

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE WAITING LIST

Coming off the waiting list is based on a lot of variables that aren't obvious from the outside. It may sometimes look arbitrary, but it's not a matter of favoritism or based on ability to pay. We don't even consider whether or not a child can pay until after we have already offered them a lesson time. But, lack of money is the #1 reason that we can't see more students (see below about resource limitations).

I've tried to list below a few things to keep in mind about how the waiting list works. Let me know if you still have any questions or would like to meet in person to discuss any of what is written below. And, please keep us in your prayers to get the funding we need in order to reduce our waiting list.

The wait list is not linear.

The most complicated part of our waiting list process is that it is not a linear list - like the next open spot going to the next student in line. This is because we have to match student availability with instructor experience and horse availability. We also take into consideration how well we know the student (see below about camps and classes). For example, suppose we have this student:

Name: Bobby

Age: 9

Weight 45 pounds

Diagnosis: mild CP, developmental delay

Lesson: Wednesdays at 3:30

Rides: Waffle - the smallest pony we have

Instructor: Mary - newest instructor we have; been teaching less than one year.

If Bobby decides to stop riding, we can only offer that lesson time to a student weighing less than 60 pounds (Waffle's weight limit). Since Mary is a new instructor, we would not want to give her a very involved student until she's had more experience. So, even if someone has been on the wait list for five years, but weighs 80 pounds they would not be offered that lesson time. Or, we would not offer it to someone with an involved diagnosis that only weighed 30 pounds. Safety is incredibly important to us so we always are careful about making sure the student, instructor, and horse are a good fit together.

Then, to further complicate it, we have to consider the child's unique circumstances. For example, suppose a child is triggered by screaming or crying. So, if we have another student riding on Wednesdays at 3:30 who cries loudly when he dismounts because he doesn't want to leave (transitions are hard), then we wouldn't want to schedule a student triggered by crying at that time because it wouldn't be setting him up for success.

High student retention prevents us from adding many new students.

We usually have 80% - 90% student retention from term to term because, well...our programs are great. This means that we can't add very many new students each term. from the wait list (currently at 150+ children). And, those will be selected based on the time they can come, weight, and safe fit for the instructor (see above about it not being linear) and how well we know them (see below about camp and class attendance).

Camp or class attendance helps us to know the child.

As we are trying to find the best fit for the available lesson time, horse, and instructor, it helps us to know the student if they have attended a previous camp or class. This helps us to know the student so we can make a better choice about matching him or her with the correct horse and instructor. When we do have open lessons, the students who have attended camps or classes are easier to schedule because we have less "guess work" in knowing where they will be a good fit.

The waiting time will be longer for lessons during peak times.

The vast majority of the students on our waiting list can only attend after school or on weekends. Since these are the busiest times, they can expect to have the longest wait times. Students with morning or mid-day availability can generally come off the list sooner.

Resource limitations keep us from serving everyone we want to serve.

All of our instructors and horses are currently working at their max workload. Unless a student leaves (see retention above), the only way we can see more students is to hire another instructor. The process to become a certified therapeutic riding instructor takes at least one year, but usually two years. Even if you wrote a check for us to hire a brand new instructor, I don't know of a single person locally that we could hire. And, we'd also have to get at least two new horses. We can't grow incrementally since all of our resources are already maxed out. We can only grow by a large jump to afford another instructor, two new horses, and another admin staff for scheduling and training the volunteers that would assist the instructor in the lessons. In order for the riding lesson program to grow beyond what we currently serve, we'd need at least an additional \$75,000 each year - in addition to what we already have to raise just to keep doing what we are already doing.