



VOLUNTEER **Policies & Procedures**

General. Volunteers generally help socialize animals, assist with animal caretaking, counsel prospective pet adopters and participate in special fundraising events. Their special skills and talents make a positive difference in the lives of shelter animals, and their recruitment is essential for good shelter operations. Since most volunteers interact in one way or another with the public, it is important that their relations with animals are humane, respectful, and kind.

A. Selection of Volunteers/Age Requirements. Most volunteers are individuals who have visited or adopted from the Shelter, have been referred by community service agencies or are students. Volunteers aged 12 years and under must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Volunteers 13 to 15 years of age must have a parental consent form on file.

B. Volunteer Information Form. Individuals wishing to become a part of the Shelter's volunteer team are asked to complete a Volunteer Information Form that is submitted to the Volunteer Coordinator. The Coordinator reviews all information forms and calls potential volunteers to advise them of the process involved for bringing new volunteers on board. All volunteers will attend an orientation.

C. Orientation. An orientation session is an important first step in acquainting prospective volunteers about Shelter operations and programs. This session allows interested persons to evaluate their level of interest and time commitment. The Volunteer Coordinator contacts potential volunteers to advise them of the date and time an orientation session is scheduled.

D. Non-Acceptance of Volunteers. Not all potential volunteers are accepted to work at the Shelter. Some possible reasons are that the service offered is not needed, they may have an incompatible schedule, or they may have a poor or abusive history with animals. The Volunteer Coordinator will tactfully explain the reason why they are not being accepted and offer suggestions, if appropriate, for working at other organizations.

The Coordinator will write the reason for non-acceptance on the Volunteer Information Form. The Information Form will be kept on file in the event the individual reapplies or a problem surfaces regarding the handling of denial.

E. Acceptance of Volunteers. If the volunteer is accepted:



1. The Coordinator gives the volunteer a copy of the Volunteer Handbook, which addresses, in part: the Mission Statement, placement of volunteers, Shelter forms, safety, and dress code.
2. The volunteer attends a “welcome” orientation session.
3. Training sessions are scheduled.
4. The volunteer signs an Agreement and Release of Liability Form.
5. The Coordinator establishes a personnel file for each volunteer. This file includes, at the minimum, the individual's Information Form, training schedules, evaluations and commendations by staff and a record of the number of hours volunteered at the Shelter.

F. General Rules. As with shelter staff, volunteers are expected to follow certain rules of conduct and behavior in order to provide a safe and productive work environment. These general rules are included in the Volunteer Handbook and are reviewed during orientation.

1. Conduct. Volunteers are expected to dress appropriately for the particular activity or event.

Although euthanasia is discussed with volunteers, they should not interfere with euthanasia decisions and/or procedures.

Volunteers are expected to do their work in a professional manner, to be constructive at all times, and should assist in any work they are asked to perform, as determined by their information form. They should refer visitors to Shelter staff if questions are asked and the proper answer is not known.

2. Adoption. Volunteers are required to go through the same adoption process as the general public.
3. Time Commitment. Because Shelter staff workload is dependent upon a volunteer's time commitment, volunteers are expected to work according to the established schedule. They are generally not permitted to come in whenever they desire.

Volunteers who wish to come in at a time for which they are not scheduled should first contact the Volunteer Coordinator to see if their help is needed.



4. Volunteer Log Sheet. Each volunteer signs a Volunteer Log Sheet for every visit to the Shelter. This is particularly important for students and community service workers who have a set amount of hours to fulfill. The Log Sheet serves as the only form documenting the dates and times volunteers are at the Shelter or assisting with special projects. The Volunteer Coordinator or Shelter Manager records the number of hours each volunteer works on a monthly basis. The Log Sheet also gives an overall picture of the impact of volunteer contribution. The Log Sheet is kept in a prominent place at the office.

Any volunteer student fulfilling a class requirement or community service worker who falsifies his or her time is immediately terminated.

5. Volunteer Calendar. To enable Shelter staff to plan tasks, assignments and work load, each volunteer is expected to schedule in advance, preferably monthly, his or her time commitments on the Volunteer Calendar. Any cancellations are to be reported to the Volunteer Coordinator or Shelter Manager. Excessive no-shows or last-minute cancellations will not be tolerated.

G. Volunteer Programs. Making a good match between a volunteer's particular area of interest and the needs of the Shelter help further the mission of the agency in providing care and companionship for homeless animals. It is also important for the volunteer's self-esteem and feelings of contribution.

