Participant Handbook

5080 146th Avenue
Holland, MI 49423
For further information, contact:
(616) 227- 3639 ext. 3
programs@renewtrc.org

Last Reviewed January 2026

Welcome to Renew TRC:

We are glad that you have an interest in learning more about Renew TRC programming! We strive to provide the highest quality of Equine Assisted Services (EAS) to individuals in our community. We look forward to welcoming you as a beloved part of the Renew TRC family.

Our Mission:

To enhance the well-being of individuals in our community through the physical, cognitive, and emotional benefits of therapeutic horsemanship.

At Renew, each participant has the opportunity to go beyond their disability, inability, fear, or reality. We encourage and support dreams by offering therapeutic horsemanship activities to fulfill our mission, striving to help participants develop their maximum potential in a caring and fun environment that empowers the participant in ways different from traditional therapy.

Our vision - Positive life change with each horse experience.

Our values - At Renew, we *empower* people by providing *excellent* service and promoting *Christ-centered acceptance* of all.

Renew Therapeutic Riding Center is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that is focused on improving the lives of all its participants. We are a Premier Accredited Center of PATH International, a federally recognized nonprofit organization that advances professional EAS by empowering its members through setting global standards of best practice.

Renew TRC is the only PATH Intl. Premier Accredited therapeutic riding center in West Michigan, and one of three in the state of Michigan. Holding our Premier Accreditation means that we are evaluated every 5 years to ensure we are following the most rigorous standards of safety and professionalism in the industry.

Our Team:

Each equine assisted service provision is supervised by one of our 7 talented PATH Intl. Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructors (CTRI), who come from a variety of professional backgrounds. Our instructors work with participants, their families/caregivers, or fellow healthcare and educational professionals to develop a plan to address each participant's needs.

With an emphasis on the safety, well-being, and respect of the participant and the horse, our trained volunteers assist the instructors in implementing the goals for each lesson. Instructors document outcomes and maintain progress notes for each session with an overall goal of increased independence and horsemanship skill attainment. All files are maintained securely on-site in locked file cabinets in compliance with PATH Intl. and participant forms and information are kept confidential.

Our History:

The riding program began in 2009 by founders, Jodi Geerlings and Phyllis DeHaan, as a result of a lifelong dream to offer therapeutic riding lessons to those who could benefit from this service. In 2011, we moved to Rusty Spurs Equestrian Center, where Jodi and Phyllis partnered with Tom and Kelly Rozema to begin therapeutic riding at this location. The name was then changed to Renew Therapeutic Riding Center, taking the notion of renewal from Isaiah 41:30.

In 2013, the Board hired Melissa Conner as Executive Director and as a PATH Intl. Advanced Instructor, and Renew began another stage of growth, doubling our number of students served and volunteers involved in the program. This growth necessitated searching for additional space and arena time than was currently available. In late 2014, Renew began a Capital Campaign to raise funds to build its own facility by repurposing a large enclosure at the south end of the property at Rusty Spurs. Due to the generosity of many, including a major grant of $30,000 from the Community Foundation of Holland/Zeeland, the new barn, pasture, heated indoor riding arena, and outdoor arena were completed in January of 2016.

Renew Today:

Renew currently serves approximately 130 participants each week through a variety of EAS programs. Under the leadership and governance of Board Members and staff, Renew TRC purchased 20 acres at 5080 146th Ave in the Fall of 2018, where new facilities continue to be built as our capital campaign continues for Phase 3 (learning center). We moved to our new space in early 2020 and now call it home complete with a 24-stall barn, 80’ x 200’ heated indoor arena, outdoor dressage arena, round pen, viewing room, pastures, pond, native flower garden, riding trails, accessible parking lot and restrooms on site. We are thankful to continue growing and serving our community on this beautiful landscape!

Renew TRC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and is governed by a Board of Directors. As a nonprofit, we are dependent upon donations and grant money to meet our budget. Lesson fees cover less than 30% of operating expenses and we continue to depend greatly upon volunteers to meet the needs of the organization.

WHY THERAPEUTIC RIDING?

Horses That Heal

Therapeutic riding opens new pathways of physical, mental, and emotional rehabilitation. The rhythmic and rocking gait of the horse transfers a gentle three-dimensional movement to the rider that relaxes muscles, improves muscle tone, flexibility and balance, and enhances spatial awareness. Accompanied by a team of encouraging volunteers and a supportive horse,

self-control, self-esteem, self-confidence, and independence grows. Rehabilitation becomes a joy rather than a chore.

