



HIPPOTHERAPY OR THERAPEUTIC RIDING?

HIPPOTHERAPY

- Completed by professional therapist (Occupational, Physical or Speech) in conjunction with a professional horse handler
- Direct hands-on participation by therapist at all times
- The horse's movement is essential to assist in meeting therapy goals
- The goal of hippotherapy is professional treatment to improve neurological functioning in cognition, body movement, organization and attention levels
- One on one treatment, generally occurs year-round until the client meets graduation criteria
- The treating therapist continually assesses and modifies therapy based on the client's responses

THERAPEUTIC RIDING

- Completed by professional horseback riding instructor in conjunction with volunteers including a therapist who may be involved as a consultant
- Occasional hands-on assistance by riding instructor and/or volunteer, with instructor primarily teaching from center of arena
- The horse's temperament is essential to learn riding skills
- Goal is to provide social, educational and sport opportunities in recreational horseback riding lessons adapted to individuals with disabilities
- The individual is often taught riding lessons in a group format, which runs in "sessions." The instructor must respond to the group as a whole, in addition to fostering individual success
- Focus on the group lesson is encouraged, along with emphasizing proper riding position and rein skills

Hippotherapy or Therapeutic Riding: What is the difference and how do I know which one is most appropriate for my child?

1. Consider your child's specific needs:
 - a. Does your child require constant positioning to maintain sitting balance?
 - b. Does your child need frequent assistance to maintain attention or alertness levels?
 - c. Is your child under age 5?
 - d. Does your child have special medical needs that may require the additional knowledge and training from a licensed professional therapist?
 - e. Does your child have sensory integration dysfunction or frequent behavioral outbursts to sensory stimulus?
 - f. Does your child have specific neuro-motor goals to work on?
 - g. Would your child benefit most from the horse's movement in private one on one sessions?

If you answered "yes" to any of the questions above, then hippotherapy may be the avenue most appropriate for your child at this time. Further information comparing and contrasting hippotherapy with therapeutic riding is presented below.

2. Next, look at the availability of programs within an hour drive of your area. Often there are many therapeutic riding programs available but few therapists offering hippotherapy. In addition, therapeutic riding lessons may be offered seasonally and/or programs may have waiting lists. These may be important factors in your final decision. ***To find a center near you, see the directory available on the PATH International website: www.pathintl.org***
3. And finally, consider the costs involved. Riding lessons typically cost less than professional treatment, however therapy fees may be covered under your health insurance policy. You will need to consult the programs and professionals in your area for more information related to your particular situation.

GRADUATING FROM HIPPO THERAPY TO THERAPEUTIC RIDING

Before graduating to therapeutic riding, the following goals must be met during hippotherapy sessions:

- Therapists will determine the safest mount/ dismount procedure for each client. It is preferable that all clients are able to mount from a mounting block and dismount to the ground.
- Therapist will determine the safest and most appropriate tack for the rider, being the saddle and bridle. The therapist will determine any adaptive equipment that may also be needed.
- Client will be able to maintain good postural alignment, including appropriate head, neck and trunk control for the entire 30 minute session while at the walk with minimal assistance.
- Client will be able to complete an around-the-world while at the walk with minimal assistance.
- Client will be able to complete a 2-3 step directional cue without prompts.
- Client will be able to demonstrate good control of the horse through reining at the walk and at the whoa.
- Client will be able to trot one full circle with some postural control and moderate assistance.