



Medicine Horse

Horses Helping Humans

Volunteer Handbook

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Our Mission

We Save Lives. Healing through the empathic power of the horse.

Our Vision

A more connected, healthy and compassionate community.

Address

7663 E. County Line Road North
Longmont, CO, 80504

Regular Office Hours

Monday-Friday 9 am to 5 pm
Closed Saturdays & Sundays

Visitors by appointment only

Due to the confidential nature of the work we do, please do not visit our facility without an appointment.

Contact

General inquiries: info@medicinehorse.org
Volunteer inquiries: volunteercoordinator@medicinehorse.org

Volunteer Qualifications

You must be 18 or older to volunteer without supervision

Anyone under 18 must be accompanied by an adult or supervised by our Barn Manager

You must complete the online volunteer application, attend our Barn Crew Orientation, then complete a background check.

Must be able to commit to at least 2 volunteer shifts per month.

History of Medicine Horse

Founded in 2000, Medicine Horse is a non-profit organization that provides equine-facilitated psychotherapy and learning sessions either free of charge or by donation. Our mission is to use the empathic power of horses to transform lives and promote healing. Our licensed therapists work with therapy horses to provide mental health support to various groups, including underserved and marginalized youth, members of the LGBTQ+ community, veterans, active duty service members, those recovering from substance abuse, women affected by breast cancer, and trauma and abuse survivors.

What is Equine Facilitated Therapy?

Equine Facilitated Therapy (EFT) and Learning (EFL) are unique approaches involving experiential therapeutic activities with horses, guided by a licensed therapist. These methodologies are supported by numerous studies showing their efficacy with a variety of populations. Research has highlighted the ways EFT and EFL can benefit at-risk youth and those with an autism spectrum disorder diagnosis (Lentini & Knox, 2015). Participants in equine-facilitated therapy and learning programs have reported experiencing numerous benefits including reduced symptoms of anxiety, depression, and PTSD, improved self-esteem and self-awareness, better communication, and increased overall wellbeing.

Programs and Services

Group Programs & Individual Therapy

There are many areas where horses can help, such as trauma, grief, recovery, depression, and anxiety for all genders and all ages. Working with horses in nature is a unique and effective therapy treatment, especially for those who need an alternative to traditional talk therapy. Equine therapy is "experiential" and in our sessions with horses, we focus on sharing space with them and building trust over time while we learn to ground, groom, and lead with the supervision of licensed mental health professionals. Equine-facilitated therapy sessions use feedback from the horse's behavior and interactions to give insight, thus enhancing the process and providing a therapeutic experience unparalleled by talk therapy alone.

Meditation with Horses

At the end of every month, we offer a Meditation with Horses! This is a time to connect with your community, yourself, and with our Medicine Horse Herd. Horses have this amazing ability to always be in the present moment. They are embodied creatures who reflect back to us whatever we bring into their space. This makes them wonderful partners in our own exploration of mindfulness and presence. This group includes time to connect with one another, time to practice our mindfulness skills, and time to meet our herd.

Corporate Programs

As a manager, you face several challenges to build team cohesiveness, collaboration, manage conflict, and ensure you're getting the best out of your employees. Medicine Horse offers the unique opportunity to participate in experiential learning with horses in these targeted areas for improved team performance. Medicine Horse delivers an unmatched opportunity of bringing the benefits of working with horses to your teams while also impacting your community by contributing to our work. Proceeds from our corporate programs are reinvested in our free mental health programs.

Therapy Intern & Practicum Program

Medicine Horse accepts a limited number of Interns and Practicum students each year and these roles are an important part of our therapy team and our offerings to the community. Please note that we only consider candidates who are currently attending an accredited university working towards a master's in counseling or social work and ultimately going for their state license. We are a passionate team, we believe in the work we do and we have high expectations for those who join us!

Our office team also accepts interns related to fundraising, marketing & PR, program and volunteer support, and web design & management.

Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers help with everything from mucking stalls to supporting our therapists in group therapy sessions to helping office staff with a variety of tasks. We have three levels of volunteering.

Please note: For working with horses we require that all volunteers go through the three levels of training, regardless of prior horses or therapy experience. It gives us the opportunity to assess skills, introduce you to our horses, and provide background on information you might need to operate in an equine-facilitated psychotherapy facility. Unfortunately, due to staff limitations, we are not able to offer one-on-one training outside of our normally scheduled group training. (You do not need to complete all three levels of training, you can always just stay at level 1!)

