



PATH Intl. Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning CERTIFICATE CANDIDATE HANDBOOK

**We are thrilled you are interested in pursuing the PATH Intl.
Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning Certification!**

*Please Note: Before pursuing certification, please read this handbook in its entirety to
ensure you understand all requirements for certification before you proceed.*

We look forward to helping you achieve your certification goals.

esmhlportfolio@pathintl.org | www.pathintl.org

OVERVIEW

JOB DESCRIPTION

PATH Intl. ESMHL Job Description A PATH Intl. Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning (ESMHL) ensures the safety and well-being of the equine participating in unmounted equine-assisted mental health and learning sessions. The ESMHL serves as the equine expert before, during and after equine/human interactions. The ESMHL is responsible for choosing appropriate equines for the session and assessing their physical and mental/emotional appropriateness to participate in sessions. The ESMHL works in partnership with a variety of professionals to deliver sessions within the scope of their profession and qualifications. An ESMHL must be knowledgeable in horsemanship and understand how to collaborate with a variety of professionals to customize sessions to the client's needs and keep the session safe. ESMHLs have a thorough understanding of the ways equine behavior affects human responses. They maintain responsibility for the equine during the sessions they supervise, assess the equine's response to any interactions, evaluate the role of the equine, advocate for the equine and prohibits or stops any activity that compromises the well-being of the equine. They ensure that equine interactions within the session are safe and ethical.

A PATH Intl. ESMHL should be able to perform the following tasks:

- Guide an equine through basic ring figures and arena patterns
- Identify basic equine body language and communication
- Manage equine behavior before, during and after an unmounted equine-assisted services (EAS) session using techniques that align with **best practices in industry standards**.
- Select appropriate equines for a variety of sessions
- Appropriately respond to an activity that compromises the well-being of the equine within an EAS session
- Apply basic equine first-aid when required

With what does a PATH Intl. ESMHL require assistance from other EAS professionals?

- When sessions include riding, driving, or interactive vaulting, an appropriately certified professional should be present
- Schooling/conditioning program horses
- Managing complex or severe behavioral issues with equines or participants

With what tools should a PATH Intl. ESMHL be familiar?

- Equestrian equipment
- Mobility and language assistive devices
- Digital note-taking programs
- Horsemanship-related resource materials

In what environments should a PATH Intl. ESMHL be comfortable?

- All equine-related facilities/venues

What is a PATH Intl. ESMHL NOT expected to do/know?

- Demonstrate and instruct riding, driving or vaulting skills
- Provide therapy (physical, emotional, educational)
- Facilitate learning and/or application of life skills
- Manage an equestrian program or center

OVERVIEW

OVERVIEW OF THE ESMHL CERTIFICATION PROCESS

- ☐ Purchase PATH Intl. Professional Level Membership
- ☐ Purchase ESMHL Application and Student Manual – \$225 (includes \$20 for initial PATH Intl. Standards exam attempt and \$50 for initial ESMHL online exam attempt and \$75 for downloadable student manual)
- ☐ Submit completed application
- ☐ Submit current adult and child CPR/first aid card to PATH Intl. (100% online courses are acceptable)
- ☐ Complete workshop prerequisites, including all virtual learning requirements. Example: EFMHA History Video and PATH Intl. Standards Course and Exam (\$20 fee for initial attempt is included application fee; \$20 fee will be assessed for each retake; score is valid for one year) – you will be enrolled in these requirements after you purchase your application and student manual
- ☐ Once you complete all prerequisites you will receive a registration link via email to sign up and pay for an in-person ESMHL Workshop and Horsemanship Skills Test
- ☐ Attend an in-person ESMHL Workshop – valid for two years
- ☐ Submit completed portfolio to ESMHLportfolio@pathintl.org – reference this packet for portfolio requirements (allow 45 business days for processing time)
- ☐ Video Submission: Horsemanship Skills Test - \$125 submission fee
- ☐ Successfully complete and pass Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning Exam (\$50 fee for initial attempt is included in application fee; \$35 fee will be assessed per retake; Passing score is 85% or higher) -reference this packet for Horsemanship Skills Test requirements
- ☐ **PATH INTL. ESMHL CERTIFICATE ISSUED:** Allow 45 business days after final exam has been completed



STEPS TO CERTIFICATION

PHASE 1: PREREQUISITES & ONSITE

- ☐ 21 years of age or older
- ☐ Current PATH Intl. Professional Level Membership or above
- ☐ Purchase and submit PATH Intl. ESMHL Application and Student Manual
- ☐ Current adult and child CPR/first aid card - send to ESMHLportfolio@pathintl.org
- ☐ Submit completed ESMHL Application online through PATH Intl. Member Portal or by filling out the application in this handbook
- ☐ Complete virtual workshop prerequisite including all virtual learning requirements. Example: EFMHA History Video and PATH Intl. Standards Course and Exam (valid for one year) - you will be enrolled in these requirements after you purchase your application and student manual

Recommended experience PRIOR to attending an in-person ESMHL Workshop and attempting the Horsemanship Skills Test:

1. **100+ hours** handling various equines in a variety of settings with skills comparable to those described in the PATH Intl. Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor criteria, Pony Club C or CHA Level 1
 2. **20+ hours** of education/training on equine behavior, particularly body language and senses
 3. **20+ hours** creating lesson plans for a variety of client goals
 4. Review PATH Intl. mandatory medical and mental health standards and EAL guidelines
- ☐ Register for and complete an in-person Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning Certification Workshop at a PATH Intl. Premier Accredited Center. Events can be found on the PATH Intl. website under the "Attend and Learn" tab.

PHASE 2: PORTFOLIO

Within two years of completing an in-person ESMHL workshop, candidates must submit their portfolio along with their video submission of the PATH Intl. Horsemanship Skills Test. Please refer to this handbook for more information about the portfolio including expectations and descriptions of the education and experience hours required.

PHASE 3: ONLINE EXAM

Following acceptance of the portfolio and passing evaluation on the Horsemanship Skills Test video submission, candidates will be enrolled in the online Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning Exam. Successful completion of the exam is required for certification to be awarded. You will have 60 days to complete this online exam. Candidates must score an 85% or higher, in the event of a non-passing score or exam expiration, retakes must be purchased at \$25 per retake. To purchase a retake, please email ESMHLportfolio@pathintl.org.

