



Dear Participant, Parent, or Caregiver,

Welcome to Grace Lake Ministries Equine Assisted Services! We are looking forward to serving you. Please read through this handbook thoroughly and let me know if you have any questions. This handbook will give you an overview of Grace Lake's Equine Assisted Services as well as our policies and procedures.

Grace Lake adheres to the high safety standards of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.) and has been a PATH Intl. Center Member since we began in 2004. We offer several distinctive Equine Assisted Services and have a couple of other unique qualities for you to enjoy.

First, Grace Lake is a God centered program. Each of our classes begin with prayer. Our mission is to partner with horses to develop life skills and God-centered wholeness for those with diverse physical, developmental, and emotional needs. Our goal is to facilitate the development of wholeness into the lives of the people that we serve. We believe that wholeness begins by knowing and following Jesus Christ. We trust God to lead us down the path that each individual needs to reach their full potential.

Second, our riders enjoy the beautiful trail rides offered on this historic 230-acre ranch in Collin County. We are grateful to have the opportunity to work on balance, focus, and improving riding skills using trail obstacles while participants connect with their horse in a peaceful and natural setting of ponds, hills, trees, and wildlife.

And lastly, Grace Lake is a 501© 3 nonprofit organization committed to keeping our programs affordable for our participants. We work diligently to make this possible through ongoing fundraising events, company sponsorships, grant applications, and the generous support from individual donors in our community. As a part of our Grace Lake family, you are in a unique position to assist with our fundraising success by sharing your experience at Grace Lake and linking us to potential collaborative resources. Funds raised go directly to supporting our specially trained therapy horse herd, maintaining our beautiful horse facility and unique trails, and keeping quality Equine Assisted Services affordable to our special needs participants. We are thankful for your collaborative support!

Blessings,

**Holly Robinson**

*Grace Lake Ministries Founder and Director*

*PATH Intl. Advanced Therapeutic Riding Instructor, CTRI, ESMHL*

*[www.gracelakeministries.org](http://www.gracelakeministries.org)*



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## Participant Handbook

### 1. GETTING STARTED

First, complete the online Participant Inquiry Form. <https://forms.gle/HhEEwKWj8pK9ZpGF6>

Once received and processed, you will be contacted by a Grace Lake staff member to answer any questions. At the time, you may request a Meet and Greet to visit our facility. The Instructor and / or Therapist will discuss each program with you and make a recommendation as to which program is most appropriate for the participant. The next steps include completing the on-line Registration Form and printing the Physician's Statement <https://gracelakeministries.org/participant-resources/>. Please have the Physician's Statement completed and signed by the participant's physician and mail (Grace Lake, 9611 FM 1827, Anna, TX 75409) or email ([director@gracelakeministries.org](mailto:director@gracelakeministries.org)) the completed Physician's Statement by the due date (Spring Session – February 1; Summer Session – May 1; Fall Session – August 1)

\*If an opening does not currently exist, then you will be placed on a waiting list and notified as soon as an opening becomes available.

### 2. PROGRAMS

Adaptive Riding Program: This program improves daily life functioning through riding skills for those with diverse cognitive, developmental, and physical needs. Participants ride once a week for 45 minutes. Group lessons (up to 4 riders) are offered. Classes are grouped into sessions of Spring, Summer, and Fall. Adaptive riding lessons use adaptive teaching techniques and/or equipment to help riders learn riding and horsemanship skills through instruction from a PATH Intl. Certified Instructor and assisted by volunteers to lead the horse or walk along with the rider when necessary. Guidelines for Participation Eligibility is based solely upon the individual's ability to participate meaningfully and safely, and there must be an instructor, horse, volunteers, and an available opening in the schedule which meets the individual's needs.

**Adaptive Riding Lessons are appropriate for children and adults who are:**

- Able to maintain a steady center of balance on a moving surface independently
- Able to follow single step instructions
- Comfortable wearing a helmet
- Not a danger to themselves or others (hitting, biting, hair pulling, etc.)
- Empathetic to the safety of the horse with no risk of bouncing on the horse, kicking the horse, pulling horse hair, etc.
- No orthopedic contraindications or mobility restrictions requiring direct therapist intervention

- Physiologically stable
- Able to maintain an upright head and neck position

**Physical Therapy Program:** This program offers outpatient private PT treatment with the horse being utilized as one of the treatment tools. Some insurances cover this type of therapy. The goal of this program is to optimize age-appropriate independence and safety to achieve full participation in life for those with movement and sensory dysfunction. Participants in this program will participate 1-2 times per week. A licensed Physical Therapist Certified by the American Hippotherapy Association (AHA) and a PATH Intl. Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor will conduct all sessions. Equine Assisted Physical Therapy is grouped into sessions of Spring, Summer, and Fall and are typically 1 hour. Physical Therapy office visits without the use of the horse are available in between sessions.

**Groundwork Connection Program:** This program develops emotional awareness and regulation to achieve healthy interpersonal relationships and improve daily functioning. Private lessons (1 participant) are offered 45 minutes weekly. These classes are taught or supervised by a PATH Intl. Certified Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning with extensive knowledge in natural horsemanship. Classes are grouped into sessions of Spring, Summer, and Fall.

