



VOLUNTEER

HANDBOOK

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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 guide, discussing available animals, accepting fees, and completing adoption and other paperwork.
- Socializing and grooming cats and dogs.
- Walking dogs.
- Training dogs in basic obedience and behavior modification.
- Showing the public available dogs and cats and describing the attributes of each animal.
- Feeding animals and cleaning kennels/cages and the shelter.
- Foster care of animals.
- Education and outreach efforts on proper care of pets and effective methods for reducing overpopulation, including spaying/neutering pets and the advantages of choosing shelter pets over breeding or buying.
- Distributing such information in person, electronically (e.g. television, Internet, telephone) or in print (posters, newspaper ads).
- Arranging and transporting animals to adoption events such as pet stores, ranch supply stores, parades and other public locations and events.
- Transporting animals to other shelters, rescue organizations, etc.
- Public relations - writing and/or distributing press releases, articles, ads and participating in radio and television interviews.
- Skilled and semi-skilled labor to improve cages, kennels, fencing, shelter and grounds.
- Recruiting volunteers, as well as being a mentor including orientation.
- Coordinating other volunteers
- Other duties as assigned.

Important Contact Information

Shelter phone number – 752-1310

Shelter director – 758-2414

EMERGENCY 911 or Sheriff's Office – 758-5585

Hours of Operation

FCAS is open to the public Tuesday – Friday 12:00Noon – 6:00PM, and Saturday 11:00AM – 4:00PM.

Volunteer Orientation

Held the first Saturday of each month from 1:00PM – 2:00PM. Attendance is mandatory for all new volunteers prior to their first volunteer session at the shelter. Potential volunteers under the age of 18 must be accompanied by their parents, who must also become volunteers.

Minimum Age

Shelter volunteers must be at least 12 years of age. Volunteers under the age of 18 must be directly supervised by their parents (who must also be volunteers) at all times. Parents or guardians must approve in writing minors as volunteers.

Hours of volunteering are the public hours of the shelter or other times with prior approval by staff. All animals must be returned to their kennels at least one half hour before closing.

Please sign in and out on the volunteer log next to the front counter and wear clothing or badge clearly indicating you are a volunteer. Volunteers are requested to commit to orientation either before beginning volunteering, or at the next available one after starting. 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.

Scheduling and sign-in procedures

Volunteers may only volunteer during open hours unless prior approval has been arranged.

Sign in and out on clipboard next to office door. Volunteers must wear a volunteer badge or other approved forms of identification.

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 be directed to a staff member. You are welcome to share the basic facts about an animal (age, breed, origin, if known), 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 & Safety

- You must be comfortable and confident around animals. Sanitize hands before and after handling each animal.
- Immediately notify staff of sick animals.
- Immediately notify staff if you receive a bite, scratch or suffer other injury.
- Staff identifies animals to be handled and groomed, and dogs available to be walked.
- Walking dogs
 - Please note on a chart which dog is getting walked.
 - Walk dogs through the back of the shelter and then through the fenced corridor.
 - Please take poop sacks and clean any mess.
 - Seek immediate staff assistance if dogs are fighting.
- Wearing closed-toe shoes is required.
- Volunteer aprons are available to keep your clothing from becoming soiled.
- The quarantine area may be entered **only** with advance staff approval.

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 manager.

Conflict of Interest

Volunteers will not use their association with the Animal Shelter to promote including, but not limited to soliciting business, fundraising, or other personal causes.

If a volunteer is at odds with the Animal Shelter'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 or friends, or to the public, as that undermines internal morale and external perception of the Animal Shelter. When presented through proper channels, the Animal Shelter will take the appropriate steps to help resolve the issue.

Impartiality

While you are volunteering 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 annual licenses for their dogs, per Flathead County ordinance. Volunteers are also strongly encouraged to have all their pets spayed and neutered.

Policy on personal belongings

FCAS provides a place for volunteers to store their coats and other personal belongings, which is the kitchen/break room. It is recommended that volunteers keep valuables with them or locked in their vehicles.

FCAS is not responsible for personal items left in the shelter.

Other

All other policies of the Flathead County Animal Shelter and Flathead County 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 TV, radio, newspaper, or magazine reporters, or by other media representatives regarding the Animal Shelter, direct him or her to the Director or the Office Administrator.

