



# GREAT OAK

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EQUINE ASSISTED PROGRAMS

## GREAT OAK PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK

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## GREAT OAK AIKEN EQUINE ASSISTED PROGRAMS SCREENING PROCESS

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All new clientele to Great Oak must undergo a screening which will allow for appropriate placement in our programs.

This screening gives us the opportunity to assess you or your child for placement as well as answer any questions riders or family members may have about our services. Screening time slots are scheduled throughout our weekly schedule.

This screening session costs \$45 per each individual. During this session, we will evaluate the potential client on the ground and on horseback to determine eligibility for Great Oak programs. We have helmets and boots that are available to borrow. If you choose to use your own equipment, boots must have a flat sole and small heel and all helmets must be riding helmets that are ASTM/SEI approved. In addition, we ask that all riders wear long pants and socks.

All paperwork must be submitted prior to setting up your screening session.

Please fill out the enclosed forms and mail them back to our office.

Great Oak EAP  
PO Box 1288  
Aiken, SC 29802

or

visit the website at <https://www.greatoakeap.org> to submit the forms electronically.

Our office staff will be in contact regarding available dates and times for screenings.

Once the screening has been completed the instructor will determine appropriateness for the program and make recommendations. Great Oak staff will follow up with program offerings and scheduling availability.

If you have any further questions about our programming please feel free to contact our office staff at 803-226-0056.



## WHO IS GREAT OAK?

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Great Oak is a therapeutic horseback riding program that provides equine-assisted living activities that promote the physical, emotional and psychological health of individuals with special needs. Great Oak is a 501(c)(3), nonprofit organization. Great Oak was originally founded as STAR Riding in 1996, providing equine assisted therapy to children and adults in the Aiken community.

In the fall of 2015, the board voted to reconfigure the organization. A new name, expanded programs and a year round facility was initiated. Great Oak is currently located on Edgefield Highway within five minutes of downtown Aiken and the major interstates. Great Oak is poised to offer an array of equine-assisted therapies on its 20 acre farm that program participants will find rewarding and beneficial in an almost undefinable way.

Great Oak is a member of PATH (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship) International. The facility at Great Oak adheres to PATH's rigorous standards to ensure the health and safety of our participants, horses, volunteers and staff. PATH was founded in 1969 as the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association to promote safe and effective therapeutic horseback riding throughout the United States and Canada. Today, PATH International has more than 850 member centers and nearly 7,600 individual members in countries all over the world, which help and support more than 54,000 men, women and children with special needs each year. The Great Oak is symbolic of the facility's impact as a place of nourishment for every aspect of one's being and as a secure and safe place open to everyone's journey.

## MISSION

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Our mission is to provide equine-assisted activities that promote the physical, emotional and psychological health of individuals with special needs.

## VISION

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Our vision is to impact the lives of participants through transformative healing and personal growth by creating the premier accredited equine assisted activity center in the Southeast.

## WHO DO WE SERVE?

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This dreamlike place is open to people of all ages. Children, teenagers, and adults will feel welcome. Their challenges may be physical, mental or emotional, and often reflect a combination of these factors. Sound horses and certified professionals guide participants down the path of discovery and recovery.

## HOW DO WE DO IT?

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Under the leadership of our Board of Directors, Great Oak employs three PATH certified instructors, a program and volunteer coordinator, and executive director. Great Oak currently has seven horses in its possession. These special equines have passed a stringent trial period and tests to determine their suitability for therapy work at Great Oak. Along with certified instructors and capable horses, Great Oak's work is dependent upon trained volunteers to help facilitate lessons and the day to day program operations.

## BENEFITS OF THERAPEUTIC RIDING

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Each individual we treat at Great Oak comes with his or her own diagnosis, necessitating an individualized treatment plan with specific therapeutic goals. The benefits of using a horse as part of a treatment plan for individuals with special needs are vast and varied, and there is significant evidence of success.

### PHYSICAL BENEFITS

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The horse's movement has a dynamic effect on the rider's body. The horse stimulates the rider's pelvis and trunk in a manner that resembles a human's normal gait. This helps improve an array of areas including balance, strength, tone, and endurance.

### SENSORY BENEFITS

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The movement, as well as the multi-sensory opportunities on the horse, can help with a variety of sensory integration issues. A smooth-gaited, consistently-paced horse provides needed input to help a rider establish rhythm. A rough-gaited horse may provide a rider with the stimulation to help organize and integrate sensory input.

### EMOTIONAL BENEFITS

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The impacts are vast — success of overcoming fear and anxiety, the ability to achieve independence, master a riding skill, control and attend to an animal will help a rider to realize self-worth and increase self-esteem. The relationships that develop between riders, volunteers, horses and staff are integral to the positive emotional experience at Great Oak.

