

COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT ADAPTIVE RIDING

In addition to therapy that utilizes equine movement, NCEFT also offers adaptive riding lessons. Adaptive riding lessons are horseback-riding and horsemanship lessons conducted under the guidance of a Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH)-certified instructor with assistance from horse handlers and trained volunteers.

What is the difference between therapy that uses equine movement and adaptive riding?

In physical, occupational or speech therapy, patients are not learning anything about riding a horse. Instead, the movement of the horse is a therapy tool to help improve function in everyday life. Therapy is delivered by licensed physical, occupational or speech therapy practitioners. Adaptive riding focuses on increasing individual riding and horsemanship skills while gaining a therapeutic benefit. Adaptive riding is taught by a certified instructor rather than a therapist.

What benefits does a rider receive from adaptive riding?

Adaptive riding utilizes on- and-off-horse activities to positively contribute to the cognitive, physical, and emotional well-being of individuals with special needs. Horseback-riding and horsemanship activities provide clients with physical and cognitive challenges, encouraging improvements in:

- Flexibility, balance and muscle strength
- Attention span
- Ability to follow multi-step directions
- Appropriate social interactions (including eye contact, vocal volume and expressive language)
- Confidence and self-esteem

Horseback-riding often improves a client's quality of life by providing an opportunity to bond with their horse, instructor, side walkers and peers. For individuals with limited mobility or difficulty connecting with others, adaptive riding offers a chance to participate in a sport and connect with others via a shared interest/activity.

How many riders are in each lesson?

Adaptive riding lessons are taught in private and semi-private format. Riders in private lessons are taught one-on-one by an instructor who is supported by a horse handler and side walker volunteers, allowing for individualized and intensive instruction. Riders in a semi-private class are usually two-to-one with an instructor and team, allowing for social interaction along with learning.

How often do riders ride? How long are the lessons?

Clients typically ride once a week for 30 minutes (private) or 45 minutes (semi-private). Adaptive riding lessons include mounting and dismounting. Many



adaptive riding lessons also incorporate horsemanship activities such as grooming and tacking along with riding.

How much do lessons cost?

Lessons cost \$60 for a half hour private lesson or a 45-minute semi-private lesson. (NCEFT treats military Veterans and First Responders at no charge.)

Are adaptive riding lessons covered by insurance?

Adaptive riding lessons are a recreational activity and are rarely covered by insurance.

Can missed lessons be made up?

NCEFT requires cancellation 24 hours in advance of scheduled sessions. There is a \$50 fee for no-show or short-notice cancellations, but we do make some exceptions for illness. Additionally, depending upon the circumstances of the absence and available appointments, some absences can be made up.

Do lessons take place year-round?

NCEFT operates year-round, weather permitting for approximately 45 weeks of the year. Sessions are held Monday through Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. We are closed periodically throughout the year (roughly every 10 weeks) to give the horses time off. Weather conditions that might prevent us from holding sessions include high wind and extreme heat (our arena is covered, so rain alone does not typically prevent lessons).

What is the procedure to ride at NCEFT?

Required screening forms for all NCEFT programs and services are available online. Please visit nceft.org/our-services/apply-for-a-program to fill out a screening form securely online. After submitting the screening form and/or participating in a phone interview, our therapists will determine if you or your child is a candidate for an in-person evaluation. If so, we will send an intake packet for you to complete and return to NCEFT. Once we receive your completed intake packet, we will schedule an evaluation. Client scheduling is then based upon coordination of client, horse and instructor availability. Please note, many NCEFT programs currently have waiting lists.

Are there any limitations for participants?

There is a list of precautions and contraindications that guide whether riding is an appropriate activity for an individual. NCEFT does not treat adults or children who cannot sit unassisted or who cannot safely work with the therapy team, including the horses. NCEFT is equipped with an overhead lift for those who are unable to mount from a standing position. NCEFT can accommodate most riders, provided they are:

- At least four years old
- Not a danger to themselves or others (no hitting, biting, hair pulling, etc.)
- Comfortable wearing a helmet
- Able to maintain an upright head and neck position
- Able to follow single step instructions
- An appropriate weight for the horses that are available

What is PATH International?

PATH International is the accrediting and certifying body for professionals in the equine-assisted activities field. For more information about PATH, visit their website at pathintl.org.