Online Social networking, Blogging, and Personal Websites

If you choose to identify yourself as a volunteer at the Flathead County Animal Shelter or discuss matters related to the Shelter on a personal web site or blog, many readers may assume you are speaking on behalf of the Shelter. In light of this possibility, your communications should be transparent, ethical and accurate. Please follow Animal Shelter guidelines when blogging or creating a personal website.

The following are guidelines we request you abide by while you are an employee or a volunteer at the Animal Shelter:

- Please make it clear to your readers that the views you express are yours alone and that they do not necessarily reflect the Animal Shelter's views. To help reduce the potential for confusion, use the following statement – in a reasonably prominent place on your site: The views expressed on this website are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Flathead County Animal Shelter.
- Respect the fact that we deal with confidential and sensitive subject matter and refrain from divulging sensitive material.

- Comments posted by others on social media sites that may be perceived as negative should be directed toward a Shelter supervisor. Please do not respond to such comments.
- Only pictures of animals available for adoption should be posted. Pictures of any other animals taken should be identified as unavailable.
- Ask your Director or direct supervisor if you have any questions about what is appropriate to include in your blog.
- Be respectful to the organization, fellow volunteers, and the general public.
- Be careful and cautious about what you publish. Once you put something out there, it can be difficult to retract.
- Use social networking sites as your personal network. If you don't want to "friend" staff members, volunteers, or clients, don't feel pressured to.

HOUSEKEEPING AND CLEANING

- All employees and volunteers are responsible for maintaining the general orderliness and 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 waste and eliminates tripping and falling hazards.
- Do not eat, drink, smoke, apply cosmetics, or store food in areas where animals are handled. These practices encourage the spread of disease.
- ALWAYS wash your hands in between handling animals to minimize the transmission of disease, and after handling chemicals to avoid potential allergic reactions.
- Non-hazardous spills are to be cleaned up promptly, and a "Wet Floor/Caution" sign placed in the area until the floor is dry. Aisles should be kept clear at all times.

ANIMAL HANDLING SAFETY

This information is a general overview of safe animal handling practices. It is not intended to replace actual safe animal handling training conducted by trained staff. When handling animals, be sure to take your time, don't over stimulate the animal, and remember that the 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 risk getting dragged, scratched, or bitten!

CATS

- When removing a cat from a kennel, be sure to get the cat's attention before opening the door.
- Allow the cat to check out your fingers before you pick it up. The cat should come to you, not the other way around. Talk to the cat calmly and softly to avoid over-stimulating the cat.
- When handling a cat, control the head and neck at all times. Hold the cat firmly—left hand controlling the head and neck, right elbow supporting/gripping the hindquarters, right hand controlling the front paws. Take a moment to readjust your grip if you need to. Keep the cat's face away from other cats. (You can reverse this procedure if you are left-handed.)
- Always use a carrier to transport the cat more than a few feet.
- Watch for signs of stress/fear--enlarged pupils, thrashing tail, growling, hissing, and attempting to hide or escape. If these signs appear, carefully remove the cat from the source of stress--out of the visiting room or into a less stressful kennel with the help of a staff member.
- If a cat is fearful, do not make direct eye contact. Approach the cat at his or her level. Do not reach over the cat's head. Move slowly because rushing the cat only adds more stress, leading to unpredictable behavior and increasing the likelihood of injury.

DOGS

- Approach the dog from the side. Talk calmly to the dog to avoid over-stimulating him or her.
- When moving the dog, keep the dog away from other kennels, and break his or her line of vision. Use proper leash techniques, looping the handle of the leash over your thumb and across your palm (like a joystick). Keep the leash short, bend your arms and knees and use both hands for better control.

- Only one dog at a time may be walked by volunteers to prevent risk of fighting or injury.
- Only small dogs and puppies should be carried, and then only as you carry a cat.
- Watch for signs of stress/fear:
 - Ears back
 - Hackles raised
 - Tail down
 - Dilated pupils
 - Lifted lip
 - Submissive posture
 - Growling, snarling, barking, or lunging

If these signs appear, remove the dog from the source of the stress--out of the visiting room, away from other animals, or into a less stressful kennel with the help of a staff member.

If a dog is fearful, do not make direct eye contact. Approach the dog at his or her level. Do not reach over the dog's head. Move slowly because rushing the dog only adds more stress, leading to unpredictable behavior and increasing the likelihood of injury.

