



Volunteer Orientation Training

The purposes of volunteer orientation include:

1. Acquainting volunteers with the mission and values of the Turning Point program as a member of PATH – committed to upholding PATH standards.
2. Demonstrating and performing the required procedures for volunteers at Turning Point.
3. Reviewing policies from safety to confidentiality that govern volunteer actions

Turning Point Ranch's Team

Volunteers are key members of the Turning Point Team. We both need and appreciate you! And we guarantee your efforts will make a difference in the life of a rider facing physical, emotional or mental challenges. When you become part of our team, you are making a semester-long commitment to one particular client and to the horses we call "therapists in horseshoes." We understand that's not always easy, but we are eternally grateful for the skills, interest and time you bring to our program. The rewards are priceless. Thank You!

Each person at Turning Point Ranch is a unique and valuable human being who deserves respect, courtesy, compassion and an opportunity to grow. Your actions as a volunteer bring those values to life for yourself, our clients and even our horses. The policies and procedures that govern our programs are designed to protect each member of the team and to promote an enhanced experience for all.

Expectations

As a volunteer, you are both the face and the heart of Turning Point. What you do, how you do it, what you say, and how you say it defines Turning Point Ranch. Here are our expectations of you:

- Be at work on time and for the total time of your shift
- Commit to a regular day and time for the entire semester in order to provide consistency to an individual client unless you volunteer as a floater/substitute
- Arrive physically and mentally ready to perform your assigned duties – someone's life and future is in your hands
- Always defer to the authority of the Instructor during sessions to insure the safety of all the riders. After a session, your feedback and suggestions are welcome to improve the quality of the program
- Take a professional approach to training so that you are aware of and prepared for the responsibilities given to you and the performance expected
- Ask for help if you do not understand something
- Dress appropriately for your assignment (See section on Dress)
- Complete all required release forms prior to the start of sessions (i.e. Commitment, Emergency Medical, Background Check, Photo and Confidentiality)
- Maintain confidentiality and respect the privacy of all other volunteers, staff and clients
- Be courteous and patient. You should never be in a position to discipline either horses or clients. Bring problems to the immediate attention of an instructor or staff member.
- Understand that you are responsible for replacing yourself if something prevents you from performing your assignment. You will be given a list of trained substitutes. Notify your instructor immediately if you are sending a replacement.

Cell phones**No Phone Zone**

Cell phones are an important part of life today but can be a distraction at best and a safety hazard at worst in an equine program. Turning Point is a “no phone zone.”

- You should leave your cell phone in your car when you report for your shift at Turning Point OR
- You MUST turn the phone OFF (not just to vibrate) once riders and horses are present.
- If your cell phone rings during a session, it is grounds for dismissal-with-cause from the program and no credit for hours worked will be awarded.

ICE

Because cell phones can be valuable devices in emergencies, Turning Point urges you to create an ICE (In Case of Emergency) contact(s) in your cell phone’s directory to supplement the information we keep on file for you and to serve you should an accident occur when you are not involved in our program.

Prohibited Personal Behavior**Profanity**

- Because the majority of our clients are children or youth and because modeling verbal skills is part of the job description of our volunteers, use of profanity is strictly prohibited at Turning Point

Tobacco Use

- Because of the dire consequences of fire related to hay, horses, wooden structures and pastures, smoking is strictly prohibited at Turning Point.
- Volunteers are asked to refrain from the use of smokeless tobacco products in the presence of clients

Substance Abuse

- A volunteer attempting to operate under the influence of alcohol or other illegal substances poses a danger to our clients, our horses and other volunteers. Use of controlled substances before or during sessions is strictly prohibited

Procedure for Removal of a Volunteer from the Program

Turning Point is so grateful for the time and talents our volunteers share with the program that we would like to keep them with us forever. However, there are several reasons that a volunteer would be asked to leave the program. They include:

- Violation of one of the policies included in Orientation Training and this manual, particularly:
 - Violation of the confidentiality of client records
 - Disrespecting a client or attempting to discipline a client or one of our horses
 - Violation of safety procedures
 - Absence from a shift without procuring a replacement or notification.
 - Presence at Turning Point under the influence of alcohol or an illegal substance.
- Conviction of a crime or being charged with sexual abuse
- Causing a conflict or arguing with an instructor during a session
- Unauthorized use of Turning Point tack or horses

Should a volunteer be accused of one of the above offenses or face removal from the program for another reason, the volunteer shall receive written or verbal notice of termination.

