

17th October 2018

To whom it may concern,

My son who is diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder benefits greatly from riding therapy lessons. Before we started riding therapy, my son was seeing an individual behaviour consultant, a speech & language pathologist and an occupational therapist. Fitting all these individual therapists into a busy weekly schedule was very stressful and my son wasn't always cooperative in these sessions. He would get bored and frustrated very quickly. I find that riding therapy combines elements of occupational therapy and speech and language pathology- his instructor is always encouraging him to make conversation with the volunteers and to also reflect on his past week and communicate with them what he has been up to. The physical aspects of riding are hugely beneficial for his core strength and his vestibular system, especially "crossing the midline" exercises, which his occupational therapist informed me he had difficulty with. But the number one advantage of these therapy sessions is how well my son behaves and cooperates from the moment the lesson starts without any of the silly behaviour he has had with other therapists.

My son loves animals and I couldn't think of a more wonderful therapy than to be outside and around horses. The wonderful part of the STARS program is the location on the farm. You get to see all of the other animals whilst your there. When my son is stuck in an office with a therapist he can get hyperactive very quickly, being outside amongst the animals has a tremendous calming effect on him.

We are very grateful to have the STARS program in Vancouver.