Level 1: Barn Crew

Position Summary: Assist Medicine Horse team with equine-related tasks around the barn, including but not limited to mucking, filling water, hay bags, sweeping, etc.

Level 2: Equine Skills

Position Summary: Assist Barn Crew during turn in and turn out and with general horse care.

- Must complete 10 hours of Barn Crew Volunteering and be approved by Barn Manager

Level 3: Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) Horse Hands Team

Position Summary: Assist therapists by handling horses during group therapy sessions (tacking up, grooming, leading clients on horses, etc.)

- Must complete 8 hours of Equine Skills Volunteering, this includes a 2-hour in-person Horsemanship training class (\$25) and 4-hour horse handler training/skills assessment. If you need financial assistance to cover the fee, you can contact us at volunteercoordinator@medicinehorse.org.

Group & Corporate Volunteering

We welcome and encourage group and corporate volunteering! Group volunteer opportunities are an ideal way for corporate teams, student groups, high schools, churches and other organizations to join the Medicine Horse community and provide unique support to our programs.

Note: For volunteer activities outside of standard barn chores there may be a coordination and planning fee to support your group.

Have questions about volunteering at Medicine Horse? Not interested in Barn Chores, or do you have a different skill that you think could help improve our operations at Medicine Horse?

Email us at volunteercoordinator@medicinehorse.org.

Policies and Procedures for Volunteers

Importance of volunteers

Volunteering your time, knowledge, and skills at Medicine Horse is more than your average volunteer opportunity; it allows you to become a part of a mission to improve the lives of others and fuel positive social change. Our volunteers are the lifeblood of our organization and an integral aspect of all our programs and activities. Each day brings our volunteers a chance to help others and be a part of a compassionate and fun community.

Our volunteers help support us in a variety of ways, from mucking stalls and caring for our horses, to helping plan event fundraisers and supporting our therapists in group therapy sessions. With over 15 horses on property and over 2266 clients served per year, we rely very heavily on the support of our volunteer team. See below for more information on joining our volunteer team!

We always have plenty of volunteer opportunities! Whatever interest, talent, or gift you are willing to share may be, your time is appreciated and will be put to good use.

As a volunteer, you have the responsibility to:

- Meet your time commitments or provide adequate notice so other arrangements can be made
- Be trusted with confidential information necessary to do your work
- Perform assigned work to the best of your ability
- Follow organizational policies and procedures
- Be open-minded and respectful of others
- Accept reasonable tasks with a positive attitude
- Maintain a positive attitude toward Medicine Horse

As a volunteer, you will:

- Know that your efforts contribute to Medicine Horses' mission
- Receive the necessary orientation, training, and supervision
- Learn how to improve your skills in the work you're doing
- Be treated with respect
- Be appreciated for the work you have done
- Ask questions and make suggestions about the work you're doing
- Receive monthly volunteer newsletters to keep you updated and connected
- Be invited to volunteer appreciation events and have the opportunity to receive recognition for volunteer of the month

Attendance

After completion of the Barn Orientation, all volunteers will receive a link to sign up for volunteer shifts via SignUpGenius. All shifts are scheduled for 1-hour time slots, however, you are welcome to stay longer or leave earlier depending on your circumstances. Once you schedule a shift, you will automatically be added to our volunteer google calendar. At the time of your scheduled shift, you will meet in the main barn with our Barn Manager to go over what tasks need to be completed.

If you are unable to fulfill your commitment or no longer wish to volunteer with us, please contact the volunteer coordinator.

Waiver and Release Form

A liability waiver must be signed before you begin volunteering with us. Volunteers under the age of 18 must have their waiver signed and be accompanied by a parent or guardian while volunteering (accompanying adults who are not volunteering are still required to submit a complete a liability release form). Our Barn Manager is able to provide supervision Monday-Friday for individuals ages 16 and 17.

A copy of our liability waiver is attached at the end of this document.

Background check

Because we are a mental health facility, all volunteers and staff are required to submit a background check. After you submit your volunteer application and attend our barn orientation, you will then be asked to complete the background check. The background check costs approximately \$24.99. If you need financial assistance to cover the fee, you can contact us at volunteercoordinator@medicinehorse.org.

Medicine Horse uses a third-party agency (Certn) to conduct the background checks. We ensure that all background checks are conducted in compliance with all applicable

federal and state statutes, such as the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and all other applicable laws and regulations.

