

Strategies for Creating Inclusive Barn Spaces

Below are tips to help riding facilities create a sense of community and grow inclusive spaces and for barn staff and partners to broaden their inclusivity skillset.

Marketing and Social Media

- Follow local, regional, and national social accounts of varying brands, influencers, and organizations. Contribute to those forums and repost efforts from these accounts as appropriate. Some example accounts include:
 - [The Helmet Queen](#)
 - [Equestrian for Everyone](#)
 - [Cool Ridings](#)
 - [Brianna Noble \(Urban Cowgirl\)](#)
 - [Black Equestrians](#)
 - [Compton Cowboys](#)
 - [Black Reins Magazine](#)
 - [Emma Booth](#)
 - [The United States Para Equestrian Association](#)
 - [Kerrits Official Page](#)
 - [Ever Wood Stables](#)
 - [Riviera Equisports](#)
- Seek community partnerships and opportunities to advertise at locations that attract a diverse clientele (e.g. grocery stores, gyms, schools, camps, places of worship, etc.).
- Consider offering low/no fee sessions that introduce communities to horses, basic horsemanship, and the opportunities offered at your lesson facility.

Signaling and Visibility

- Post a statement of inclusion
 - Publicly hang a [statement of values](#) so that students and family members can easily see it.
- Use inclusive language
 - Look for simple changes that can make a huge difference in folks feeling seen and supported. These adjustments are for everyone, not only those that you may fear offending. Some examples include:
 - *Boys and girls* → *everyone, folks*
 - *Your mom and dad* → *parents/guardians, your parenting adults*
 - *What are you doing for Christmas?* → *What are you doing for winter break?*
 - Watch the [Presentation from the 2020 Annual meeting](#) for other ideas.
- Recognize relevant holidays
 - Acknowledge relevant holidays (e.g. Black History Month, Pride month, National Women's Day, Hispanic Heritage Month, etc.) via social media or in a visible place at the

barn. One easy way to do this is by reposting USHJA elements related to these moments on social media or having a festive statement on the day board.

- Note that some religious holidays have elements of fasting that may impact a student's ability to participate. Talk to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of students or the students themselves, depending on their age, about what accommodations need to be made.
- Recognize sportsmanship and horsemanship regardless of riding ability and age
 - Look for ways to recognize folks for sportsmanship, camaraderie, and horsemanship to elevate and promote behaviors that make the sport inclusive. This could be in a monthly highlight, a conversation with guardians, at a barn or show organization banquet, or another way.
- Embrace body neutrality
 - Riders are athletes who represent a variety of body types and sizes. Refraining from commenting on body size and/or type and acknowledging that riders of all shapes and sizes can be successful is a big step toward people being healthy and safe in their bodies in the horse world.
 - Watch a [webinar discussion on body image in the Hunter/Jumper world](#).

Intervention

- Bust bias and intervene in moments of disrespect. Modeling behaviors that emphasize the importance of inclusion and safety are crucial to creating a welcoming environment.
- Common topics that might require intervention include:
 - Preferred pronouns and terms when addressing Queer identities
 - It is important that these are disclosed by the individuals or their guardians and not assumed.
 - Read [Creating Safe and Inclusive Teams for LGBTQ+ Athletes](#) and [Key Concepts and Terms](#) to learn more.
 - [Reform the Locker Room](#) by The Trevor Project is a free course designed for coaches, parents, or students to support LGBTQ young people and help drive positive sports environments for all.
 - Heritage
 - Background, culture, and food can lead to conversations about differences. Ensure that all parties are respectful and that questions come from a place of curiosity, not exclusion.
 - Accessibility
 - Body image and size

Safety

- Clothing and helmet fit
 - Prioritize safety and kindness over aesthetics when addressing the fit of helmets and riding clothes.

- Dreadlocks or long, thick, or curly hair in a tidy braid or ponytail outside of the helmet may work better with the fit than attempting to put all of a rider's hair in a helmet. It is a legal style, and having a braided style may allow for a safer fit of the helmet.
- Riding clothes are expensive. If it is functional and safe and your opinion is not asked, never comment on brand choice or repetition of outfits.
- Weight and height boundaries for horses and ponies
 - Use veterinarian-recommended standards when determining weight and height boundaries for horses and ponies and follow a consistent and transparent measure.
 - In initial conversations with a new rider, use intake questions to determine which horses would be a best fit for the rider based on the information provided.
 - If there are limitations and you cannot provide a horse to fit an individual, be welcoming and share ways to be involved with horses in other ways (e.g. horsemanship lessons, grooming, groundwork etc.).
- Bilingual signage
 - If you live in an area that is multilingual, aim to have prominent directional and informational signage in both the primary and secondary languages spoken in your region. Bilingual signage should include but is not limited to:
 - Hours of operation
 - Safety protocols both in the barn and in the ring
 - Barn rules and expectations
 - [Google Translate](#) can help with simple translations.

Continued Learning

- It is important for lesson programs to understand the changing landscape of terminology and inclusion and, in particular, how it relates to Gen Z.
- Check out these additional resources about acceptance:
 - [The USHJA Diversity and Inclusion Advocacy Committee Action Plan](#)
 - [USHJA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion webinars](#)
 - Resources from [#weridetgether](#)
 - [Podcasts and book](#) on strategies for diversifying sport
 - [DEI Glossary of Terms](#) (provided by Westover School)

If you have any questions, please email diversity@ushja.org.