



**updated 10/21/2025*

MISSION

The mission of Meadows Center for Equine Connection (MCEC) is to EMPOWER, EDUCATE and UPLIFT through positive and therapeutic interactions with equine partners.

OUR PHILOSOPHY OF VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT

Volunteers are essential to MCEC's program success. We appreciate the time, skills and knowledge volunteers contribute. You infuse our organization with energy and passion. Our mission is accomplished by including community members as partners which allows us to achieve a level of service that would not otherwise be possible.

PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook is designed to familiarize you with MCEC. As a volunteer, you will be provided with a safe working environment, job training and supervision. Our expectation is that you will honor your volunteer commitment, respect our students and their families, the staff, other volunteers, the horses and equipment while performing your assigned tasks to the best of your abilities. If you have any questions or need clarification on anything covered in this handbook, please feel free to ask.

GENERAL VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS

For the safety of everyone, interested volunteers should meet the following requirements:

- Complete an application, which includes:
 - Providing emergency medical consent
 - Photo and liability release
 - Permission to run a background check
 - Youth under 18 years old must have a parent/guardian signature prior to participating in training or volunteering).
- Attend a general orientation
- Attend trainings as required
- Update paperwork upon request



- Inform Volunteer Coordinator of change in address, phone number, or email, as well as change in health or recent physical injuries.

Volunteering at MCEC is a way to give back to our community, meet new friends, enjoy the human-animal bond and have fun. Included here are both the responsibilities and rights of each volunteer.

VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES

- Be sincere in the offer of service and believe in the value of your position
- Be reliable and punctual in reporting for scheduled work, meetings or trainings
- Keep accurate records of hours worked in MCEC log
- Notify the Volunteer Coordinator as early as possible if you are unable to work as scheduled
- Seek assistance in any situation requiring extra support or special guidance
- Keep MCEC rider information confidential
- Participate in training programs, meetings and continue to learn on the job
- Accept the guidance, feedback and decisions of the staff and be accountable to them
- Provide feedback and suggestions to the staff if they might increase the effectiveness of our program
- Keep an open working relationship with the staff and other volunteers

VOLUNTEER RIGHTS

- Be appropriately assigned to a position with consideration for personal preference
- Receive a clear, comprehensive job description
- Receive training for the job and continuing education on the job
- Work in a place that is appropriate for the task and to work in an environment that is orderly, clean and safe
- Be heard – to make suggestions and be shown respect for giving an honest opinion
- Be appreciated and treated as a valuable co-worker
- Receive sound guidance and direction
- Feel comfortable about saying “no” if you feel a boundary is not being respected.
- Have your personal information and any private conversations kept confidential

HOURS OF OPERATION

We have lessons Monday-Friday and some Saturdays. The Barn team meets on Wednesdays and Fridays by arrangement with the Barn Team Manager.



LESSON VOLUNTEER PROTOCOL

- Leaders should plan on arriving 30 minutes before the assigned lesson time to bring the lesson horse out. Halters and lead ropes are on the wall to the left of the Volunteer area, grooming boxes are in the tack room. Check with the riding instructor to see how much participation in the grooming process is appropriate for your student.
- Sidewalkers need to arrive 15 minutes before the lesson and do any arena set up that the instructor may need. Meet the rider and offer help when needed.
- Take care of personal items - Items of value should be left in your vehicle and locked. There are lockers in the Volunteer area for storage of snacks/water bottles etc., hangers for jackets and a pocket hanger for your cell phone. Should you wish to keep your phone with you, please be sure to silence it. Except for emergencies, we ask that you refrain from using your phone during lessons.
- Check the whiteboard to familiarize yourself with the horse and tack for your student's lesson and be ready to follow the instructor's directions.

ATTENDANCE

We depend on you to be punctual, dependable, and to make every effort to meet the schedule that you have agreed upon.

We understand that sometimes conflicts cannot be avoided. So as to not disappoint our students, (and their lesson may be the "big event" for their week), if for some reason you are unable to make your shift, **please notify the volunteer coordinator as soon as possible and try to find a replacement.** A list of substitutes can be found on the board in the volunteer area.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

Since our weather can vary depending on where you are in the area, please plan on being here for your lesson unless you have heard otherwise. If necessary, cancellations will be made no later than one hour before a lesson. When this is the case, you will be notified by text unless other arrangements for communication have been made.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

All people, animals and equipment need to be treated in a kind and respectful manner.

- All equipment should be put back in its proper place in the same condition in which it was found.
- Volunteers may not discipline students in any way. If there is a problem with a student or rider, please contact the instructor, administrative director, or volunteer coordinator.
- Abusive behavior towards our staff, volunteers, participants, guests, animals and equipment will not be tolerated.



DRESS AND APPEARANCE

It's important for the safety of volunteers, riders, and horses that you follow these guidelines:

- Close toe shoes are required.
- Long hair should be tied back.
- Please bring rain attire when necessary.
- During lessons, hoods should be down.
- Please dress appropriately for the weather, avoid shorts, tank tops and cropped shirts. Capris that end at the knee or calf are fine.
- Make sure jackets are zipped and scarves are tucked in. (If you need to remove your jacket, please alert the instructor.)
- Non-slip gloves are always a good idea.

WORKING TOGETHER

When a group of people work and volunteer together, problems may arise. Our problem-solving procedure provides you with the opportunity to have a review of any problem, dispute or misunderstanding that arises during the course of your volunteering.

- In situations where differences arise between volunteers or volunteers and staff it is a good idea to first try to resolve these differences amongst the parties involved.
- If a third party is needed, the Volunteer Coordinator, the Program Director or the Executive Director is to be informed and involved. Under no circumstances should differences be made public or involve other members of our organization.

