



## Hippotherapy & Physical Therapy Registration Information

Thank you for your interest in **Easterseals Massachusetts Physical Therapy at The Bridge Center**. The Bridge Center is a fully accessible 22-acre campus offering year-round inclusive recreation and equine-assisted programs including adaptive programs for individuals with disabilities. At this unique facility, Easterseals Massachusetts (ESMA) offers physical therapy (PT) services to a wide variety of clients, ages 2 and up.

While utilizing an evidence-based approach to client care, including the use of hippotherapy in some treatment terms, ESMA provides physical therapy services that focus on helping clients achieve functional goals. When participating in physical therapy at The Bridge Center, sessions are guaranteed to be individualized and fun while working on meeting meaningful outcomes that make a long-lasting impact on quality of life.

Please read through this information packet to learn more about Easterseals Massachusetts Physical Therapy at The Bridge Center, including how to register online for physical therapy services.

For questions or concerns, please email [equestriancenter@eastersealsma.org](mailto:equestriancenter@eastersealsma.org) or call (508) 471-1479.



### Frequently Asked Questions:

#### What makes physical therapy at The Bridge Center unique?

Physical therapy (PT) at The Bridge Center offers a variety of treatment options to meet each client's needs. In addition to the traditional treatment tools that one may encounter in a typical outpatient PT setting, Easterseals Massachusetts (ESMA) also has the unique ability to incorporate equine movement/ hippotherapy (HPOT) and use the natural environment to help clients reach their optimal level of functioning. Individualized treatment sessions are created and planned to ensure an enjoyable, meaningful, and memorable experience. Highly skilled ESMA therapists collaborate with clients and/ or caregivers to create and achieve meaningful therapeutic outcomes in an inclusive, natural, and fun environment.

#### What is hippotherapy?

Hippotherapy is a therapy tool that the ESMA physical therapy team uses in combination with other treatment tools to engage sensory, neuromotor, and cognitive systems to ultimately improve functional outcomes. An equine (horse) provides multidimensional movement that is variable, rhythmic, and repetitive, making it an excellent tool for increasing strength, endurance, motor planning, balance, and coordination. When sitting forward on the equine, a client experiences a walking pattern like a normal human's gait. This similar gait pattern allows the therapist to purposefully use equine movement to reach desired effects. The effects of equine movement on postural control, sensory systems, and motor planning can be used to facilitate coordination and timing, grading of responses, respiratory control, sensory integration skills, and attentional skills.

## What should a client expect during a physical therapy session?

ESMA offers physical therapy services using a combination of therapy tools, including those that incorporate the use of hippotherapy (when medically and clinically appropriate) and those that do not. The goal of ESMA physical therapy is to ensure that all clients are provided with a personalized level of care to meet their functional goals, all while having fun and exploring the natural environment. An individualized plan of care will be established in collaboration with the client and/ or caregiver and will include both goals and expected outcomes. ESMA therapists will regularly reassess goals and revise individual plans of care as clinically appropriate based on individual needs.

When hippotherapy is incorporated into a treatment session, this does guarantee that the full duration of the session will be on the equine. The therapist will use their clinical discretion and judgement to determine the most optimal treatment tools to use during each session. It is considered best practice to incorporate equine-assisted movement with other treatment tools to achieve the most optimal functional outcomes. PT sessions are either 30 or 45 minutes.

## What happens when all therapeutic goals are met?

ESMA physical therapists regularly assess a client's progress during each session. Once a client has met their goals for therapy services and the client, therapist, and/ or caregiver feel the client is ready to be discharged, the client may be referred to adaptive riding lessons. With this transition, participants continue to build on the skills developed and strengthened during physical therapy, while still participating in inclusive equine activities. Visit [bridgecenter.eastersealsma.org](http://bridgecenter.eastersealsma.org) for information about Weekly Riding & Horsemanship lessons.

## What should I wear? Do I need a helmet?

Closed-toe and closed-back shoes, helmets, and long pants are required to participate in equine-assisted activities. Clients must wear an ATSM/ SEI-approved riding helmet. It is highly recommended that clients acquire and bring their own helmets to ensure proper fit. If necessary, helmets are available for onsite use. Dress in comfortable clothing that is weather-appropriate, as therapy sessions will be held outdoors or in the riding arena, which is not heated.

## Is an evaluation required? Is a doctor's referral required?

Yes, all clients must have an ESMA Physical Therapy Evaluation to initiate therapy services at The Bridge Center. This allows the physical therapist, along with the client and/ or caregiver, to develop an appropriate plan of care and goals. A PT evaluation must be scheduled using the below registration process. Once an evaluation is completed, the therapist will provide the client and/ or caregiver with recommendations regarding hippotherapy/ physical therapy.

Massachusetts is considered a "direct access" state, which means a doctor's referral is not required for physical therapy services without the use of equine-assisted activities. However, a healthcare provider's clearance is **required to participate in equine-assisted activities/hippotherapy**. The **Healthcare Provider Form** is located on **CampDoc** (our online registration system) after the client creates a profile and registers for the relevant term.

## Do you accept insurance? What payment methods do you accept?

All payments should be made through the online registration system **CampDoc**. ESMA does not bill insurance companies directly and all clients are responsible for payment at the time of registration, prior to beginning any therapy service. After services are completed and upon request, ESMA can provide a client and/ or caregiver with an itemized receipt.