Individuals with disabilities such as cerebral palsy, spina bifida, neuromuscular disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, acquired brain injury, cognitive limitations, emotional challenges, autism, learning disabilities, and attention deficit disorder, can experience vast benefits through participating in riding and horsemanship activities.

Healing Attributes of Riding

- Normalizes muscle strength and tone. Improves coordination, freedom of movement, balance, respiration, body awareness, tactile perception, and oral motor control.
- Enhances self-image and confidence. Increases acceptance of unfamiliar experiences. Develops loving relationships with a team of individuals and the horse.
- Increases attention and safety awareness. Enhances comprehension and memory. Improves ability to sequence and follow directions.
- Improves interpersonal communication. Promotes family interaction and broadens social activity. Develops a recreational skill with opportunities to experience success.

Therapeutic Riding

At Renew TRC, our instructors strive to teach riding skills in the learning style that is best received by each individual involved. The Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl., *see pathintl.org for more info*) Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructors conduct each lesson. The rider receives the physical, cognitive, and emotional benefits that come along with learning how to ride. Each lesson incorporates an opportunity for rider skill growth and learning through implementing a thoughtfully planned 45-minute lesson. Although there is variability in the skills achieved based on a variety of factors, including rider/horse pairing, we encourage the practice of safe and relational horsemanship at all levels. Please reach out to programs@renewtrc.org if you'd like to learn more about our teaching methodology.

Speech Therapy

Renew TRC is pleased to host Beth Macauley, PH.D., CCC-SLP, and Trisha VanDyke MA CCC-SLP, of Macauley Therapy Services, on Tuesday evenings during regular scheduling to provide SLP sessions at the barn on horseback. If you'd like to learn more about these services and how to get involved, please click here to visit our website or contact programs@renewtrc.org.

Additional Programs

If you would like to hear more about other unique program offerings available at Renew TRC throughout the year, please contact us at programs@renewtrc.org. Our Renew Equine Assisted Learning opportunities range in variety from hosting field trips, providing educational trailer visits, corporate group experiences, and beyond. We continue to expand our special programming to serve, but not limited to, veterans and first responders, those grieving the loss of a loved ones, children in adoptive or foster care, memory care, etc.

Student Information



Lesson Schedule:

We offer therapeutic riding lessons throughout all seasons of the year. Most sessions are 6 weeks long, with one 45-minute lesson each week (2-6 riders per lesson). Each lesson includes a warm-up, review of previous skills learned, introduction of a new skill, practice, progression, and a cool down. Registration information is generally emailed to participants a few weeks before the start of each session. We follow the Holland Public School system's closures and delays.

Upcoming session dates are updated on our website.

Lesson Cancellation:

Renew prefers at least a 24-hour notice by phone to (616) 227-3639 ext. 7 if a rider needs to cancel a scheduled lesson due to unexpected absence (ie. illness). An email to programs@renewtrc.org in addition to the phone call is preferred. If a student has a treatment, surgery, or injury mid-session we are happy to discuss the possibility of passing the credit on to an upcoming session they can attend. Riders who arrive more than 10 minutes late to their lesson without a phone call may not have the opportunity to ride out of respect for the volunteers, other riders, and horses as the horse will be returned to pasture. Please utilize the cancellation hotline number to inform your instructor that you are running behind schedule and they will help determine the best plan with you. Preplanned absences, such as vacations, are asked to be communicated at the start of the session whenever possible.

Make-Up Lessons:

At this time, make-up lesson dates will only be offered if the lesson is canceled by Renew TRC due to weather, or if the rider has a medical emergency/related-reason during their session and as determined by Renew Staff. If scheduling does not allow make-up, credit may be given to the following session attended by the student if deemed appropriate by staff. We cannot guarantee the rider will be given their regular horse, time, or instructor during our provided make-up dates.

No Shows:

If you fail to show up for your scheduled lesson, you will still be charged for the lesson with no make-up date option given. If you don't attend your lesson without notice more than twice during a session, you may be dropped from the regular schedule and allowed back in as the schedule permits. Lesson credit will not be given for no-shows.

