



Volunteer Handbook

Our mission at Hope Retreat Ranch is to enrich people's life through the use of nature, health, and horsemanship.

In this handbook you will find information pertinent to your work as a volunteer at Hope Retreat Ranch, aka HR Ranch, Inc. This is meant to be a guide to our programs and a supplement to orientation and training.

We realize that volunteers are the strength of our programs.

The volunteer experience offered at Hope Retreat Ranch is as rewarding as it is unique. It is an opportunity to channel individual talents and skills into a variety of volunteer activities, work with horses, help those with disabilities, and make new friends.

Our desire is to have many experienced and compassionate volunteers that enjoy sharing their time and energy in building a premier center for disabled children in Eastern Oklahoma County. In volunteering you contribute to the process of giving our participants one of life's most precious gifts – a feeling of self-worth, accomplishment, and self-esteem.

For everyone's safety and enjoyment, please take the time to **read this handbook**. The information included is vital for a safe and enjoyable experience. Please **save a copy** for review.

We greatly appreciate your interest and time. You are why Hope Retreat Ranch is a success.

Confidentiality Policy

Any information in regards to the participants of HRR including: riders, volunteers, and personnel shall remain privileged and confidential. This information may include, but is not limited to, any medical, social, referral, personal, and/or financial information. Information concerning students will be shared with volunteers on a need-to-know basis. Disclosure of any confidential information shall not be released to anyone not associated with HR Ranch. Volunteers must seek staff permission prior to taking any pictures or videos.

Volunteer Activities

Orientation and training are provided and required for volunteer positions. Those that work directly with riders and/or horses may be required to attend additional classes.

HR Ranch offers a variety of volunteer activities dependent upon your interests and abilities. You can volunteer as an individual or as part of a group; Service clubs, youth groups, school groups, church groups, and other organizations are encouraged to participate in community service projects with us.

Volunteer Guidelines

- Arrive on time, sign in, wear your name tag (if applicable) and stay for the total time of your shift.
- For equine sessions, commit to a regular day and time for the entire block duration in order to provide consistency to an individual client, unless you volunteer as a floater/fill-in.
- Take a professional approach to training so that you are aware of and prepared for the responsibilities given to you and the performance expected.
- Ask for help if you do not understand something or cannot perform your task.
- Dress appropriately for your assignment (See section on recommended attire).
- Complete all required release forms each year prior to volunteering. This is an annual requirement.
- Maintain confidentiality and respect the privacy of all other volunteers, staff, and clients.
- Contact us if anything prevents you from fulfilling your commitment. Call, text, or leave a voicemail for the program coordinator or your instructor as far in advance as possible so that a replacement can be found.
- At least two volunteers must be with any one client at any given time.
- All personal needs such as toileting or clothes changing may only be conducted by a parent/guardian – NEVER a volunteer.
- Children 10-13 can volunteer but must be under direct supervision of an adult.
- Must be 14 or older to be considered for side walker or horse handler.
- Please refrain from offering food or other gifts to participants without permission as they may have medical conditions such as food allergies, diabetes, etc.
- Please do not perform a volunteer role you have not yet been trained for.
- If corrective actions need to be implemented to diffuse a potentially hazardous incident, be calm and send someone to direct the instructor's attention to the situation.

Volunteer and Guest Dismissal Policy

HR Ranch is very grateful for the time, energy, and resources our volunteers give to the programs. We cannot succeed or function without you, however, there are several reasons that a volunteer would be disciplined or asked to leave the program. Examples include, but are not limited to the following:

- Violation of one of the policies included in Orientation Training and this handbook, particularly:
 - Violation of the confidentiality of client records.
 - Disrespecting a client or attempting to discipline a client.
 - Abuse one of any ranch animals.
 - Violation of safety procedures.
 - Absence from a shift without notification.
 - Presence at HR Ranch under the influence of alcohol or other substances.
- Causing a conflict and/or arguing with an instructor, staff, or fellow volunteer.
- Unauthorized use of HR Ranch tack, horses, or facilities.
- Failing an annual background check.
- Failure to participate in HRR orientation.

Should a volunteer face removal from programs as a result of one of the above offenses or for another reason, the volunteer shall receive notice of termination. The volunteer may request a review hearing by a 3-person review committee from the Board of Directors. Otherwise, any professional staff member, instructor, or sessions leader may request removal of a volunteer from the program pending a board committee review if requested.

Safety is our FIRST Priority

In the event of an Emergency:

- Dismount riders first. Side walkers escort the riders out of the arena. Instructor decides about the horses.
- Evacuate the arena and facilities and gather under the pavilion for a head count.
- Instructor will decide the next course of action.

Fire Extinguishers:

We have fire extinguishers in each building on the wall near exits.
To operate a fire extinguisher, remember “**Pull, Aim, Squeeze, Sweep**”.

First Aid Kits:

Human first aid kit is in the classroom in the cabinet beside the door.
Equine first aid supplies are located on a tack room shelf in the barn.

Medical Emergency or Occurrence with Injury:

- Alert the instructor, give details and follow instructor's direction
- If requested – call 911 – stating the directions to the ranch located by the phone in the ranch office, on bulletin board in classroom, and in the barn on tack room door. Stay on the line with 911 if possible.