In event that a candidate's horsemanship skills test video does not meet requirements there is a \$100 resubmission fee.

CERTIFICATION ISSUED

Within 45 days of successful completion of the ESMHL final exam, candidates will receive confirmation from PATH Intl. via mail that the Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning Certification has been earned.



PATH Intl. Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning (ESMHL)

STEPS TO CERTIFICATION

INSTRUCTOR APPLICATION REFUND POLICY

PATH Intl. Instructor Certification Applications will only be refunded if a written request is made via email to the PATH Intl. Certification Department, Please send all requests to certificationrequirements@pathintl.org The written request must be received by the PATH Intl. office within 5 business days of the received date of the application. Please include in the written request: name, member number, address, phone number and reason for refund. If the on-line courses have already been accessed, a refund will not be given. Refunds will be issued in the original form of payment. If a credit card is not available for credit, a check will be issued for the refunded amount.

Merchandise or materials purchased with the instructor application submission, will be considered under the Returns/Refund policy.

PATH Intl. Membership is non-refundable; please see the Memberships refund policy on the PATH Intl. website, www.pathintl.org.

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FIRST, ARE YOU 21 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER? THEN...

PREREQUISITES AND ON-SITE PHASE:

- ☐ Create a portal and purchase a PATH Intl. Professional Level Membership
- ☐ Purchase PATH Intl. ESMHL Application and Student Manual bundle
- ☐ Submit completed PATH Intl. ESMHL Application
- ☐ Submit proof of current adult and child CPR and first aid certifications (100% online courses are accepted)
- ☐ Complete virtual prerequisites
- ☐ Attend a PATH Intl. in-person ESMHL Workshop (valid for 2 years)

PORTFOLIO PHASE:

- ☐ Documentation of PATH Intl. Professional Level Membership
- ☐ Current adult and child CPR/First Aid card or certificate
- ☐ Certificate of completion for ESMHL Workshop (maximum of 2 years old)
- ☐ Signed PATH Intl. Professional Code of Ethics
- ☐ 1 equine professional reference
- ☐ 1 mental health or educator reference with additional questions answered
- ☐ PATH Intl. Image Release Form

Documentation of Hours:

- ☐ 20 hours of hands-on education in Equine Behavior and Management
- ☐ 60 hours of experience actively participating in Equine-Assisted Services and/or experience in a mental health or special education setting
- ☐ Video Submission of Horsemanship Skills Test

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PATH
INTERNATIONAL

Professional Association of Therapeutic

ESMHL ROADMAP

NOTE: This diagram is intended to be a general checklist/overview of the application and certification process.

Please thoroughly review this booklet for details on each component of the process.

YOU ARE A PATH Intl. CERTIFIED ESMHL!

Certification issued within 45 days of successful completion of ESMHL final examination

Reminder:

Renew ESMHL certification annually

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UPON CONFIRMATION THAT YOUR PORTFOLIO AND HORSEMANSHIP SKILLS TEST VIDEO SUBMISSION ARE APPROVED:

- ☐ Complete online ESMHL final examination

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PATH Intl. Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning (ESMHL) CERTIFICATION APPLICATION

Please type or print clearly in ink. Please use the form provided.

Candidate First Name: _____ Candidate Last Name: _____

PATH Intl. Member ID # _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

I hereby affirm that:

- ☐ I have included front and back copies of my adult and child CPR/first aid card (REQUIRED)
- ☐ I am a current PATH Intl. Professional Level Member (REQUIRED)
- ☐ I have paid the ESMHL certification application fee of \$125
(REQUIRED; initiates enrollment in online learning module and the PATH Intl. Standards Course and Exam)
- ☐ I have paid the ESMHL student manual fee of \$75 (REQUIRED online download; please visit the
PATH Intl. online store if you would like to purchase a hard copy in addition to the online download)
- ☐ I can complete the certification process as outlined and **do not need** an accommodation
OR
- ☐ I am unable to complete the certification process as outlined and have:
 - Downloaded the Reasonable Accommodation Policies and Procedures instructional booklet for the necessary forms
 - Included my written accommodation request with this application
 - Included a letter from my physician verifying my diagnosis and associated limitations

I understand that I must be 21 years of age or older in order to be issued PATH Intl. ESMHL certification.

Initial: _____

I understand that in order to be eligible to register for the in-person workshop that I must complete all virtual prerequisites.

Initial: _____

I have carefully read and fully understand the policies and procedures that are laid out in this application booklet.

Initial: _____

Candidate Signature Date: _____

TOTAL AMOUNT BEING REMITTED TODAY* \$_____.

Please submit your completed application to PATH Intl. via email at esmhlportfolio@pathintl.org.

Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning workshops are three days long and are offered at a variety of different PATH Intl. Premier Accredited Centers. All workshops are listed in *PATH Intl. eNews* and on the events calendar on the PATH Intl. website. Check the calendar frequently for updates.

The objective of this Equine Specialist workshop is for participants to develop an understanding of the importance of a trusting relationship and open communication between professionals.

The workshop:

- Provides specialized training for experienced equestrians, instructors or mental health professionals and educators who are interested in equine-assisted mental health and education programs. The workshop will not count towards a certification for anyone except an equine specialist.
- Is taught by a mental health professional and an equine specialist, using a combination of lectures, demonstrations, role-plays and hands-on exercises with equines.
- Focuses on the specific role of the equine specialist (equine handler) when assisting or collaborating with the licensed mental health provider or educator in designing safe, mutually respectful and effective activities to enhance participant outcomes, determining specific equine handling methods, and has an understanding of students with mental health and/or learning issues.
- Teaches participants how to create and maintain a therapeutic and educational environment, including a review of current PATH Intl. standards as they relate to psychotherapy incorporating equines.
- Includes demonstrations and exercises to increase awareness of equine behavior and how the behavior might enhance a therapy session.
- Emphasizes always keeping the equines and all participants in the session safe.
- Gives particular attention to assessing the equine's response to student behaviors and needs.
- Facilitates the collaboration between the mental health professional/educator and the equine specialist.
- Gives participants the opportunity to look at treatment plans and educational plans with a mental health professional or educator and develop lesson plans based on client goals.

The workshop learning goals are for attendees to be able to:

- Create a therapeutic environment.
- Understand equine care and management and ethical treatment of the equine in these sessions.
- Understand how to maintain the association's code of ethics and standards, including the ethical treatment of the equine.
- Design appropriate exercises based on the IEP (individual education plan) or mental health treatment plan.
- Collaborate with other members of the team (mental health or education professional and the equine) to meet treatment goals or the individual education plan goals.