Annual Form Updates:

The two required forms for participation in Renew TRC lessons are the Participant Application and the Physician's Statement. They both can be downloaded from our website: renewtrc.org under the 'Therapeutic Riding' tab. The Release of Information Form is only necessary when the rider attends lessons with a school group or group home or in a situation where information will need to be shared with a third party. With the help of their instructor, all riders will participate in a verbal session discussion of their goals for each session.

If there are any changes in the rider's health/medical status, please notify the Program Coordinator immediately. The Program Coordinator will determine if a change requires updated forms.

An annual update of form information will be required and prompted through CampDoc. Updated riding forms are required at least every 3 years, or annually for riders diagnosed with Down Syndrome. A licensed Physician must sign the form when the participant has a diagnosis of Down Syndrome.The Program Coordinator will monitor all forms for required updates.

Research:

From time to time, Renew TRC may participate in research studies to assist in furthering evidence based practice (EBP) in the Equine Assisted Services (EAS) industry. If a Renew participant chooses to participate in the study, you may be asked to sign an additional form relevant to the study. See example below.
'By completing the attached questionnaire, you are indicating your consent to participate in this research.'

Confidentiality:

Any information pertaining to the participants is strictly confidential. It is critical that we respect each individual by keeping confidential who participates in the program and what occurs at the center unless given specific permission by an authorized person to share information outside of the Renew TRC community. Confidentiality and respect are considered two of the most basic responsibilities of our staff and volunteers.

Participant Eligibility and Discharge Policy:

Renew TRC respects the guidelines listed below when making decisions regarding acceptance into programs and horse selection for the lesson. Each guideline is in place so that every member of the team (horse, rider, volunteer and instructor) may have a safe experience. If these guidelines are not met, or if a participant's status (weight or health condition) changes, then Renew staff retain the right to discharge the participant from services.

Eligibility/Discharge Guidelines:

- As a Premiere Accredited Center with PATH Intl., all lessons are conducted and/or supervised by a credentialed professional for the service being provided. In addition to the certified professionals on our staff, we frequently provide training and mentorship to others seeking certification in the field of Equine Assisted Services (EAS).

- Per our accreditation, we follow all guidelines and standards for precautions and contraindications of PATH Intl. These guidelines, precautions and contraindications are reviewed regularly by a team of medical professionals in partnership with PATH Intl. and updated as new information is acquired. It is the policy of Renew Therapeutic Riding Center to document all precautions noted when assessing an individual for appropriateness for services in EAS at Renew, and to decline services or discharge for those with conditions that are considered to be contraindicated. This is to ensure safety for all involved. Contraindications exist when the risk outweighs the benefit for participation in EAS.

- For safety, we ask that riders *do not exceed the weight of 250 pounds* for participation in Therapeutic Riding. Other program options, such as grooming/ground time with a horse may be offered in place of riding when appropriate. Staff of Renew TRC will take into consideration various factors such as rider's skill set, weight, and stability on the horse in order to provide the best service possible. Each of our horses are evaluated and assigned a maximum carrying weight for balanced and unbalanced riders with the help of our veterinarian. Considerations will be made for the horse's age, health/soundness, stability, equipment available, and appropriateness of volunteers available.

- If a rider exceeds 200 pounds, Renew may ask for a bi-annual weight update to be provided by the family to ensure that the rider is still an appropriate match for their horse and riding services. This is for the safety of all involved. Weight can be self-reported, or the staff may request a participant's weight be taken using a scale on-site.

- Each rider will be evaluated as an individual. Considerations will also be made for the rider's height, range of motion, balance and ability to dismount independently. Our riders in therapeutic riding must be at least 4 years old and able to self-support their head/neck/trunk for at least 10 seconds. This is for the well-being of the rider.

- Speech therapy riders may be considered starting at the age of 3 when a licensed speech/language pathologist is conducting the session.

- If your participant experiences seizures, you must notify the Renew Program Coordinator immediately if the type, frequency, or medication to control seizure activity changes.

Failure to notify Renew TRC of these changes could result in the pause of participation in programming as it poses significant risk of injury.

- If a current participant is unwell, they should communicate with us and cancel their lesson. In the same way, in the event of a recent surgery or fracture, a doctor's note will be required before returning to programming.

- A participant not showing up for a scheduled lesson without notice will result in a staff member following up to check on the wellbeing of the individual. Repeated absences will not be allowed, as there is an extensive waiting list for services and this is a potential reason for discharge.

