



Freedom Ride, Inc.

Volunteer Manual

Horsepower for the Spirit...

“Freedom Ride is built on the conviction that we are not bound by our physical limitations. Therapeutic riding empowers people with disabilities to challenge themselves physically, mentally, and emotionally. The benefits they reap are remarkable – from improved strength and flexibility to confidence and self esteem.”

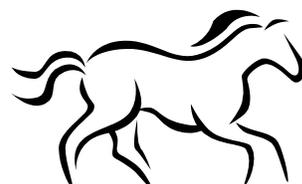
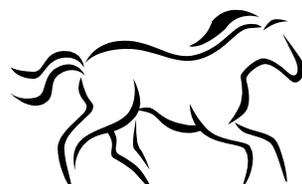
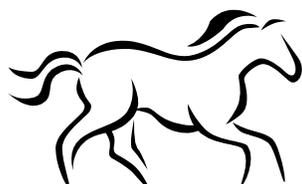
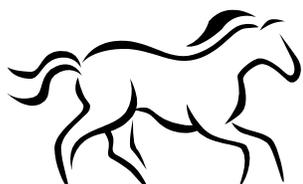


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Welcome to Freedom Ride!

We began in 1998, with one horse and one rider...

As a nonprofit organization Freedom Ride, Inc. relies on the strength of our many dedicated volunteers to assist our riders and staff in a variety of different areas. This manual is to serve as a guide for any questions or concerns you might have regarding your job as a volunteer at Freedom Ride. Freedom Ride is a member of PATH International – The Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International. As a certified PATH center, Freedom Ride is held to the highest safety standards in our industry. Due to the nature of our work and the people we serve, it is important that everyone be as knowledgeable and consistent as possible to uphold the highest quality and safety standards. Most of all, volunteering at Freedom Ride is a wonderful way for you to help make a difference in the lives of some very special riders.

Mission Statement: Freedom Ride, Inc. is a nonprofit organization dedicated to enriching the lives and experiences of individuals with disabilities in the Central Florida community through therapeutic horseback riding and related activities.

Confidentiality

Freedom Ride's employees and volunteers have an ethical and legal obligation to respect the privacy of our clients and to protect and maintain the confidentiality of all information that we learn about our clients, their family members, and friends in the course of providing services to them. **Please do not take pictures of our riders or post any information regarding our riders on social media.** Information of a confidential nature is NOT to be discussed with anyone outside Freedom Ride and only discussed within Freedom Ride on a "need to know" basis.

Staff and volunteers have a responsibility to avoid unnecessary disclosure of non-confidential internal information about Freedom Ride and its associates. This responsibility is not intended to impede normal business communications and relationships, but is intended to alert everyone to their obligation to use discretion to safeguard internal Freedom Ride affairs. Volunteers who have any questions regarding a situation should consult with the Volunteer Coordinator who will address the concerns with the Executive Director.

Therapeutic Riding Vs. Hippotherapy

Therapeutic Riding – Riders participate in tasks and games that encourage physical strengthening and cognitive improvement while learning basic riding skills. When a horse walks, the movement is remarkably similar to a human being walking. Both walk rhythmically, gently shifting their weight from hip to hip, side to side. This movement provides sensations that travel to the brain, “waking it up” to become more focused and organized.

The simple task of sitting atop a horse encourages riders to react to the movement of the horse. Additionally, by grasping the reins and holding their bodies up straight, riders improve their balance and coordination, developing better muscle control.

Learning how to attach reins or secure a saddle helps to improve fine motor skills. Riders also develop sequencing and memory skills while participating in obstacle courses and other activities while enjoying the companionship of a therapy horse.

Hippotherapy – The term hippotherapy refers to occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech-language pathology professionals using equine movement to engage sensory, neuromotor, and cognitive systems to achieve functional outcomes. In conjunction with other treatment strategies, hippotherapy is part of a patient’s integrated plan of care. These riders do not learn basic riding skills.

