

Code of Ethics
For the
Equine Facilitated Mental Health Association

Preamble

This Code of Ethics sets forth ethical principles for all EFMHA Members: Clinicians, Educators, Horse Professionals, and Volunteers. The EFMHA Code of Ethics is intended to be used as a guide for all involved in the provision of equine facilitated mental health services for promoting, and maintaining the highest standards of ethical practice, personal behavior, and professional integrity.

The guidelines expressed in the Code are not to be considered all-inclusive of situations that could evolve under a specific principle and are designed to be additive to such other professional codes as may be applicable (such as: psychology, social work, nursing, etc.). Further, this Code is meant to be complementary to other NARHA documents such as the NARHA Codes of Ethics for Centers, for Instructors, for Site Visitors, and NARHA Guidelines and Standards.

Principle 1

The Member respects the rights and dignity of all individuals* (human and equine) and promotes well-being for all involved.

Guidelines:

- 1.1 The Member is guided by consideration for the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health of all concerned.
- 1.2 The Member accurately represents their level of expertise, experience, education, and actual practice. The Member accurately represents to the participant(s)* possible benefits, potential outcomes, expected activities, risks and limitations.
- 1.3 The Member serves individuals regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, creed, national origin, or sexual orientation.
- 1.4 The Member respects the participant's right to privacy and discloses information only where appropriate, with a valid written consent from the participant or in response to a legal mandate and is in compliance with HIPAA* regulations where appropriate.
- 1.5 The Member avoids dual or multiple relationships* with participants or former participants in which there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the participant. In situations where dual relationships are unavoidable, the Member is responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and sensitive boundaries.
- 1.6 The Member assesses the clinical advisability* and/or appropriateness of physical contact, in order to avoid misinterpretation and minimize the possibility of psychological harm.

* Indicates a term defined in the attached Glossary.

Principle 2.

The Member accepts responsibility for the exercise of sound judgment and professional competence.

Guidelines:

- 2.1 The Member engages in best practices of their field in all phases of their work with individuals.
- 2.2 The Member offers services within the scope of their practice, competence, education, training, and expertise.
- 2.3 The Member is responsible for continued personal growth, continuing relevant education and professional skill development.
- 2.4 The Member agrees to address their personal problems, psychosocial distress, legal problems, substance abuse or mental health difficulties which may interfere with their professional judgment or performance. The Member agrees to immediately seek consultation and take appropriate remedial action should their judgment or performance become impaired.
- 2.5 The Member demonstrates openness to, and respect for, other colleagues and professionals.

Principle 3.

The Member acknowledges and responds to the necessity of responsible care for their equine colleagues, recognizing the unique character, psychology, physiology, heart and desire of the equine.

Guidelines:

- 3.1 The Member utilizes language which reflects a collegial relationship*.
- 3.2 The Member designs safe, mutually beneficial human and equine interactions. The Member avoids intentionally harassing, intimidating, frightening, or confusing the equine.
- 3.3 The Member is aware that every interaction with the equine is teaching the equine something, whether purposeful or incidental and that this serendipitous learning is taking place in all observers of the interaction, both human and equine. Consequently, the Member models appropriate interaction.
- 3.4 The Member demonstrates the highest level of equine care, understanding and responding to the equine's instinctive needs for socialization, play, turnout, time off, and retirement..
- 3.5 The Member assesses and addresses the need to include other professionals to provide medical, safety, and other support for the equine.

Principle 4.

The Member demonstrates responsibility for contributing to the broader knowledge base of the profession through teaching, supervision, consultation, mentoring, conducting and/or supporting research, and publishing, or otherwise contributing to the development of the profession.

Guidelines:

- 4.1 The Member engages in providing and receiving individual or peer supervision, and/or staffing consultation.
- 4.2 The Member engages in an annual ethics audit*, meeting with colleagues and staff to formally review their compliance with this code in proactive fashion.
- 4.3 The Member presents this ethical code to all human personnel, outlines their collective obligation to support it, and addresses any questions or concerns pertaining to it.

Principle 5.

The Member honors all professional and volunteer commitments.

Guidelines:

- 5.1 The Member negotiates and clarifies the fee structure and payment policy prior to the initiation of service, and charges only for services rendered.
- 5.2 The Member maintains membership in NARHA and EFMHA, as well as other pertinent professional organizations.
- 5.3 The Member accurately describes services provided with legally recognized terminology, consistent with their credentials.

Principle 6.

The Member abides by NARHA and EFMHA Standards and Guidelines and Federal, State, and Local Laws.

Principle 7.

The Member recognizes the need to support this Code for the protection of participants, equines, the public, and the profession from unethical, incompetent, or illegal practice.

Guidelines:

- 7.1 The Member takes active steps to ensure that the barn environment and culture in which equines reside and services are taking place is compliant and congruent with this ethics code.
- 7.2 The Member accepts the responsibility to discuss the suspect unethical behavior directly with the parties involved. Should this fail to achieve resolution, the Member is then responsible to report by letter the said infraction to the EFMHA Executive Committee.
- 7.3 The Member's failure to report a clear violation of this code by another Member constitutes a violation of this ethical principle.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Individuals – Reference to *individuals* in this code may be presumed to include equines.

Participants – Reference to *participants* in this code, refers not only to students or clients, but to their friends, relatives, and significant contacts.

HIPAA – HIPAA stands for the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act that was signed into law in 1996 as a result of the Kassebaum-Kennedy bill and was implemented in 2003. The privacy rule of HIPAA describes how medical information may be used and disclosed.

Multiple (Dual) Relationship - A dual or multiple relationship occurs when a service provider relates to a client in more than one relationship, whether professional, social, or business. Dual or multiple relationships can occur simultaneously or consecutively.

Clinical Advisability – Clinical advisability is a judgment made by a licensed mental health professional about the suitability of a specific behavior or intervention with an individual client or group of clients.

Collegial Relationship – The horse is a sentient being and participates by facilitating or assisting in the provision of service. Since the equine is not inanimate, it is not ‘used’. Horses may be ‘worked with’, or the movement of the horse may be ‘used’, or examples of equine behavior may be ‘used’, but the animal is not used (NARHA Guidelines for Authors).

Ethics Audit – This merely means a staff meeting or an individual meeting with a supervisor to discuss how well the program is following the code of ethics. Reviewing the program’s compliance with ethical standards has been described as important in avoiding complaints, citations, and law suits.