

**Maryland Horse Industry Board
Voluntary Certification Program for
Horse Discovery Center**

In an effort to provide the general public with a safe, friendly, and educational experience, particularly for those individuals who have never or rarely experienced horses personally, MHIB has developed a network of licensed equine facilities that can offer tours, demonstrations, educational programs, and riding experiences to individuals and groups.

Certification *is voluntary*. No fees are assessed for applying for certification. Each facility maintains its own fee structure for activities conducted on site. Annual re-certification is required and ongoing until revoked by MHIB for failure to comply with regulations and requirements, or facility voluntarily withdraws. Facilities participating in the certification program agree to be monitored by MHIB based on the following criteria indicated below.

REQUIRED Criteria: Facility and General Operations

MHIB licensed and in good standing ⁱ
Allow scheduled and unscheduled inspections by MHIB and pass all inspections ⁱⁱ
Clean, sanitary conditions of facility, including restroom or portable restroom
Availability of hand washing or hand sanitizer for guests
Sufficient parking, at least one spot reserved for handicap parking
Maintain commercial liability insurance
Fire extinguishers present in barn(s) and classroom(s)
First Aid kit for humans and horses
Maintain medications and medical supplies in safe and secure location
Written liability release form ⁱⁱⁱ
Written safety rules posted and/or provided to participants (including use of helmets, and proper riding attire for facilities offering riding activities)
Written program plan & procedures (tours, demonstrations, education, etc.)
Written incident response plan and procedure (report of all incidents)
Written "rider information" form/permission for treatment ^{iv}
Classroom facility or suitable area for conducting educational activities
Instruction areas for riding (rings, arenas) maintained with good footing, free of hazards, solid fencing, adequate head clearances, etc.

SUGGESTED Criteria: Facility and General Operations

Handicap accessible areas of facility (please notify MHIB if unable to accept limited mobility guests/clients)
Posted hours (and days) of operation
Appropriate horse handling areas for conducting activities
Written photographic release form (if video or photos are taken)
Written lesson plans and fee structure for paid services
Written emergency preparedness plan & procedure (severe weather, fire, disease outbreak, etc.)
Written horse and facility management plan (care of horses and facility)

REQUIRED Criteria: Horses

Well cared for and healthy animals
Maintain health records on each horse at facility
Availability of clean water and adequate forage
Follow standard industry practices for working horses (maximum hours used)
Properly fitted tack and equipment used on horses

REQUIRED Criteria: Instruction (riding, handling)
Helmets required and available for lessons (clean, sanitary, and undamaged)
Written procedure for identifying riding skill & experience of riders
Tack and equipment maintained for safety and sanitation, organized and accessible
Written procedure for introducing rider to horse; safety check
Facilities offering therapeutic and specialized instruction to handicapped individuals must conform to those particular industry standards customary for such services
SUGGESTED Criteria: Instruction (riding, handling)
Mounts identified suitable for different levels of riders (entry level, novice, experienced, therapeutic, etc.)
Written procedure for screening horses for riding levels
Written procedures for inspecting tack for safety and sanitation

REQUIRED Criteria: Personnel
Management has working knowledge of MD liability laws and risk assessment
Attend periodic information sessions and share best practices with others
Management and support personnel exhibit enthusiasm and selflessness
Willingness to accept guests to site
Exhibit exemplary customer service
Willingness to offer referrals to other facilities ^v
Provide orientation to guests on first visit
Client to staff ratio appropriate to maintain a quality & safe experience for guests/clients (appropriate to type of activity offered)
Staff of appropriate age, maturity and experience for facility's programs
File annual report to MHIB (form to be provided by MHIB)
Build collegial network within horse industry
Promote a positive image of the Maryland horse industry
Offer educational components (e.g. demonstrations, tours, lessons)
Willingness to teach basic horsemanship
Experienced instructors (certification, or combination of training & experience)
Able to refer a local tack shop conducive to inexperienced riders
SUGGESTED Criteria: Personnel
Continuing education on industry practices for management and personnel
Personnel trained in first aid and CPR
Availability of a portable defibrillator (and trained personnel on its use)
Certified Horsemanship Association certification
Maintain confidential notes on client's progress
Availability of reasonably priced starter riding kits (helmets, boots, etc.)

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ "In good standing" shall mean all licensing and inspection fees are paid timely and in full.

ⁱⁱ MHIB inspectors may make unannounced inspections for purposes of maintaining certification and/or if complaints or concerns have been directed to MHIB regarding the facility.

ⁱⁱⁱ Customized liability release provided as a courtesy.

^{iv} Customized Rider Information Form/Medical Release provided as a courtesy.

^v Participating facilities are encouraged to direct guests to other certified facilities or those facilities management knows to be safe and appropriate for the activity sought by the guest which they may be unable to provide.