



Administrative Office\*P. O. Box 924067 Houston, Tx 77292

281-356-7588\*Fax 1-866-495-1351

SIRE Fort Bend \*7206 Poolhill Rd\* Fulshear, TX 77441

SIRE Spring \* 4610 Sloangate \* Spring, TX 77373






*SIRE is a Premier Accredited Center through the  
Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH INTL)*

## Client Handbook

Thank you so much for your interest in SIRE's Therapeutic Horsemanship Program. SIRE is a PATH International Premier Accredited Center that has been providing therapeutic programs to individuals with physical, cognitive, sensory, and learning disabilities in the Houston area since 1983. SIRE has two locations: Spring and Fort Bend County (Richmond).

Lessons are conducted Tuesday - Saturday mornings, afternoons, and evenings. The SIRE lesson schedule follows the school year calendar, with class starting in September and ending in May. Anyone enrolling in the program after the beginning of class in September will have their tuition fee prorated for the remainder of the year. Summer is considered a separate semester and is billed for separately. Tuition fees vary by the day of the week according to the total number of lessons offered on that day. Our Client Relations Manager will provide you with the most up to date calendar and fee schedule.

To enroll as a new client in SIRE's program, please take the following steps:

-  Carefully read all of the attached information.
-  Complete the attached registration form, release and consent forms.
-  Request your physician to complete and return the Client Medical History and Physicians Statement Form prior to your assessment.
-  Mail, fax, or deliver the completed forms to SIRE's administrative office. After processing your application, we will contact you to schedule an appointment for an assessment. The assessment will take up to 1 hour and is conducted at the SIRE location where you will be participating. Following the assessment, you will be placed in a class, if a suitable opening is available, or placed on a waiting list for an appropriate opening.
-  **A one-time \$120.00 Assessment Fee is due at the time of the assessment or may be sent in with the completed registration forms.**

### Volunteers

SIRE volunteers are the lifeblood of our program. If you know of someone who is a minimum age of 14 years old and may be interested in volunteering, please direct them to our website for further information:

[www.sirehouston.org](http://www.sirehouston.org)

All of us at SIRE are looking forward to having you as part of our SIRE family.

Yours truly,

Joe Wappelhorst  
Executive Director

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### **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

SIRE is staffed with PATH Certified instructors who evaluate the needs and abilities of each client. The PATH Certified instructors develop and follow lesson plans designed to benefit the client with whom they work. The horse leaders and side walkers volunteer their time to ensure the safety of the clients.

#### **Therapeutic Riding:**

Therapeutic Riding lessons are equestrian skill-based lessons for people with disabilities. The focus of the lessons is skill development and progression while improving the client's physical, cognitive, emotional, sensory and/or social skills. Taught by a Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor, and assisted by volunteer aids, helping the client reach their full potential is of paramount importance. Often the clients participate in pre-mounted and post-mounted horse care. Clients who have physical, intellectual, cognitive, developmental, sensory, and/or learning differences will benefit from Therapeutic Riding.

Based on individual needs, the goals of the program are for the client to improve his or her:

Muscle Tone	Sensory Awareness	Confidence
Muscle Strength	Spatial Organization	Empathy
Balance	Social Skills	Pride
Rhythm	Sequencing	Attention Span
Coordination	Judgment	Flexibility
Range of Motion	Reasoning	Patience

**AND** develop some of the following horsemanship skills:

Reining	Horse handling	Posting Trot
Transitions	Ground skills	Ground Poles
Sitting Trot	Stable Management	Cantering
Arena figures	Lateral movements	Horse husbandry
Trail obstacles	Two-point position	

Classes are 45- 60 minutes long depending on size and age of clients. Classes have a maximum of 4 clients per class. Group classes are beneficial due to the opportunity to interact with other riders and families. The clients can also learn from the other students in the class and enjoy group activities. All clients new to SIRE and therapeutic horsemanship are strongly encouraged to register for group lessons. Clients are scheduled by age, skill level and availability.

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### **Equine Assisted Therapy:**

**This program is under revision and currently unavailable.** Equine assisted Therapy is a form of therapy that uses the movement of the horse as a means to achieve therapy goals. The horse's movement promotes active responses in the client and facilitates activation of postural control, balance, motor and sensory systems. The treatments are conducted by licensed Physical, Occupational or Speech therapists and assisted by a certified riding instructor and volunteer aids. Although the focus is not on horsemanship skill development, the client develops balance and feel of the horse and often will participate in therapeutic riding as well.

