



You will be issued your own official Instructor's Assistant t-shirt in bright orange, so volunteers can pick you out of a crowd! Please wear it and your name tag every time you volunteer as a TREC Instructor's Assistant.

INSTRUCTOR'S ASSISTANT HANDBOOK

Revised 03/2011

WELCOME ABOARD! You have been asked to volunteer as a TREC Instructor's Assistant for a variety of reasons. Your general equine knowledge and instinctual responses to horse behavior, qualifies you to work with the animals. You are already "TREC trained" in the areas of tacking and grooming, side-walking, leading as well as mount and dismount procedures. But it takes more than good horsemanship to excel at the task to which you are assigned. We also recognize that your people skills will help you succeed. TREC staff, its clients and other volunteers appreciate your willingness to assume this vital role.

Instructor's Assistant NAME:

Days and time of CLASS(es):

Instructor's NAME and PHONE:

The Instructor's Assistant (IA) role at TREC depends largely on the individual instructor's requirements of you. You'll be asked to keep the volunteers on task, grooming and tacking the appointed horses in the proper way. You'll need to learn proper safety procedures and when in doubt, ask the instructor. The IA is in communication with the instructor before, during and after classes to report any potential or actual safety risks to the volunteers, riders or horses. The IA leads by example and ensures that all are following TREC protocol for everything from safe and humane handling of the horses and humans to proper care, application and organization of the tack and grooming equipment. Remembering that safety comes first for volunteers as well as riders, the IA should be able to quickly assess what individual volunteers can and cannot do. This will require keen observational skills. TREC has very particular ways of doing things, because we are held to *Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International* standards. (*PATH International* is the accrediting body that holds us accountable, helping us stay safe and effective.) We are in the business of teaching AND learning. The Instructor, Instructor's Assistant, riders, parents/caregivers and volunteers ALL have something to learn and contribute each and every time they participate in a TREC program. The IA will assist the instructor in teaching the volunteers TREC's policies and procedures in order that the TREC experience will be safe, effective and

enjoyable for ALL involved. This is a comprehensive manual. You and your TREC instructor will discuss which of the responsibilities outlined in this handbook you will actually assume.



YOU MAKE IT ALL POSSIBLE

INSTRUCTOR'S ASSISTANT RESPONSIBILITIES

*Please use the outline below to assist you in adhering to TREC policies, procedures and practices as an Instructor's Assistant. In addition to TREC policies, procedures and practices, this handbook contains a comprehensive list of duties that your TREC Instructor may (or may not) assign to you. **Only those duties agreed upon between you and your particular TREC Instructor are your responsibility.** Every TREC Instructor has different expectations of their Instructor's Assistant. Please take careful notes when you meet with your Instructor, so you understand what is expected of you.*



Know your volunteers

If you see a new face introduce yourself and tell them that you are here to assist or answer any and all questions. If you can't help, refer them to the Instructor and follow-up, making sure their questions and/or concerns were addressed.

Junior Volunteers, age 12 – 13 may volunteer if accompanied by a parent or guardian who is also a trained volunteer. Junior Volunteers' duties are limited to grooming, tacking and cleaning with supervision. All other volunteers that do not require supervision by a parent or guardian must be at least 14 years of age.

Engage your volunteers in conversation to find out the extent of their horse knowledge. Carefully observe a new volunteer around the horses to gain more insight into how your guidance will benefit them. Some of the practices of a new person may differ from TRECs, so diplomatically direct them to proper TREC procedures as outlined on the training posters in the "Volunteer Lounge" as needed. Some volunteers require more direction than others. Use your judgment, keeping in mind the safety of all involved (including the horse).

Learn names and make your volunteers feel welcome, needed and appreciated, because they are. Without them TREC could not exist!

Know TRECs safety rules, teach them to the volunteers and enforce them

Safety for the clients, volunteers and horses take priority over everything else. Impress this notion upon your volunteers at all times.

Go over all safety policies with new volunteers and if a safety rule is violated politely, yet firmly redirect the individual. Refer to the safety poster hanging in the Volunteer Lounge and use it as a teaching aid when training volunteers.

Give a tour of the TREC facility to all new volunteers

First stop... Volunteer Lounge: This special area has been set up for volunteers to sign in, store their nametag and pick up T-shirts, etc. Safety, grooming and tacking posters are also hung here for training purposes and as reminders about proper TREC policies and procedures. Impress upon the volunteers the importance of signing in and out. An

accurate record of volunteer hours must be maintained for funding purposes.

Other points of interest to a new person would be the fire extinguisher, first aide kits, restroom, pop machines, large arena, connector, small arena, viewing area/TV room, outdoor arena, TREC office, helmet room and tack room.

