



INSIDE

Therapeutic Riding

Thanks from a Parent

Coping with Emotions

and More

**Massachusetts
Early Intervention
Consortium**

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From Your Board

As we look back on FY'05, the Board's emphasis on recruitment and retention has taken many forms. Mary Anne Mulligan, our legislative advocate from Governmental Strategies continues to work diligently with the legislators on behalf of the provider community. Our spring Director's Forum at the Hoagland Pincus Center focused on the preliminary data from the MEIC Survey, analyzed by the Fiscal Issues Study Group (FISG). Issues discussed related to a shortage of available professionals - especially speech and language pathologists, competition with schools and hospitals, and the reality of hiring increasing numbers of part time/fee for service staff. Also noted, were increases in caseload size which decreased time for service coordination and increased productivity demands. Staff for billing has increased in response to insurance and Medicaid billing, collecting the annual fee, and the increased need for fiscal accountability.

Looking ahead, the Board has several vacancies and would welcome new participants for FY'06. If interested in either nominating some one or recommending yourself, please contact sandylevine@rcn.com. Regional conferences supported by the Consortium throughout the year have been very successful. The state-wide Conference, Child's Play, will take place this month. Please mark your calendars for Friday, September 30th for a Director's Forum at Tower Hill in Boylston. We are hoping to offer some fun activities in addition to the usual informational emphasis.

*Respectfully Submitted: Sandy Levine,
Vice-President – ITA /MEIC*

Therapeutic Horseback Riding



Therapeutic horseback riding dates back to ancient Greece. It was used to rehabilitate their warriors. The term “hippo therapy” is derived from Greek word “hippo,” meaning horse. We have three goals for our students. The first goal is to improve the student’s balance, strength/endurance, coordination, language and/or cognitive skills. The second goal is to build self confidence/esteem and give the students a sense of control they might not get a chance to experience off the horse. And the third goal is to teach the student to ride and care for a horse at their level of ability.

Signing up is very easy:

1. Call (978) 448-6200.
2. Entrance will be first come. Space is limited.
3. You will be sent an application form to be completed by the student’s parent/guardian and a signed medical release form, completed by the student’s doctor.
4. A licensed Therapist and Certified Riding Instructor will evaluate all new riders. At this time, the riders will be placed into an appropriate class based on his/her ability and/or safety.

Structure of the group

A Licensed Therapist and Certified Riding Instructor will evaluate all new riders. At this time, the riders will be placed into an appropriate level based on his/her ability and/or safety. Rider’s ability and level will be reassessed at the end of a six-week session. The level’s are as follows:

1. Level 5: Horse Handler, 2 Side Walkers
2. Level 4: Horse Handler, 1 Side Walker
3. Level 3: Horse Handler
4. Level 2: Independent with support
5. Level 1: Independent

The above levels are the same levels used in the Special Olympics. If a rider decides to participate in the Special Olympics they will be familiar with the rules within their level. (*Applicable fee may apply*). The groups (*no more than 3 riders*) will be a half hour in length. The lessons include the rider preparing the horse/pony for riding (*i.e. brushing and putting*

on the saddle) and returning the horse/pony to the stall. The level of participation of the rider will depend on his/her physical/cognitive limitations. All lessons will be done in an indoor arena. Please dress for the outdoor temperatures. All riders **MUST** wear a certified riding horse helmet (*no bike helmets*). Helmets are available at the farm. There will be no exceptions. If this is a problem due to sensory issues, please let them know and they will work with you to help the rider tolerate the helmet. While on the horse/pony the riders will work on balance, range of motion, social skills, receptive and expressive language, cognitive, gross and fine motor skills and confidence. During the lesson, the areas to be addressed vary from rider to rider depending on his/her ability. At the end of the session, the riders will assist at his/her level in removing all the equipment, brushing the horse/pony and returning the horse/pony to the stall.

Staff

There will be licensed Occupational Therapists, Special Education Teacher/Developmental Specialist, and Certified Riding instructors working with the rider. All the staff hold current licenses in the state of Massachusetts.

Support Staff

The Horse Handlers (*leading the horse*) and Side Walkers will be provided. The Horse Handlers will assist the therapist and rider in preparing the horse/pony for riding. The Horse Handlers are also responsible to make sure the horse/pony carries out the request of the rider and/or therapist/instructor. Parent(s)/guardian and family members are encouraged to participate in all aspects of the lesson, but it is not required.

Fees and Sessions

The evaluation fee will be due at the time of the evaluation. Call for fee schedule and session dates (which run from May through November) at (978) 448-6200.