*\*A physician's prescription for physical therapy and/or occupational therapy is required.*

Clients who have movement, speech and/or motor deficits can benefit from Equine Assisted Therapy. Some of the issues that may be addressed in a session are:

- Abnormal Muscle tone
- Impaired Balance
- Abnormal Reflexes
- Decreased Coordination
- Postural Asymmetry
- Decreased trunk mobility
- Abnormal limb function
- Impaired Sensorimotor function

### **SIRE's Competition Program:**

SIRE offers the opportunity for clients to compete in horse shows, should they desire. Some of the competitions we attend are:

The Top Hands Horse Show  
Special Olympics Area and State Games  
SIRE's All-Site Horse Show  
The Old 300 Horse Show

Benefits of competition include:

- Skill Development
- Validates Progress
- Competitive nature enhances quality of home program
- "Real World" Experience
- Teaches winning and less than winning
- Teamwork
- Instills perseverance
- Develops discipline and training principles
- Pride in accomplishment
- Opportunities to learn to deal with adversity.
- Develops Horse mastership
- Increases flexibility
- Fun!

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## **SIRE CLIENT ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES**

SIRE's Therapeutic Horsemanship programs are based on an individual's ability to participate safely and effectively and in compliance with our industry standards. Enrollment is offered when the necessary resources are available including: an appropriate horse, available volunteers, and class compatibility that meet the individual's needs.

**Age:** Clients are at least 3 years of age. There is no maximum age limit.

**Weight:** Maximum Weight: **200** pounds \*

**Postural Control:** Clients over 80 pounds must be able to maintain a sitting position; by holding on with at least one hand.

### **Precautions and Contraindications:**

The following conditions, if present, may represent precautions or contraindications to therapeutic horseback riding. Please review this information, and if present, contact SIRE for more information.

#### **ORTHOPEDIC**

Atlantoaxial Instability  
Coxa Arthrosis  
Cranial Deficits  
Osteoporosis  
Heterotopic Ossification/Myositis  
Joint subluxation/dislocations

#### **NEUROLOGIC**

Pathologic Fractures  
Spinal Instability/Abnormalities  
Seizure Disorder  
Hemophilia  
Spina Bifida/Chiari II malformation  
Tethered Cord/Hydromyelia  
Hydrocephalus/Shunt

#### **OTHER**

Indwelling Catheters  
Skin Breakdown  
Weight exceeds 200 pounds

#### **MEDICAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL**

Animal Abuse  
Physical/Sexual/Emotional Abuse  
Dangerous to self or others  
Exacerbation's of medical conditions  
Fire Settings  
Heart Conditions  
Medical Instability  
PVD  
Respiratory Compromise  
Thought Control Disorders Respiratory Compromise  
Recent Surgeries  
Substance Abuse  
Thought Control Disorders

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## **CLIENT GUIDELINES AND POLICIES**

### **Tuition & Fees:**

SIRE follows a typical school year calendar, with lessons beginning the first week of September and ending the last week of May or the first week of June. The summer semester is separate and is charged separately.

The actual cost for one year of riding lessons (fall and spring semesters) is over \$5,500 per rider, but thanks to our generous donors we can charge less than half this amount. Tuition cost to you will be **\$2,500.00 per school year (September – May)**

Tuition is based on participation for the full year. We have built in weather days to the schedule, if we do not use those weather days it is a bonus to you. Fridays & Saturdays are highly requested and are priced at a premium.

**Please Note** – We have factored in 4 *SIRE canceled* lessons per year *such as weather* related. If fewer weeks are missed that is considered a bonus for our riders and no additional fee will be assessed.

The tuition for our summer semester is separate from above and based on weeks available.

**Because our tuition fee is less than half of our actual operating expense per lesson, we do not offer credits or make-up for missed lessons.**

Fees may be paid in the following options:

- 1 full payment due on or before August 31<sup>st</sup> – \$250.00 discount applied
- 2 equal payments due on or before August 31 and December 31<sup>st</sup> – \$100.00 discount applied to each payment
- 9 Monthly payments; first payment of \$500 in August, then \$250 per month for 8 months (September through April).

Fees are due before or on the last day of each month. Payments not received by due date are subject to a late payment fee of \$25.

The summer semester requires separate registration and payment.

Payment is due before services are provided. Please arrange a payment method before your first lesson.

**Please Note** – **Non-payment of fees will result in suspension from the program until the account is made current.**

Payment methods include:

- Automatic bill pay through your banking institution
- ACH payment which can be set up directly through your QuickBooks invoice
- Check by mail or tuition drop box at each site or mailed to:

SIRE, Inc.  
PO Box 924067  
Houston, TX 77292

- **Due to the prohibitive cost of credit card processing. Starting August 1, 2025, SIRE will no longer accept credit card OR PayPal payments for tuition.**



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If you would like to request financial aid, please contact the Client Relations Manager: [Etta@sire-htec.org](mailto:Etta@sire-htec.org); or phone 346-261-1402. Financial Aid is limited and awarded annually; you must apply each year.