The volunteer may request a review hearing by a 3 person review committee from the Board of Directors. Otherwise, any professional staff member, instructor or the Herd Manager may remove a volunteer from the program pending a board committee review if requested.

Parking

Volunteers and clients arriving at Starr Valley Stables, 4101 E. Lakeview Rd, (2.5 miles east of Perkins Rd) should take the first entrance on the right immediately past the cluster of manufactured homes. Look for the sign that says "Home of Turning Point Ranch"

- Sessions are held either in the covered arena or the attached outdoor arena. Our venue is in the large barn you see directly ahead as you enter the property. Enter the west end.
- Parking is allowed along the driveway and around the arena area. The home, shop and other facilities to the east of our arenas are private property and Turning Point participants should not trespass or otherwise block or interfere with access to those properties.
- DO NOT under any circumstances park on Lakeview Rd.

The Turning Point Ranch Program

Program Goals

The Turning Point Ranch offers developmental and age-appropriate horse activities that will promote:

- physical,
- social,
- language and
- emotional growth through therapeutic horsemanship.

Volunteers are encouraged to interact with the riders as a part of the therapy (as long as those conversations don't distract from directions from the instructor.) However, it is important to remember that some riders have physical or emotional problems that require special handling. The instructor will inform you of any special "do's and don'ts" regarding your rider prior to each session. For instance, the recent separation of parents or the death of a family member can have a profound effect on a young person with limited verbal skills. Knowledge of such a major life disruption becomes a proactive safety measure when 1200 pound horses are involved.

Personal Space and Behavior

It is critical that all volunteers respect the personal space and behavior of each rider. All volunteers who interact with clients are required to undergo criminal background checks mandated by federal statute for agencies who deal with vulnerable clients.

In addition, Turning Point has policies designed to protect both the clients and volunteers:

- At least two volunteers must be with any one client at any given time---NO one-on-one time away from the group.
- All personal needs or situations such as toileting must be conducted by a parent/guardian or teaching assistant --NEVER a volunteer.
- Volunteers are NEVER allowed to discipline a client. Only the instructor may offer "guidance" to a client whose behavior is becoming a safety issue.

Examples:

- The instructor might tell the leader to bring a particular horse to the center of the arena to remove the potential disruption from the other horses.
- The instructor might dismount the rider to allow the individual a moment to regain calm.
- Volunteers should proactively direct the Instructor's attention to potentially disruptive situations, but
- ONLY the instructor should make decisions and take actions to guide a rider's behavior.

Safety

Horseback riding has an inherent quality of risk which Turning Point Ranch addresses by:

- Selecting and training gentle horses handled only by our trained volunteer horse team.
- Prohibiting hand-feeding, giving treats or running anywhere on our facilities as well as running or shouting near sessions in progress
- Using quality, well-maintained tack that is inspected for any damage prior to and after every session (including ASTM/SEI equestrian helmets).
- Requiring all dogs to remain inside a vehicle...NEVER on the property -- even on leash.
- Providing an observation area for friends and family that is OUTSIDE the arena and requiring all children to be supervised while at Turning Point
- Banning smoking, and the use of alcohol or other controlled substances on our facilities.
- Encouraging feedback, questions and suggestions from clients and volunteers to address concerns before they become issues.

Dress

Appropriate dress is an important safety issue. Footwear and clothing will be exposed to mud, manure and other substances which will stain. Layers are recommended as the weather changes quickly and Turning Point does not have extra gloves, jackets, socks or boots. Horses may accidentally step on your feet, so closed toe footwear – not flip flops or tennis shoes -- is required. (No Steel toed boots as they are more damaging to feet if stepped on than any other type of footwear.) Loose jewelry, gum and strong fragrances are also discouraged.

