



## Welcome to Unbridled Spirit!

We are so excited to start working with you and/or your family. Here at the farm we meet participants where they are at, allowing them and the animals to make each session a meaningful experience. We provide the following guidelines and expectations to ensure that the participant can get the most out of their experience.

**Disclosure** Unbridled Spirit 7 is a farm that offers Equine/Animal Assisted Learning. We provide a variety of activities with the different animals to build a relationship and connection, yet work mainly alongside horses. Participants may have the opportunity to sit on or ride a horse, however, riding is not the goal of our programs but rather to build a mutually respectful relationship.

**How animal-assisted experiential learning works** Our animals and staff create an inviting and safe space. This allows for vulnerability and for a person to connect to one's true authentic nature. Animals offer us an opportunity to pause and become aware of our emotions and how they relate to our behaviors. We practice identifying our needs and look at how we get them met in unhealthy and healthy ways.

This awareness can guide us to understanding and managing our responses to life's daily challenges. Learning to trust oneself alongside an animal companion can lead to decreased anxiety and increased connection with humans. Anxiety has become epidemic and many of our community members are struggling because of a lack of connection to family, friends and even themselves.

Unbridled Spirit uses experiential learning practices. We create contracts that we all agree to abide by and our program activities are based on experiential learning best practices.

### **Physical and Emotional Check In**

At the beginning of each session, we do a physical and emotional check in. Animals base much of their behavior in reaction to our current state. Therefore we take time to pause and look inside to become aware of our current physical and emotional state. We share this with the group to mutually support each other throughout the session.

### **What, So What, Now What?**

At the end of each session we debrief to discuss ways that new understandings gained from the day's activity can be applied in other areas of the participant's life.

### **Full Value Contract: (made with humans)**

To keep everyone physically and emotionally safe  
To give and receive respectful feedback  
To work as a team

### **Horse Contract: (made with our horses)**

I promise to take good care of you. I need you to promise to take good care of me.  
I promise to forgive you if you mess up, I need you to forgive me if I mess up.

### **Wellness Skills introduced during animal-assisted programming**

Exploration of Trust, managing anxiety, breathing exercises, relationship support, clear communication skills, learning how to speak up for yourself, deepening awareness of your needs and how to meet them in healthy ways, understanding the importance of connection with others, practicing patience, self care and self love, setting boundaries, self confidence and problem solving.

## **Guidelines and Expectations**

Sessions are scheduled to start and end on time. If participants are late arriving, it will result in a shorter session, and will have the same ending time.

**Drop Off and Pick Up** Please bring participants to the parking lot next to the arena. Parents or guardians must stay with participants until the program facilitator meets you at your car. We request that parents or guardians leave while programs are in session. Family presence on the property, unless requested, typically interferes with the privacy of the session for the participant. At the end of your session, participants will be released to meet you at the parking lot.

\*Please share with staff prior to the session any recent significant events in the youth's life, so we can most effectively support the youth throughout the session. Current events often affect the horse's intuitive response. Staff will report any urgent participant-related information to the family after the session, as needed.

**Absences** Participants are to give at least twenty-four hours notice if they are unable to attend a planned session. A minimum of two hours notice is requested if a participant is sick and they are not able to make it to their session. With less than one hour notice or failure to show you will be charged for half the cost of your session. If you are on scholarship, two no shows will jeopardize further scholarship support. If an emergency situation arises, causing an urgent cancellation or a no show we will understand and allowances will be made.

\*Please notify your instructor by phone (number to be given prior) for the session if you cannot make it.

**Length of program** It is important for facilitators to know how many sessions (typically 6 to 8) to plan for to assure that there is time for participants to have maximum benefits and reach their goals. At the beginning of a season of sessions we will plan out the program to follow the participant's needs based on the number of projected sessions.

**Creating Goals** Goals for this program will be discussed with the youth the first day. Facilitators can direct the sessions based on any needs identified by the school to best support your youth.

- a. Over the course of the program, *participants will respond to pre and post questionnaires*, sharing reflections on their personal sense of hope, their goals and growth towards those goals.
- b. Any parental feedback is welcome.
- c. During a session a participant will envision a current goal and our animals and staff will support them as they gain clarity, a better understanding of the paths to that goal and the obstacles they could face, and how to problem solve overcoming those obstacles.

## **Guardian/Parental Participation**

Every season parents or guardians will attend one or two sessions. This gives facilitators the opportunity to support the family with an activity that creates connection and teamwork between the family members and participants. Participants will have the opportunity to teach their parents or guardian, what they have learned and talk about goals for future sessions. Family communication and trust activities will be shared.

## **Payment Plan**

- Please mail, call in a credit card number or drop payment in the locked payment box in the main barn by the meeting room.
- Scholarships are available depending on our current level of grant funding. Please request a scholarship form to submit three weeks prior to programming.

## **Unbridled Spirit expectations of families**

- Commitment by participants to attend every session.
- Registration and Liability forms are to be signed by all participants/families before the first session
- Cell phones off and put away during a session
- Close-toed sturdy shoes and socks, and dress for the weather
- Open hearts and minds
- Even when a youth is having their worst day, it's more important than ever that they attend the farm and spend time with the animals.