



## FAQs about PBJ Connections

### What does PBJ Connections do?

PBJ Connections provides mental health and behavioral therapy for youth and families. A licensed therapist partners with a trained horse professional in therapy sessions. Our treatment program uses horses to help clients with emotional and behavioral growth and learning. Some of our clients present with emotional and behavioral issues and some have mental health diagnoses. In all cases, the horses can help with healing. This model of therapy is called Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP).

### Why is EAP effective?

EAP is facilitated by a licensed mental health professional, or therapist, and a trained horse professional along with one or more horses. Therapy sessions can be done in groups, with individuals, or with families. This type of therapeutic process is classified as *experiential*, meaning it is solution-focused, strengths-focused, and process-focused. When change occurs for the client, it is because they have experienced a difference in themselves, their communication, or their situation. Traditional therapy can do this as well; however, experiential therapy allows the client to experience and process the change instead of just discussing the change.

### Why should I choose PBJ Connections for EAP?

PBJ Connections is a professionally run organization with access to two indoor facilities in two different locations, so our services can be offered year round and regardless of weather. We also have access to a large herd of horses and donkeys with diverse personalities, which enable us to offer the right therapeutic match for each client. Many members of the herd have other jobs and all are supported through resources outside of the program.

PBJ Connections is the largest EAP organization in Central Ohio. With two therapists and five horse professionals we have flexibility in scheduling, as well as diverse facilitator personalities to match with our clients. To keep our image professional and clear, we promote ourselves as a mental health and behavioral health organization that uses horses, which allows us to gain the respect of other mental health workers and organizations in the area.

Because of our diverse funding sources and our careful accounting, we have never had to turn down a client because of lack of funding, and we serve youth and families from all socio-economic levels. We accept funding through the following sources:

- Donations made to our scholarship fund
- Grant funding
- Private pay

- County Departments of Developmental Disabilities: County funding that has already been awarded to a specific client, or state funding that has already been awarded to a specific client through I/O waiver funding. We are eligible for clients who need social work services.
- PASSS Funding, which is county funding awarded through the government for post-adoption treatment.

PBJ Connections is collecting empirical data through the Behavioral Assessment for Children (BASC), which is a tested and respected tool used for behavioral assessment and diagnostics. We also have an independent Board of Directors that has rapidly expanded beyond the founders and the founders' friends. This is important to the organization so that it can be sustainable long into the future.

**What behavioral issues does PBJ Connections address?**

Due to the nature of our programming, we are able to provide services to youth who struggle with a multitude of behavior and mental health issues. We strive to help youth and their families communicate more effectively, recognize and manage their emotions, and improve their self-esteem, which often reduces behavioral outbursts. By focusing on these therapeutic goals, we are able to assist youth in transferring these skills to everyday life, which helps them maintain themselves in their homes, their schools, and their communities. Though many of our clients have a mental health diagnosis, this is not a requirement for receiving our services as most of our funding is not insurance driven.

A sample of clinical issues we have treated include:

ADHD	Anxiety	Autism Spectrum
Grief	Pervasive Developmental Disorder	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
Abuse	Obsessive Compulsive Disorder	Self-esteem
Attachment Disorder	Divorced Parents	Depression

**What counties do PBJ Connections clients come from?**

PBJ Connections serves all of Central Ohio and currently works with clients from Franklin, Licking, Delaware, Fairfield, and Knox Counties. PBJ Connections has no restrictions on client residency.

**How are families and parents involved in the therapy process at PBJ Connections?**

Parents and families are encouraged to actively participate in treatment planning along with their children. Parents are also encouraged to participate in providing information through the evaluation process and studies that take place at PBJ Connections. Through these studies, we are able to develop more effective future programming.

In addition, family therapy sessions are available. PBJ Connections provides sessions for parents when appropriate and if the parents are willing to participate. This enables parents to get the support they may need to provide stability for their child.

**What kind of communication can families and parents expect from PBJ Connections?**

We encourage parents and guardians to maintain open communication with the mental health professional via face-to-face meetings, phone calls, and email throughout the therapeutic process. Our service is here to help both the parent and child, so we encourage questions and participation from

parents. When youth participate in group sessions, we like to have a minimum of one family meeting at the start of the sessions and one at the conclusion of the sessions.

Parents are welcome to invite the mental health professional working with their child to team meetings, IEP meetings, court hearings and any other process involving their child's or their family's mental health needs. The mental health professionals will do their best to provide accurate information to others who are working with the family with the express permission of the family. Parents are also welcome to set up additional family sessions or parent consultation sessions.

