



# RIDER HANDBOOK

Adaptive Riding

*Approved: January 2024*

*Effective: January 2024*

Welcome Parents, Guardians, Caregivers and Riders!

Thank you for your interest in Free Rein Therapeutic Riding; we are excited to guide you through the process of becoming a participant in our program! Our goal, “equipping riders for life”, *means increasing skills, strength and confidence that carry over into riders’ everyday lives.*

Free Rein is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and a member center of PATH (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship) International. We have been providing Adaptive Riding lessons and other equine assisted activities to children and adults in the Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho area since 2008.

Free Rein strives to be the highest quality Adaptive Riding program in the area. We will continually develop policies and procedures to ensure that all aspects of our organization are running smoothly and efficiently. The policies in the handbook have been created to help us serve you better.

## History

Free Rein was founded in the summer of 2008 in hopes to provide a facility where those with physical, mental or emotional challenges could experience the profound benefits of therapeutic horseback riding. The program started with 18 riders and 6 horses in a borrowed space off the South Hill, then quickly moved to a longer-term facility in the Spokane area. In spring of 2013, Free Rein started a Military Horsemanship program to serve disabled veterans with both physical injuries and other challenges such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

## Credentials

The Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH) International is the national nonprofit organization that promotes and supports equine-facilitated activities for individuals with disabilities. PATH International sets the safety guidelines and teaching standards for the industry. Free Rein is a member of PATH International, and all riding instructors are PATH Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructors.

## Benefits of Adaptive Riding

Free Rein’s programs are uniquely designed to meet the educational, behavioral, social and physical goals of individuals with disabilities.

**Physical Disabilities** – The horse’s unique, three-dimensional movement replicates the movement that the human body experiences while walking. Therefore, sitting on a horse increases balance and helps to strengthen and stimulate core muscles, which often improves walking and the ability to accomplish activities of daily life.

**Cognitive Disabilities** – Our program complements individual educational plans. The result is a creative, progressive, experiential learning opportunity, which directly relates to riders’ goals.

**Psychosocial Disorders** – Our horses provide motivation and encouragement. The relationship that develops between rider and horse nurtures the development of skills such as responsibility, increased self-esteem, confidence, honesty and respect.

Each lesson incorporates the educational, physical, social and recreation goals set for the rider during their assessment. Lessons range from 1-3 riders, for 30 – 60 minutes, and can include grooming, tacking up, leading the horse with assistance from volunteers, mounting, warm-up time, an exercise, an activity or game, skill development, skill review, a closing activity and dismounting. They may also include a short trail ride if time permits. Not all riders will groom and tack up their horses but can work up to learning those skills.

Continual participation in the program is suggested for maximum therapeutic benefits.

- Private lessons (1 rider) run 30 minutes
- Group lessons (2+ riders) run 45-60 minutes

### Eligibility

Free Rein serves individuals with any developmental, acquired, or physical disabilities, ages 4 and up. An assessment and screening process conducted by a certified instructor determines eligibility for the program. The assessment also takes into consideration the available facilities, suitable equines, and program equipment needed to provide safe and effective services to the rider. All horses have an assigned weight limit based on their overall health, condition, and capabilities. Riders will further be assessed for eligibility if his/her size causes safety concerns for the rider, horses, staff, or volunteers (i.e. in the event of an emergency dismount). Riders will be weighed on the first day of class for each session, however with one exception for non-ambulatory riders, Free Rein will use the weight provided from the Physician's Form.

Behavior and attitudes are also assessed to ensure the safety of the rider, staff, volunteers and horses. Rider behaviors eligible for dismissal include, but are not limited to, those that are:

- Dangerous in nature
- Uncontrollable while riding
- Other dangerous behaviors directed at staff, volunteers, horses, or other riders

A potential rider is ineligible for Adaptive Riding if they have a condition that contraindicates horseback riding, according to the guidelines set by the PATH Intl. Medical Committee, or if a student is unable to adhere to the policies in this handbook. Free Rein in conjunction with the rider's health care provider will make the final decision of acceptance into the program. Acceptance will be reevaluated as needed. All riders **must** have paperwork, including a physician's medical form, updated yearly.