Reminders for Freedom Ride volunteers

- Be on time for your chosen shift – Our therapeutic riding classes begin promptly at the scheduled time Monday through Saturday. Freedom Ride relies on our volunteers to assist our riders during their lessons.
- It is very important that you let us know if you will not be able to attend your scheduled shift. We ask that you provide at least 48-hour’s notice by calling our office at 407.293.0411 or emailing the Volunteer Coordinator at volunteerinfo@freedomride.com.
- Always wear your Freedom Ride Volunteer shirt or tank top. This ensures that each individual interacting with our horses and our riders can be easily identified as an approved volunteer.
- Always wear closed toed shoes. You will not be permitted to volunteer in open toed footwear. A hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen are advisable, as well as clothing for rainy weather.
- Remember to sign-in and sign-out each time you volunteer. You do not need to check-in at the administrative office before your first volunteer shift; head directly to the tack room.
- Leave cell phones on silent in the tack room. Never carry a cell phone with you into a class, as this can cause a disruption during a therapeutic session.

- Always check in with the barn manager on duty before starting any task. Never handle a horse without permission from a barn manager.
- If you are asked to retrieve a horse from the pasture and cannot easily catch him/her quickly or safely, please return to the barn and ask for assistance from the barn manager. Time between classes is usually short, so we need to tack up horses in an efficient manner.
- Never approach a horse from behind, since horses cannot see directly behind themselves. Always approach a horse from the side.
- Volunteers are NOT allowed to hand feed the horses. Please check with staff before offering the horses treats. If allowed, treats may be given in a blue treat bucket located in the feed room.
- Volunteers are not responsible for fully tightening the girth when tacking for a lesson. Girths should be tightened just enough to prevent the saddle from sliding, but still loose - the instructor will make the final adjustment.
- Listen carefully to instructions from the barn manager on duty; if you need clarification, don't hesitate to ask questions!
- Feel free to bring beverages or snacks. A refrigerator is available in the Volunteer Center.
- Do not leave your volunteer shift without notifying or checking in with the barn manager on duty. The barn manager needs to know who is on the premises at all times.

Freedom Ride Volunteer Tasks

- Volunteers may help in a variety of different areas such as horse handling, side walking, grooming, tacking, special events, and more. Beginning with the basics, each task is outlined with the volunteer's responsibilities. Volunteers must be able to complete volunteer duties independently without direct one-on-one supervision. Freedom Ride volunteers are a part of all aspects of our program. We realize that there are as many ways to do things in the horse world as there are people who work with horses. For this reason, please follow Freedom Ride procedures closely. They were created to ensure everyone at Freedom Ride is safe and happy. Remember - safety always come first! If you are uncomfortable completing an assigned task, please consult the barn manager on duty.
- Horse Care - Volunteers help with responsibilities within the barn. Their job is to help groom, clean stalls, keep the tack clean and orderly, and help prepare hay and feed.
- Side Walking - Volunteers are responsible for the students in the classes. Side walkers are responsible for the well being of the rider and will be expected to report any concerns to the instructor immediately. When a volunteer is not working in a class he or she will assist with horse care responsibilities.
- Horse Handling - Volunteers are responsible for handling the horses during classes. Horse Handlers need to show confidence and comfort in handling the Freedom Ride horses. They will be expected to report any concerns about the horses to the instructor

or staff member on duty. Horse handlers can also substitute in as side walkers when needed and assist with horse care responsibilities when not working in a class.

- Special Events- Volunteers assist staff members with the coordination, set-up and clean up of Freedom Ride's special events, such as our annual Jeans and Jewels fundraiser!

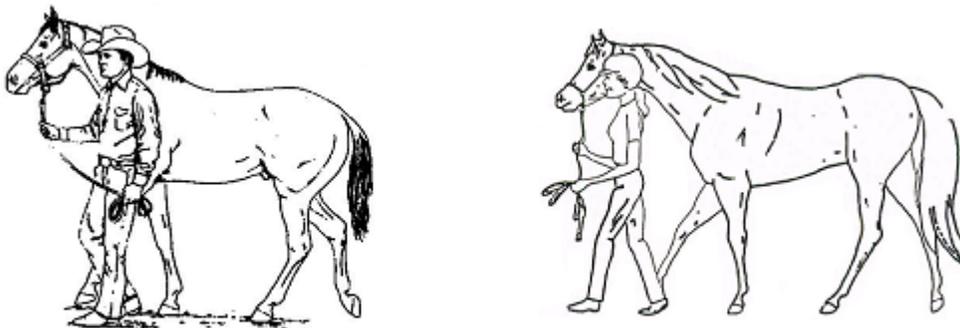
Lesson Procedures

Volunteers may assist with the lessons as a HORSE HANDLER or SIDE WALKER.