Topics Covered at the Workshop

DAY 1

- ESMHL Team Role plays
- Mental health team HIPAA and confidentiality
- Relationship exercise
- Equine behavior and management

DAY 2

- Partner vs. tool
- Riding lesson vs. meeting therapy goal or education plan
- Equine behavior and ethical treatment of equines
- Death of a program animal
- Abuse of animals and aggression
- Ethical parameters
- Design lesson plans
- Group work
- Reporting and discussion

DAY 3

- Define partnership
- Collaboration Exercise role-play (Includes hands-on team skills and activities with equines)
- Processing and final reflection Criteria for skills test

NOTE: The workshop does NOT include time practicing the horsemanship skills test



REGISTERING FOR WORKSHOP

Once a candidate has completed all workshop prerequisite requirements they will receive an email from PATH Intl. with a unique registration link that will allow them to pay for and register for an upcoming in-person ESMHL Workshop.

To see an upcoming list of events visit the PATH Intl. events calendar to locate a PATH Intl. Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning Workshop. The calendar is located under the “Attend and Learn” tab at the top of the pathintl.org website.

ACCOMODATIONS

An accommodation is an adjustment or an adaptation of a component or components of the ESMHL certification process to meet the special needs of a candidate.

- ▶ **Reasonable accommodations may be granted to qualified individuals with known disabilities, unless doing so would result in a fundamental change to the certification criteria, create an undue hardship or cause a direct threat to health or safety.**

Requests for an accommodation to any part of the process must be made in writing by the candidate and submitted to PATH Intl. All requests for accommodation must be accompanied by a letter from a physician (with letterhead and physician’s handwritten signature) verifying the diagnosis and defining the candidate’s limitations to help PATH Intl. determine appropriate, reasonable accommodations on an individual basis. Please visit our website at **PATH Intl. Certification Accommodations** to obtain the Reasonable Accommodation Policies and Procedures instructional booklet containing the necessary forms.

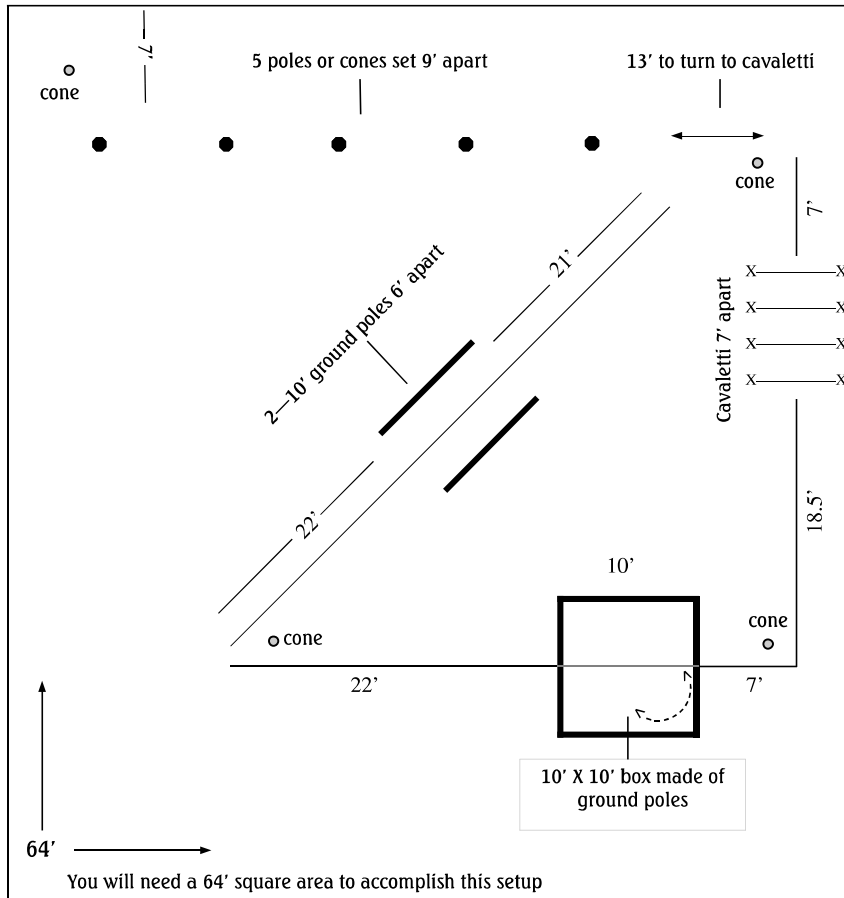
Accommodation requests will be reviewed by PATH Intl. on an individual basis to determine appropriate, reasonable accommodations. **Please allow up to 60 days to receive accommodation request results in all cases.**

* *For more information please contact PATH Intl.*

* *PATH Intl. is not responsible for refunding candidate registration fees or travel expenses in the event that an accommodation request is submitted with insufficient processing time.*

HORSEMANSHIP SKILLS TEST

The horsemanship skills test is an assessment of candidates' ability to establish a connection with an equine to effectively read and respond to the equine while leading them **at a walk** through an obstacle course. Please refer to the ESMHL horsemanship criteria on the next page to gain a full understanding of what is evaluated for this test.



Note: Please use the provided map to complete your arena layout for your horsemanship skills test. Please review the video specifications for exact instructions.

