

Originally sent via email to current TherAplay parents on Monday, January 30, 2023

TherAplay Parents & Caregivers,

Six months ago, Children's TherAplay embarked on bold planning to address current programming gaps that leave several children a day without the movement of a horse as a tool in their therapy session. Using the horse to increase individualized skill development is at the core of our mission here at TherAplay. To provide as many children as possible with therapy that uses the movement of horse as a tool in their treatment plan, Children's TherAplay will be implementing new programming enhancements starting the week of February 6, 2023.

Every fourth week, your child will participate in a Therapeutic Animal Assisted Groundwork (TAAG) session. In a TAAG session your child and his/her therapist will spend one-on-one time purposefully utilizing the horse in the barn or our facility service dog in the clinic to target functional skill acquisition tailored to your child's goals. As a general practice, your child will now be riding three times per month, and participate in a TAAG session one time per month.

Since early in 2020, Children's TherAplay has faced a demand for our services exceeding our organization's capacity. We found we had children in physical, occupational, and speech therapy who had little to no interaction with the horse during their session. This critical programming change will allow 80 more children each week across all three disciplines to access the movement of a horse as a tool in their treatment plan.

We know change like this can bring questions, and we want to walk alongside you to share the incredible therapeutic benefits which exist through our TAAG sessions. Human animal interaction has been shown to increase motivation in therapy, and research studies have shown a measurable decrease in stress, pain, anxiety, and fatigue with the use of animal assisted therapy.

During TAAG sessions, your child will be relationship building with the horse and will receive more engagement with the horse, which improves motivation to work toward their functional goals. TAAG sessions also allow work on functional goals across environments by moving from the clinic to the barn setting.

We will continue to provide updates on the benefits of implementing TAAG sessions and share photos and video of TAAG sessions in action. You can find FAQ's on our website on February 10th.



**What is a TAAG Session?**

Therapeutic Animal Assisted Groundwork (TAAG) sessions involve a child and his/her therapist spending one-on-one time purposefully interacting with the horse or with the facility service dog to target functional skill acquisition **tailored to the child's goals.**

*Human-animal interaction increases intrinsic motivation to complete challenging functional tasks, helping to meet the child's goals.*

TAAG sessions involve skilled PT, OT & ST and may include activities like:

- + Grooming
- + Giving verbal commands
- + Shoveling or raking
- + Braiding hair
- + Head leading a horse
- + Feeding activities

**80** more kiddos **each week** will receive time on the horse as a result of implementing TAAG sessions.

**Questions?**  
Contact Carah Sullenbarger,  
Director of Therapy Services

317-872-4166  
csullenbarger@childrenstheraplay.org

Equine movement is so central to our mission and programming, and this change will ensure we continue moving forward in our pursuit of offering transformational therapy using a horse as a tool to as many children as possible.

Please contact Carah Sullenbarger, Director of Therapy Services, at [csullenbarger@childrenstheraplay.org](mailto:csullenbarger@childrenstheraplay.org) with any questions or concerns.