## HOW TO SIGN UP FOR FREE REIN PROGRAMS

1. Visit us online at [www.freereinspokane.org](http://www.freereinspokane.org) or email us at [info@freereinspokane.org](mailto:info@freereinspokane.org) or call **509-979-1468** to request an application.
2. Once the rider application is received in our office, you will be placed on our waiting list while your application is under review. During that time, we will request Doctor's forms to be completed, rider availability and any other needed information based on your application.
3. Free Rein will reach out to schedule an assessment once a spot becomes available in the schedule.
4. After an assessment is completed and eligibility confirmed, register and pay for the session.

## Placing a Rider in Class

When scheduling riders in Adaptive Riding lessons, Free Rein's priority is always finding the best fit class. In order to provide the most effective environment, it is important that groups working together have similar goals, riding skills and abilities. There are limited days/times available for each potential rider, so the more flexible a rider can be in regards to availability, the better chance they'll have of getting into a class.

Existing riders are given the first opportunity to keep/confirm their spot in the new session. Please understand that sometimes riders need to move to another class for various reasons. It is very important for riders to be prompt with their confirmation. Class spots cannot be guaranteed after the registration due date! After existing riders are confirmed, riders that are returning from a break and new riders that are on the waitlist will be scheduled as openings allow.

## Dismissal

Riders/families who cannot adhere to the policies in this handbook or who no longer meet eligibility requirements will be dismissed from program activities.

## BILLING PRACTICES AND POLICIES

Riders only pay a portion of the actual cost for riding. Rider tuition generally makes up about 20 - 30% of Free Rein's total operating costs. In order to provide services at this reduced rate, we ask that riders keep their account current. The rider is responsible for working with any third party funding sources (i.e. Ben's Fund, Elevations of Spokane, etc) as Free Rein does not directly bill third parties. Free Rein does not currently accept payment through DSHS/DDA. Statements for accounts with an outstanding balance are sent monthly, but the rider may call or email Free Rein at any time if they have questions about their balance. We ask that riders please familiarize themselves with Free Rein's billing practices below.

***All current fees can be found on the Adaptive Riding page on our website: [www.freereinspokane.org](http://www.freereinspokane.org).***

## Insurance

All riders are charged an annual insurance fee for the calendar year. This fee is billed on the rider's first session for the year and is **not** prorated.

## Assessments

All riders needing an assessment will be charged a one-time assessment fee. Current riders who have had recent surgery or any other major medical changes may be required to schedule a reassessment before they can continue riding in the program. The assessment payment is due to Free Rein at the time the rider is assessed.

## Adaptive Rider Tuition

Riders will be charged for the entire session, regardless of missed or canceled classes. Free Rein will confirm the cost of the session before the rider is registered to ensure proper payment can be made. The payment for the session is due by the registration deadline, which is one month before the session start date.

## Payment

Free Rein accepts payment in forms of check, cash, credit card, or direct bank transfer. Invoices will be emailed and payments can be made online, dropped off at the Free Rein office, or mailed to PO Box 30893, Spokane, WA 99223. Requests for special payment arrangements are allowed, but must be arranged prior to receiving services.

## Payment Plans

A payment plan may be set up if the rider has an extenuating circumstance that makes them unable to pay for the entire session up front. If a payment plan is arranged, the rider is required to follow a payment schedule. If a payment is not received by the due date, the rider will not be allowed to participate for the remainder of the session until that balance is paid in full.

## Scholarships

Free Rein strives to make scholarship funds available to riders who cannot afford the cost of tuition. Scholarships are awarded each session on a sliding scale depending on financial need.

To apply for a scholarship, request a waiver application by emailing [info@freereinspokane.org](mailto:info@freereinspokane.org). Applications must be turned in two weeks prior to the start of session (one month is preferred). The application is good for the calendar year, but will need to be updated if financial information changes throughout the year. Riders who are awarded scholarships are still required to pay the annual rider insurance fee.

Unfortunately, Free Rein is not always able to fund every request in full. If the rider receives a partial scholarship, or if the waiver application is declined, the rider is still responsible for paying the remaining balance or setting up a payment plan. Carrying an outstanding balance or failing to pay the annual insurance fee may also jeopardize the application status. The rider is welcome to reapply as often as they would like.