- 1
 - Enter arena, close and secure gate
 - Proceed at a walk to cones
 - Serpentine the cones
 - Proceed right across the diagonal at a walk
- 2
 - Stop in chute
 - Back three steps
 - Proceed at a walk across diagonal, turn left at cone, proceed into box
- 3
 - Stop in box
 - 1/4 turn right, stop
 - 1/4 turn left, stop
- 4
 - Proceed at a walk and turn left at cone
 - Proceed over cavaletti (leader may walk to the side of cavalettis)
 - Proceed at a walk around cones, along the rail, back to gate
 - Exit gate

HORSEMANSHIP CRITERIA

Candidates should possess mastery of all skills within this list to be successful in the horsemanship skills test. Previous experience handling a variety of equines is essential to success, as is knowledge of equine behavior, body language and senses.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Verbal greeting is given to equine
- 1.2 Demonstrate appropriate method of approach
- 1.3 Quiet, effective, timely approach especially if horse has rear end facing person

2.0 Haltering

- 2.1 Demonstrate proper placement of halter on equine
 - Candidate does not stand in front of the equine; stands on the left side of the equine
 - Halter is placed on the equine correctly, not too tight or too loose
- 2.2 Demonstrate caution around equine's eyes and ears
- 2.3 Demonstrate safe method of securing the equine while in the stall/paddock
- 2.4 Demonstrate safe space position in stall/paddock

3.0 Exiting and Entering Stall/Paddock

- 3.1 Demonstrate spacing for both leader and equine during exit/enter of stall or paddock
 - Open stall or paddock door completely when exiting/entering
- 3.2 Demonstrate appropriate release of equine
- 3.3 Demonstrate method of maintaining visual observation of equine while exiting stall
- 3.4 Close gate to paddock or stall door only if center/situation requires it
- 3.5 Leader leaves stall before or with the equine
- 3.6 Turn equine toward the front of stall/paddock prior to release
- 3.7 Security while releasing the equine, gate or stall door closed prior to release/catch

4.0 Leading

- 4.1 Demonstrate method of holding lead with both hands (unless praising or cueing equine)
- 4.2 Demonstrate method of holding lead in a folded or figure 8 manner
- 4.3 Demonstrate correct position of leader at halt, walk and turn
- 4.4 Demonstrate proper hand placement on lead rope, not grabbing buckle of lead rope or halter
- 4.5 Rhythm of active walk is maintained throughout testing and in serpentine
- 4.6 Demonstrate smooth, timely transitions

- 4.7 Demonstrate wide, smooth turns
- 4.8 Leader does not contribute to horse stress level (throwing head up, pulling up)
- 4.9 Leader promotes straightness of equine when backing up
- 4.10 Equine's head is not bent or being pulled toward the leader
- 4.11 Organization, effective use of aids and body position shown during ¼ turn in box
- 4.12 Demonstrate correct position leading over cavaletti

5.0 Aids

- 5.1 Demonstrate use of clear voice aids with different inflection for upward and downward transitions
- 5.2 Demonstrate tone of voice that influences equine
- 5.3 Demonstrate ability to read equine's mood and respond
- 5.4 Demonstrate body language according to equine behavior
- 5.5 Walk with eyes forward and head up except when going over poles or cavaletti
- 5.6 Demonstrate use of aids: voice, body and energy sticks
- 5.7 Demonstrate use of touch aid when appropriate
- 5.8 Demonstration of praise/appreciation for work done by equine

6.0 Safety

- 6.1 Close gate when entering working ring/arena
- 6.2 Overall safety
- 6.3 Planned carefully and conducted test safely

7.0 Automatic Failures

- 7.1 Abrupt or rough handling of equine
- 7.2 Lead rope allowed to drag on the ground
- 7.3 Lead rope draped over shoulder
- 7.4 Lead rope tightly wrapped around hand
- 7.5 Halter put on backwards or incorrectly positioned on equine
- 7.6 Failure to close gate when entering working ring/arena
- 7.7 Consistently dropping lead rope
- 7.8 Kneeling on the ground
- 7.9 Approaching equine from blind spot



PATH Intl. Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning (ESMHL) VIRTUAL SKILLS TEST VIDEO SPECIFICATIONS

- ☐ The video is clearly visible and one continuous recording (not edited) and is no longer than 15 minutes
 - ☐ The audio is clearly audible throughout video
 - ☐ Video includes introduction of candidate and equine
 - ☐ Video includes reflection questions from candidate
 - ☐ Candidate's face is clearly visible during self-introduction and at several points during the demonstration, to include adequate lighting during stall work
 - ☐ Photocopy of candidate's driver's license or other photo ID has been uploaded with the video to the secure PATH Intl. Dropbox
 - ☐ Haltering of equine is shown
 - ☐ Returning equine to stall or turnout is shown
 - ☐ The working area meets the requirements listed in the current PATH Intl. Standards for Certification and Accreditation manual
 - ☐ All gates are securely closed during the demonstration
 - ☐ All elements of the test pattern are demonstrated in sequence as outlined in this handbook
 - ☐ Test pattern has been set up according to specifications as outlined in this handbook*
 - ☐ Candidate has completed all parts (including checkboxes) of BOTH the "Participant Filming Release" and "Participant Waiver and Release of Liability" forms
- * While exact equipment is not required, pattern must be set up according to the specifications and dimensions outlined in this handbook. For example, candidate may choose to replace cones with bending poles when appropriate. Please be advised that the candidate accepts any consequences from deviating from the outlined equipment.



PATH Intl. Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning (ESMHL) VIRTUAL SKILLS TEST REVIEW QUESTIONS

Please take a moment to answer the questions, on camera, before filming is concluded. Candidates should engage thoughtfully with the questions, there is no "right or wrong" answer. Videos submitted without reflection questions will be considered an incomplete submission and candidates may be asked to complete and submit a new video.

- ☐ What did you learn about the equine you partnered with?
- ☐ How was partnership displayed and how did you develop that partnership?
- ☐ What went well? What would you do differently?



PATH Intl. Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning (ESMHL) VIRTUAL SKILLS TEST FILMING TIPS

- ☐ Be sure audio is clear and able to be assessed
 - An external microphone may be helpful
- ☐ Faculty may only score what is seen and heard on video.
- ☐ Ensure lighting in stalls/barn area is sufficient so that components here are easily visible
- ☐ Minimize outside noise and distractions
- ☐ Clients/participants should be not visible/audible
- ☐ Only those with video release should be seen
- ☐ Individual filming should be familiar with rubric and utilize zoom function
- ☐ Provides clear visual and audio for all aides
- ☐ Be aware of any glare from windows



PATH Intl. Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning (ESMHL) VIDEO UPLOAD INSTRUCTIONS

To submit the horsemanship skills test video, applicants must take the following steps:

1. **Title their video file with:**

- Last name
- Date of submission using two digits for both the month and day and four digits for the year
- Periods to separate the month, day and year
- File type (i.e., video file format)
- No spaces between any of the items

For example: Sam Smith's video submitted on January 3, 2020 would be titled: Smith01.03.2020.mp4

NOTE: Videos that are not titled using the above convention may not be connected to the correction application, resulting in the application being recorded as incomplete

2. **Title the copy of the photo ID using the same naming convention as described above.**

For example: A JPEG of Sam Smith's photo ID submitted on January 3, 2020 would be titled: Smith01.03.2020.jpg

NOTE: Copies of photo IDs that are not titled using the above convention may not be connected to the correction application, resulting in the application being recorded as incomplete.