The horse handler

As a horse handler, your first responsibility is the horse. If you are working without side walkers, you must also be aware of the rider. The rider's safety comes first.

Handling - The proper position for the horse handler is to walk between the head and shoulder of the horse. Handle from the LEFT side of the horse. A good rule of thumb for holding the lead line is to hold it in your RIGHT hand approximately six inches away from the buckle. The excess lead line should be held in your LEFT hand in a figure eight loop, and should not drag on the ground.



Correct Position for Horse Handler

NEVER WRAP THE EXCESS LEAD LINE AROUND YOUR HAND, DRAPE AROUND YOUR NECK, OR TIE AROUND YOUR WAIST.

Mounting - When the rider is ready, the instructor will ask you to lead the horse to the mounting ramp. Be sure you have the horse as close to the ramp as possible and stand in front of your horse while the rider is being mounted. When the instructor is ready, the rider will ask their horse to "walk on". It is important to bring the horse forward slowly, keeping

the horse as close to the ramp as possible. Once at the end of the ramp move back to the left side of the horse and proceed according to the instructor's directions.

The side walker

As a side walker, your first responsibility is the rider. The side walker should help the rider focus their attention on the instructor. Try to avoid unnecessary talking with the rider or other volunteers.

Mounting - When mounting with two side walkers the side walker working on the RIGHT will wait on the offside ramp and the side walker working on the LEFT will stay with the rider. Side walkers assist with mounting and dismounting. It is important to let the rider do as much of the mounting/dismounting as possible, only helping when the instructor says it is necessary. Side walkers will be informed of which type of support each rider needs. Side walkers should take support positions before leaving the ramp.

Different Forms of Support that Side Walkers Use

- Arm over thigh and ankle hold - The side walker rests the inside arm (closest to the horse and rider) over the rider's thigh and lightly holds onto the saddle/tack with their hand while using their outside hand to hold the rider's ankle.
- Arm over thigh hold - The side walker rests the inside arm over the rider's thigh and lightly holds onto the saddle/tack with their hand.
- Ankle hold - The side walker uses the inside hand to hold the rider's ankle steady - this helps teach the rider to keep their heels down and legs still.
- Spotter - The side walker stands next to the rider but does not physically assist them during their lesson - spotters are used for riders learning independence who need or want someone at their side for comfort and moral support. It is important to continue paying close attention to your rider.

The ultimate goal for therapeutic riding is to encourage the rider to stretch and meet his/her full potential. You are there right by his/her side, so help the instructor to challenge him/her to the best of his/her ability!

Emergency Therapeutic Riding Dismount

In the event of an emergency therapeutic riding dismount, please follow these guidelines:

- Instructor or horse handler signals the need for an emergency dismount.
- Horse handler immediately stops horse and stays close to the horse's head to calm the horse.
- If stirrups are being used, the side walker(s) would immediately free the rider's feet.
- The side walker/ instructor on the horse's left side grasps the rider firmly around the waist and pulls the rider off and away from the horse, while assisting to moving the rider's leg over the horse's mane.
- Horse handler turns horse's head toward the side to which the rider is dismounting so that the hindquarters automatically swing away from the rider.
- The instructor will give directions to take rider to a safe, quiet area and check for any injuries or emotional instability. In the event of any problems, call for help and care for riders following first aid guidelines.

Emergency Hippotherapy Dismount

In the event of an emergency hippotherapy dismount, please follow these guidelines:

- Therapist or horse handler signals the need for an emergency dismount.
- Horse handler immediately stops horse and stays close to the horse's head to calm the horse.
- If stirrups are being used, both side walkers immediately free rider's feet.
- The side walker/therapist on the horse's left side grasps the rider firmly around the waist and pulls the rider off and away from the horse, while assisting in moving the rider's leg over the horse's mane.
- Horse handler turns horse's head toward the side to which the rider is dismounting so that the hindquarters automatically swing away from the rider.
- The therapist will give instructions to take rider to a safe, quiet area and check for any injuries or emotional instability. In the event of any problems, call for help and care for riders following first aid guidelines.