Riders who benefit from scholarships are expected to maintain excellent attendance. If a minimum of 70% attendance is not maintained, the scholarship may be revoked.

## Foundation Grants and Other Funding Sources

Free Rein encourages riders to explore other possible funding sources when applying for the scholarship program. For instance, **Ben's Fund** (<https://www.bensfund.org/>) will grant scholarships to children with Autism, and **Elevations of Spokane** (<https://elevationsspokane.org/>) will grant scholarships to children with disabilities.

## Account in Arrears

Failure to keep balances current based on the above guidelines can result in a rider being removed from the class schedule. As a nonprofit, Free Rein is unable to carry debt, so Free Rein cannot allow riders to continue to accrue balances. Free Rein is always happy to arrange payment plans that indicate a good-faith effort to keep up with costs incurred. Free Rein strives to keep the rider informed of their account status, and will notify the rider if the account is in arrears, but payment for all services ultimately remains the responsibility of the rider. Reasons for being removed from the class schedule include, but are not limited to:

- Private Pay Riders – Failing to pay tuition and annual insurance by the first day of class.

- Foundation Grant Riders – Carrying any unpaid balance for more than one session.
- Payment Plan Riders – Failing to pay tuition as agreed upon, or failing to make arrangements to pay any outstanding balance at the time of registration.
- Scholarship Recipients – Poor attendance.

If the rider has any questions about their account, or the billing policies, please contact us at [info@freereinspokane.org](mailto:info@freereinspokane.org).

## Tuition Refund

Tuition is not refunded or credited if individual classes are missed. If a rider cancels for the entire session, the following refunds apply:

- If a rider cancels for the session prior to class starting, full tuition minus a \$35 administrative fee is refunded.
- If a rider cancels during the first two weeks of classes, Free Rein refunds the full tuition minus a \$35 administrative fee and the cost of any attended classes.
- Refunds are available after the second week of class only at Free Rein's discretion.

## Attendance

Regular attendance is important! Why?

- Each class builds on the previous class information.
- Groups learn together – it is hard to catch up on missed information and practice.
- Volunteers set aside their personal time to help out – some travel quite a distance to be at Free Rein for the rider each week.

## Cancellation Policy

Due to a full Free Rein schedule and the required careful coordination of horses, volunteers, instructors, and other riders, Free Rein does not generally offer makeup classes. On occasion and at Free Rein staff discretion, riders may be offered an opportunity to make up missed classes.

General Rules Regarding Canceled Classes:

- No refund or credit will be given if Free Rein cancels because of weather or smoke, unless there are more than 30% of classes in a given session cancelled due to weather or smoke.
- No refund or credit will be given for rider's illness or vacation. For extenuating circumstances, the rider may formally apply for a refund consideration.
- If Free Rein is unable to provide a horse, instructor, or volunteers, a full credit or refund will be offered.

Families may always opt to turn their canceled class fee into a donation, in which case they will receive a tax deductible donation receipt.

## Attendance Policy

Free Rein asks for notification at least 24 hours in advance when a rider knows they will be absent. If it is a last-minute emergency, Free Rein asks to be notified as soon as possible. If a rider misses **three** lessons without notifying Free Rein prior to class, the rider will be canceled for the remainder of the session. Tuition will not be refunded or credited. If the rider needs to cancel, they should call

**509-979-1468** or email [info@freereinspokane.org](mailto:info@freereinspokane.org). Please call if cancellation is within 24 hours of class time.

### Late Arrival

Riders arriving more than 15 minutes late will not be able to participate in their scheduled mounted lesson. A lesson missed due to arriving late is considered an absence and the rider will not be refunded.

### Attire

Riders are required to wear long pants and closed toed shoes (preferably shoes with a heel). ASTM-SEI approved helmets are also required. Helmets expire 5 years from their manufacture date. Free Rein has helmets riders may borrow if they do not have their own. It is important to remember to dress for the weather. Layers work great as it is typically windier at Free Rein than in town. Gloves with individual fingers are also helpful on cold days. Some riders will be required to wear a gait belt, Free Rein will provide these when needed.

