

Reigning Hope Ranch

Volunteer Policy

Winter 2021

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why volunteer with RHR• General purpose of policy• Definition of volunteer	
Volunteering Job Description	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Types of volunteering with RHR• Availability• Conduct• Confidentiality	
Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Involvement with RHR• Application review• Acceptance and interviewing process• Work conditions• Support for volunteers• Probationary period• Training• Separation	
Policy Acknowledgment	8

Introduction

1.1 Volunteers are critical to the success of many, if not all, non-profit organizations. Reigning Hope Ranch (RHR) values each volunteer and is committed to providing a healthy work environment in which volunteers can experience the joy that comes from serving selflessly, and being an integral part of RHR. The mission of RHR is to provide the community with an equine therapy center that maintains the highest standards of safety and services, while simultaneously serving those in the community who are struggling with emotional, physical, psychological, and spiritual challenges. Volunteers and student interns will make up the majority of the staff, making their presence and support vital to the success and community engagement of the facility. The position of the salaried staff will be mostly limited to their specific job duties, while the volunteers and interns will be asked to assist with the clients (as horse leaders and sidewalkers), facility upkeep (basic cleaning and maintenance), horse care (feeding, mucking, exercise, grooming, etc), and miscellaneous tasks. Volunteer staff is an integral part of any therapeutic riding center, and they will give this facility the community ties that will be vital to the support and success of the organization.

1.2 The general purpose of this policy is to protect RHR, the volunteers, outline the expectations and rights that both parties possess, and provide general guidelines. This policy will also serve as a terms document with conditions, and volunteering with RHR is contingent upon acknowledgment of the policy.. Changes or exceptions to this policy can be discussed with the Volunteer Coordinator, and requests as well as approvals must be in writing and kept in the volunteer's file on site.

1.3 By very definition, a volunteer is someone who freely gives of themselves for the sake of a cause or duty and agrees to do so without monetary compensation. As such, they make it possible for non-profit organizations to minimize overhead costs associated with bringing on paid employees, and allow the organization to focus on the mission. Volunteering is one of the most selfless acts that an individual can

partake in, and as such, it not only gives the volunteer experience that they may be looking for, but also allows them to be a part of making a difference in and for the community. Considering that non-profit organizations by nature tread those same selfless waters, a symbiotic relationship can be seamlessly formed for the good of the community, the organization, and the volunteer.

Volunteer Job Description - General

2.1 As previously stated, paid staff will generally maintain the duties that their specific title requires, while volunteers are expected to wear multiple hats. Volunteers will be asked to assist with the clients (as horse leaders and sidewalkers), facility upkeep (basic cleaning and maintenance), horse care (feeding, mucking, exercise, grooming, etc), and other miscellaneous tasks as needed. There are several stages of client sessions in which volunteers are encouraged to be involved (unless the instructor states otherwise). Services offered at RHR will predominantly be equine-based, with sessions centered around the interactions and work with the horses. Sessions for all clients (only differing if the individual is unable to integrate the equine-based portion at that time) will be composed of the following components:

- Meaningful conversations - what this means is that the interactions will be genuine, with a goal of creating a safe place where the individual coming for this session will be able and encouraged to speak freely and honestly. This also includes setting reasonable goals for the session.
- Pre-ride duties - this will most likely be assisting with grooming and tacking up the horse prior to the session, but can also be a task around the facility that contributes to the well-being of the facility and makes the individual feel like their effort is valuable to the care of the horses or the organization.
- Working with the horse - this portion of the session is not structured rigidly, but will have the flexibility necessary to adapt to the needs of the individual. This means that they might work on

ground work, actual riding, play, or whatever activity that the instructor and client decide they feel comfortable and capable of doing.

2.2 Volunteer availability is to be managed by the Volunteer Coordinator. Volunteers are expected to perform their agreed upon duties in a timely and regularly scheduled manner. If there are any conflicts or emergencies which arise, volunteers are required to contact the coordinator as far in advance as possible so that the staff can fill the gap and ensure that the client's needs are met appropriately.

2.3 As a volunteer with RHR, there is a strong emphasis placed on professionalism and respective conduct of staff both on and off the property. As a representative of RHR and its mission in the community, it is vital that at all times staff behave in a way that honors that title. It is expected that volunteers dress appropriately for duty, performance, and work conditions when on the property. Additionally, prior to making any public statements that may be counterproductive to the mission of RHR, harm the brand image, or further significantly obligate or affect RHR, volunteers must obtain prior approval or advice from the board of directors. Any unprofessional or unethical behavior or unauthorized public statements that could negatively impact RHR will result in immediate dismissal from volunteer service.