Considerations: Although dismounts are traditionally made to the left, if the emergency deems it, the dismount may occur on the right side.

Emergency Evacuation Procedures Policy

In the event of a necessary emergency evacuation, please follow these guidelines:

1. Therapist/instructor signals the need for an emergency evacuation.
2. Handler immediately takes horse to mounting block to complete dismount of any riders, unless emergency deems immediate dismount. In that case, complete emergency dismount as written above.
3. Therapist/instructor radios or calls manager to ask for safe place to evacuate to. If no contact is made, therapist makes best educated decision possible.
4. All riders and guests are directed by facilitator or assistant to safe area.
5. Horses are immediately evacuated from arena (with tack on) and taken to a safe area.
6. In the event of an emergency, do not concern yourself with picking up materials, tack, etc. All items are replaceable.

General Mounted Emergency Action Plan

If A Rider Falls During A Lesson

- If a rider appears off balance and about to fall or jump off of their horse – inform the horse handler to stop and call for the instructor immediately.
- If a rider has fallen, remain calm and do not move the rider; the instructor must check him/her for signs of injury.
- Horse handlers will bring all horses within the arena to a halt with horses clipped onto their lead lines.
- The horse handler will be directed to move the horse carefully away from the fallen rider by the instructor.
- The instructor will determine if the rider is able to remount and finish the lesson.
- If the rider remounts, give him/her time to rebuild his/her confidence.
- Other mounted riders must remain at a halt until directed by the instructor.
- No one is allowed to enter the arena, including parents and additional volunteers unless summoned by the instructor. If summoned, please enter at a walk and remain quiet/calm.
- The instructor will determine whether to continue or end the class.
- If circumstances call for the arena to be evacuated, other mounted riders will be dismounted by the instructor.
- The side walker(s) will escort the rider(s) out first and the horse handlers will then escort the horse(s) back to the barn.

If A Rider Removes Helmet While Mounted

- The horse handler should immediately halt the horse and inform the instructor.
- The side walker(s) will remain quietly beside the rider until directed by the instructor for further action.
- The instructor will decide if the lesson can continue based on the rider's behavior.
- The rider may or may not be allowed to finish his/her lesson.

Runaway Horse

- IN ARENA: Be aware of the loose horse but do not run after it, as this may cause the horse to continue running. Horse handlers should try to keep their horses calm while side walkers offer assurance to the rider if he/she becomes nervous. Inform the instructor if your horse becomes difficult to control and the rider needs to be dismounted.
- OUT OF ARENA: Be aware of the loose horse but do not run after it, as this may cause the horse to continue running. An instructor or other staff member will tend to the loose horse.

Mechanical Lift Use & Safety

The mechanical lift may only be operated by trained instructors and staff and may only be used to place participants on horses that have been trained to receive riders using the lift.

Lift Procedures

1. Begin with rider in wheelchair facing the direction of travel.
2. Instructor and one volunteer or caregiver should be on the left side of the ramp with rider.
3. One non-lift side volunteer should be on the off-side ramp (right side ramp) to assist.
4. Instructor moves the lift to the rider in preparation.
5. Instructor gives the go-ahead to the horse handler to bring the horse into the mounting ramp.
6. Instructor positions under-arm rests and thigh-supports on the rider with assistance from volunteer and/or caregiver.
7. Instructor activates lift and with assistance from both volunteers, positions rider above the horse.
8. Instructor activates lift to lower the rider onto the horse with assistance from both volunteers.
9. Instructor and volunteers remove lift supports from rider and take the positions necessary to support the rider.
10. Instructor raises lift and moves it away from the rider to a neutral position.
11. Once rider is settled, the team leaves the ramp with all necessary volunteer support in place.

For lift dismount, complete the steps in reverse

Emergency dismount in the event of lift malfunction

1. Instructor positions him or herself facing rider.
2. Volunteer or caregiver prepares to lift rider from behind with hands under the rider's armpits.
3. Instructor and off-side (right side) side volunteer lift rider's legs from under the thigh near the knee.
4. Volunteer or caregiver lifts rider's torso slightly.
5. Off-side (right side) volunteer gently hands off the rider's right leg to the instructor and the team lifts the rider off the horse and places him or her into their wheelchair.

