

# Hippotherapy as a Treatment Tool in Physical, Occupational, and Speech-Language Therapy

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Fort Collins, Colorado

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"Treatment with the Help of a Horse"

# Hippotherapy Description

- Equine movement as a therapy tool used in conjunction with other therapy tools in a treatment plan to achieve functional outcomes.
- Multidimensional movement of horse can facilitate core postural control and neuro motor systems that support functional skills.
- ✓ Used by PT, OT, and SLP professionals.



# Clarity of Conversation

- Hippotherapy is not a profession nor a separate service.  
*There are no “hippotherapists”.*
- *There is no time when the therapist stops doing PT, OT, or ST and starts doing “Hippotherapy”.*



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**PT, OT and SLP professionals use evidence-based practice and clinical reasoning in the purposeful manipulation of equine movement to engage the sensorimotor and neuromotor systems to create functional change in their patient. Used with other neuromotor and sensorimotor techniques, hippotherapy is one tool used in a patient's integrated plan of care.**

**- AHA, Inc. Best Practice Statement, 2015 -**



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# Population . . . .



- **Age: 2 years\* to Adults**
- **Impairments: mild to severe neurologic, sensory, oral-motor, communication and/or motor deficits**

*\*Children younger than 2 years should be treated by a therapist with AHCB HPCS© (clinical specialist) certification.*

# SCOPE OF PRACTICE

The incorporation of equine movement into treatment (hippotherapy) is considered scope of practice by the:

- American Physical Therapy Association
- American Occupational Therapy Association
- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

***And has been since the mid 1980's....***



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# Research Evidence

- Substantial body of evidence in 52 peer reviewed journals showing hippotherapy/equine movement as effective in promoting function improvement/gains.
- Subject populations include: Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Multiple Sclerosis, Down Syndrome, Postural instability, Spinal Cord Injury, Language-learning Disability, Stroke.
- Detractors include poor consistency in the terminology used.



# States without Exclusions on Equine Movement as a Therapy Tool in PT, OT & ST Services.

- Alaska
- Arkansas
- Florida
- Georgia
- Indiana
- Missouri
- Nevada
- New Mexico
- North Carolina
- South Carolina
- Texas

***These states treat the inclusion of equine movement in therapy as they would any other scope of practice therapy tool/strategy.***

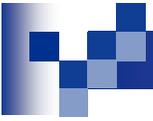
**This list is not a complete review of all 50 states – it is based on information shared by therapists who currently work in these states and have been including equine movement in their therapy plans for their clients.**



# Fee Schedules/Documentation

- The inclusion of equine movement/"hippotherapy" into a physical, occupational and/or speech-language therapy plan falls within *standard fee schedules for those therapy services*.
- Guidelines for meeting medical necessity and accountability for demonstrating positive treatment outcomes are part of a therapist's legal/ethical obligation – *regardless of tools used*.
- This includes: assessments, treatment plans, treatment goals, data collection & treatment notes/reports as per discipline and payer source.





# Reimbursement Codes / CPT

## *AMA Coding Guidelines mandate:*

- ✓ Use of the CPT Code that most accurately describes the clinical reasoning process and the services provided by the therapist.
- ✓ Standard physical medicine codes best reflect what the therapist is doing when equine movement is included in PT, OT and/or ST.



***One More  
Standard  
Therapy Tool for  
the PT, OT or SLP  
to use***



*"Treatment with the Help of a Horse"*