



# Volunteer Handbook

Dear Volunteer,

Welcome to the Flathead County Animal Shelter! We are so happy to have you onboard!

Volunteers are such a vital part of the FCAS. With you by our side, we help us make these animals' lives better. With your help we can get our friends adopted and hopefully their new families will tell other people about FCAS. Our program is for individuals 18 years old and over. The FCAS could not do what it does without the help of volunteers! Although our staff is dedicated and knowledgeable, extra helping hands and hearts are necessary to the important work in which we are involved. Every activity you perform, whether directly handling the animals or not, improves the quality of their lives while at the shelter and decreases the length of their stay here. We look forward to working with you and getting to know you! We want you to have fun with us while being safe, so if you have any questions please don't hesitate to ask one of the staff members. Welcome aboard and thank you again.

Sincerely,

*The team at Flathead County Animal Shelter*

## About The Flathead County Animal Shelter

The Flathead County Animal Shelter is overseen and administered by Flathead City-County Health Department. The shelter is a Managed Admission Shelter and Adoption Center and provides safe haven and humane care to homeless dogs and cats residing in Flathead County while they await permanent, loving homes.

The Flathead County Animal Shelter is concerned with the safety of its staff and volunteers, safety for the public and the welfare of cats and dogs in Flathead County.

We are responsible for the following:

- The sheltering and care of those abandoned, stray, impounded and surrendered cats and dogs of Flathead County who do not pose an injury risk to shelter staff and volunteers.
- Assisting with the enforcement of the Flathead County ordinances relating to the keeping, restraint and humane treatment of cats and dogs.
- The education of the public concerning proper animal care and responsible animal ownership.
- The responsible placement of adoptable cats and dogs.

Flathead County Animal Shelter  
225 Cemetery Road  
Kalispell, Mt 59901  
p. (406) 752-1310 f. (406) 752-1546

### Hours of Operation

FCAS is open to the public Tuesday - Friday 12pm - 5pm and Saturdays 11am - 4pm. The shelter is closed Sundays and Mondays, though there is always someone here those days to care for the resident animals.

### Shelter Director

Cliff Bennett  
p. (406) 758-2414

### Sheriff's Office/Animal Control

p. (406) 758-5610 ex.#1

## Volunteer Program Overview

Thank you for considering volunteering at The Flathead County Animal Shelter as your efforts will greatly help in providing a safe, healthy environment for dogs and cats until they are placed in permanent, caring homes. If you have any questions or concerns about these policies, please check with staff.

Under staff direction, volunteers assist in many ways, including:

- Administrative services such as answering phone calls, greeting the public at the front counter, tour guides, discussing available animals during appointments, accepting fees and completing adoption and/or other paperwork.
- Socializing and grooming cats and dogs.
- Feeding animals and cleaning kennels and other areas of the shelter.
- Foster care.
- Education and outreach efforts on proper care of pets, effective methods for reducing overpopulation and the advantages of choosing shelter pets and distributing such information in person, electronically or in print.
- Transporting animals to other shelters, rescue organizing, etc.
- Mentoring new volunteers during orientation.
- Other duties as assigned.

## Volunteer Orientation

Applicants will be contacted to discuss the date and time for orientation by the Volunteer Coordinator.

## Minimum Age

Applicants must be at least 18 years of age to participate in the FCAS Volunteer Program.

## Volunteer Hours

Volunteers are welcome during the open hours of operation. Volunteers wishing to work during closed hours must have prior approval from staff. All animals must be returned to their kennels 30 minutes prior to closing. At this time, we do not require set days and times for volunteering, however it is very helpful if volunteers are willing to set up specific schedules. This can assist in filling voids or eliminating overcrowding.

## Confidentiality Policy

Some volunteers may have access to computer records and other information that may be confidential. Volunteers are not permitted to share such information with others.

## Animal Representation

In order to promote the animals at the shelter in the most consistent manner, it is imperative that all questions relating to an animal's history and personality be directed to a staff member. Volunteers are welcome to share the basic facts about an animal based on information provided by the shelter staff but please refrain from representing the animal in a manner based on assumption or conjecture.

## Workplace Safety

### Health and Safety

- You must be comfortable and confident around animals.
- Sanitize hands before and after handling each animal to help stop the spread of illness.
- Immediately notify staff of sick animals.
- Immediately notify staff if you receive a bite, scratch or suffer any other injury.
- Staff will identify which animals are safe to handle.
- Wearing closed-toed shoes is required.
- The quarantine/isolation/nursery areas may be entered **only** with prior staff approval.
- FCAS uses an accelerated hydrogen peroxide cleaner that can be harsh to exposed skin. Gloves are recommended while using any cleaners or chemicals.