A background check report showing negative information will not automatically disqualify an applicant or volunteer. Rather, determinations of suitability will be made based on:

- The contents of the background check report, including the severity and recency of any offenses.
- The facts or circumstances surrounding the offense
- The nature of the job or other role under consideration.
- Full compliance with any and all local, state, and federal laws or regulations.

Please note: because we are a mental health facility, we are unable to accept individuals with the following charges: Felony, Assault/Harassment, Drugs, or Theft.

Accidents and injuries

Any accident or injury that occurs while at Medicine Horse must be reported to the supervisor immediately (within 10 minutes after the injury occurs).

Proper dress

Volunteers are asked to represent Medicine Horse in a professional manner. When you're working in the barns and on property, we ask that you wear jeans/long pants, close-toed shoes, work gloves, and appropriate shirts/tops. No clothing with beer/alcohol/drug/ political references or foul language. Please no dresses or skirts.

Personal Property

Medicine Horse is not responsible for loss, theft or damage of personal items. Volunteers are advised not to bring excessive cash or valuables with them while working on-site. We ask that you keep all belongings in your car, but you are welcome to keep small belongings such as keys in our office.

Communication

All volunteer communication will be done through our Slack channel. Slack provides a space to connect about current volunteer needs, changes in plans, or simply share thoughts and cute animal photos. If you have any questions, or thoughts you would like to share, or encounter any issues during your volunteering time, don't hesitate to contact our Barn Manager or the Volunteer Coordinator. We are always here to help!

If for any reason you do not have access to our slack channel, please reach out to the volunteer coordinator to get access.

New Volunteers: You will receive access to Slack after attending our Barn Orientation!

Harassment

It is illegal to harass others on the basis of their sex, age, race, color, national origin, religion, marital or veteran status, citizenship, disability and other personal characteristics. Harassment includes making derogatory remarks about such characteristics, making "jokes" about ethnic or other groups, and other verbal, physical and visual behavior, including sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment is a form of misconduct that undermines the integrity of the volunteer/Medicine Horse relationship. No volunteer should be subject to unsolicited or unwelcome sexual overtures or conduct, either verbal or physical. Sexual harassment refers to behavior that are not welcome, that is personally offensive, that debilitates morale, and that, therefore, interferes with work effectiveness. Such behavior may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Sexual harassment is defined as any unwanted physical, verbal or visual sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and any other sexually oriented conduct, that is offensive or objectionable to the recipient, including but not limited to: abusive language, derogatory or suggestive comments, slurs or gestures, and offensive posters, cartoons, pictures or drawings and/or unwanted communication via, phone, email, social media or other communication channels.

Medicine Horse will not tolerate the harassment or sexual harassment of any employee, client, customer, volunteer, vendor or any other person dealing with the organization. **Volunteers should report suspected sexual comments or harassment directly to their supervisor or the executive director and the matter will be promptly investigated.** Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible consistent with the need to conduct a prompt and thorough investigation of a complaint. Retaliating or discriminating against an employee or volunteer for complaining about sexual harassment is prohibited.

Any instance of sexual harassment as described herein, any act of retaliation, or any failure to cooperate in the investigation or resolution of a sexual harassment complaint may result in disciplinary action or termination.

Mistreatment of Animals

There will be no mistreatment of animals. If a volunteer is found mistreating an animal, the volunteer will be terminated immediately.

Termination and Resignation

As a volunteer you are under no contractual obligation to continue services at Medicine Horse. Should you decide to resign, please notify the volunteer coordinator of your decision.

Reasons for involuntary termination include, but are not limited to:

- Distribution of any defamatory or slanderous comments about Medicine Horse
- Any abuse of animals
- Sexual harassment of any kind
- Reporting for duty under the influence of alcohol or other substances
- Utilizing Medicine Horse property for any illegal purposes
- Theft in any form
- Non-compliance with rules and regulations of Medicine Horse

MEDICINE HORSE PROPERTY RULES

These guidelines were developed in accordance with an Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA) to create a safe, respectful environment for clients, volunteers, horses, and therapists at Medicine Horse (MH).

Safety and confidentiality are always our primary concerns for clients, volunteers, horses, staff, and anyone on the property.

Therapeutic Environment. Most of the areas at MH, including the office, are used for therapy. When entering MH property, please be mindful that a session may be in progress. If a therapist is with anyone while you are on the property, please pass quietly without interrupting.