- Please note that the herd and volunteers at the center are dynamic and due to this fact, we do not always have the means available to safely accommodate every individual who wishes to onboard as a participant in services at Renew. We will maintain a waiting list and will offer services as soon as possible based on availability.

Participants as Volunteers - Professional Conduct and Appropriate Boundaries:

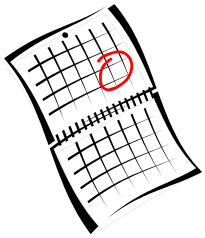
- Participants who also engage in the work of Renew as a volunteer is an especially valued role. We desire to empower and support our participants in unique ways, inviting them to participate in the full mission of Renew through volunteering of their time and talents.
- Although the lesson volunteer may not be an appropriate role for each of our participants, Renew is unique in that those we serve are invited to also support others receiving the service.
- When a Renew participant serves as a volunteer, his/her thinking <u>needs to shift to focus on the participant</u> whom they are serving and the role they are assigned to fulfill. (In other words, volunteers should not share personal concerns or anxieties with Renew participants during their lesson or session time).
    - If a volunteer feels they need to share about stresses in their life, they are to talk with staff.
    - If a volunteer is uncomfortable at any point with disclosures from other volunteers and/or participants, please bring this to the attention of staff immediately.
    - If a volunteer arrives and realizes that they are not able to be fully present in a lesson/able to fulfill their assigned role for the day (mentally, emotionally, physically, etc.), they are to notify staff immediately. (Renew staff cares about our volunteers! We are here for you!)

Dismissal Policy for Participants, Volunteers, and Guests:

In accordance with PATH Intl. Standards, Renew TRC has a policy to dismiss any participants, volunteers, or guests who become disruptive to horses, staff, or programs.This may include not following barn rules or code of conduct, disrespectful or foul language, uncontrolled behaviors, violating the confidentiality policy, or exhibiting actions or language that endanger horses, volunteers, staff, property owners, neighbors, horse owners, or program participants. This policy is to ensure that the culture and environment at Renew TRC remains safe and secure for all stakeholders.

Once a dismissal occurs, the individual involved will not be welcomed back to the facility unless approved in writing by both the Executive Director and the Board of Directors. If a dismissal occurs, staff members will complete an Incident Report and the Executive Director and Board of Directors will be notified.

Financial Information



Payments:

Lesson fees are to be paid in full during the first week of the session, or weekly payment plans are available if desired. The total cost of a 6-week session is $240 ($40 per lesson) but payment for the entire 6-week slot, regardless of planned absences, is expected. An invoice will be sent to your email for the convenience of online payment, or payments can be mailed or dropped off to the payment box inside the viewing room in the arena. Please be sure to include the participant name and invoice number on cash/checks.

Scholarships:

Renew TRC Scholarship is a fund that provides participants dealing with financial hardship a chance to participate in our programs. This is thanks to generous donors from our community. Click here to visit our website and learn more about scholarships and guidelines.

You can complete the application from the link above, or contact Kennedy at programs@renewtrc.org for more information. We ask that participant's receiving a scholarship maintain at least 80% attendance, or they will be asked to skip a session before being eligible for scholarship coverage again. Makeup lessons are not typically available to our scholarship covered students.

Respite Funding Through OCCMH:

As respite funding through CMH is only available for lessons attended, families are given one grace lesson every 6 months. If a family is unable to attend more than one lesson in a 6 month period, the family will be invoiced and expected to privately pay for the lessons they were unable to attend.

Funding Through Auto Insurance:

In some cases related to a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) as a result of an automobile accident, participants may qualify for billing services to their Auto Insurance. Please inquire and coordinate with our Program Coordinator, Kennedy and/or our Administrative Assistant, Emily Hill, for more information.

Riding Information



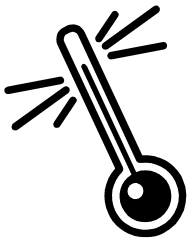
Clothing:

Riders will be in a barn environment, and must dress appropriately. We ask that all riders wear closed toed and heeled shoes such as boots or tennis shoes. An ASTM/SEI helmet is required for each participant. We will provide the helmet for lessons if the rider does not own one. Please check to make sure all headbands and hair ties are worn below the helmet and that jackets are zipped. Also, horses may be wary of any noisy clothing or observers' umbrellas. Please avoid both noisy and long jewelry.