2.4 RHR is committed to protecting the private and privileged health information of its clients and as such requires complete confidentiality regarding client information from its staff. Volunteers are strictly prohibited from sharing any protected information that they may have been exposed to while serving in their duties at RHR. Failure to comply with this policy will result in immediate dismissal from volunteer service.

Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities

3.1 RHR welcomes volunteers from all walks of life who have the heart and desire to serve the community. As previously stated, there are multiple opportunities for volunteers to best use their skills and gifts on the property; from assisting with lessons, to cleaning stalls and grooming horses, to property maintenance. RHR will provide a clear and concise plan for each volunteer and scheduling will be done through an online scheduling board. If unable to access the online board, volunteers will be expected to reach out to the Volunteer Coordinator and set up an alternative. Volunteers are a crucial resource and bring skills and knowledge to the organization and will be honored as such, but they also have responsibilities; as they have made a commitment to the organization and will be held accountable to that commitment.

3.2 When a volunteer application is received at RHR, that application will be reviewed by the board of directors at RHR. This process will take at least 3 business days but no more than 10 business days. The timeline given is to allow the board time to process and review the application in its entirety. If the application is rejected for any reason, the applicant will receive an email stating that the application was not accepted by the board at this time. The state of Maine does not require reasoning for rejection of applications or separation of the employee/volunteer, and RHR will review requests for reasoning but is under no obligation to provide that information. RHR will consider applicants without regard for race, gender, religion, social status, age, or other defining factors. However, RHR as a non-profit will reserve the right to reject applications or separate from volunteers who do not meet the standards required in the policy, or who display behaviors that do not adhere to the mission statement and values that RHR stands for.

3.3 If the application is accepted by the board after the review period, an interview will be set up between the applicant and the board. Not all members of the board must be in attendance, but it is encouraged that a majority of board members are at least aware of the applicant and available for input. Interviews will run approximately 30 minutes and will be as comprehensive as any other employment interview would be. Upon completion of the interview, deliberation may take up to 3 business days. Once a decision has been reached, the applicant will receive an email with the decision.

3.4 Volunteers will be expected to dress appropriately for the conditions they will be working in. In cases of inclement weather, the Volunteer Coordinator will send out correspondence regarding the schedule for the day and guidelines for safety of the volunteers. Volunteers will be trained for the positions that they will be placed in, and are encouraged to ask questions in order to maintain a safe and comfortable environment for the volunteers, clients, and horses.

3.5 RHR firmly believes that volunteers are a necessary part of non-profit success and that they bring skills, knowledge, and experience to fit the needs of the organization. RHR will provide support and guidance for volunteers through training, clear and concise communication, and will set expectations to protect both the volunteers and RHR. Volunteers are encouraged to reach out to supervisors if they have questions or concerns about their positions, the organization, or policies.

3.6 Volunteers will be retained at RHR initially with a probationary period of 14 days. After that period, volunteers will meet with their supervisor and undergo an evaluation of their performance so far. Following the evaluation, either an offer of continued volunteering or a dismissal will be made. RHR values the sacrifice that volunteers make in order to contribute their time and skill set and as such, will be as honest and concise as possible in the evaluation of their performance.

3.7 Volunteers will be thoroughly trained in their positions and are encouraged to ask questions throughout their tenure with RHR. Training will consist of guidelines for the position they are placed in, observation of the process, and hands-on practical application of the task. Volunteers will be paired up in the early stages of learning with either another volunteer, or their supervisor if the schedule permits.

3.8 As previously stated, rejection of an application or separation from the organization can be done at any time if RHR decides that the relationship is no longer serving either party to the extent that was initially agreed upon. Additionally, if a volunteer has been inactive for 3 weeks, a reminder will be sent to them regarding their inactivity. If the volunteer does not respond and the inactivity period reaches 30 days they will be removed from the online scheduling group and not considered for future volunteer opportunities until they reestablish with RHR. A condition of volunteering with RHR is that the volunteer adhere to the policies and values of RHR. The board will extend the courtesy of providing an opportunity for the volunteer to correct their behavior and/or discuss the reasons for potential dismissal, but will not allow for multiple offenses or deviations from the expectations set within the policy. Grounds for dismissal may include the following:

- Substance abuse
- Theft
- Unsafe behavior (not closing gates, not securing horses, not supporting clients, etc)
- Failure to abide by policies and expectations
- Misuse or abuse of materials
- Abuse or lack of respect for staff, clients, or horses
- Failure to meet physical or mental standards for volunteering
- Failure to perform as required

Acknowledgement of Policy

Reading this policy serves as an agreement to the terms and conditions of volunteering with RHR.