Accident or Occurrence Report Forms:

Rider incidents – In the case of an incident involving the fall of a rider from a horse or any mishap with a rider involving a bruise or cut, an Occurrence Report Form must be completed by the instructor of the session involving that rider whether the session has ended or has not yet begun. Volunteers may be asked to provide additional information to aide in the completion of the form, but responsibility for completing the form lies with the instructor.

Staff/Volunteer Incidents – In the case of an incident involving a volunteer or staff member, whether due to a horse-related event or a fall or accident, an Occurrence Report Form must be signed by the individual who was injured. Another volunteer or an available instructor may complete the form, but a completed form with the signature of the individual is required unless that person is left unconscious or taken by ambulance from the property. Occurrence Report Forms are available in the file slots outside the ranch office in the classroom.

Horses:

No running or shouting around the arena while horses and or clients are present.

No hand-feeding and giving treats to the horses or other farm animals.

No catching or using a horse without proper permission.

Pets:

All pets are required to stay inside your vehicle, whether on a leash or not, unless it is an authorized service animal and you have received **prior permission** from the Ranch.

Phones:

If there is an emergency, and you are without a cellphone, there is a phone located in the ranch office behind the desk. Emergency numbers to call are posted on the wall by the phone, inside the classroom on the bulletin board, and in the barn on the tack room door.

Weather Cancellations:

Occasionally, classes may need to be cancelled due to bad weather. No classes will be held if a tornado warning is in effect in the area. If the local news is calling for severe weather or rain, please be sure to call the program instructor or volunteer coordinator to check if classes have been cancelled. We don't ride in extreme heat or with lightening in the area.

We do NOT have a storm shelter.

Recommended Attire for Volunteers

There are a few basic rules that volunteers need to follow concerning wearing apparel:

- Weather conditions will dictate that outer garments be comfortable. HR Ranch does not have extra gloves, jackets, socks, or boots.
- Professionalism is the key. Clothes that are durable, modest, neat, and clean are recommended. Clothing should be comfortable and easy to move in, not binding.
- Shirts must have sleeves and appropriate skin coverage.
- Jeans or long pants are preferred. Shorts must be mid-thigh or longer.
- Dangling earrings, bracelets, and necklaces should not be worn since they could become entangled in equipment and could also cause a distraction to the horse and/or rider.
- No perfumes or colognes.
- Recommended footwear is hiking/walking shoes or boots. Shoes should be stable and comfortable. No open spaces, open toes, and no straps. High heels, flip flops, and sandals are not suitable.
- All clothing must be modest. Not Allowed:
 - No tank tops.
 - No inappropriate exposure; must cover cleavage, torso area, and backside.
 - No foul or obscene writing or art on clothing.

Prohibited Personal Behavior and Items Banned from Property:

Cellphones:

Cell phones are an important part of life today but can be a distraction at best and a safety hazard at worst for an equine program. **No Phone Zone in or around the arena while students are mounted on horses.** Everywhere else on HR Ranch grounds cell phones must be turned off or put on silent.

Firearms/Fireworks:

No firearms or fireworks are permitted on HR Ranch grounds.

Profanity:

The use of profanity is strictly prohibited throughout HR Ranch grounds and functions.

Tobacco Use:

Smoking, smokeless tobacco products, and E-cigs are strictly prohibited on HR Ranch grounds.

Substance Abuse:

No alcohol is permitted on HRR grounds. Use of controlled substances before or during sessions is strictly prohibited. A Volunteer attempting to operate under the influence could pose a danger to our clients, our horses, and other volunteers.



HR RANCH BARN RULES

1. Before any client, parent, or guest may remain on HR Ranch property a Liability/Medical release form must be completed and on file.
2. All children under 13yrs. old must be supervised and/or accompanied by an adult at all times. Under 10 yrs. old must be accompanied by parent/guardian.
3. Smoking, E Cigs, Tobacco, Alcohol, Illegal substances, or Firearms are prohibited on HR Ranch property.
4. No pets of any kind allowed unless it is a service animal with prior approval by HR Ranch Executive Director.
5. No Running or Screaming around horses. Keep a safe distance and do not climb on the fences.
6. Do not approach horses without permission and supervision from a trained volunteer or HR Ranch staff.
7. Horses should never be left unattended, nor should they be turned out, without consent of management.
8. NO riding or being on horseback inside stalls, in the barn, or on any hard surface.
9. If horses are left in the stalls make sure they have water. Have HR Ranch staff review the area before leaving the horse unattended.
10. Helmets are required at all times when mounted on a horse.
11. Make sure all gates are closed and lights are turned off when not needed.
12. Actions such as stealing, damage or destruction of stable property, abuse of animals, physical or verbal abuse of any person or any other actions which is deemed detrimental will not be tolerated and will result in the immediate dismissal from HR Ranch property.
13. Foul language is prohibited.
14. HR Ranch is not responsible for any lost, stolen or damaged items left at the barn.

SAFETY, SAFETY, SAFETY

YOU are responsible for the SAFETY of the animals, people and the environment around you. Rules and Regulations apply to everyone for the safety and comfort of horses and riders and are subject to change without further notice.