Conducting the Session:

The Instructor

All sessions run under the control of the instructor who is usually stationed in the center of the arena. Sessions are usually limited to five riders with up to three volunteers each.

The instructor's duties and responsibilities include:

- Preparing the Lesson Plan
- Making decisions regarding equipment and how to conduct the class
- Briefing volunteers prior to the session
- Giving all instructions to both volunteers and riders during the session.
- Matching the rider with the horse and tack
- Mounting and dismounting all riders
- Assigning volunteers to horses and riders
- Taking charge of all emergency situations

Granting the instructor absolute authority during sessions insures the safety of everyone involved in the program.

Assisting the Session:

The Volunteer

There are six distinct parts of a session from the volunteer perspective:

1. Grooming and Tacking
2. Opening Procedures
3. Leading
4. Sidewalking
5. Un-tacking
6. Closing Procedures

Note: This section of the orientation deals with volunteer roles surrounding riding sessions. Medical attention, schooling, stretching, massage therapy or other evaluations and treatments

involving the horses falls under the purview of the Herd Manager and Horse Care Team. If you are interested in volunteering in those areas, give your name to a staff member or instructor. Your acceptance to the Horse Team is at the sole discretion of the Herd Manager.

If you have extensive experience with horses, you may have learned different methods of working with horses than Turning Point requires. We recognize the value of many other methods; however consistency in technique and procedures are very important both for our horses and the array of volunteers who serve their needs. We ask all volunteers to follow our standards exactly when helping with our horses.

Opening Procedures

- Arrive 30 minutes before sessions in order to work with clients who want to groom or help warm up horses before the riding session begins.
- Report to Instructor for briefing and assignments, sign in and put on nametag.

Sidewalkers:

- Set up cones, barrels, ground poles or other equipment in the arena at the direction of the Instructor
- Set up mounting ramp/area in the indoor arena
- Turn on music if requested by the Instructor
- Place games required for session in the arena.
- Check games for wear & tear before and after session
- Note any damage found on the check board

Horse Leader:

- Catch your team's horse
- Groom horse – checking for any injuries or sensitivities
- Inspect tack, Tack-up horse and safety tie to indoor arena rail. Ready for session.
- Inform instructor of any unusual behavior, mood changes or injuries to horse

Note: In some cases, clients will be assigned to participate in the grooming and tacking-up process in order to address fine-motor skills and hand-eye coordination. In those cases, the Leaders and generally one sidewalker will provide supervision to keep the client safe while participating in grooming and tacking. Always stay between rider and rear of horse.

LEADING

Experience with horses is mandatory for volunteers selected as horse leaders. A practical test with an instructor is required before a volunteer is assigned to perform this duty in a session.

Leading the Horse – General Principals

- Lead from the Inside. While horses are generally led from the left, at Turning Point, horses are led from the side nearest the center of the arena where the Instructor stands. In other words, the leader is always between the Instructor and the horse.
- Keep both hands on the lead rope. Position the “near hand” 6 to 8 inches from the snap while the “far” hand carries the folded rope. NEVER coil the lead rope around your hand! Never “walk” backwards when leading. Face your horse at a halt.
- Walk beside the horse's head, watching eye and ears for expressions of disposition
- Use voice, body language and pressure, in that order, to cue the horse;
- Do not let the horse crowd you with his feet, face or body or pass your shoulder;
- Inform the instructor promptly if there is an issue with a horse.
- Follow any decision by the instructor regarding how to proceed.