### **What kind of certification does the staff at PBJ Connections have?**

Our mental health professionals are licensed or independently licensed social workers or counselors. We have a counselor on staff who is also a certified American Sign Language interpreter, allowing her to work in a culturally competent manner with Deaf/Hard Of Hearing clients. Mental health professionals have taken specific training for providing EAP sessions.

Our horse professionals have also gone through specific training to provide EAP, and they have years of documented horse experience. In any given session, at least one member of the treatment team holds an EAGALA (Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association) certification. This is a national organization providing certification in a model of EAP that PBJ Connections typically provides. Treatment team members who have not completed the training are involved in some step of the process.

Our Program Director is an LISW and holds an EAGALA and a NARHA (North American Riding for the Handicapped Association) certification. NARHA is an international certification organization that has been providing a framework for equine-assisted therapy for nearly 50 years.

### **How long is treatment at PBJ Connections?**

Individual and family sessions can last from just a couple of meetings to long-term therapy, depending on the need of the family or client. Our group sessions are typically 10 weeks long, and often clients repeat groups because they enjoy them or the family feels it has been helpful. The "A PONY" Program, which is school based, can last anywhere from 12 weeks to an entire school year.

### **Does insurance cover any of the cost of treatment at PBJ Connections?**

PBJ Connections is unable to accept Medicaid at this time. On a case-by-case basis, clients may choose to ask their insurance provider if they will cover the cost of these mental health services out-of-network. Very few clients have health insurance that is comprehensive enough to cover out-of-network mental health costs. Our mental health professionals are more than willing to discuss this with the family and the health insurance company.

### **How does EAP at PBJ Connections support social and behavioral growth?**

EAP brings interactions between the humans and the horses to the forefront of the clients' attention. Emotions and behaviors that occur during the therapy process often reflect what occurs in the clients' everyday life. The opposite sometimes occurs, where a client is able to manage herself extremely well with the horses where she has not been able to elsewhere. Either way, the therapeutic process brings out the client's interactions in real time, and the treatment team can help to tie this back to the client's everyday life.

## **What does experiential therapy mean at PBJ Connections?**

Experiential therapy is when clients are in a situation where they can actually experience behaviors and emotions, rather than just discuss them. The focus is on the present moment. In traditional talk therapy, clients are more likely to be discussing past events and emotions. Experiential therapy is process-focused rather than content-focused.

## **Does PBJ Connections do any traditional talk therapy?**

When a new client starts services with PBJ Connections, there is an intake session that is used for information gathering and talk-therapy. From that point forward, processing typically takes place within the context of the experiential session. The power of EAP is that it is process-oriented rather than talk-oriented. However, in some instances the therapist may find it necessary to conduct more traditional therapy with a client. This typically happens when:

- A client is in crisis
- A client requests a talking session
- A client needs more intensive services and is not yet linked with another service provider.
- Pre-treatment is needed. (Pre-treatment is often necessary for Deaf clients, clients who have never been in therapy, and clients unfamiliar with the therapeutic process.)

## **How does PBJ Connections respect confidentiality?**

All staff and contractors at PBJ Connections are trained to respect confidentiality by following the guidelines presented by their licensing and certification boards. Other workers at the facility and all volunteers are instructed to treat any client information with the utmost confidentiality. Client information is kept protected and in the custody of PBJ Connections at all times. If there is a conflict of interest with a client, the client is notified of this immediately and the client's comfort on the issue is discussed and honored. No one affiliated with PBJ Connections will discuss any identifying information about a client without the express written consent of the client or guardian. The only exception to this is if a client is in danger or is putting someone else in danger. Then the appropriate authorities will be informed.

## **What does a typical session at PBJ Connections look like?**

In a typical session, an individual, family, or group (depending on the program) will enter the arena where one or more horses is present along with a mental health professional and a horse professional. The treatment team will assign a task to the client(s) that will involve doing something with the horse(s). The clients will be given rules for the task and will be encouraged to think independently and with other clients to attempt to complete the task. Throughout the session, the horse professional will monitor safety and the reactions of the horses. The mental health professional will monitor the clients emotionally and behaviorally. Throughout the task, verbal processing will take place with the client(s). At times, the client(s) may spend the majority of the session working on the task without a lot of verbal processing, and at times more verbal processing may be necessary.

The goal of every session is to work on therapeutic objectives. The therapeutic team will have no expectation of how the task should be completed.

## **Where are PBJ Connections services provided?**

We operate primarily out of a private farm in Pataskala and Otterbein University's Equine Facility in Westerville. We have also traveled to schools and other community locations to provide services when the need arises.

