

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Alabama Introduces New Apprenticeable Occupation: Therapeutic Riding Instructor

Birmingham, AL — In a move that continues to broaden the utilization of registered apprenticeship to new industries, Alabama has introduced the Therapeutic Riding Instructor occupation to the list of occupations recognized as apprenticeable. This achievement marks a significant milestone for the state, as it is the first occupation developed in Alabama to gain national recognition for adoption across the country.

The initiative was initially spearheaded by Ms. Kristen Holder in her work with the Alabama Office of Apprenticeship (AOA) in collaboration with The Red Barn, a non-profit organization offering equine assisted services to benefit people with disabilities and special circumstances. Red Barn Executive Director Joy O'Neal and Program Manager Ellen Davis initially defined a detailed skills-based program and then coordinated meetings among their peers around the country to refine the model. The therapeutic riding instructor training model has been met with resounding approval by employers and industry experts across the country. On October 14, 2023, the broad demand for this program and the industry-driven way it was developed led to its approval by the USDOL Office of Apprenticeship for use in any state.

The Therapeutic Riding Instructor apprenticeship program is poised to make a profound impact on the equine assisted services industry. By formalizing the process of becoming a Therapeutic Riding Instructor, this program not only ensures that professionals in this field are well-equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge but also bolsters the overall quality of therapeutic riding services.

Josh Laney, director of the AOA, expressed his enthusiasm for the potential positive outcomes of this apprenticeable occupation. "The introduction of the Therapeutic Riding Instructor apprenticeship program is a testament to Alabama's commitment to fostering excellence in workforce training and expanding the traditional concepts of apprenticeship. We anticipate that this program will significantly elevate the standards of therapeutic riding instruction, benefiting individuals with diverse needs across the nation."

This achievement not only highlights Alabama's dedication to advancing registered apprenticeship opportunities but also underscores the potential for innovation and collaboration in the realm of occupational development. Its success is a great example of how Alabama's industry-driven approach to competency-based education and skills attainment is working to create opportunity for Alabama citizens.

For further information or inquiries regarding the Therapeutic Riding Instructor apprenticeship program, please contact Joy O'Neal at [joy@theredbarn.org](mailto:joy@theredbarn.org) or AOA project manager Tawanna Robinson at [Tawanna.Robinson@commerce.alabama.gov](mailto:Tawanna.Robinson@commerce.alabama.gov).