

Hippotherapy vs Therapeutic Riding

New Mexico

What is Hippotherapy?

Hippotherapy is when the movement of the horse is used as a treatment tool by Physical Therapists (PT), Occupational Therapists (OT), and Speech Language Pathologists (SLP) to address impairments, functional limitations, and disabilities in patients. This strategy is used as part of an integrated treatment program to achieve functional outcomes (American Hippotherapy Association, 2000).

- Hippotherapy is not a horseback riding lesson
- Physician referral is required and therapy is implemented by a licensed and credentialed physical, occupational, or speech therapist
- Prescribed interventions may address, but are not limited to, head and trunk control, muscle tone and strength, coordination, balance, and attention
- The therapist, a professional horse handler, and a highly trained horse work as a team to treat impairments
- One-on-one treatment is provided by the therapist at all times
- Horses are specifically chosen based on the type of movement, gait, and figure to influence the rider and assist in meeting therapy goals
- The goal is to improve client function in cognition, body movement, organization, and attention levels

What is Therapeutic Riding?

Therapeutic Riding is an adaptive/recreational sport activity and is not therapy. The benefits from riding could include health, education, or leisure.

- Adaptive recreational horseback riding lessons are for people with disabilities
- The team consists of a certified therapeutic horseback riding instructor and volunteers
- Lessons are typically taught in a group format of 4-6 riders
- Occasional hands-on assistance from an instructor or volunteers is needed, but the instructor typically teaches from the center of the arena
- Horses have been screened for appropriate temperament
- The emphasis is on proper riding position, reining skills, and pleasure riding
- The goal is to achieve riding skills and horsemanship

Who is eligible?

- Eligibility for **Hippotherapy** requires a physician referral. Hippotherapy is reimbursed by the majority of medical insurances (third party) because therapy (OT, PT, SLP) is provided.
- Eligibility for **Therapeutic Riding** requires a physician's approval. Medical insurance does not cover therapeutic riding because therapy is not provided.
- Depending on the site, partial scholarships or limited funding from grants may be provided for qualifying applicants. The Mi Via Self-Directed Waiver may cover therapeutic riding.



American Hippotherapy Association

www.americanhippotherapyassociation.org

PATH International Therapeutic Riding

www.pathintl.org/resource-s-ducation/workshops/27-resources/general/198-learn-about-therapeutic-riding

Questions?

Call the CDD Information Network

1-800-552-8195

or visit our website at <https://goto.unm.edu/x8gmt>

Informational Tip Sheets:

<https://goto.unm.edu/>