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Equine-assisted Services for Children with Disabilities

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Equine-assisted Services for Children with Disabilities

Sponsor: Tiffani Kisler (Human Development and Family Science)

According to the World Health Organization, about 15% of the world's population lives with some form of disability. Equine-assisted Services (EAS) are an effective-based therapeutic approach for children with disabilities. While there are a number of studies to date addressing the benefits of EAS for all individuals, there are few studies that focus on children with disabilities specifically. This project presents data from an investigation of program directors and instructors of therapeutic equestrian facilities in the northeast United States. Using a 17 question Qualtrics survey, the researcher explored the program directors and instructors' perceptions of the benefits, rewards, and challenges of EAS. Research indicates that the benefits of EAS vary based on the type of disability (physical, mental, and cognitive). Main themes that emerged around the rewards of EAS include goal achievement, community engagement, and the value of working with horses. The challenges included finding funding and finding horses for these programs. Implications for future intervention and research will be discussed.