## Shelter Protocols

### Termination Policy

FCAS volunteers should tell the Volunteer Coordinator or other designated staff if they intend to stop volunteering for any reason. Departing volunteers are encouraged to provide feedback regarding their departure, which will help FCAS improve its program. FCAS values your work and we sincerely hope volunteers will discuss any concerns or grievances with the volunteer coordinator.

### Conflict of Interest

Volunteers will not use their association with FCAS to promote, including but not limited to: soliciting businesses, fundraising or other personal causes.

If a volunteer is at odds with FCAS's philosophy, policies, procedures or past, proposed or existing state of affairs, the volunteers will only discuss such differences with the Volunteer Coordinator according to the procedure outlined in the grievance policy below.

Volunteers must not disclose differences in the above matters privately, including but not limited to: non-supervisory staff, other volunteers, clients, family, friends or the public as that undermines internal morale and external perception of FCAS. When presented through proper channels, FCAS will take the appropriate steps to help resolve the issue.

### Impartiality

While volunteering at FCAS, you are representing the shelter and must maintain impartiality for pet-related businesses and products.

### Personal Pets

All volunteers are encouraged to have their personal pets current on their vaccinations and to obtain county licenses, per the Flathead County Dog Ordinance.

### Personal Belongings

IT is recommended that volunteers keep valuables on their person or locked in their vehicles. FCAS is not responsible for personal items left at FCAS.

## Shelter Protocols Cont.

### Other

All other policies of the Flathead County Animal Shelter and the Flathead City-County Health Department apply as appropriate (e.g. confidentiality of information, weapons, drugs, etc.) Failure to follow policies will result in termination as a volunteer.

### Media Contacts

If you are contacted by a reporter or representative of any television, radio, newspaper or magazine or by other media representative regarding FCAS, please direct them to the Director.

### Social Media

If you choose to identify yourself as a FCAS volunteer or discuss matters related to FCAS on a social media website or blog, many readers may assume that you are speaking on behalf of FCAS. In light of this possibility, your communications should be transparent, ethical and accurate. Please follow the Social Media Guidelines when posting.

Please make it clear to your readers/followers that the views you express are yours alone and that they do not necessarily reflect FCAS's views. Please respect the fact that we deal with confidential and sensitive subject matters and we ask that you refrain from divulging sensitive material.

Comments posted by others on social media that may be perceived as negative should be directed to a shelter supervisor. Please do not respond to such comments.

Only pictures of animals that are available for adoption should be posted. Other animals that reside at FCAS include pets awaiting pickup, the sick, the infirmed or the young. Exposure of animals that are not available for adoption could result in public confusion.

Ask the Director or Volunteer Coordinator if you have any questions about what is appropriate to include in social media.

## Shelter Protocols Cont.

### Housekeeping

All employees and volunteers are responsible for maintaining the general cleanliness of their work areas. Keep floors and aisles free of debris at all times. Housekeeping is an important part of maintaining a safe work environment. It reduces the spread of disease harbored by clutter and eliminates tripping hazards.

Do not eat, drink, smoke, or store food in areas where animals are handled.

ALWAYS wash your hands in between handling animals and after handling chemicals.

### Animal Handling

When handling animals, be sure to take your time and remember that an animal may perceive a threat even though you do not intend to threaten. If you do not feel comfortable handling an animal, DON'T! Get a staff member to help you. Don't put yourself and the animal at risk by overestimating yourself or underestimating the animal.

Inform a staff member if any animal is displaying signs of aggression or may be a threat to other animals or people.

Wear protective gear such as long-sleeved shirts to reduce the risk of injury from bites and scratches.

If you have questions, ask a staff member. If you feel uncomfortable handling any animal, DON'T.



## Volunteer Job Descriptions

### Janitorial

Janitorial duties include, but are not limited to:

- Pet Laundry
- Dishes
- Cleaning Bathrooms
- Sweeping, mopping, vacuuming, etc.
- Emptying Garbage
- Filling Water

### Animal Socialization

Work with dogs and/or cats to improve their adoptability by socializing and training.

### Grooming

Help improve the comfort of the dogs and cats in our care by bathing and grooming them to look their very best. Staff can provide training to any interested volunteers for grooming and safe animal handling. Comfortable, clean looking animals are more likely to be adopted and groomers are critical to helping with that process.

### Outreach & Community Event Assistance

Help us spread the word about responsible pet ownership and the animals we have available for adoption. This includes events such as parades, fundraisers and much more.

### Office Assistance

Aid the office workers by helping with data entry, answering phones, filing and paperwork support. Volunteers should have some basic computer skills and good communication skills.

### Foster Care

Help save lives of animals needing temporary housing before they can become available for adoption. For more information, please refer to the Foster Program Coordinator.