**Minimum Age:** Adaptive Riding: 5 years old

Groundwork Connection: 5 years old

Physical Therapy: 2 years old

**Weight Maximums:** Adaptive Riding and Physical Therapy: 120-150lbs. Considerations include the availability of a suitable horse related to the height, weight, cognition, balance, and behavior of the participant. Each horse must stay fit and healthy to be able to perform their job. A participant towards the top of the weight range must be completely balanced while mounted. If an appropriate horse is not available due to the participant's weight and/or physical abilities, the Groundwork Connection program may be recommended to safely enjoy the therapeutic value of horsemanship.

### 3. COST

**Spring Session (10-week session):** Adaptive Riding Group Class: \$500

(March, April, and May) Groundwork Connection Private Class: \$700

**Summer Session (5-week session):** Adaptive Riding Group Class: \$250

(June and July) Groundwork Connection Private Class: \$350

**Fall Session (10-week session):** Adaptive Riding Group Class: \$500

(Sept, Oct, Nov, and Dec) Groundwork Connection Private Class: \$700

**Per Visit Treatment:** Equine Assisted Physical Therapy: \$175

(Same sessions as offered above) Questions concerning insurance will be answered on a case-by-case basis.

*Grace Lake provides financial assistance of 10% and up to 90% of the cost of tuition based on annual income. Please see the Financial Aid Application for more information.*

<https://gracelakeministries.org/participant-resources/>

## 4. TUITION PAYMENT

Grace Lake offers 3 ways to pay tuition each session. You will receive an invoice via email prior to the start of the session.

- Online payment on our website:  
<https://gracelakeministries.org/payments/> . **Please use this payment method if a receipt is needed.**
- Venmo: @GraceLake-Ministries
- Pay by Check: Place your check in the black lock box located inside the barn under the Grace Lake banner.



Grace Lake Ministries  
@GraceLake-Ministries



Scan this code to pay

## 5. ABSENCES AND CANCELLATIONS

It is important that our participants attend their sessions on a regular basis so that their goals can be met, and progress is made in a timely manner. We understand that all families need to cancel on an occasional basis, but please be aware that we have individuals on a waiting list that would utilize that time. We ask each of our families to make a commitment to regular attendance of their weekly scheduled lesson.

Our Equine Assisted Services are grouped and billed in 5 week (Summer and Winter) and 10-week (Spring and Fall) sessions. Our programs are conducted outdoors and subject to weather cancellations. If Grace Lake must cancel an equine class due to weather or other circumstances, we will schedule a makeup class at the end of the scheduled session. If Grace Lake cancels (due to weather or other circumstances) and the full 5- or 10-week session is not available, the remaining balance on your account will be credited to the next session.

Grace Lake keeps you updated via text messages in Remind. To receive texts from Remind, you must sign up by contacting Holly at [director@gracelakeministries.org](mailto:director@gracelakeministries.org).

- ❖ If you cancel, the class cannot be refunded or made-up. (For Equine Assisted Physical Therapy, this applies to the \$70 horse fee)
- ❖ If you will be absent, please text via Remind as soon as possible (or a minimum of 3 hours in advance) so that we may alert your team and volunteers.
- ❖ Participants who have excessive absences (3 or more) or more than 1 no-show in a session will be ineligible for future sessions.
- ❖ If you have dates that you already know you will not be attending, please let us know via Remind text messages as soon as possible.

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- ❖ Any time a Participant is late, their class time will be decreased accordingly so that the schedule remains intact. If a Participant is 15 or more minutes late, they will not ride in that class that day.
- ❖ Participants are required to pay their balance in full by the last day of the session to participate in subsequent sessions.

For our current session schedule (class days and weather cancellations), please refer to our website calendar. <https://gracelakeministries.org/calendar/>

## 6. SAFETY

~ Severe anxiety, aversion to the outdoors, or intolerance of heat or cold may limit participation. Please note that all Grace Lake programs are outdoors with no indoor or covered arena.

~ If seizures are severe or frequent, it may not be safe to be around horses.

~ Behavior must not pose a safety threat to others or horses.

~ Grace Lake staff will review PATH recommendations to identify specific situations that make riding / horsemanship unsafe.

~ Balance: For adaptive riding, participants must be able to maintain a steady center of balance on a moving surface independently. For Equine Assisted Physical Therapy, participants must be able to maintain a steady center of balance on a static surface with moderate assistance.

## 7. ATTIRE AND EQUIPMENT

- Boots with a one (1) inch heel are recommended but not required. Closed toed shoes are required.
- All riders are required to wear a helmet while mounted. We provide a variety of sizes of helmets. We recommend that you purchase your own well fitted ASTM-SEI certified equestrian helmet.
- To ensure a safe helmet fit, please avoid beads, high ponytails, and bows. Low ponytails and close fitted braids are acceptable.
- Long pants are recommended. Please do not wear slick material pants.
- Do not wear big or priceless jewelry as it can easily get lost or caught on something.
- It is common for the temperature to feel significantly different at our barn (colder and warmer). We suggest wearing layers in cool weather. This means wear warm clothes that can be added or removed easily as needed.