Please submit all receipt requests to [equestriancenter@eastersealsma.org](mailto:equestriancenter@eastersealsma.org) and one will be provided within 7 business days of request. ESMA cannot guarantee reimbursement through insurance. It is advised that all clients reach out to their insurance company to confirm out-of-network coverage/benefits if looking to receive reimbursement for physical therapy services, as each insurance company handles cash-based practices differently. Suggested questions for a client's insurance company when inquiring about reimbursement are included at the end of this packet.

## ESMA Offers the Following Physical Therapy Services:

- Physical Therapy Evaluation
- Physical Therapy Re-evaluation
- 30-minute Hippotherapy: Physical Therapy Using Equines
- 45-minute Hippotherapy: Physical Therapy Using Equines
- 30-minute Physical Therapy Facility (Without the Use of Equines)

Please visit [bridgecenter.eastersealsma.org](http://bridgecenter.eastersealsma.org) for current costs. Upon request at the time of registration, an estimated summary of charges (i.e., Good Faith Estimate) can be provided to the client and/ or caregiver within 7 business days of receipt. Requests should be submitted to [equestriancenter@eastersealsma.org](mailto:equestriancenter@eastersealsma.org).

## How To Register for Physical Therapy Services:

When you are ready to register, please visit [bridgecenter.eastersealsma.org](http://bridgecenter.eastersealsma.org) to find the Hippotherapy & Physical Therapy webpage under Equestrian Center. There you will find the links to **CampDoc** (our online registration system), our **Healthcare Provider Form**, the **Physical Therapy Intake Form**, and the **Cancellation Policy**.

### Step 1: Sign up and complete a participant profile via CampDoc

- Complete and submit all registration information on **CampDoc**, including the **Healthcare Provider Form**.
- Please note that form submission does not guarantee automatic enrollment and ESMA reserves the right to weigh medical information given against existing precautions and contraindications to confirm enrollment.

### Step 2: Register for a Physical Therapy Evaluation via CampDoc

- Read the **Cancellation Policy**.

### Step 3: Complete the Physical Therapy Intake Form and send it to [equestriancenter@eastersealsma.org](mailto:equestriancenter@eastersealsma.org).

### Step 4: The Equestrian Center Director or designee will contact the client and/ or caregiver within 5 business days of complete registration to schedule the PT evaluation, which will be completed by a physical therapist on the agreed date and time.

- Please note: CampDoc profile must be 100% complete and payment must be received in full prior to the evaluation date; otherwise, the evaluation will need to be rescheduled or cancelled.
- ESMA does not bill insurance companies.
- At the end of the PT evaluation, the physical therapist will advise on which program is recommended for the client based on the results of the evaluation.

### Step 5: To be completed **AFTER** the PT Evaluation and recommendation from the physical therapist: **Register via CampDoc for the recommended program**

- 30-minute Hippotherapy: Physical Therapy using Equines session
- 45-minute Hippotherapy: Physical Therapy using Equines session
- 30-minute Physical Therapy Facility session
- Clients must register and pay for the full term (unless registering mid-term in which your payment will be prorated). **Please note: ESMA does not offer registration week to week.**
- During Hippotherapy: Physical Therapy Using Equines sessions, a variety of treatment strategies are utilized, including activities on and off the horse. The activities completed are based on the therapist's clinical discretion while keeping the client's needs, goals, and safety a priority.

### **Step 6: Confirm the session schedule**

- After registering, an ESMA staff member will contact the client and/ or caregiver within 5 business days to schedule therapy sessions for that term.
- All sessions must be prepaid prior to beginning hippotherapy/ physical therapy treatment terms. If payment is not received, ESMA reserves the right to cancel and/or reschedule the client's sessions.
- ESMA strives to accommodate all individuals' schedules; however, ESMA cannot guarantee time slots. Scheduling is completed on a first-come, first-serve basis, so early registration is recommended to be seen during the most ideal time slot.

### **Step 7: Participate in weekly sessions following the term dates as outlined in CampDoc**

- Sessions do not carry over into the next term and the client must register for each term separately.
- Please be sure to note the term dates and any upcoming terms that are of interest. ESMA tries to maintain consistent schedules for returning clients if registering for consecutive terms.

### **Step 8: Re-evaluations are required bi-annually, if there is a 2-month or more lapse in services, and/ or if there are any significant medical/ physical changes**

- The PT will notify the client and/ or caregiver when it is necessary to register for a re-evaluation.

### **Suggested Questions to Ask Your Insurance Company**

ESMA cannot guarantee reimbursement and payment is the sole responsibility of the client. ESMA advises all clients to reach out to their insurance company to confirm out-of-network coverage/ benefits if looking to receive reimbursement for physical therapy services as each insurance company handles cash-based practices differently.

During a physical therapy evaluation/ treatment session, all or some of the following CPT codes may be used: 97162, 97530, 97112, 97110, 97542, 97763, 97164. Please note the physical therapy professional is not limited to these above codes when completing an evaluation or treatment session.

Here are some suggested questions to ask when inquiring about reimbursement from an insurance company:

- Do I have benefits that cover out-of-network or non-participating providers?
- Does coverage run on a calendar year or plan year? If it runs on plan year, when does it start and end?
- Is there a limit to the number of sessions per plan year and if so, does that include just PT or other therapies? How many sessions have I already used?
  - If Autism diagnosis, is there an exception for the maximum number of sessions and do I have unlimited sessions?
  - What is my deductible? After I meet my deductible, what is my co-pay or coinsurance?
  - Do I need an MD referral or prior authorization?
  - Are any specific services excluded?
- Are there any exclusions to my policy?

Please email [equestriancenter@eastersealsma.org](mailto:equestriancenter@eastersealsma.org) with any additional questions or concerns.