WHEN ENTERING OR LEAVING THE PROPERTY DRIVE SLOWLY AT 5 MPH.

In Case of Emergency. Instructions and phone numbers for emergencies are posted in the barn and on the Medicine Horse office door. The office is located near the front door and the phone is on the desk inside. If there is an emergency and you must enter the office while a session is in progress, knock first and wait for the door to be opened. Please note: the office phone is to be used only for emergencies.

A first-aid and venom-extractor kit are both located in the main office.

Community. We are a safe and inclusive environment and expect our volunteers to uphold these values while working with Medicine Horse.

No Smoking or smokeless tobacco products on the Medicine Horse property, please.

Alcohol/Drug Use. Volunteering around horses requires a clear head. Please do not use drugs or alcohol before or during your time volunteering. If we suspect that you are under the influence, we will ask you to leave the property. No alcohol or drugs are permitted on property.

Parking. Please park in designated areas only to the side of the main barn. Do not park on the grass or block the roadway. There is overflow parking available back by the trailers as well.

Outside Animals. Other than service animals, no outside animals are permitted on the Medicine Horse property, especially in parked cars. Please leave your furry companions at home.

Family and Friends. You are not permitted to bring additional individuals with you during any volunteer shift. Any family members or friends that would like to participate in volunteering MUST complete the volunteer application, liability release and be scheduled to volunteer.

Horse Safety

- Do not leave gates open or turnout without permission from the staff, make sure to latch properly behind you.
- Always wear sturdy closed-toe shoes and work gloves (optional).
- Do not feed the horses or offer treats, even if they act hungry (they always act hungry). Feeding treats can encourage bad habits and can also cause health issues.
- Do not remove a horse from a stall
- Horses are unable to see directly in front or behind them, be mindful of your position to them.
- Never walk behind a horse without proper safety measures (taught in orientation)
- Be aware of biting or nippy horses, do not show your fingers.

Volunteer Promises to our Herd

- To always treat every animal with kindness and respect
- To report any signs of illness to a staff member

Copy of Liability Waiver

Authorization of emergency medical treatment

In the event emergency medical aid/treatment is required due to illness or injury while serving as a volunteer or while on the property of Medicine Horse Program, I authorize Medicine Horse Program to secure and retain medical treatment and transportation if needed. This authorization includes but is not limited to x-ray, surgery, hospitalization, medication and any treatment deemed "life-saving" by the physician. This provision will be invoked only if the emergency contact person(s) listed above is/are unable to be reached. The financial charges will be paid by the ill/injured person.

Photo Release

I hereby consent to and authorize the use and reproduction by the Medicine Horse Program of any and all photographs and other audiovisual material taken of me for promotional printed materials, educational activities, exhibitions, or for any other use for the benefit of the program.

Confidentiality Policy

Medicine Horse respects the privacy of clients, their families, and all who come into contact with our program. We recognize others' right to have control over any information about them that might be personal or sensitive. Confidentiality and trust are critical components for our Program, and are essential for achieving human growth and potential.

Therefore, all those connected in any way with Medicine Horse are required to be bound by our Confidentiality Policy, including but not limited to: volunteers, board members, full/part-time staff, temporary employees, contractors, instructors, and aides.

Information considered to be confidential includes all medical, familial, social, behavioral, referral, personal, legal, and financial concerns regarding clients, and their families, as well as the business of Medicine Horse. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to: client, donor, mailing, email and member lists, medical records, case notes, financial information, trade secrets, data, technology, intellectual property, business operations, legal counsel opinions, personnel files, and any information coming from staff and planning meetings. Such information is considered confidential regardless of how it is obtained, whether directly from the client or family, staff, volunteers or others associated with Medicine Horse, or inadvertently from other sources such as but not limited to a form, computer screen or overheard conversation.

It is the policy of Medicine Horse that trustees and employees of Medicine Horse may not disclose, divulge, or make accessible confidential information belonging to, or obtained through their affiliation with Medicine Horse Program to any person, including relatives, friends, and business and professional associates, other than to persons who have a legitimate need for such information and to whom Medicine Horse has authorized disclosure. Volunteers, contractors and employees shall use confidential information solely for the purpose of performing services as a trustee or employee for Medicine Horse. This policy is not intended to prevent disclosure where disclosure is required by law.