Make sure everyone knows where and how to put the tack away. Halters and one lead rope belong on the horse's stall door. Bitless bridles hang on the wall in the tack room on the appropriate peg, pads go on top of the saddle, girths come off the saddle completely and are placed on top of the saddle, etc. A note about the bitless bridles: Buckles on the bitless bridles must remain buckled. The only exception is the one buckle on the noseband, which is tightened securely under the horse's chin each time it is put on the horse or loosened when taken off the horse.

Ensure that volunteers are trained and stay updated on revisions to TREC policies and procedures

Properly trained volunteers help ensure the safe and smooth operation of the entire TREC experience for everyone, so avail yourself to your staff, anticipate questions and stay informed.

Don't assume a new volunteer knows how to groom or tack a horse no matter what they tell you. TRECs procedures may differ from what they've learned elsewhere.

There are three posters hanging in the Volunteer Lounge designed to aid in training new volunteers. Refer volunteers to the "TREC Policies and Procedures" poster, the "Safety & Horse Sense" poster and the "Grooming & Tacking" poster. Use the step-by-step instructions on the posters to reinforce the skills and/or policies they learned at previous volunteer training sessions. Use a live horse to demonstrate if necessary. Watch as they repeat what they've learned. Have them repeat it until they become proficient, especially for those that are new to horses. After they have mastered grooming and if time permits, use the same procedure to reinforce bridling and saddling a horse using the "Grooming & Tacking" poster if needed. (hint: It would be a good idea to review the posters with your group of volunteers at the start of each new session even if they previously had group or individual lessons with another TREC staff member.)

Keep your staff of volunteers apprised of new or revised policies and procedures. This will require you to remain in constant communication with your supervisor(s).

INSTRUCTOR'S ASSISTANT SESSION CHECKLIST

Use the checklist below to assist you in adhering to TREC policies, procedures and practices as Instructor's Assistant during any given class session. Please check with your Instructor to see which of these duties are your responsibility.

- ✓ Check if the horse is okay to use for class. This can be done during the grooming time. Any doubts about the soundness and/or mood of the horse should be reported to the instructor.
- ✓ Set out grooming baskets (or ask a responsible volunteer to assist).
- ✓ Set out tack (or ask a responsible volunteer to assist).
- ✓ Greet volunteers cheerfully and remind them to sign in and out.
- ✓ Assign volunteers to horses as they arrive. Please make sure no volunteer is left idle wondering what to do.
- ✓ New volunteers should be paired with experienced volunteers the first several weeks.
- ✓ Check that horses are being treated respectfully.
- ✓ Supervise the tacking and grooming of the horses (refer to the Grooming & Tacking poster in the lounge):
- ✓ Cross check the horses being groomed with the horse use list to make sure the right horses are being prepared for class.
- ✓ Ensure horses are tied properly inside the stalls (with a quick-release knot) or in the crossties in the aisle for grooming and tacking, unless otherwise instructed by your Instructor.
- ✓ Ensure that the girth area is thoroughly groomed and hooves are picked in a safe and thorough manner.
- ✓ Check that tack is put on horses properly. Remind riders that the elastic/buckle end goes on the left side of the horse. Do NOT tighten the girth all the way yet. The Instructor will do that prior to mounting a rider.

- ✓ Assist and instruct side-walkers and leaders in proper leading and side-walking techniques. Be eager to answer any and all questions with respect and patience.
- ✓ Ensure that horses are warmed up (lead at a walk) in arena 10 minutes prior to class start.
- ✓ Check tack in arena prior to mounting during warm-up. Tack should not be adjusted in mounting area.
- ✓ Alert the instructor if a horse's behavior should preclude a horse from being used in class.
- ✓ Assist with mounting riders.
- ✓ Observe class and volunteers to ensure safety. If a volunteer needs to change positions or requires a break, notify the instructor.
- ✓ Fill gaps when short on volunteers.
- ✓ Assist with dismounts and walk riders to the arena gate.
- ✓ Report horse behaviors, injuries, etc. to the instructor.
- ✓ At the end of class, check for safe and proper return of equipment to tack room.
- ✓ Check that all stall doors are secured and lead ropes/halters are hanging in their proper place on the stall doors.
- ✓ Pick horses feet if needed or ask volunteers to help with this after class.



- ✓ Check TREC aisle, stalls, tack room, helmet room, bathroom, lounge and viewing room to ensure areas are left tidy.

*The duties performed as Instructor's Assistant require commitment, dedication, responsibility and charity. The riders, their families and TREC staff acknowledge the sacrifices you make to create successful programs here. Your contributions to TREC have lasting and far-reaching implications. Your labors not only impact the small community here at TREC, but our society as a whole. Our goal is that the individuals we serve, including their families and caregivers come away from their TREC experience refreshed and hopeful, ready to face another day. We wish the same for you too. Be encouraged that you are making a difference! **Thank you!***