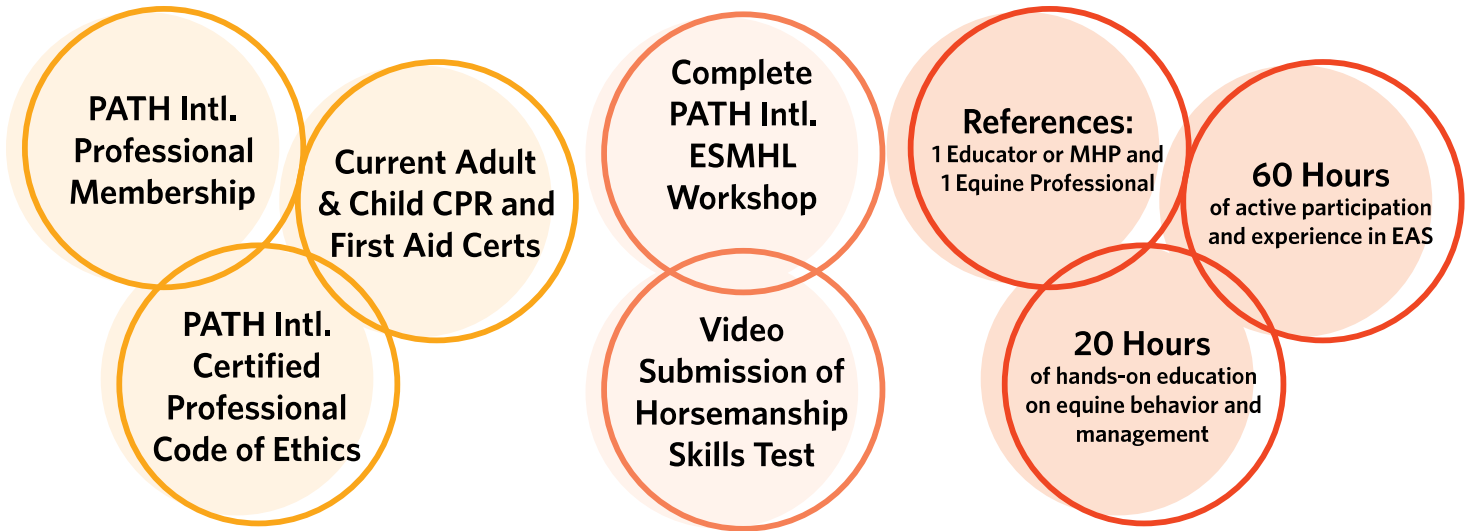
3. **Upload both files to the secure PATH Intl.**

Dropbox at <https://www.dropbox.com/request/3dhpQUexqNds2RigPjjm> by following the steps provided by Dropbox.

The video should be uploaded at the same time the portfolio is submitted—regardless of whether the application is submitted online, via email or by mail. All videos and photo IDs must be uploaded to the secure PATH Intl. Dropbox. Emailed videos and photo IDs will be immediately deleted for security purposes.

- * In event that a candidate's horsemanship skills test video does not meet requirements there is a **\$100 resubmission fee.**

PORTFOLIO COMPONENTS



PROOF OF POSSESSION

PROOF OF COMPLETION

FIELD EXPERIENCE

PORTFOLIO SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Please do not submit your portfolio to PATH Intl. until you have attended the PATH Intl. Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning workshop and gathered all items listed below.

Incomplete portfolios and/or illegible forms will not be accepted. Subsequent submissions may be subject to additional portfolio fees being assessed.

PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENTS

- 1 A copy of **current PATH Intl. Professional Level (or above) membership card**. Your membership must be up-to-date and active on the date you submit your portfolio.
- 2 A copy of **current adult and child CPR and standard first-aid certifications**. These certifications should have been earned via a reputable organization. Online certification courses are acceptable.
- 3 Signed copy of the **PATH Intl. Certified Professional Code of Ethics**. All certification candidates must agree to abide by the PATH Intl. Certified Professional Code of Ethics to earn and maintain PATH Intl. certification. See pages 15-17.
- 4 Proof of completion of a **PATH Intl. Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning Workshop**. A copy of your workshop certificate of completion should be provided. *Note: that each certificate of completion is valid for two years.* If you possess a certificate that will be more than two years old on the date you submit your portfolio, you must request an extension prior to the expiration date, or the workshop will need to be repeated so that a valid certificate can be provided.
- 5 Video Submission of **Horsemanship Skills Test Video**. Please see submission details in this handbook.

- 6 **Two completed reference forms** from professionals in the field who have **directly observed and supervised** you in a professional setting (see enclosed forms), one from each:
- a. **An educator¹ OR a licensed mental health professional** (psychologist, psychiatrist, LCSW, LPC, LCPC, LPCC, LMHC, etc.)
Ensure this reference fills out the reference form and answers the questions.
 - i. For the purposes of this requirement, an educator is defined as a professional competent in teaching and instruction who possesses at least one of the following:
 1. A teaching license
 2. A degree (bachelor or higher) in education
 3. A paid position as an educator at a higher education institution
 - ii. For the purposes of this requirement, a Mental Health professional is defined as someone who has a current license to provide mental health services.
 - iii. A certification or degree in equine care, management, etc.
 1. A minimum of 600 hours of successful employment as an equine/barn manager, equine/barn assistant, etc.
 - b. **An equine professional²**
- 7 Total of **80 clock hours of relevant education/training** and experience comprised of:
- a. **20 clock hours hands-on** education on equine behavior and/or management with a maximum of 10 hours at any single event or training. ***All hours reported must consist of active learning of equine behavior and management concepts from a reputable source, courses in which you are the teacher or assistant teacher will not suffice for this requirement.*** The expectation for this requirement is that each activity is designed to accomplish specific learning objectives related to equine behavior and/or senses, equine management and/or best practices in handling and care of equines. ***Hours must be active learning of equine behavior and management concepts from a reputable source.***
 - Video or webinar-based education may be counted ***only if supplemented by a comprehension assessment or a hands-on component/activity.***
 - General day-to-day equine care and/or equine ownership does not count.
 - b. **60 total clock hours** of active participation and experience in equine-assisted services (EAS) sessions and direct interaction with people with disabilities. These must be accomplished via one of the three options below.
 - OPTION 1**
60 clock hours working or volunteering at a PATH Intl. center and/or under the supervision of a PATH Intl. Certified Professional offering psychotherapy incorporating equines or equine-assisted learning programs. The candidate must have actively participated in every session/activity documented. Only Equine-Assisted Learning and/or psychotherapy incorporating equines sessions will count toward option 1.
 - OPTION 2**
30 clock hours working or volunteering in a PATH Intl. program offering equine-assisted services (i.e. therapeutic riding, driving, interactive vaulting, equine-assisted learning, therapy incorporating equines, etc..) at a PATH Intl. center and/or under the supervision of a PATH Intl. Certified professional **AND 30 clock hours in the mental health or special education field interacting with individuals with disabilities.** The candidate must have actively participated in every session/activity documented. Hours can be paid or volunteer.
 - OPTION 3**
30 clock hours working or volunteering at a PATH Intl. center and/ or under the supervision of a PATH Intl. Certified Professional offering psychotherapy incorporating equines or equine-assisted learning programs. The candidate must have actively participated in every session/activity documented. Only Equine-Assisted Learning and/or psychotherapy incorporating equines sessions will count towards these hours. **AND 30 clock hours working or volunteering at a PATH Intl. Center and/or under the supervision of a PATH Intl. Certified Professional offering therapeutic riding lessons.**
- 8 **PATH Intl. Image Release Form**