VOLUNTEER & GUEST DISMISSAL

Dismissal of a volunteer is a very serious consideration and would only take place if there is a lack of reliability or responsibility. Inappropriate or disruptive behavior may result in dismissal. Harassment is never tolerated. Please report any of these behaviors to the Volunteer Coordinator. Steps that may follow are:

1. Verbal warning with documentation
2. Written warning to individual and copy to personnel file
3. Termination/dismissal



CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

The identity of all participants must remain confidential. In consideration of the right to privacy of riders and their families, and in compliance with HIPPA privacy standards you will be asked to sign a Confidentiality Agreement. By signing this document, you have agreed to use appropriate discretion in written comments and related conversations with volunteers, staff, family, or the general public. Any breach of this confidentiality will prove reason for dismissal.

PHOTOGRAPHY POLICY

All of our participants have the option to consent to having their photo taken. If you ever want to take a photo of a participant, check with the instructor. They are responsible for protecting the privacy of riders. As a volunteer, you will be asked to sign a photo consent form before volunteering. You will also need to politely advocate for yourself if a viewer is photographing you without consent. MCEC employees cannot be responsible for managing this for you.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

There will be training for all emergency procedures required for lessons by the Program Director. Emergency phone numbers and MCEC address information are posted throughout the property. Please stay calm and act quickly when emergency situations arise.

SUSPECTED ABUSE POLICY

Many of our participants are children or vulnerable adults. In recognition of their potential vulnerability, MCEC is obligated to report all suspected cases of abuse or neglect to proper authorities.

As a volunteer, you are included in this process of reporting. If you have any reason to suspect that a participant at MCEC has experienced any form of harm or neglect, please bring it to the attention of a MCEC staff member immediately so that appropriate action can be taken. The incident does not need to have occurred while the participant was at MCEC, nor do you need proof of harm to suspect abuse.

DOG POLICY

Only service animals and staff dogs are allowed on the property, for the safety of our horses and students. Volunteer dogs must stay in vehicles.



VOLUNTEER POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

LESSON TEAM

A lesson can include a number of combinations of leaders and sidewalkers:

Lesson Volunteers play a key role in assisting participants to meet their goals in Hippotherapy and/or Adaptive Riding classes. Both the participant and volunteer benefit from establishing a lasting relationship with one another. Tasks may include grooming/tacking the horse, physically or socially supporting the participant during class, leading the horse, and untacking/grooming the horse at the end of the lesson. We ask for a commitment of at least one 2-hour shift once a week, for the six week session.

All lesson volunteers must attend Program Volunteer Training. Each role has specific tasks including, but not limited to:

- ***Sidewalker:*** (16+ years, 14+ years upon approval) assists in preparing the horse and works with the participant as directed by the instructor or therapist. May include physical, cognitive, sensory, or emotional support.
- ***Leader:*** (16+ years, 14+ years upon approval) responsible for fetching/returning horse from paddock and leading during class. Must successfully complete Horse Leader Training.
- ***Header*** (16+ years, 14+ years upon approval): Person needed during a lesson to assume a halt position in front of the horse, open gates, and play games with students. This allows for the student to be more independent during the lesson.
- ***APV (All Purpose Volunteer):*** (16+ years, 14+ years upon approval) step in where needed depending on their training and schedule.

BARN TEAM

Barn Team volunteers meet on Wednesday and Friday from 2:30 - 4:30 PM. Barn Team volunteers handle everything related to horse care. Tasks include, but are not limited to, mucking paddocks, scrubbing water troughs, sweeping, and filling haynets. Tasks that require more experience will be assigned by the Barn Team Manager and will depend on experience and competency. Volunteers commit to a once a week shift and may also substitute. Barn Team members must be at least 12 years of age.

ENDING YOUR VOLUNTEER SERVICE

You may resign from your volunteer service with MCEC at any time. Ideally we'd like volunteers to complete the current session but that is not required. We request that you notify the Volunteer Coordinator at least two weeks in advance and participate in an exit interview. If you plan to end your service with Barn Team please notify the Barn Team Manager.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF MEADOWS CENTER FOR EQUINE CONNECTION VOLUNTEER POLICIES

Volunteers are essential to MCEC'S success and our ability to serve those members of our community who are in need. We are grateful for your willingness to give of your time and talents to help us and serve our riders.

We want you to be aware of MCEC policies:

- If you are a **leader, please arrive 30 minutes early** to prepare for the lesson by grooming and warming up horses. If you are a **sidewalker, please arrive 10-15 minutes early** so that the instructor has a solid headcount on volunteers for that lesson.
- Remember, confidentiality is extremely important for the safety of our riders and their families. Please keep any rider details private, such as name, diagnosis, or any other personal identifying details.
- Parking is available just outside of the arena.
- A restroom is available next to the hay barn.
- Please remember to wear closed toed shoes and appropriate dress for the weather. Failure to dress appropriately will result in your inability to participate in the lesson.
- If MCEC needs to cancel a lesson when you are scheduled to volunteer, you will be notified by email, text, or phone at least two hours before the lesson time. Please indicate your preferred phone and whether a call or text is ideal next to your signature at the bottom of this page.
- Volunteer communications will be through emails, so please be sure to check your emails weekly. We will also post any news to our Facebook and Instagram accounts.

By signing, you are indicating you have read the Volunteer Handbook and agree to abide by the policies and procedures of Meadows Center for Equine Connection.

Volunteer Signature

Date

Preferred Contact (Circle as many as you like)

Email	Text	Phone
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Staff Signature

Date