WINTER/FALL:
In the cool or cold seasons, please be aware that the temperatures at the barn can feel 10° colder than at your house. Layers work best for our riders. Big, bulky coats can hinder the rider and can become a safety issue when dismounting. Gloves can be helpful so long as the rider is not bothered/distracted by them. Please note that when the temperature is below 20 degrees outside, trotting may not be available to ensure our horses can stay healthy and cool down appropriately before being turned out.

SUMMER/SPRING:
In our warm or hot seasons, light colored clothing can help keep the rider more comfortable. Shorts are allowed but can cause the rider discomfort when riding in a

saddle. For this reason, long pants like jeans or riding pants are more appropriate. **No sandals are allowed.** During the lesson the rider may be outside in the sun, so sunscreen is strongly recommended. Insect repellant is also available and recommended.



Inclement Weather:

If the heat index is above 105°F, lessons will be canceled. All effort will be made to contact the riders whose lessons are affected by this decision. However, if there is a question as to whether we are having lessons, please contact the barn at 616-227-3639. If **Holland Public Schools** have canceled classes or evening activities due to snow or extremely low temperature during the winter months, we will cancel lessons. If there is a threat of tornado or severe thunderstorms, please contact us for details concerning lessons.

Frequently asked questions:

Q: Will I/my child ride the same horse every week?
A: We try to keep the rider with the same horse for every session unless there is a health issue with the horse, scheduling conflict, or the instructor requests a horse change based on student needs.

Q: Will I/my child have the same instructor every session?
A: Scheduling and availability of instructors drives much of our assignments. It's possible that their instructor may change from session to session, but we do our best to avoid this.

Q: Will I/my child have a private or group lesson?
A: Research has shown that most people benefit from a group experience. Therefore, we attempt to group our riders for the group experience. However, during the initial assessment the instructor may decide that a private lesson is most beneficial for the rider and may be an option based on schedule availability.

Q: I/my child need(s) to take a session off. Can I/my child keep the same lesson time for the next session I/my child ride(s)?
A: Since scheduling requests are made per session/semester, we can try to keep to the same lesson time if possible, but this is not guaranteed. Due dates for each session's registration form will be provided in emails from the Program Coordinator.

Q: If I know of a lesson I/my child will miss before the session begins, what should I do?
A: If you know of a pre-planned lesson cancellation, let the Program Coordinator know at registration so the instructor and volunteer team is aware of the absence. No make-up lessons are available at this time in order to be good stewards of our waitlisted riders.

Q: If the traffic is bad and I think I/my child will be late, what should I do?
A: Call the HOTLINE at (616) 227-3639 ext. 7 and tell us about the traffic and try to get to the barn ASAP. If you think that you cannot make it in time, we will help work out a solution with you.

Q: I would like to help the program but not in lessons, what can I do?
A: We always love receiving help with mailings, special events, and even dusting or cleaning around the barn. We will direct you or your participant to our Volunteer Coordinator to schedule your volunteer time. We have a Parent Committee that meets quarterly so please contact the Program Coordinator if you'd be interested in learning more!



<u>Renew Therapeutic Riding Center Staff Members, 2025</u>

Melissa Conner: Executive Director, Master Therapeutic Riding Instructor, ESMHL, EAL certified facilitator

Shaina Strikwerda: Director of Programs, Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor, ESMHL, CTRS

Kennedy Sall: Program Coordinator, CTRS

Emily Hill: Administrative Assistant, Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor, ESHML

Mia Diekevers: Volunteer Coordinator

Elizabeth Turner: Volunteer Training Associate, Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor

Kayla Tuinenga: Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor, EAL certified facilitator

Teresa Harrington: Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor, EAL certified facilitator

Cassie Pelon: Communications Coordinator

Liz Lesperance: Development Coordinator

Dan Habers: Farm Manager

Tess Timmer: Barn Assistant, Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor

Ellis Stitch: Equine Coordinator, Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor

Robyn Allison: Finance Coordinator

Beth Macauley: Speech and Language Pathologist, PH.D., CCC-SLP

Tasha Federinko: MA, LPC

Tori Conner: Trauma Therapist

Safety Rules and Regulations

Barn Rules

The purpose of these policies are to ensure the safety of participants, volunteers, the health of the horses, and document compliance with standards of the PATH Intl. Center Accreditation Manual.