WITH ANY ANIMAL

- Inform a supervisor immediately if an animal is displaying signs of aggression and/or may be a threat to other animals or people.
- Wear protective gloves, long-sleeved shirts, and shoes with closed toes (no sandals) to reduce the degree of injury from bites and scratches.
- If you have questions, ask a staff member. If you feel uncomfortable handling an animal, DON'T!

JOB DESCRIPTIONS & VOLUNTEER LEVELS

LEVEL 1

Janitorial

- Duties may include doing pet laundry, i.e. blankets, beds, toys, towels.
- Washing pet dishes either in sink or dishwasher
- Cleaning bathrooms
- Mopping, sweeping, vacuuming floors and rugs.
- Emptying garbage
- Filling water buckets for dogs
- Shelter Greeter

Dog Walking

Help to increase the adoptability of the dogs in our care by working with specific, positive reinforcement techniques to encourage them to display desired behaviors. Volunteers are encouraged to work on training the dogs to focus, sit, and walk well on leash while walking them. This can be a very physical, outdoor job and many of the dogs are untrained. Some experience with dogs is helpful as the shelter takes in many different breeds and sizes of dogs. Volunteers should have basic knowledge of dog behavior As well as go through a scheduled “Basic Dog Training” time at the shelter and be able to safely handle dogs at all times.

LEVEL 2

Kennel Assistance

Work with the dogs to improve their adoptability and provide assistance to members of the public by answering questions about the animals and setting up visits with potential adopters.

Cat Room Assistance

Help to provide care and socialization to the cats and kittens in our care. Volunteers spend time in the cat room petting, brushing and playing with the cats and provide assistance to members of the public by answering questions about the animals and providing the opportunity for potential adopters to spend time

with individual animals to better get to know them. Volunteers should have some knowledge of basic cat behavior, be able to safely handle all animals in the cat room and help with laundry and dishes.

Grooming

Help improve the comfort and adoptability of the dogs and cats in our care by bathing and grooming them to look their best. Volunteers brush and bathe and sometimes trim the fur of the animals to make them more attractive to potential adopters, and ready to go into their new homes. 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

Go to where the people are and take animals and information about FCAS with you! Outreach volunteers help us spread the word about responsible pet ownership and the animals we have available for adoption. This included such events as Petco Adoption Days, various parades, fundraisers and much more.

LEVEL 3

Shelter Ambassador

Help members of the public looking for lost pets by maintaining print outs of all animals held in the shelter, escorting visitors to stray-hold areas to look for possible matches, and compare lost and found reports at the shelter, in the newspaper and on the internet to help reunite lost companion animals with their families. Volunteers must have good communication skills and the ability to provide high quality customer service.

Adoption Counseling

Help members of the public find the right companion for their family and lifestyle by providing adoption counseling and introductions to animals. Volunteers must have basic knowledge of the particular animals in the shelter.

Adoption Promotion Assistance

Help our animals find loving and permanent adoptive homes by promoting the animals to potential adopters. Volunteers take digital photos and write up fun descriptions of the animals so they can put their best paw forward on internet adoption sites. Volunteers take the photos here using their own camera, but can upload the content from home or the shelter.

Volunteer Program Assistance

Provide administrative support for the volunteer program by helping with data entry, filing and paperwork support. Volunteers should have some basic computer skills and good communication skills. This opportunity allows for flexible hours of service.

Office Assistance

Provide assistance to the office workers by helping with the Pet Point computer program, answering phones, filing and paperwork support. Volunteers should have some basic computer skills and good communication skills. Volunteers will have to assist with this during open business hours.

Transport Team

Help support FCAS with the transfer of animals out of the county by using your own vehicle to transport them to other shelters and/or rescue groups. This opportunity occurs on an on-call basis; transportation usually occurs during our regular operating hours. Volunteers often assist with this program in addition to helping in other areas.

Foster Care

Help save the lives of animals needing temporary housing before they can become available for adoption. These cats, kittens, dogs and puppies may need time in a volunteer's home to recover from treatable illness or injury, or who simply need to get a little older and gain weight before we can neuter them and make them available for adoption into their new forever homes. Foster care is essential to help us meet our goal of increasing the number of animals we are able to place.