

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 and on ground interactions(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
	Ability to email events, reports and respond to MHIB in a timely manner (normally monthly)
	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
	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.