## 8. HELMET FIT

ALL helmets must be ASTM-SEI approved and it is recommended that they are dated within five years. Bike helmets are not acceptable for horseback riding. Helmets are worn to protect the head in the event of a fall from a horse. Only a properly fitted helmet will truly protect the head.

The following are tips to help fit a helmet the correct way.

- ❖ The helmet should fit snugly- but not snug enough that it will leave marks.

- ❖ The helmet should sit level on the head.
- ❖ The helmet should sit approximately one finger above the eyebrows.
- ❖ The harness should be snug under the chin and snug under the back of the head.

Tests to check fit:

- ❖ Bend over and shake your head- if the helmet moves around or covers your eyes- it's too big!
- ❖ Move the front of the helmet up and down - if the skin above the eyes moves with the helmet - it's a good fit.
- ❖ If you can flip the helmet back off your forehead, it's too big or the harness is not adjusted correctly. If the helmet tilts back, tighten the front harness strap. If it covers the eyes, tighten the back strap.

Remember- only a correctly fitted helmet can do a proper and safe job!

Riding will be delayed if helmet fit needs to be adjusted by Grace Lake staff before mounting, so please be sure to have helmets properly adjusted before it is time to ride.

## 9. OUR FACILITY RULES

- ✓ Show respect to all animals, people, and to yourself.
- ✓ Family members and visitors, please watch from the waiting area during class time.
- ✓ Keep our facility clean by putting your trash in the trashcan inside the barn.
- ✓ Do not climb on hay, gates, fences, or mounting ramp.
- ✓ Do not enter any horse pens without permission from a staff member.
- ✓ Parents are responsible for the supervision of their children.
- ✓ Pet the cats, dogs, and horses at your own risk! They may bite or scratch. No picking up or chasing dogs and cats.
- ✓ Personal dogs/pets are not allowed on the property.
- ✓ No feeding treats of any kind to the horses.
- ✓ No smoking on the property.
- ✓ Have a good time, grow, and give God the glory!

**We ask everyone to be mindful of the fact that Grace Lake facilities are located on private property. Access to the property is limited to specific class times and events.**

## 11. PARTICIPANT DISMISSAL & DISCHARGE POLICY

It is the discretion of Grace Lake's staff to accept or remove a Participant from the program. The results of a risk/benefit analysis will be considered. Participants who do not adhere to the rules and procedures or meet the guidelines for eligibility are subject to dismissal or discharge. Possible grounds for dismissal may include but are not limited to: conduct endangering another participant, volunteer, staff, or horse, conduct endangering themselves, consistent failure to follow safety procedures, a gain in weight above the Grace Lake maximum, frequent cancellations, or no shows, the development of a contraindicated condition or the deterioration of a condition to the point horseback riding / horsemanship is no longer beneficial or could be harmful to the participant, where safety for the participant or others has become a concern, or a suitable horse is no longer available.

Participants at Grace Lake shall have no history of inappropriate behavior with fire, or any tendencies or history of abuse or violence directed toward other people or animals. Grace Lake reserves the right to deny services to any individual based upon concerns for the applicant's safety and/or the safety of the horses, volunteers, staff, facility, or other reasons in accordance with PATH Intl. operating center guidelines.

## 12. WAYS TO HELP OUT

One of the easiest ways to help is by designating Grace Lake as your charity of choice on Amazon and encourage your family and friends to do the same. Amazon will donate money to us for every purchase you make. Free money at no cost to you! Grace Lake has received over \$1,000.00 from purchases by people who have us as their charity.

- When shopping on Amazon, enter their site through Amazon Smile and choose Grace Lake as your non-profit of choice. A portion of your purchase will be donated back to Grace Lake. We also have an Amazon Wishlist. [Charity Lists \(amazon.com\)](#)
- Advocate for Grace Lake in the community by liking and sharing our Facebook posts. Share our newsletters and website with others. [Grace Lake Ministries | Facebook](#)
- Connect us to resources (donors, sponsors) in the community.
- Donate items such as bottled water, Kleenex, paper towels, and stamps.
- Make a donation. Every donation counts! Both small and large donations are needed to operate the program.
- Share any specialized skills you have such as photography, videography, marketing/advertising, fundraising, carpentry, grant writing, etc
- Check to see if your employer has a charitable giving program. Employers often offer grant programs to organizations with whom their employees volunteer their time. Some employers also offer matching donation programs in which they match employee donations. Additionally,

some employers offer volunteer hour match programs. Through these programs employers will often donate on your behalf once a set number of volunteer hours have been completed.

*Follow us on Facebook to see pictures of classes and other happenings around the barn.*

[Grace Lake Ministries | Facebook](#)

**Grace Lake Ministries 9611 FM 1827 Anna, TX 75409 (972) 837-4621**  
[www.gracelakeministries.org](http://www.gracelakeministries.org)