Please note: It is the responsibility of each applicant to request documentation verifying the center and/or PATH Intl. Professional they are working with holds a valid and current membership and/or certification with PATH Intl. – please contact our office with questions.

ADDITIONAL PARAMETERS FOR EDUCATION/EXPERIENCE HOURS

- **Equine-assisted services and certified professionals that candidates are involved with, must demonstrate safe, professional and ethical practices as evidenced by adherence to applicable PATH Intl. Standards and the PATH Intl. Certified Professional Code of Ethics.**
- Hours cannot include time spent interacting with individuals to whom the candidate is related.
- Hours may be accumulated at any time in your career.
- Hours must consist of active participation in the sessions/activities, observation does not count.
- Time spent reviewing participant/client files, preparing lesson plans and/or preparing equines for sessions/activities does not count.
- Candidates **may not** count hours from their attendance at an ESMHL workshop. .

ACCEPTABLE ACTIVITIES FOR EQUINE EDUCATION HOURS

- Participation in trainings, clinics, workshops with learning goals related to promoting healthy equine behavior
- Participation in trainings, clinics, workshops with learning goals related to proper care of equines
- Training/orientation to serve as a paid employee caring for equines
- Educational presentations supplemented by a comprehension assessment or a hands-on component/ activity to apply concepts presented (virtual discussion or breakout groups can be counted; simple Q&A sessions cannot be counted)
- Coursework at a higher education institution
- Serving as an official assistant to a veterinarian
- Exercising equines
- Observing veterinary visits/services
- Observing farrier services
- Veterinary care of personal equines
- Shoeing of personal equines
- Boarding equines/conducting boarding services

ACCEPTABLE ACTIVITIES FOR EAS EXPERIENCE HOURS

- Participation in EAS sessions/lessons at a PATH Intl. center or under the supervision of a PATH Intl. Certified Professional.
- Instruction of EAS sessions/lessons at a PATH Intl. center.
- Serving in a role supporting multiple individuals in a mental health facility/program, group home, veteran's rehabilitation program, youth at risk program, etc.
- Serving as a teacher or teacher's aide in a special education classroom setting.
- More than 10 hours of one-on-one caretaking of an individual with disabilities.

UNACCEPTABLE ACTIVITIES FOR EAS EXPERIENCE HOURS

- Observation of EAS sessions/lessons without direct participation.
- Participation in center events (such as fundraisers, exhibitions, open houses, etc.) that do not involve direct participation in EAS.
- Participation in or instruction of EAS sessions/lessons NOT at a PATH Intl. center or NOT under the supervision of a PATH Intl. Certified Professional.

FINAL STEP: ONLINE EXAM

Upon approval of your portfolio and horsemanship skills video, PATH Intl. will enroll you for the PATH Intl. Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning online exam. Access information for this exam will be delivered via email. **You have 60 days to complete this online exam. Retakes must be purchased in the event of a non-passing score or exam expiration.** Allow **45 business days** from the date both exams are completed, to receive your official ESMHL certificate.



APPLICATION 2026

CANDIDATE FILMING RELEASE

I hereby consent to and authorize this video record of me participating in the horsemanship skills test as part of the application for Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.) ESMHL certification.

Furthermore, I consent to PATH I consent to PATH Intl. distributing any video images of me to individuals authorized to review ESMHL applications.

BY CHECKING THE BOX BELOW, I ACKNOWLEDGE AND AGREE THAT I HAVE READ THIS RELEASE AND FULLY UNDERSTAND ITS CONTENTS. I SIGN IT OF MY OWN FREE WILL.

➡ I Agree ☐

Print Applicant's Name: _____

Please check one (optional): I ☐ DO or ☐ DO NOT authorize PATH Intl. to use my video for training and quality assurance of PATH Intl. Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning application reviewers.

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

CANDIDATE WAIVER AND RELEASE OF LIABILITY AGREEMENT

In consideration of participation in equine assisted services activities as part of my application for PATH Intl. ESMHL certification, I hereby understand and agree to this release of liability, waiver of legal rights, and assumption of risk and to the terms hereof as follows:

1. I acknowledge that horseback riding involves activities and that such activities are subject to mishap and even injury to participants. I expressly voluntarily assume all risk I may sustain while participating in horseback riding activities whether or not caused by the negligence of the released party.
2. I take full responsibility for, release and hold harmless PATH Intl., its directors, officers, employees, and agents ("Released Parties") from any and all liability, claims, or causes of action that I may hereafter have for injuries or damages arising out of my participation in horseback riding activities as part of my application for PATH Intl. ESMHL certification. I further agree that I will not sue or make claim against the Released Parties for damages or other losses sustained as a result of my participation in horseback riding activities. I also agree to indemnify and hold the Released Parties harmless from all claims, judgments and costs including attorney's fees, incurred in connection with any action brought as a result of participation in horseback riding activities by any of the undersigned.