Leading in a Class Setting – In the Arena

- Always handle the horse in a manner that creates a safe environment for your team of rider and sidewalkers.
- Never release the horse unless instructed to do so.
- Follow the direction of the instructor regarding patterns, games, mounts and dismounts
- Leave a minimum of one elephant space between you and the horses in front of and behind you when walking.
- To create space between you and another horse, there are three options:
 1. **Circle** – make a large circle to the inside of the arena ending in an area that has enough space in front of and behind the horse you are leading.
 2. **Pass on the Inside** – if the horse in front of you is going at a slower pace, pass on the inside (leaving one horse width between the sidewalkers) and saying “passing on the inside” as you do so. Pass the slower horse until you have one horse length between you and then fall back into the pattern.
 3. **Halt** – perform a short halt to create additional space between you and the horse in front of you. This should only be performed if there is more than ample space behind you and won’t create a short space situation for a horse that’s following you.
- At halt, stand in front of the horse at 45 degrees, angling toward the horse’s face, maintaining 6 to 12 inches slack in the lead.
- ALWAYS ask the sidewalkers and rider if they are ready before walking on.
- If it is necessary to relax the horse, rub the side of the neck or the poll. Use quiet hands when close to the horse’s face.
- Stand on the side of the horse nearest games when they are being played so you can screen the horse from the action as needed.
- Halt to walk – Rider cues with “walk on”, then and only then begin walking.
- Walk to halt – rider cues with “whoa!” and leader gradually slows walking speed to a halt.

Leading into Mounting Area

Note: The instructor is responsible for checking that the rider is appropriately wearing an ASTM-SEI approved helmet and that other riding apparel is appropriate to the individual’s safety and particular health or structural issues.

- Rider should be *on the mounting ramp with the instructor or a sidewalker*.
- Leader will bring horse to mount area but halt approximately 10 feet from it.
- Leader waits until instructor asks for the horse.
- Leader then leads the horse close to the ramp listening to instructor positioning cues.
- Leader will then make sure the horse is square, facing the horse at the halt.
- Instructor will check girth and stirrups before assisting rider to mount the horse
- Instructor will then assist rider on the horse.
- Leader will remain in front of the horse until instructor has done all safety checks.
- Instructor will ask rider to give walk on and leader will move horse from mounting area.
- During a session, if there is a need for a tack adjustment or the instructor must focus on a particular rider, the instructor will ask the rider, horse and volunteer team to come to the center of the arena. At this time, the leader will lead the rider to the center of the arena and have a halt. This will get the team out of the way of the other riders.

Possible Instructions from the Instructor:

- Walk On
- Halt

- Half Halt
- Change of Direction
- Circle
- Weave Cones/Poles
- Come to Center
- Back
- Trot
- Loose Lead
- Tie Up
- Fall Off

SIDE WALKING:

The sidewalker is responsible for the safety of the rider, both on and off the horse. Horse skills are not required to perform this duty. The volunteer will be in close contact with the horse at all times. If a volunteer has concerns or fears but would like to volunteer in this capacity, please talk with a staff member and they will attempt to help you overcome any anxieties.

- There are two side walkers for each rider:
 - The **Interactive** sidewalker
 - The **Supportive** sidewalker
- When supporting a mounted rider, the sidewalker's duties are identical with one exception. The Interactive sidewalker is responsible for pulling the rider off in an emergency or if requested by the instructor.
- The Interactive Sidewalker is also the one to give instructions or prompts to the rider.
- NEVER release your hold on the rider unless instructed to do so by the Instructor!

General Duties - Prior To Mounting

- Go to volunteer room 30 minutes before class, check sign-in sheet , get name tag and check for assigned rider and duties
- Greet rider upon arrival. Take care of any concerns or questions prior to riding.
- Encourage family or care givers to watch classes from viewing area.
- Fit rider with ASTM/SEI equestrian helmet bearing their name.
Check helmet inside and out for dust, spiders, wear and tear on straps. Helmet should fit snugly at level of eyebrows without constricting vision. Loosen Velcro straps on sides of helmet that control length of strap that fits at base of neck. Place helmet on rider and adjust chinstrap to fit firmly under chin. With helmet in proper position, adjust Velcro straps so that strap at base of neck fits snugly.

Interactive Sidewalker – Mounting

- Responsible for rider safety on ground while in arena. Hold rider's hand if appropriate and always stand between rider and rear of horse.
- Take rider up to instructor for mounting the rider on the horse. You should walk on the open side of the ramp nearest the horse. If a wheelchair or other mobility aid is used take directions from the instructor regarding your role.
- Once the rider is securely mounted, you move into position for a walk-on.

