Equine-Assisted Activities: Increasing Participation and Quality of Life for Individuals with Disabilities

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Equine-Assisted Activities: Increasing Participation and Quality of Life for Individuals with Disabilities

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Expert Mentor: Lindsey Wood, CTRS

Mission:
To provide children and youth with disabilities the opportunity to grow and develop through therapeutic, educational and recreational activities with horses.

Vision:
Saddle Up! seeks to be an essential community partner, enriching the lives of children with disabilities through constantly improving the excellence and accessibility of the highest quality equine-assisted activities.

Identified Needs

- Communication tool to supplement equine-assisted therapy services for children who are non-verbal or experience other communication barriers
  - 100% of instructors and therapists surveyed stated they interact with individuals who struggle with communication
- Recent, relevant research regarding impacts of equine-assisted activities on facility’s populations
- Modifications to facility’s therapy room in order to allow for increased accessibility for participants and access to materials for intentional therapist use

Communication Tool

“Joy comes from all when one can communicate. It allows a stronger probability of connecting with nonverbal riders. They will feel more empowered which will transfer to their riding skills.”

Survey Findings

Literature Review Infographic

- Develop a communication tool for equine-assisted therapy sessions to promote an active participant role in sessions and ability to communicate wants and needs
- Distribute literature review findings to families regarding the impact of equine-assisted activities on global health and quality of life of individuals with disabilities served by the facility
- Apply knowledge on ADA accessibility to expand accessibility within therapy room for individuals using mobility devices, therefore increasing participant independence within all aspects of sessions

Outcomes

- Increased knowledge of the operations of a large non-profit organization
- Designed, conducted, and collected data through a survey to determine facility needs
- Developed a hands-free mounted communication tool organized by categories for use during equine-assisted therapeutic riding sessions
- Infographic summarizing research findings of equine-assisted activity benefits on participants’ health distributed to families of participants
- Reimagined therapy room with open floor plan and decreased visual stimuli for participants with physical and cognitive impairments

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