BY CHECKING THE BOX BELOW, I ACKNOWLEDGE AND AGREE THAT I HAVE READ THIS RELEASE OF LIABILITY, WAIVER OF LEGAL RIGHTS AND ASSUMPTION OF RISK AND FULLY UNDERSTAND ITS CONTENTS. I SIGN IT OF MY OWN FREE WILL.

➡ I Agree ☐

Print Applicant's Name: _____

Applicant's Signature: _____

Date: _____



PORTFOLIO SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

Please type or print clearly in ink. Please use the form provided.

Candidate Name: _____ Candidate Last Name: _____

PATH Intl. Member ID # _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

I hereby affirm that:

- ☐ I am 21 years of age or older
- ☐ My PATH Intl. Professional Level Membership is current
- ☐ I have completed and included all requirements for my portfolio:
For my 60 EAS experience hours, I am selecting: ☐ Option 1 ☐ Option 2 ☐ Option 3
- ☐ I completed the PATH Intl. Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning workshop on (date and location):

- ☐ My video submission has been made for my horsemanship skills test
- ☐ I have taken the PATH Intl. Standards Course and Exam since purchasing my ESMHL Application (or within the last year)

I have watched the online EFMHA History and Standards Video

I am ready to take the online PATH Intl. Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning exam

I understand that BOTH the PATH Intl. Standards and online PATH Intl. Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning exams must be completed with passing scores before certification will be granted.

- ☐ Signed code of ethics
- ☐ I am ready to take the online PATH Intl. Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning exam
- ☐ Two completed reference forms (Educator or Mental Health Professional and Equine Professional)
- ☐ Completed and signed participant waiver
- ☐ Completed and signed release of liability form

Date: _____

Candidate (print name)

NOTE: Portfolio may be submitted as a hardcopy via mail or scanned and emailed to esmhlportfolio@pathintl.org. Email is preferred.

INCOMPLETE PORTFOLIOS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. SUBSEQUENT SUBMISSIONS WILL BE SUBJECT TO ADDITIONAL FEES.



PATH Intl. Certified Professional Code of Ethics

- *Approved by PATH Intl. Board of Trustees October 21, 2010. Edited name change to PATH Intl. July 2011*
- *Revisions by the PATH Intl. Credentialing Council November 11, 2017, Implemented July 1, 2019*

Preamble

The PATH Intl. Certified Professional Code of Ethics sets forth ethical principles for all PATH Intl. certified persons.

The practice and preservation of the highest standards of ethical principles and integrity are vital for the responsible implementation of obligations, activities and services provided by PATH Intl. certified persons. All certified persons are responsible for maintaining and promoting these ethical practices. The code of ethics is intended to be used as a guide for promoting and maintaining the highest standards of ethical practice, personal behavior and professional integrity of certified persons.

The guidelines expressed in the code are not to be considered all-inclusive of situations that could evolve under a specific principle, nor is the failure to specify any particular responsibility or practice a denial of the existence of such responsibilities or practices. The guidelines are specific statements of minimally acceptable conduct or of prohibitions applicable to all certified persons.

In recognition of the responsibility inherent in the delivery of services provided by equine-assisted activities and therapies, PATH Intl. asks all certified persons to subscribe to the following to the extent permitted by law:

Principle 1

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

Guidelines:

- 1.1 The certified person shall be responsive to, and mutually supportive of, the individuals served, including families, colleagues and associates.
- 1.2 The certified person shall respect the unique nature of each individual and shall be tolerant of, and responsive to, differences. The certified person shall not discriminate based on age, gender, race, nationality, religion, ethnicity, social or economic status, sexual orientation, health condition or disability.
- 1.3 The certified person shall follow equal employment opportunity practices in hiring, assigning, promoting, discharging and compensating staff.
- 1.4 The certified person shall maintain in professional confidence participant, volunteer and staff information, observations or evaluations and shall adhere to all legal requirements.
- 1.5 The certified person, in community settings, shall use caution in forming dual or multiple relationships with participants or former participants where there is a risk of a conflict of interest. The certified person, in clinical treatment settings, shall avoid dual relationships when possible. In situations where dual relationships are unavoidable, the certified person shall be responsible for setting clear, appropriate and sensitive boundaries.
- 1.6 The certified person will understand the sensitive nature of physical touch and use it with caution.

Principle 2

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

Guidelines:

- 2.1 The certified person shall accurately represent his/her level of expertise, experience, education and actual practice and provide service only to those individuals he/she can competently serve. The certified person shall engage in sound business, employment and administrative practices.
- 2.2 The certified person shall maintain certification by complying with all recertification requirements.
- 2.3 The certified person shall recognize and take appropriate action to remedy personal problems and limitations that might cause harm to recipients of service, colleagues or others.

- 2.4 The certified person shall demonstrate objectivity and fairness by interacting with individuals in an impartial manner.
- 2.5 The certified person shall accept responsibility for the exercise of sound judgment when interacting with individuals and animals.
- 2.6 The certified person shall demonstrate openness to, and respect for, other colleagues and professionals.

Principle 3

The certified person shall respect the integrity and well-being of program equines and animals whether owned, leased or borrowed.

Guidelines:

- 3.1 The certified person shall recognize and respect the individual character, nature and physical attributes of each program equine.
- 3.2 The certified person shall encourage safe and respectful human and equine interactions, placing equines in activities suited to their temperament and physical ability.
- 3.3 The certified person shall support the highest standard of care, maintenance and selection for each program equine, understanding and responding to the equine's need for socialization, play, turnout, time off and retirement.
- 3.4 When equines are borrowed or leased, the same high standards of equine respect, care and maintenance shall apply.
- 3.5 The certified person shall cultivate a barn and practice environment that supports personal and professional development and provides a safe environment for persons and equines.

Principle 4

The certified person shall be truthful and fair in representing him- or herself and others.

Guidelines:

- 4.1 The certified person shall be responsible for providing each participant with accurate information regarding programs, services, professional training and credentials, as well as possible benefits, outcomes, expected activities, risks and limitations of the service or program.
- 4.2 The certified person shall use the certification logo and certification marks only in an authorized and approved manner.

Principle 5

The certified person shall seek to expand his/her knowledge base related to the field of equine-assisted activities and therapies.

Guidelines:

- 5.1 The certified person shall maintain the competence requirement by meeting certification renewal requirements (recertification).