After the orientation, the Volunteer Coordinator discusses the various volunteer opportunities available, either within the Shelter itself or outside of the Shelter. Many volunteers may already have a special skill that they are willing to contribute, such as graphic art design, calligraphy or photography or may desire to groom animals, or assist with legal matters, as indicated on their information form.

H. Typical Volunteer Programs.

1. Socialization. Both cats and dogs housed at the Shelter need socializing for bonding, exercise, companionship and reducing stress. Volunteers socialize only those animals available for adoption. No volunteer is permitted in the quarantine and cat isolation rooms unless specifically authorized by Shelter staff, i.e., kittens and puppies needing to be socialized to *become* adoptable.

Socializers should direct questions regarding adoption to staff.



Time commitment for socialization is based on the volunteer's schedule, although they will follow a certain time frame. Training is provided by staff.

a. **Cats.** Cat socializers interact one-on-one with homeless cats to ensure that their time at the Shelter is as enjoyable and stress-free as possible. Cat socializers pet, groom and play with the animals, tidy the cat's living area and interact with potential pet adopters. At no time will cat socializers allow cats to roam free in the Shelter, except at the discretion of staff. Cat socializers are instructed to disinfect hands between handling each cat, which will discourage the potential spread of any infection or disease, and to monitor the public's contact with the animals.

b. **Dogs.** Generally, dog socializers walk dogs, an important activity that provides play and exercise time. Volunteers are instructed to properly leash and collar dogs, to scoop any excrement while walking and to secure dogs in their runs upon returning to the Shelter. Dog walkers must choose only dogs that they are able to keep under control at all times. Dog walkers must control dogs so that they do not jump on people or other dogs, and at no time are dogs allowed off a leash.

2. Kennel Work. Many volunteers want to interact directly with animals. Kennel volunteers may perform a wide variety of tasks ranging from cleaning kennel runs and cat cages, feeding, assisting with medicating and grooming to carrying out administrative and laundry chores. Training is provided by the staff. Volunteers are scheduled to work based upon the needs of the Shelter and are expected to follow a designated work schedule.

3. Administrative Work. On occasion Shelter staff need assistance with a variety of projects. These projects may include typing or computer work, filing, mailings, coordination of humane education or adoption packets or following up on lost and found reports. Time commitment for administrative work is on an as-needed basis. Training is provided by the Shelter staff or Volunteer Coordinator.

I. **Training.** Before any volunteer begins work at the Shelter, he or she must attend a Volunteer Orientation. The Volunteer Coordinator introduces volunteers to all Shelter staff whenever possible. For example, individuals wishing to learn animal caretaking duties or administrative duties will be referred, respectively, to a staff member or appropriate committee chair.



Shelter staff are responsible for developing a training schedule, complete with dates, times and duties to be undertaken and both parties are expected to adhere to the schedule. The schedule is provided in writing so that there are no misunderstandings. Any volunteer who cancels a training session will call the staff trainer before the appointed time to arrange another appointment.

J. Role of Shelter Staff. Shelter staff are expected to keep the Volunteer Coordinator well informed of the volunteer's progress and work habits. This is especially important for community service workers and students, as the individual's probation officer or teacher may contact the Volunteer Coordinator or Shelter Manager on a regular basis for status reports. Any problems with volunteers should be promptly reported to the Volunteer Coordinator.

Volunteers generously give of their free time to help homeless animals and significantly complement the work of animal care professionals. Shelter staff should always find time to verbally thank volunteers for their help. Staff may also want to add a nice touch by writing thank you notes to volunteers, being certain to make a copy for the Volunteer Coordinator for placement in the individual's file. All volunteers should be treated by Shelter staff with courtesy, respect and appreciation.

K. Termination. Like Shelter staff, volunteers can be terminated for a variety of reasons. Poor performance, disruptive behavior, habitual tardiness or absenteeism, or falsification of work hours by student volunteers or community service workers, will result in termination.

In most situations, any problems brought to the attention of the Volunteer Coordinator will be discussed with the Shelter Manager. A meeting will be called with the volunteer for the purpose of discussing the reason for termination. The Volunteer Coordinator or Shelter Manager is expected to document in writing the events leading up to the termination, including discussions held at the meeting itself, and add this information to the volunteer's personnel file.

Should there be an extremely serious incident that would warrant the volunteer leaving immediately, the staff on duty has the authority to direct the volunteer to leave. The Shelter staff will promptly notify the Volunteer Coordinator or Shelter Manager and will prepare written documentation about the incident.

For community service workers and students, the Volunteer Coordinator will contact the probation officer or teacher to inform them of the termination.