



2026 SunCatcher Therapeutic Riding Academy Participant Guidelines

Our mission is to provide inclusive therapeutic horsemanship services, guided by experienced instructors, bringing a sense of joy, hope and belonging to those facing life challenges.

The following is information necessary for us to ensure that you have a safe, fun and successful experience here at SunCatcher. Participants, parents/guardians, volunteers and guests are responsible for following rules and regulations at all times. Any violation may be considered a reason to be dismissed from the lesson or facility.

Eligibility Requirements

*All participants must have a current physical before engaging in any mounted sessions.

For the health of our horses and safety of all, the mounted sessions weight limit is 200 pounds for dependent riders (needing a side walker) and 230 pounds for independent riders.

(An independent rider must be able to ride without a side walker's physical assistance and must be able to ride balanced at a walk on bareback pad).

*Groundwork-only sessions (30 - 60 minutes) are specifically designed to encourage confidence-building and exploring the unique horse-human connection. They will include grooming, horse-led games, painting and learning alongside a horse.

*The minimum age for all participants is three years old.

*Our instructors reserve the right to make discretionary decisions on eligibility for their programs, and all sessions are dependent upon health and availability of our horses and volunteers.

Risks of Engaging in Equine Activities

Although our horses are well-trained for therapeutic activities, they are still animals. Please note that equine activities inherently involve risk. Under South Dakota law, an equine professional is not liable for an injury to or the death of a participant in equine activities resulting from the inherent risks of equine activities, pursuant to §42-11-2.

Participant Dismissal From Activities

Participants, parents and guardians should be aware that certain conditions will require the dismissal of participants from equine activities. These conditions include but are not limited to:

- Incomplete registration and/or physician's forms.
- Any display of harmful or threatening behavior exhibited towards the facility, any person, or animal.
- Failure to pay the account balance within 90 days.
- Failure to follow SunCatcher's Code of Ethics, as well as any rules, regulations, or policies.

SunCatcher Sessions

Registration:

- Participants must annually complete all required documents before attending a session.
- Registration forms must be completed accurately and returned to SunCatcher prior to the registration deadline (minimum 4 weeks before session month begins)
- ALL participants are required to have a physician's medical release on file and up to date. Staff will notify you if your medical release will soon be expired.

Payments:

- Sessions will be billed at the end of each month, with prepayment strongly encouraged.
- Acceptable payments may be made in the form of cash, check, or credit/debit via the DONATE button on our website, with the Participant's name in the comments.
- Payment more than 90 days past due may result in participant unable to return

Make-up Sessions & Tardiness:

- The session fee pays for your time slot for all scheduled sessions.
- If regular or make-up lessons are provided but you are unable to attend for any given reason, make-up lessons will not be rescheduled and refunds will not be given.
- If you are more than 10 minutes late, your session will be cancelled but you will still be fully charged.
- All of our lessons require volunteers who travel and may be taking time off work to help YOU. We ask that out of courtesy to them, you give at least 24 hours notice if you will be gone for your session.

Proper Clothing:

- Full-length pants or jeans (If a participant has soiled pants, SunCatcher cannot provide the lesson)
- Completely enclosed, sturdy shoes (Sneakers and boots are preferred).
- Helmets are required and provided by SunCatcher.
- Please wear layers that can be put on or taken off if you get too cold or too hot!

If proper clothing is not worn, a make-up lesson will not be scheduled and a refund will not be given.

Cancellation & Rescheduling Policy:

Due to horse health and rider safety, lesson cancellation and rescheduling is at SunCatcher's discretion. SunCatcher will make every attempt to notify participants of lesson cancellations within 4 hours prior to the start of a lesson and to accommodate rescheduling where possible.

- **All sessions & cancellations will be communicated on the Wranglr app**

SunCatcher Safety Rules

Safety is of utmost importance during equine activities. All of our staff are highly competent and trained, and their instructions must be followed. If you don't know something or are unsure, please ask.

Please familiarize yourself with the following safety precautions:

ON SITE:

1. No smoking/vaping anywhere on SunCatcher property.
2. Alcohol, tobacco and illegal drug use is strictly prohibited on SunCatcher property.
3. No abusive, threatening or violent behavior will be tolerated.
4. No cellphone use allowed before or during sessions; please leave in vehicle or put on airplane mode. (Vibration may spook horses or over-stimulate some participants)
5. Families are welcome and encouraged to attend sessions, but non-participants must be supervised at all times.
6. Caregivers/guardians of participants must remain at SunCatcher during their session times.
7. Only SunCatcher staff will be permitted to take photos during sessions, due to safety and confidentiality of all participants and volunteers.

HORSES:

8. Only approved staff and volunteers will enter corrals, catch horses, clean hooves, bridle and tighten cinches.
9. Only approved staff/volunteers over 18 will lead a horse during a mounted session.
10. Do not stand directly behind a horse.
11. Do not approach a horse unless you have permission to do so.
12. No running or yelling when horses are present or inside any building.
13. Do not give the horses ANY snacks unless staff has directed you to do so.
14. Arena gates must always be closed when mounted sessions are in progress.
15. No one may mount, dismount or ride a horse unless supervised by a staff member.
16. In the case of a loose horse, fallen rider, or any other emergency, do not panic. Rider safety is our highest priority. Directions will be provided by an instructor and emergency protocols followed.

WEATHER:

Due to the unpredictability of South Dakota's weather, and the fact that we only have outdoor facilities, the following guidelines will apply:

- All sessions will be cancelled if outside temperatures are over 100 degrees F with the humidity factor, or under 45 degrees F
- No mounted activities if temperatures are over 90 degrees F with the humidity factor (will substitute groundwork with horses)
- No outdoor activity if there is lightning within 5 miles of session site, or if it is determined to be too muddy/slick/windy to safely work with horses—indoor activities will be substituted.