We respect the facility and express gratitude to the donors who enable us to operate at this location, and as a result we take care of the property and the barn that we use for program activities by maintaining a clean, safe environment.

- There is no smoking, running, roughhousing, or offensive language.
- Children must always be directly supervised by their responsible parent, guardian, or caregiver outside of their scheduled programming time.
- Always follow the instructions of staff members.
- No entering of paddocks without permission or appropriate training. Do not feed our horses out of your hand.
- No pets are allowed on the property with the exception of approved service animals with a designated task. Please note - Renew staff reserves the right to ask that the animal leave the property in order to maintain the safety of all involved. For further information, please reference the ADA.gov website regarding Service Animals.
- Speak to one another with respect and love. We are all members of the Renew family and agree to work in cooperation with one another to ensure safety.
- If you bring friends or family with you to the barn, they are welcome to watch from the front of the arena. If you wish for them to interact with the horses at any point, a day guest waiver must be completed.

- Obey all posted signs and instructions by staff

SAFETY & EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Safety is of utmost importance! We have many procedures in place to ensure the safety of our participants, volunteers, and equines. We will review and rehearse emergency procedures at least annually for all participants and volunteers.

FACILITY SAFETY

- We have a few off-limits areas, which are indicated with yellow "Authorized Personnel Only" signs. Unless directed to do so by a staff member, please do not go into an "Authorized Personnel Only" area. These off-limit areas are marked for your protection, and for the protection of all program participants.
- The emergency phone for outgoing calls is located in the indoor arena on the north wall near the sound box closet. It has emergency phone numbers and directions to our facility located adjacent to it. The barn phone number is 616-227-3639 (616-22RENEW).
- **Human First Aid supplies** are in the connector between the barn & arena, in a labeled cabinet.
- **Horse First Aid Supplies** are located in a labeled cabinet of the feed room on the East wall.
- **Immediate Trauma Kits** are located in gators, tractors, skid steer, and human first aid kit.
- **Life Preserver Ring** is located in the old barn near the pond.
- Renew Instructors are all CPR/First Aid certified.
- Two **AEDs** are on site accessible for both the indoor and outdoor arenas. One AED is hanging on the northwest side of the indoor arena, near the sound box closet. A secondary AED is hanging on the south side of the inside of the horse barn.

FIRE PROCEDURE

In the event of a fire, please vacate the building using the closest safe exit. A staff member will alert everyone in the barn to enact the Fire Safety Procedure and will call, or delegate the call, to 911. All individuals on property will meet on the hill area between the white three stall garage and the red maintenance barn (NE corner of property). Horses that were in lessons

should be brought to the outdoor arena. No one is to re-enter the building(s) until cleared to do so by emergency personnel. If there are horses in their stalls of the barn, staff could delegate the effort to open barn paddock gates and dutch doors (only from outside access). This should only be attempted if deemed safe by the staff member. The lower half of the dutch door should be closed after the horse is removed from the barn to ensure the horse doesn't reenter the barn. Additional halters and lead ropes are located in the SE corner of the hay barn and in the equipment shed to the South of the barn.

TORNADO PROCEDURE

Tornado watch (be cautious): Indoor lessons continue with caution and stay alert. Only Renew Staff shall make attempts to lead horses outside of the barn/indoor arena if absolutely necessary.

Tornado warning (tornado spotted/reported): All persons on site gather in the center of the indoor arena (riders are dismounted). Remain there until instructed otherwise. For individuals in other buildings on property, no attempt to get to the arena should be made. Persons should proceed to the safest location in the building they are in. For example, those in the farmhouse should proceed to the basement.

Please note: During a tornado warning, at the discretion of staff no attempt to bring the horses inside should be made as horses are the safest outdoors! Leave horses as they are (either in the barn or in pasture).

INCLEMENT WEATHER

In the event of an ice storm, hail, wind, etc. all volunteers may remain inside and staff will retrieve horses as deemed possible. In accordance with the guidelines written by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, volunteers may remain inside in the event that lightning strikes are visible and staff will retrieve or turn horses out. Please note that volunteers are not required to go out in inclement weather; please ask a staff member for assistance.

