

Hippotherapy vs. Therapeutic Riding

What is the difference? And how do I know which one is most appropriate for my child?

Hippotherapy

Physical, Occupational or Speech Therapy. The movement of the horse is a treatment tool.

Hippotherapy is not a horseback riding lesson. It is physical, occupational or speech therapy, which is approved by a physician and implemented by a team that includes a licensed, credentialed therapist.

Hippotherapy is implemented by a professional therapist (occupational therapist, physical therapist or speech language pathologist) in conjunction with a competent horse handler and a specially screened and trained therapy horse.

There is direct hands-on participation by the therapist at all times.

The horse's movement is essential to assist in meeting therapy goals.

The goal of hippotherapy is to improve neurological functioning in cognition, body movement, organization, and attention levels to improve function off the horse.

Hippotherapy is a one-on-one treatment and generally occurs until the client meets discharge criteria.

In hippotherapy, the treating therapist continually assesses and modifies therapy based on the client's responses.

Physical, occupational or speech therapy in which hippotherapy is utilized, is reimbursable by medical insurance (third party).

Therapeutic Riding

Adapted recreational horseback riding lessons

Therapeutic riding is recreational horseback riding lessons adapted to individuals with disabilities.

Therapeutic riding is completed by a certified therapeutic horseback riding instructor in conjunction with volunteers.

In therapeutic riding, the individual is often taught riding lessons in a group format, which runs in "sessions". The instructor must respond to the group as a whole, in addition to fostering individual success.

There is occasional hands-on assistance by the riding instructor and/or volunteers, but the instructor usually teaches from the center of the arena.

Horses used for therapeutic riding instruction have been screened to make sure they have the appropriate temperament for this job.

In therapeutic riding, the emphasis is on proper riding position and reining skills, not functional therapeutic goals.

Because therapeutic riding is an adaptive/recreational/sport activity, NOT therapy, it is not covered by insurance.



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