Trustees, employees, volunteers and contractors must exercise good judgment and care at all times to avoid unauthorized or improper disclosures of confidential information. Conversations in public places, such as restaurants, elevators, and public transportation, should be limited to matters that do not pertain to information of a sensitive or confidential nature. In addition, trustees and employees should be sensitive to the risk of inadvertent disclosure and should for example, refrain from leaving confidential information on desks or otherwise in plain view and refrain from the use of speaker phones to discuss confidential information if the conversation could be heard by unauthorized persons.

At the end of a trustee's term in office or upon the termination of an employee's, volunteer's or contractor's relationship with Medicine Horse, he or she shall return, at the request of Medicine Horse, all documents, papers, and other materials, regardless of medium, which may contain or be derived from confidential information, in his or her possession.

Liability Release

Under Colorado Law, an Equine Professional 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 section 13-21-119, Colorado Revised Statutes. Medicine Horse Program (MHP) seeks and strives for safety at all times.

However, I understand that there are certain risks inherent in equine related activities. I acknowledge that all activities involving horses, both Medicine Horse and Boarder owned horses (including but not limited to horseback riding, handling, leading, groundwork and other contact) involve this degree of risk. I acknowledge the risks in working with and around horses.

However, I feel that the benefits of the program to all associated with it are greater than the risks assumed. I hereby, intending to be legally bound, for myself, my heirs, assigns, executors and/or administrators, waive and release forever all claims for damages against the Medicine Horse Program, its board of directors, instructors, therapists,

aides, volunteers, private owners of boarded horses and/or employees for any and all injuries and/ or losses I may sustain while participating in the program. Should I be seriously injured while on the property, I authorize Medicine Horse staff and/ or therapists to use their best judgment in calling 911 for assistance. This in no way obligates Medicine Horse or Papillon Ranch to be responsible for any expenses incurred for care. I further acknowledge that I am not covered under Medicine Horse or Papillon Ranch's insurance policy. I have read and understand this release.

Frequently Asked Questions

I don't have any horse experience. Can I still volunteer?

Yes! Our Barn Volunteers do not need to have prior horse experience.

What do I need to do to start volunteering?

All volunteers must complete the online application and attend our Barn Crew Orientation.

Why do I need a background check for volunteering?

Because we are a mental health facility, we require all volunteers and staff who join our team to submit a background check.

Do you accept community service hours?

Yes! If you are looking to complete court appointed community service hours, you must be pre-approved. Please note: because we are a mental health facility, we do not accept community service for individuals with the following charges: Felony, Assault/Harassment, Drugs, or Theft.

Please contact us via email at volunteercoordinator@medicinehorse.org

I have prior horse experience. Do I still need to attend all of the training?

Yes. We ask all our volunteers to go through the same training, regardless of prior experience. These training sessions allow us the opportunity to introduce you to our horses, staff, and barn policies. We also engage our horses differently because they are therapy horses. Our horses are always given the choice to participate and we use these training sessions to provide more background on what that looks like.

Why do you charge for your Horsemanship lesson?

Because we have a small team, the fee helps us to cover the cost of staff time for training. However, all of our trainings have options to waive the fee through volunteer hours.

What hours can I volunteer?

After attending Barn Orientation, volunteers must sign up for shifts via SignupGenius. Barn Crew volunteers can sign up for shifts Monday-Friday between 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Turn-in starts at 6:00 AM, and turn-out begins at 4:00 PM, depending on the weather and season.

How do I sign up for volunteer shifts?

Once you attend our Barn Crew Orientation, you will receive a link to access our volunteer sign ups using SignupGenius.

Find out what's going on: We use Slack as our main means of communication with volunteers. Once you complete level 1 requirements, you will receive an invitation to set-up your account.

Can children volunteer?

Anyone under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult or our Barn Manager (accompanying adults who are not volunteering are still required to complete a liability release form), but we do welcome younger volunteers! Level 3 volunteers must be at least 18 years of age. Our Barn Manager is able to supervise a limited number of younger volunteers during the week.

Can I ride as a volunteer?

No. Volunteers working with our horses are engaged in ground work and do not ride.

Do you offer riding lessons?

We do not, but we are happy to put you in contact with local trainers or equestrian facilities in the area who do!

Can I visit the property or bring my family?

Guests are only allowed on the property during our special events. When volunteering, only volunteers may be on the property, please do not bring friends, family or others who have not gone through orientation.