LESSON SAFETY

- Occasionally, emergency dismounts are necessary to quickly dismount students in emergency situations. Sidewalkers are responsible for dismounting the student safely if an instructor is not near enough to do so in an emergency situation (horse spook or stumble, saddle slip, rider off balance, for example). Horse Leaders should stay with the horse and put as much distance as possible between rider and horse when an emergency dismount occurs.

- If a student is exhibiting unsafe behavior (such as a tantrum or removal of a helmet while mounted), volunteers should assist as best they can until staff can respond appropriately.
- During mounting and dismounting procedures, it is important for volunteers to follow the directions of the instructor. Sidewalkers should attend to participants and Horse Leaders should attend to the horse only (not the student).
- The lesson will end should an injured horse or human need to remain in the working space due to severity of injury, unless the lesson can move to alternative space.
- When assisting with the lift, volunteers should follow the instructions of the staff member in charge. Only instructors or a trained volunteer should operate the lift.

BASIC RULES FOR WORKING WITH PROGRAM HORSES

- Approach the horse from the side, not the rear. Talk to it in a low voice, and keep a hand on its body while walking around it.
- Always use quiet voices and avoid sudden movements when working with horses.
- All cell phones or other personal communication devices should be in either an OFF or MUTED position at all times when working with the horses.
- Always speak to a horse before approaching or touching it.
- Always walk around a tied horse - never under or over the rope when a horse is tied facing a wall.
- After leading the horse to the paddock, turn the horse to the gate so that the horse faces the gate. Close the gate, then remove the halter and leadrope. It is important to take a 'gate-buddy' with you to assist.
- When saddling a horse – ***please do not tighten the girth.*** Renew's horses get used many times a week by many different people. Because of this, we need to remember to be incredibly gentle when tightening the girth. This means only tightening the girth so that it's just touching the horse's belly. The instructor will check and tighten the cinch or girth again BEFORE bringing the horse to the mounting ramp, and ensure that the saddle pad or saddle is tight enough so that it will not shift when the rider mounts.
- Keep all reins and lead lines off the ground to avoid the horse stepping on it. NEVER wrap the rope around your hand or wrist; instead, fold extra lead so it makes an 8-shaped loop in your hand. By holding the rope 'accordion style', it allows you the ability to let go of the rope quickly if needed in an emergency situation.
- Never leave a horse unattended in its stall with a bridle or halter on its head with or without reins attached.

EMERGENCIES WITH HORSES

- Only trained and authorized volunteers and staff are allowed to handle, tack, feed, and groom horses.

- If illness or injury are suspected in a horse, staff should be contacted immediately.
- When working around horses, it is important to use a calm voice and touch. Walk and take care not to startle them - be aware of loud noises, opening doors, etc.
- All volunteers should maintain safe spacing when working around horses and be respectful of the horse's "personal space."
- It is always preferred to walk in front of the horse rather than behind the horse to avoid the danger of being kicked.
- Emergency numbers and vet/farrier numbers are located in the feed room horse first aid kit.

HORSE SENSE

Think of each horse having a danger zone surrounding it the size of a baby elephant. You or your participant can be seriously injured by a horse kicking, striking or biting. Because of this, we ask that you please be aware of the following when working with our horses:

- Don't yell, run or make sudden movements near a horse; be slow and gentle.
- Speak softly as you approach a horse to let them know that you are coming. Like people, horses do not like being surprised by loud noises or unexpected encounters.
- Approach a horse from the side, never from the rear or directly in front of a horse. A horse cannot see what is directly behind or in front of them.
- When walking behind the horse, be sure to keep an elephant's distance from the rear end of the horse and yourself until you have walked completely around to the other side.
- Never walk under a horse's neck. Never walk under a horse.
- It's easy to get your feet stepped on, so be aware of where your feet are in relation to all four of the horse's hooves.
- Hand feeding horses is an invitation to get your fingers bitten. Please keep your hands away from the horse's mouth and treats are to be fed in a bowl.
- Keep horses well away from other horses at all times

OTHER SAFETY CONCERNS

Please refer to the Risk Management Manual for additional information on safety issues. (Ask staff for access to view if desired) If you have any concerns or input, please contact a staff member.

Please reach out to Kennedy at programs@renewtrc.org or Shaina at shaina.strikwerda@renewtrc.org if we can answer any additional questions.

We are so thankful for who you are in the Renew family.