Equine Lift Training

Any horse that is to be used to accept riders using the lift must first undergo several training sessions receiving able-bodied staff or volunteers. This training will be repeated several times a year for each horse.

Emergency Dismounts

In the event a rider who is typically dismounted using the lift needs to come off a horse quickly, the rider may be dismounted in an emergency fashion. The need for this type of dismount is solely up to the instructor, who is trained in the appropriate method of emergency dismounts. However, should the emergency occur while a participant is in the lift, the following steps should take place. Because the lift is battery operated, any failure of the lift that involves the battery power will result in manual operation of the lift.

The lift is moved along the track manually, and may be lowered manually by pressing the **yellow button** on the side. This is the parachute button, to be used in case the lift unexpectedly stops in midair.

Manufacturer's Instructions

For full instructions on use of the lift, see the manufacturer's Lift User Guide (Track-To-Track), which is located in the Freedom Ride administrative office. Safety instructions and an explanation of the buttons are included in the front of this guide.

Quick Reference

For quick reference, here are the most important things to remember:

1. Charge the lift when not in use. Do not let the batteries drain completely. The charging station is located in the tack room; it is labeled clearly along the wall under the training rope halters.

2. Check the motor band (nylon belt-like strap that raises and lowers the lift). If there is fraying, get it changed immediately.
3. If a user is lifting and there is a high-pitched beep, the batteries are low and you only have 1 to 2 lifts left. Put the lift back on the charging station.
4. If the user is in the air and the lift stops working, press the YELLOW button on the side of the lift. This will slowly lower the lift. (This is the parachute button.)

Procedures: Emergency/Medical Emergencies/Risk Management

A. Emergency Telephone Numbers: FIRE / POLICE / AMBULANCE 911

B. Fire and Other Emergency Evacuation Plan

The following procedures must be followed. Any fire, regardless of size, should be reported immediately to the Fire Department. Persons reporting a fire must give:

- Their name
- Freedom Ride's name
- The fire's location on the property
- A description of the type of fire

If a fire is noticed emergency services should be contacted and the person must remain, if possible and without harm, to inform a responsible person of the exact location of the fire. Fire extinguishers are located along the aisles at the barn, within the administrative office, in the Volunteer Center, tack room, and feed room. They should be used to fight small fires only. All persons should leave the building, proceed to the parking lot and await instructions from fire department personnel before reentering. Supervisors should see to the safety of all disabled persons and assist them in leaving the area. Premises affected by fire should be left with the doors unlocked.

C. Disaster Procedures: Hurricane / Tornado / Fire / Lightning

- **Hurricane**

Because of our location in Florida, we occasionally find our facility to be in the path of a hurricane. The executive director will assign staff to assist with building preparation and will advise staff regarding attending the office on the day of storm. All classes and program activities will be canceled, and the volunteer coordinator will advise all scheduled volunteers.

Plan:

In the event that a hurricane is predicted to pass through our area, all horses will be locked in their stalls, as the barn is made of concrete block and considered to be the safest location for our herd.

Identification tags with the phone numbers of the barn manager and executive director will be secured to the front leg(s) of each horse, so in the event of an emergency we can be alerted should they escape or become injured.

Each horse will be left with extra water and hay as a precaution during the event that access to the facility is delayed.

As soon as possible and as safety allows, a staff member will come to the facility to check on the horses, alert necessary staff personnel, clean stalls, and feed/water them.

- **Tornado**

Leave the administrative office immediately and take shelter within the bathroom of the volunteer center or other interior room within the barn area. Move away from windows. Do not stand under light fixtures or near objects that may fall or move, such as files, water coolers, and chairs.

- **Fire**

Fire is always a possible threat, but should a fire ever occur, it does not have to result in harm.