Supportive Sidewalker -- Mounting

- Stand 2-3 feet from mounting block to create an alley for the horse to enter for mounting

- Assist from the ground with the rider mount – face the horse’s side, feet astride, hands raised in readiness to receive rider. Method and amount of assistance needed will vary with the rider. Assist in positioning the horse close to the ramp and standing steady.
- When rider is securely mounted, instructor approves, both sidewalkers are in position and leader is ready, rider will give the “walk-on” command.

Interactive and Supportive Sidewalkers – Supporting Mounted Rider

- **Emergency Dismount**
 - Interactive sidewalker will do an emergency dismount of the rider in an emergency situation.
 - Hold safety belt or grab rider around chest or waist, attempting to protect the head as you pull the rider off and slightly backward.
 - A small child may be held, but a larger child or adult should be lowered to the arena floor.
 - Instructor will give further directions related to the situation
- **General Riding**
 - ***Keep the rider centered on the horse!***
 - If shifting occurs, ask the rider to shift their weight. If they don’t or are unable to do so, then assist the rider in shifting back to center.
 - Minimal re-centering can be done while walking.
 - Major corrections of rider position may require a halt in the center of the arena.
 - Cue to leader to whoa, if necessary to shift the rider.
 - Repositioning is most easily done using the hips or shoulders as control points.
 - The instructor will provide guidance, as needed, in positioning riders.
- **Changing Sides**
 - *This is to be done ONLY at a halt!*
 - If either sidewalker needs to make a change, first alert the instructor, then go to the center of the arena.
 - The sidewalker who calls for the change releases hold on the rider, walks in front of the horse then replaces the other sidewalker.
 - Once the changing sidewalker has a hold on the rider, the other sidewalker walks in front of the horse to the other side and takes hold.
 - Make sure a conversation is taking place so that the rider is securely held by at least one sidewalker at all times during the switch.
- **Games**
 - Sidewalkers should participate in games as directed by the instructor.
 - If you have not been instructed to participate, it is imperative that you remain with your rider using the support hold required.
 - DO NOT reach for stray balls, beanbags or other objects unless the instructor tells you to or they are about to injure your rider and you are in a position where you can continue to support your rider while deflecting the object.

Support Holds

Take cues from the Instructor for the required hold from the following list:

- **Ankle Hold** - used if the rider has better balance.
 - With “near” hand, lightly grip the ankle with a slight downward pull.
 - Instructor may request “human stirrup” which requires the sidewalker to use the “far” hand under the forefoot to prevent foot drop.

- **Hip Hold**
 - Place the “near” hand on the rider’s thigh allowing your forearm to support the rider’s hip/buttock.
- **Over Thigh Hold** – is the most common hold.
 - Place the “near” arm over rider’s thigh applying light pressure.
 - Hold surcingle handle or swell of saddle.
 - Do not hang on saddle or rider.
 - Do not dig elbow into horse.
- **Shoulder Hold**
 - “Near” hand uses fingertip pressure at shoulder for balance.
 - Usually done only for short distances at the walk.
- **Tie On**
 - “Near” hand rests on cantle (back saddle swell) or pad just behind rider and “far” hand rest on front swell or surcingle handle.

There are many other “touch” points on the body to align posture or create a rider’s awareness of their position. The instructor will apply these techniques or demonstrate their use on an as needed basis, but one of the most important jobs of the sidewalker is to keep the rider centered on the horse and to cue to leader, if necessary, to whoa, to shift the rider. Nudge, don't grab.

EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

Rider Falling

- If the rider is falling and cannot be supported, tell the leader “Rider Falling” and pull the rider off toward the back of the horse while attempting to protect the rider’s head.
- ALL LEADERS STOP HORSES! and move in front of horse.
- All sidewalkers stay with your riders.
- The instructor will assess the situation before proceeding.

