



PATH Intl. Backriding Position Statement

Back ground: In past editions of the *PATH Intl. Standards for Certification and Accreditation* manual, guidelines have been published for the practice of backriding. The practice of backriding and these published guidelines have been questioned by PATH Intl. members as to whether they reflect best practice in equine-assisted activities. After extensive research of organizations worldwide as to their position on backriding, the PATH Intl. Standards Task Force recommends the backriding guidelines published in the *PATH Intl. Standards for Certification and Accreditation* manual be removed so that PATH Intl. does not appear to encourage or condone an activity that is considered unsafe for instructors, participants, volunteers and equines.

It is proposed that the following statement be published in the *PATH Intl. Standards for Certification and Accreditation* manual and on the PATH Intl. website, and be included in the PATH Intl. Registered Instructor Onsite Workshop materials, as representing the position of PATH Intl. in respect to the activity of backriding. Backriding is a technique infrequently used in therapeutic horsemanship in which two people are mounted on an equine at the same time – one backrider and one participant. Backriding was intended to facilitate riding position and skills of participants in a therapeutic riding lesson with a goal of learning horsemanship skills.

Backriding activities are not the same as Tandem Hippotherapy (T-HPOT). T-HPOT is a treatment strategy in which the therapist/health professional sits on the equine behind the client in order to provide specific therapeutic handling as part of an integrated treatment protocol. A therapist is not typically part of a therapeutic horsemanship lesson. If it is determined that a participant is unable to support him- or herself sufficiently to participate in therapeutic horsemanship, he or she should be referred to a therapist. Backriding activities also differ from Interactive Vaulting activities, where two students, who meet specific requirements, may be on the horse at the same time.

Due to the increased risk of injury to the equine, the backrider, sidewalkers and the participant, backriding is not recommended to be used in therapeutic horsemanship programs.

- Currently there is no empirical evidence that backriding techniques can improve riding skills in participants in a therapeutic horsemanship program.
- Backriding causes increased stress to the equine.
- Backriding increases the risk of injury to the equine, the backrider, sidewalkers and the participant. In the event of an emergency, backriding can be extremely dangerous for the participant and backrider.
- Backriding may not be covered by insurance.