Plan:

In preparation for responding to a fire, all volunteers and staff undergo emergency dismount procedures and emergency evacuation procedure training, and are instructed on the location of all fire extinguishers. There are three (3) copies of the fire extinguisher diagram posted in the barn area:

- 1 Outside the office of the barn manager
- 2 Outside the front of the feed room
- 3 Outside the rear of the feed room

- **Lightning**

We live in the lightning capitol of the world, and as such lightening is something we must deal with on a regular basis.

Plan:

The City of Orlando has a “lightning detection” siren located adjacent to Freedom Ride that is audible from our facility.

Lightning Detected in the Area:

There is one long warning siren sound when there is lightning detected in the area. After hearing the sound the following procedure is implemented:

- Classes are immediately stopped
- Horses are returned to their stalls
- Riders are brought into the tack room and/or office

Lightning No Longer Detected in the Area:

There are three short warning siren sounds when lightning is no longer detected in the area. At this time, the instructor determines if classes can be resumed or canceled for the day.

PLEASE NOTE: If lightning is seen in the area and the siren did not sound the same plan, as noted above, is followed.

D. Power Blackout Procedure

If a power blackout occurs, turn off all electrical equipment such as computers, copy machines, etc. to lessen the electrical load on the circuits. Open all doors, shades and curtains to allow natural light to filter through the office or in-case of extreme outdoor heat keep shades closed to keep room the cool.

Contact Orlando Utilities Commission to report outage: 407.423.9018

E. Bomb Threat Procedure

If you receive a bomb threat over the phone, please do not panic. This may be the only opportunity to obtain information about the bomb. If possible, have someone else listen to the call without letting the caller know. You should listen to the caller rather than talk, except in an attempt to try to find out:

- When the bomb will go off
- Where the bomb is
- What kind of bomb it is
- What the bomb looks like
- Why the bomb was planted

Immediately after the call has ended, call the police and notify the executive director or the barn manager on duty and inform them of the bomb threat. Do not touch any strange objects that may be present. Instead, report its presence as indicated above and follow direction from the Police.

F. Location of Fire or Emergency Exits

- All barn aisle ways will remain clear of obstructions for easy access in case of emergency.
- There are two emergency exits in the administrative office building:
 - One located in the front of the building
 - One located in the rear of the building

G. Horse and Human First Aid Kits are located as follows:

- **Horse First Aid Kits are located:**
 - Feed Room
 - Barn Manager's Office
 - Truck/Trailer

Please note: Volunteers are never to assume responsibility of a Freedom Ride horse's care medical.

- **Human First Aid Kits are located:**
 - Barn Manager's Office
 - Truck/Trailer

H. Reporting On-The-Job Accidents

Report any accident or injury suffered on the job to the barn manager on duty, complete an incident report form, and contact emergency services if necessary. Incident report forms can be found in the administrative office.

I. Hazards Specific to the Site: Natural/Manmade/Equine

1. Natural

There are no known natural hazards on site.

2. Manmade

There are a few manmade hazards specific to Freedom Ride Inc.

- Lee Road has traffic that could pose a danger to a loose horse.
- The mounting ramp could cause a fall hazard.
- The drainage area located behind the main barn where horses could misstep and hurt themselves.
- Freedom Ride has a tractor, cart, fence, and other items that may pose a hazard to participants.

Plan:

- To ensure that a horse does not enter traffic, all staff and volunteers are instructed to double check the latch/chain for each stall door or gate when putting a horse away. Staff should ensure that the front gate is closed each evening at the close of the business day.
- To keep participants off the ramp, we hang signs at both ends of the entry ramp when not in use.
- We have posted a sign in the drainage area cautioning participants of the potential hazard
- We have posted a sign on the tractor, instructing participants to stay away.
- We have posted signs at various locations cautioning participants to stay away from potentially hazardous situations.
- Signs have been posted instructing participants not to stand or lean on the fence.

3. Equine

There are specific hazards related to being around and working with equines.

Plan:

Because there are hazards specific to the use of equines, each participant, volunteer, and employee must sign a waiver and undergo training on best practices. Precaution is used in handling the horses at all times.

- If an accident should occur in which an equine is injured, the barn manager or a member of the Freedom Ride staff should be alerted.
- Should an individual be injured, the injury should be tended to immediately. Staff and/or the parent/legal guardian should use their best judgment to determine if the injury needs medical attention.