**R.E.I.N.B.O.W**

Therapy

What is equine-assisted therapy?

Equine (horse) assisted therapy utilizes evidence based practice and clinical reasoning to purposefully manipulate the movement of an equine to engage the sensory motor system and create functional change in clients. It combines an interdisciplinary approach conjoining the disciplines of physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech-language pathology. When combined with other neuromotor and sensorimotor techniques, equine assisted therapy serves as an integral aspect of providing outcomes and leading to improvement in clients. Equine assisted therapy is part of a therapist’s integrated plan of care.

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**Who can participate?**

Equine assisted therapy can be used for clients as young as 2 years old to adults with varying disabilities such as Developmental Delays, Sensory Integrated Dysfunction, Austin Spectrum Disorder, Rhett Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, learning or language disabilities, genetic disorders, Traumatic Brain Injuries, Attention Deficit Disorder, Neurological Diseases, Cerebral Vascular Accident (Stroke), Down Syndrome, Spina Bifida, Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis, emotional disturbances, as well as visual and hearing impairments.

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About Monica Wu, MS OTR/L, HPCS

Monica Wu MS OTR/L, HPCS attended Columbia University, located in New York in 1990, where she received her Masters in Occupational Therapy. Prior to this degree, in 1987, she attended Trinity College of Hartford, CT where she earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Biology. Monica specializes in pediatrics and is currently working at Minuteman Arc Early Intervention program in Concord, MA offering traditional occupational therapy services while also leading Minuteman’s hippotherapy program. She is also the owner and founder of REINBOW Therapy located at Windrush Farm in North Andover, MA and Liberty Tree Farm in Acton, MA.

Monica is also a Massachusetts registered riding instructor, a registered PATH International instructor and therapist, as well as a Hippotherapy Professional Clinical Therapist.

Who provides equine-assisted therapy?

Guidelines have been established by the American Hippotherapy Association and have to be approved by the Professional Association for Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH) for therapists that wish to practice in the field of hippotherapy. They must meet the qualifications, responsibilities, and training requirements to provide direct treatment services such as:

- Licensed or registered to practice as a PT, OT, or SLP
- Certification and rigorous training in the principles of hippotherapy and equine assisted movements

Present during each equine assisted treatment session includes the client, the expert therapist, a horse leader/PATH, volunteer(s), and a specially trained horse/pony.

What are the benefits?

- Balance / Posture / Gait / Midline Orientation
- Self-confidence
- Body Awareness
- Critical Thinking / Cognitive skills
- Limbic system arousal / Attention / Motivation
- Mobility of pelvis, spine, and hip joints
- Symmetry / Alignment / Coordination / Flexibility
- Timing and coordination of motor strategies
- Muscle strength / Normalizing muscle tonus
- Musculoskeletal alignment
- Speech and language / Communication
- Oral-motor function
- Neurogenic bladder advancements
- Problem-solving movement strategies
- Circulation
- Respiratory function
- Neuromotor function
- Sensorimotor integration
- Gross motor skills
- Fine motor skills