Rider Seizure

- In the unlikely event of a rider having a seizure, pull the rider from the horse in the same manner as above.
- Do NOT attempt to intervene during the seizure.
- ALL LEADERS STOP HORSES! All sidewalkers stay with your riders.
- The instructor will assess the situation before proceeding.

Horse Spooks

- If a horse is startled but does nothing more than move its feet a bit, the **sidewalkers** need to tighten their hold on the rider and stay with the horse – attempting to keep the rider mounted unless the situation escalates.
- The **leader** will lead the horse in the direction of the spook, attempting to regain control of the animal by talking calmly and touching the horse’s neck gently.
- DO NOT turn the horse’s back to the object that caused the spook as it could stimulate the flight response and cause the horse to run.

Fire or Tornado Emergency

- Evacuate the arena and go to the Kountry Kitchen for a head count
- If there is time, dismount riders and sidewalkers take them out first
- Instructor will decide whether to remain in shelter or board busses/cars to leave site

Medical Emergency or Occurrence with Injury

- Alert the instructor, give details and follow instructor’s direction
- If requested, go to the session phone in the phone basket on the tack room door and call 911 – reading the directions to the arena attached to the basket.

Accident/Occurrence Report Forms

Rider Incidents

In the case of an incident involving the fall of a rider from a horse or any mishap with a rider involving a bruise or cut, an Occurrence Report Form must be completed by the Instructor of the session involving that rider whether the session has ended or has not yet begun. Volunteers may be asked to provide additional information to aide in the completion of the form, but responsibility for completing the form lies with the instructor.

Staff/Volunteer Incidents

In the case of an incident involving a volunteer or staff member, whether due to a horse-related event or a fall or accident, an Occurrence Report Form must be signed by the individual who was hurt. Another volunteer or an available instructor may complete the form, but a completed form with the signature of the hurt individual is required unless that person is left unconscious or taken by ambulance from the property.

Occurrence report forms are available in the top drawer of the file cabinet in the tack room.

CLOSING PROCEDURES

Sidewalkers:

- Clear arena of games, cones and ground poles.
- Return all equipment to storage area neatly. Spray helmets and return to correct bin.
- Note any damaged equipment on the dry erase board in the game room/office.
- View the arena...Is equipment including ramp and bleachers stowed away?

Horse Leaders:

- Remove and put away tack. **Fork horse apples from arena.**
- Groom horse – noting any injuries that might have occurred in the session
- Tell the horse what a great therapist he or she is!
- Check with the instructor regarding where the horse needs to go:
 - If there is a session later that day, put the horse in its assigned run.
 - If there is a session immediately following, tie the horse to a rail in the indoor arena.
 - If yours is the last session of the day, put the horse in the pasture.
- If yours is the last session of the day, turn off indoor and outdoor arena lights.
- Close all gates and make sure locks are fastened.

All Volunteers: Log hours in book before leaving and hang up your nametag.

OTHER

Fundraisers

Turning Point will host an annual fundraiser in order to purchase special equipment or fund scholarships. If you are interested in participating or serving on the fund-raising committee, please let us know. Turning Point is not able to “Host” events for individual groups or small businesses even if proceeds are donated to the Ranch. We will support such events through our newsletter and website.

Finally, THANK YOU! Volunteers are the backbone of the wonderful services Turning Point Ranch offers individuals with physical, mental and emotional challenges. We thank you for sharing your time and talents!

DISABILITIES SEEN IN THE TURNING POINT PROGRAM

1. ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER: Inability to focus attention

Characteristics: May have difficulty following directions, may be overly active

Benefits: Stimulates attention span, group skills, builds confidence, opportunities to meet goals

2. AUTISM: A self-centered mental state from which reality tends to be excluded

Characteristics: Unresponsiveness to the presence of others; withdrawal from physical contact; severely delayed and disordered language; self-stimulating behaviors; unusual or special fears; insensitivity to pain, unawareness of real dangers; hyperactive, passive; unusual behaviors such as smelling/tasting/licking/mouthing all objects; ritualistic behaviors; developmentally delayed; unusual response to sounds; clumsiness; social withdrawal; resistance to change.