### COGNITIVE BENEFITS

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The horse's gait helps organize the nervous system of the rider and thus is a perfect time to work on educational goals such as multi-tasking, cause and effect learning, sequencing and attention while riding. The alternative setting also proves the motivation and inspiration to address other specific cognitive tasks.

## HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR LESSONS

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Great Oak strives to provide an individualized goal-oriented therapy program for every participant. Each Great Oak participant will work with a treatment team to develop a program to meet his or her specific needs. Program goals will be specific and time-oriented and may be focused on occupational, physical and speed therapy improvement. Great Oak hopes that all participants will achieve their personal goals through creative equine partnerships and achieve confidence and self-esteem that extends outside of the Great Oak program.

#### TIPS ON HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR LESSONS:

- Communicate with your instructor, share any issues, concerns and goals immediately.
- Ask other providers to attend a lesson and give feedback. (Please schedule with your instructor.)
- Be an active participant in your treatment. Ask questions.
- Participate in monthly feedback with your instructor and Great Oak.
- Remember that not all treatment occurs on horseback. program.

## SAFETY

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There is an inherent risk associated with horseback riding. That being said, Great Oak uses every precaution to provide a safe environment for participants. Safety is a top priority at Great Oak. Great Oak instructors have been trained, tested and certified by PATH International to ensure that the highest safety standards are being upheld. Instructors may end a session prior to completion if they feel the circumstances have become unsafe.

### **GREAT OAK STRONGLY RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING:**

- Riders should wear long pants and appropriate clothes for the weather.
- Riders should wear barn appropriate footwear. Flat soled boots with a heel are preferable.
- Riders should purchase their own riding helmets. An ASTM-SEI designated helmet is required for all mounted activities and strongly suggested for groundwork conducted with or near equines (grooming, tacking, leading, lunging, etc.). All helmets should fit correctly and have the harness strap adjusted correctly. Helmets should not interfere with vision. If you do not have a helmet, Great Oak will provide one.
- Do not enter the barn without a Great Oak staff member.
- Do not use flash photography around the horses, as it could spook them.

## FACILITY SAFETY RULES

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These rules have been established for the protection and safety of everyone, including staff, horses, riders, family and friends. Please follow them and use common sense when around horses. If you ever have a question about anything, please ask.

- Please wait in the viewing room for your instructor before and during your student's lesson.
- The riding arenas are for riders only, unless invited by a Great Oak instructor.
- Children must be supervised at ALL times.
- Do not enter the barn unless accompanied by a Great Oak staff member.
- Do not enter a horse stall unless accompanied by a Great Oak instructor.
- Do not feed the horses unless accompanied by a Great Oak instructor. Horses are to be fed in their buckets only.
- Helmets are required for all mounted riders. Riders participating in ground work may be asked to wear a helmet as well.
- Riders should wear appropriate riding attire and barn appropriate footwear.
- Long pants and proper clothes for the weather.
- Flat soled boots with a heel are best.
- No open toed shoes, sandals or Crocs.
- No dogs are permitted at Great Oak.
- Anyone on property must sign a Great Oak release.
- No smoking on the property.
- No drugs or alcohol on the property.

# GREAT OAK PARTICIPANT'S APPLICATION AND HEALTH HISTORY

## General Information

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Height: \_\_\_\_\_ Weight: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer/School: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Legal Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Address (if different from above): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Referral Source: \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about Great Oak? \_\_\_\_\_

## Health History

Diagnosis: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of onset: \_\_\_\_\_

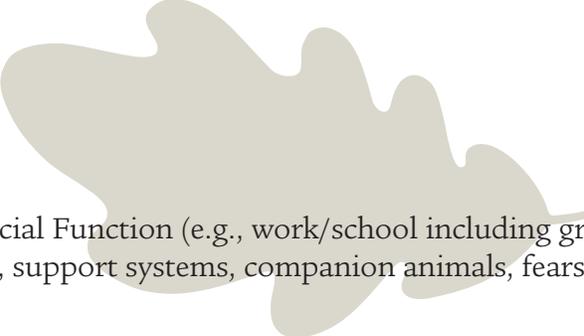
*Please indicate current or past special needs in the following areas:*

	Yes	No	Comments
Vision			
Hearing			
Sensation			
Heart			
Breathing			
Digestion			
Elimination			
Circulation			
Mental/Emotional Health			
Behavioral			
Pain			
Bone/Joint			
Muscular			
Cognition			
Allergies			

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Physical Function (e.g., mobility skills such as transferring, walking, wheelchair use, etc.):



Psychosocial Function (e.g., work/school including grade completed, leisure interests, relationshipsfamily structure, support systems, companion animals, fears/concerns, etc.):

Goals (Why are you applying for participation? What would you like to accomplish?)  
Remember to make your goals SMART! (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Reward, Timeframe specific):