### Safety Rules

Free Rein strives to provide the safest possible environment for riders, volunteers, staff and visitors. Horses, even though specifically trained, can react unexpectedly. Working around and riding a horse is a risky activity. All riders **must** wear an ASTM – SEI approved helmet with the chin harness secured when riding or working around Free Rein’s horses. The following rules **must** always be followed:

- No smoking anywhere on the premises.
- Only water is allowed in the arena.
- No gum chewing while riding.
- All minors (including siblings) must be supervised at all times.
- Riders and families are not permitted in volunteer and staff zones. Riders, parents and visitors must be escorted by a Free Rein volunteer or staff member when visiting the working areas of the facility. This includes the Free Rein barn, outdoor pens, pastures, arenas, etc.
- No running, pushing, yelling or other actions that might frighten a horse.
- No pets allowed. Public Access Service Dogs require documentation to be on file with Free Rein before coming to the property.

### Closing Policy

Free Rein may close due to severe weather, smoke, power outages or any reason that may cause unsafe conditions. Free Rein follows snow closures with the Spokane School District (District 81). Riders can call the office at (509) 979-1468 for the most up-to-date facility closure information.

### COVID

Free Rein will follow all federal, state, and local COVID requirements with regard to facemasks, vaccinations, quarantines and other recommended protocol.

## Holiday Closures

Free Rein observes the following holidays and will be closed, in addition to any dates of closure listed on the Session Calendar:

- New Year's Day
- President's Day
- Memorial Day
- 4<sup>th</sup> of July
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving, Day After Thanksgiving
- Spring Break (Spokane Public Schools District 81)
- Christmas Day

## Weather Policy

Free Rein's highest priority is safety. If conditions appear to create a risk to the health and well-being of riders, horses, staff, or volunteers, classes may be canceled.

Typical cancellations include:

- Temperature in the arena reaches 90 degrees or above
- Temperature in the arena reaches 30 degrees or below
- Air quality index is 150 or above, in the RED range (*riders' parents/caregivers may be consulted if air quality is 100, in the ORANGE range*)

Due to the weather, students may not be able to ride, but because Free Rein focuses on all aspects of horsemanship, we may offer an opportunity to conduct ground lessons, learn about horse care, tack and equipment, or work on a special project, if applicable and beneficial.

## Rider Paperwork

All rider forms must be completed and submitted by the registration deadline (two weeks prior to the first class of the session). Riders will not be allowed to ride or work with Free Rein's horses if forms are incomplete or missing. Forms are available online at [www.freereinspokane.org](http://www.freereinspokane.org), at the barn, or can be requested by emailing [info@freereinspokane.org](mailto:info@freereinspokane.org).

Annual updates are required for all returning riders at the beginning of the calendar year. Throughout the year, it is important for riders to share any significant health changes. An update from a physician or reassessment may be required. **Students are not permitted to ride without up-to-date forms.**

## Confidentiality

Participant medical histories, diagnosis, and related information are used by Free Rein's instructors to develop goal-oriented lesson plans. General information, as it relates to the success of the rider's experience, is shared with volunteers on a need-to-know basis.



## Visitors

Visitors are always welcome during business hours. Children must always be supervised. If visitors would like more information about Free Rein or a tour of the entire facility, advance arrangements with a Free Rein staff member are required. Visitors are not permitted in the barn area unless escorted by a Free Rein staff member or volunteer. All persons entering the barn area **must** follow the barn rules. Riders, parents, or caregivers are responsible for their guests.

## Parking

The dirt lot on the northwest side of the indoor arena is for parking. Please leave the most accessible parking spaces to riders who need them (ie. wheelchairs, riders who can only walk short distances, etc.)

## Contact Us

Physical Address: 6919 N Walnut Rd, Spokane WA 99217

Mailing Address: PO Box 30893, Spokane, WA 99223

Office Number: 509-979-1468, Text Number: 509-508-1449

Website: [www.freereinspokane.org](http://www.freereinspokane.org)

Email: [info@freereinspokane.org](mailto:info@freereinspokane.org)