Benefits: Interaction in a group setting stimulates interest away from self and toward others and the horses. Postural and verbal stimulation.

3. CEREBAL PALSY: Brain damage occurring before, at, or shortly after birth. It is a non-progressive motor disorder.

Types and Characteristics:

Spastic - hypertonicity with hyperactive stretch reflexes, muscle imbalances and equilibrium.

Increased startle reflex and other pathological reflexes.

Athetoid – extensor muscle tension, worm-like movements, abnormal posturing and slow and deliberate speech

Ataxic – poor balance, difficulty with quick, fine movements and are often described as having a “rag doll” appearance.

Benefits: Normalization of tone, stimulation of postural and balance mechanisms, muscle strengthening and perceptual motor coordination.

Associated Problems: Seizures; hearing defects; visual defects; general sensory impairment; perceptual problems; communication problems; mental retardation; emotional disturbances; learning disabilities

4. DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY: A general term applied to children functioning two or more years below grade level.

Characteristics: Varied but can include slow physical, motor and social development

Benefits: Provides arena for success, opportunity for sport and recreation, stimulates body awareness.

5. DOWN SYNDROME: Condition in which a person is born with an extra chromosome resulting in mental retardation and developmental delay

Characteristics: Broad, flat face, slanted eyes, neck and hands may be board and short. Usually hypotonic, have hypermobile joints and tend to be shrot and slightly overweight. Prone to respiratory infections.

Benefits: Riding improves expressive and receptive language skills, gross and fine motor skills, balance, posture, muscle tone and coordination.

6. EMOTIONAL DISABILITIES: A congenital or acquired syndrome often compounded by learning or physical disabilities incorporating numerous other pathologies.

Characteristics: Trouble coping with everyday life situations and interpersonal relations. Behaviors such as short attention span, avoidance, aggression, autism, paranoia or schizophrenia may be exhibited.

Benefits: Increases feelings of self-confidence and self-awareness and provides appropriate social outlet.

7. HEARING IMPAIRMENT: Congenital or acquired hearing loss from mild to profound.
Characteristics: Communication difficulties – may use lip reading, finger spelling (manual alphabet) or sign language. Often phase out and have attention deficits.
Benefits: Stimulates self confidence, balance, posture and coordination. It also provides appropriate social outlets and interactions.
8. LEARNING DISABILITIES: Catch-all phrase for individuals who have problems processing, sequencing and problem solving, but who appear to otherwise normal intelligence skills.
Characteristics: Short attention span, easily frustrated, immature.
Benefits: Effects depend on the particular disorder. Stimulates attention span, group skills, cooperation, language skills, posture and coordination.
9. MENTAL RETARDATION: Lack of ability to learn and perform at normal and acceptable levels. Degree of retardation is referred to as educable, trainable, severe or profoundly retarded.
Characteristics: Developmentally delayed in all areas. Short attention span.
Benefits: Stimulates group activity skills, coordination, balance, posture, gross and fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination. Provides a structured learning environment.
10. MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS (MS): Progressive neurological disease with degeneration of spinal column tracts, resulting in scar formation.
Characteristics: Most commonly occurs in the 20 to 40 year range. It is progressive with periods of exacerbation and remissions. Fatigues easily. Symptoms include weakness, visual impairment, fatigue, loss of coordination and emotional sensitivity.
Benefits: Maintains and strengthens weak muscles and provides opportunities for emotional therapy.
11. MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY (MD): Deficiency in muscle nutrition with degeneration of skeletal muscle. Hereditary disease that affect mainly males.
Characteristics: Progressive muscular weakness, fatigues easily, sensitive to temperature extremes.
Benefits: Provides opportunity for group activity, may slow progressive loss of strength, stimulates postural and trunk alignment, and allows movement free of assistive devices.
12. VISUAL IMPAIRMENT: Moderate or total loss of sight
Characteristics: Insecure posture, lack of visual memory, anterior center of gravity, fearfulness, and developmental delay.
Benefits: Stimulates spatial awareness, proprioception, posture and coordination. Provides social outlet, structured risk taking and freedom of movement.