dancers immediately of any changes in health status, conditions or medications. This includes, but is not limited to, changes in weight, medications and dosages, revised diagnoses, medical interventions, surgeries, etc. In case of accident or injury, Cloud Dancers will follow your directives in your registration materials. Please notify us immediately of any changes to that information.

Changes in personal or contact information should also be reported to our Program Coordinator at programs.cloud dancersth@ gmail.com.

Confidentiality

Staff and volunteers are responsible for maintaining confidentiality of any information pertaining to Cloud Dancers' riders.

Communications

Our Program Coordinator or Instructors will communicate with students or parents/guardian on a regular basis about progress or issues that may arise during lessons. If you have any concerns, questions or issues, please contact your instructor or Program Coordinator immediately. Students or parents who feel their concerns are not being addressed may contact our Equine and Facilities Manager/Lead Instructor, Karen Molony at (505) 235-8358.



More Questions?

Contact Louisa Roberts, Program Coordinator at (505) 926-1426 or email programs.cloud dancersth@ gmail.com.

Have fun and enjoy your time with Cloud Dancers!

Thank you for your interest in our programs.