Principle 6

The certified person shall honor all financial commitments to participants, personnel, vendors, donors, the certification entity and others.

Guidelines:

- 6.1 The certified person shall negotiate and clarify the fee structure and payment policy prior to the initiation of service, and charge in a responsible and reasonable manner.
- 6.2 The certified person shall not misrepresent in any fashion services rendered or products dispensed.
- 6.3 Certified persons shall remain in good standing with the annual compliance process for certification.

Principle 7

The certified person shall abide by all applicable PATH Intl. standards and guidelines and all state, local and federal laws.

Principle 8

The certified person shall protect participants, equines, the public and the profession from unethical, incompetent or illegal practice.

Guidelines:

- 8.1 The certified person accepts the responsibility to report suspect violations of the code of ethics to the PATH Intl. Credentialing Council.



I have read, fully understand and will uphold the PATH Intl. Certified Professional Code of Ethics at all times. Furthermore, I understand that failure to abide by the code of ethics could result in disciplinary proceedings. BY CHECKING THE BOX BELOW, I ACKNOWLEDGE AND AGREE THAT I HAVE READ THIS CODE OF ETHICS AND FULLY UNDERSTAND ITS CONTENTS. I SIGN IT OF MY OWN FREE WILL.

Agree ☐

Printed Name _____

PATH Intl. ID # _____

Signature _____ Date _____



REFERENCE

EDUCATOR OR MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL*

Please type or print clearly in ink.

Candidate Name: _____ PATH Intl. Member ID # _____

The above-named person is a candidate for certification as a PATH Intl. Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning. The equine specialist should be competent to partner with an educator or licensed mental health professional in providing equine services to students in experiential education or to clients in mental health sessions. In preparation for this service, candidates are required to work at least 60 hours in a mental health session incorporating equines or equine-assisted learning program, or 30 hours in a mental health/educational setting and 30 hours in a program offering equine-assisted services (e.g., therapeutic riding program) or 30 hours in a mental health session incorporating equines or equine-assisted learning program, AND 30 hours of Therapeutic Riding sessions. You are being asked to attest to the candidate's practical experience related to the mental health and/or education component. Please refer to the "PATH Intl. Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning Criteria" to facilitate your assessment.

*See definitions for educator and licensed mental health professional in this handbook to ensure adequate qualifications are held.

REFERENCE (MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL OR EDUCATOR):

Name: _____ Program: _____

Credentials: _____ Position: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Work Experience: I hereby attest that the above named candidate worked for a total of _____ hours in a program that provides:

Counseling, psychotherapy or learning incorporating equines _____

OR

Describe mental health or educational service:

Please answer the following on an attached sheet:

1. How long and in what connections have you known the candidate?
2. Evaluate the candidate's performance in your program in regard to understanding client need, providing program services, integrating with other staff, etc.
3. Please assess the candidate's maturity, emotional stability, sensitivity, resourcefulness, professionalism, judgment and awareness of the well-being of others when working with special populations.

Reference continued on next page.

Please rate the candidate relative to others whom you have known in the same field in recent years:

COMPETENCY	MASTERED	STRONG	BUILDING	LACKING
Ability to maintain a safe and therapeutic environment				
Ability to relate to clients/ students				
Ability to relate to other professionals and collaborate as part of a team				
Ability to analyze a problem and formulate a solution				
Ability to partner with professional educators OR Ability to partner with mental health professionals				
Works within defined role and within skill level				
Oral communication skills				
Written communication skills				
Maturity				
Self-awareness				
Professionalism				
Knowledge of and adherence to PATH Intl. Code of Ethics				

Date _____

Signature of Reference



REFERENCE

EQUINE PROFESSIONAL*

Please type or print clearly in ink.

Candidate Name: _____ PATH Intl. Member ID # _____

To the reference: The above-named person is a candidate for certification as a PATH Intl. Equine Specialist in the ESMHL is primarily responsible. One of the criteria for this certification is comprehensive experience with equines. The Mental Health and Learning Equine Specialist is primarily responsible for ensuring the safety of the participants and the health of the equine involved with mental health clients. You should have been provided with a copy of the "PATH Intl. Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning Criteria" to facilitate your assessment of this candidate.

*See definition of equine professional in this handbook to ensure adequate qualifications are held. Equine Professional Information.

REFERENCE (EQUINE PROFESSIONAL):

Name: _____ Are you a PATH Intl. Certified Instructor? YES ☐ NO ☐

Program: _____ Position: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Equestrian Credentials/Certification: _____

By my signature below, I am certifying that the candidate has experience and demonstrated competence in, at minimum, the following horsemanship skills. Additionally, the candidate has the ability to train others in the performance of these skills.

- Demonstrates knowledge of the characteristics and senses of the equine.
- Demonstrates knowledge of feed requirements of equines.
- Demonstrates knowledge of stable management, maintaining cleanliness, safety and health for the equine.
- Can recognize common equine health problems and unsoundness.
- Can recognize common stable vices.
- Can competently apply basic equine first aid.
- Can approach, catch and halter an equine safely.
- Can properly fit a helmet.
- Can lead, turn and back an equine safely.
- Can lead an equine in to and out of a stall.
- Understands and demonstrates proper attire for equine activities.
- Can tie an equine at appropriate level and length, with a quick release knot.
- Can competently groom an equine, including picking up and cleaning the feet.
- Can lead an equine at a walk and trot.
- Can lunge an equine at a walk, trot and canter, in both directions.
- Follows safety procedure when turning equine loose.
- Additionally, the candidate is suitable for work with participants who may have mental health issues.
- The candidate has demonstrated common sense, professionalism, cooperation, ethics and the ability to teach others.

I, _____ confirm that _____
Reference (print name) *Candidate (print name)*

has ample experience to demonstrate competence in horsemanship, the ability to work with others and a history of safe equestrian practices.

Signature of Reference Date: _____ *Signature of Candidate* Date: _____



(Minimum of 60 hours)



(Minimum of 60 hours)

26



(Minimum of 60 hours)

27



General day-to-day equine care and/or personal equine ownership cannot be counted.

ESMHL workshop hours do not count towards this requirement.

Phone: Day _____ Phone: Evening _____ Email: _____ .

*Please provide specific dates if possible. General date ranges are not accepted.

I do hereby affirm that the information and documentation of hours recorded above is accurate and factual.

Signature of Candidate