## **How do I enroll in PBJ Connections programs?**

Anyone can call PBJ Connections to set up an intake session. Often, a referring source, such as a therapist, doctor, case manager, or teacher will call for information and will then be asked to send us a referral form. Once they have done that, the family will be contacted by a PBJ Connections' mental health worker. Parents and guardians are also welcome to call PBJ Connections directly to set up an appointment. At the moment, there is no waiting list for individual or family sessions. Group sessions start four times a year in March, June, September, and January.

## **What does PBJ Connections stand for? Where did the name originate?**

PBJ Dressage (named after a favorite horse) was the original horse training business run by the founders of PBJ Connections. When the therapy organization was developed, it was important to the founders to keep "PBJ" in the name. PBJ Connections became the natural name as our program works to help clients draw "connections" about how their behavior impacts those around them.

Anytime PBJ Connections is referred to in writing or formal speech, it is important to use the whole name: **PBJ Connections**. "Inc." can be used at your discretion, unless filling out an official document.

## **Is horse experience necessary for EAP to be effective?**

No horse experience is necessary for this program. In fact, sometimes this can be an advantage. It is the process of interacting with the horses and the other people involved that is therapeutic. Riding is rarely utilized in our program unless the treatment team feels this would be therapeutically beneficial. The goal of the program is not to teach riding or horse management skills, but rather to gain therapeutic insight into the self, nature, and the community.

In all of our sessions and programs, the treatment team is providing a safe environment for working with horses.

## **What is so special about using horses in therapy sessions?**

Horses are prey animals, and humans are predators by nature. Both humans and horses are social animals, choosing to live in herds, groups or families. Therefore, the interaction between horses and humans is quite different from that between cats or dogs and humans. Horses react to emotional states in order to protect themselves and their herds and most horses are followers by nature, preferring to have a strong leader in charge of their herd. Because of these social interactions and instantaneous reactions to behavior and emotions, horses give obvious feedback to clients in real time.

Horses are also very large and powerful animals. They often bring up an array of emotions in humans that we cannot access without their help. The sense of awe when in the presence of horses and the sense of pride when we are able to communicate effectively with them is unattainable in other therapeutic settings. Horses often have an engaging and calming effect on clients as well. When a client comes to a session in a hyper, angry or agitated state of mind, they often calm down quickly when they are working directly with a horse.

The therapy staff is trained to recognize the reactions of both the horse and client allowing them to assist the client in the growth and learning process.

### **What types of horses work at PBJ Connections?**

The horses in our program are picked for a variety of reasons, including personality, tolerance for this type of work, and safety around people. They are not chosen for their breeding, size, color, or training. Most of the horses are current or former riding/competition horses. We also work with a herd of five donkeys which react to clients like horses do, but are smaller, quieter, and less intimidating. Each horse and donkey has a unique personality and background that creates unique interactions with clients. Some horses may love being brushed; some will stand quietly; some are active and playful; some can be turned loose with clients and other horses; some are safe to ride. We know the individual traits of each equine we work with, and we closely monitor their reactions throughout any given day or session.

### **When someone sponsors one of PBJ Connections' therapy animals, where does that money go?**

PBJ Connections leases facilities and animals from two different locations, allowing us access to a great variety of horses and increasing convenience. All of the animals in our program are the financial responsibility of their owners. When someone sponsors any of our animals, it is an honorary sponsorship that allows us to pay for the lease of the animal and the treatment facilities. A portion of the money may also be used for costs on that particular animal above and beyond everyday costs, such as veterinary care, extra feed or equipment needed for that horse. For example, if Rocky needed medication, a sponsorship could be used to purchase medication to keep him healthy so that he can continue to participate in sessions. Any sponsorship money not used directly on the sponsored animal is folded into our scholarship fund.

### **Why should I donate to PBJ Connections?**

Hopefully this list of FAQs has helped explain what PBJ Connections does and why it works so well. We are a non-profit organization that relies on donations, sponsorships, and grants to supplement a client's ability to pay for services. We do not want to turn any child away who is in need of our help. Your funding helps make that possible.

PBJ Connections is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Your donations are tax deductible as determined by federal law. We hope you choose to support us.

### **Where is PBJ Connections advertised?**

PBJ Connections is listed on many free community bulletin boards both in newspapers and online. We are also a part of several community-based service boards, such as the Pataskala Chamber of Commerce, One Place for Special Needs, and First Link. We appear on several data bases, including EAGALA, NARHA, and I/O Waiver Providers. Additional locations and listings are welcome, so if you have ideas, please check with us.