Your lesson time is guaranteed upon enrollment. We require a three week notice of withdrawal (medical emergencies excepted).

Should you have any questions please contact Client Relations Manager at [Etta@sire-htec.org](mailto:Etta@sire-htec.org) or by phone; 346-261-1402.

#### **Forms:**

To be in compliance with our PATH Accreditation Standards, registration forms must be renewed annually by all clients actively participating in the SIRE program.

#### **Attendance:**

To gain maximum benefit from SIRE it is imperative that clients attend as many lessons as possible. A client's enrollment in the SIRE program reserves a place for him/her which otherwise could serve another client. When a scheduled client does not show up for their lesson, volunteers assigned to work with that client may become discouraged and perhaps drop out. This jeopardizes SIRE's program. We do understand that illnesses, work, traffic and other situations arise and ask that if you or your client must miss class, please contact your SIRE site so we can avoid having the horse tacked up unnecessarily. A 24-hour notice of an absence is most helpful.

**Medical Leave:** Medical leave can be requested if three or more lessons are missed for health-related reasons. Your account will be credited for these lessons. SIRE cannot guarantee your lesson time will remain open. If you wish to reserve your lesson time, 50% of the tuition fee will be assessed.

#### **For absences please call:**

**281-356-7588**

#### **Punctuality:**

It is extremely important for a rider to arrive approximately 15 minutes prior to the scheduled riding time. If a client is more than 15 minutes late, SIRE cannot guarantee he/she will be able to ride. **Once the lesson has begun, the instructor may not be able to leave the other riders unattended to mount late arriving students.**

#### **No Shows:**

Clients having three no show/no notification occurrences within a semester will be notified that they are being dropped from the program.

#### **Lesson Cancellation Due to Bad Weather:**

Weather cancellations will be unusual. If road conditions are unsafe SIRE will make the determination to cancel class **usually no earlier than two hours prior to class.**

**To determine cancellation, it is the client's responsibility to call the appropriate SIRE Office.**

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### **Clothing for Riders:**

Appropriate clothes for riding:

- Long pants and hard soled boots with a low heel. Since we use safety stirrups on all of the English and most of the western saddles, sneakers are permissible but not desirable. Dress for comfort and according to the weather.
- Undergarments that provide adequate support and comfort are necessary.
- Wear close-fitting clothing for safety as well as comfort. Loose or baggy clothing can get caught and tangled in equipment.
- No dangling jewelry is permitted.
- All riders are required to wear an ASTM/SEI approved Equestrian Helmet. If you do not have your own helmet, SIRE will provide you with one. Should you choose to purchase your own, a list of tack shops that carry approved helmets is included in this packet.
- Sunscreen, gloves, and jacket, as needed.

### **Parking:**

The parking area is marked at all sites.

### **Siblings:**

If siblings are in attendance with parents of clients participating in class, **parents are responsible for the supervision of these children at all times**. Noise and activity can distract from the lesson and compromise the safety of our riders. Distractions reduce the benefit the rider receives from riding.

### **Pets:**

No personal pets are allowed on the SIRE premises. Your instructor must approve guide dogs or other assistive animals.

### **Conduct at the Site:**

It is mandatory that everyone comply with all posted safety rules. Smoking or the use of drugs or alcohol on the property is strictly forbidden. No mistreatment, abuse, or verbal suggestions of abuse of any animal or person will be tolerated. We reserve the right to ask anyone to leave the premises.

### **Recommended Tack Shop for Riding Clothes:**

#### **English Apparel**

#### **Charlottes Saddlery:**

114 West Main  
Tomball, Texas 77375  
281.351.1705

#### **Western Apparel**

#### **Laura's Saddlery**

30020 TX-249,  
Tomball, TX 77375

#### **Dover Saddlery:**

17675 Texas 249 Access Rd  
Houston, TX 77046  
281.890.5691

#### **Any Boot Barn**

#### **Any Cavender's Boot City**



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### **Possible Reasons for Client Discharge**

Please be advised of the following reasons that may lead to discharge from the riding program.

- The rider's inability to maintain head and neck control while riding.
- The rider's inability to maintain sitting balance while riding.
- The rider exceeds a weight that can safely be managed by staff, volunteers, and/or horses.
- Uncontrolled and/or inappropriate behavior that constitutes a safety risk to rider, volunteers, staff and/or horse.
- Any change in the rider's medical, physical, cognitive, or emotional condition that makes therapeutic riding unsafe for the rider, staff, volunteers and/or horse.
- Three scheduled appointments are missed without prior cancelation.
- Nonpayment of fees.

**Our primary goal is for everyone at SIRE to have a fun, safe, successful, and productive experience.**

**Thank you for joining us!**

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