

Volunteer Handbook



Last Revised January 2020

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Welcome!

Thank you for choosing to volunteer at the Montgomery County Animal Care and Adoption Center! You are a critical part in our mission to create a no-kill community here in Montgomery County. We rely on volunteers to run programs, socialize and exercise animals, communicate with the public, and raise funds for veterinary care and other projects. While you may be associated with one of several other volunteer groups, everyone who volunteers on shelter property or at shelter events is subject to the rules and regulations contained within this document. Please read it through carefully and familiarize yourself with the procedures, rules, and definitions that are outlined inside.

From all the staff here at ACAC we hope you have a fun, safe, and rewarding time volunteering with us!

Marilyn Wheaton
Volunteer and Education Coordinator

Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Montgomery County Animal Care and Adoption Center to foster a culture of compassion within our community by being a valuable resource for health services, education and recreation for animals and their people. We are committed to finding every healthy and treatable animal in our care a forever home, preventing all forms of cruelty to animals, and creating a happier and healthier animal population through spay/neuter, sheltering, adoption, education and community outreach.

Open Hours

Open to the public:

11:00 am – 6:00 pm Monday through Friday

11:00 am – 4:00 pm Saturday and Sunday

Volunteer hours may vary from the public open hours. Volunteers should not allow members of the public to enter the shelter outside of public open hours without express permission from staff.

Volunteer Coordinator Office Hours

The Volunteer and Education Coordinator will hold open Office Hours at least one day per week. Volunteers are encouraged to stop by and ask questions, present suggestions, resolve conflicts, or seek one-on-one training. As hours are subject to change depending on the Coordinator's schedule please contact the Center for the current available hours.

Emergency Contacts

It is always a good idea to have shelter contact numbers easily accessible when you are volunteering at the shelter or out and about with dogs. Please save the following numbers in your phone so you have them with you in case of an emergency:

- Main Shelter Number: 540.382.5795
Press 1 for Front Desk, 2 for Animal Control
- Volunteer Emergencies: Marilyn Wheaton, Volunteer Coordinator
Extension 57005 or 540.529.0273 (cell)
- Animal Emergencies: Della Mills, Shelter Supervisor
Extension 57006 or 540.589.3252 (cell)
- Facility/Other Emergencies: Eileen Mahan, Shelter Director
Extension 57003 or 540.200.9194 (cell)

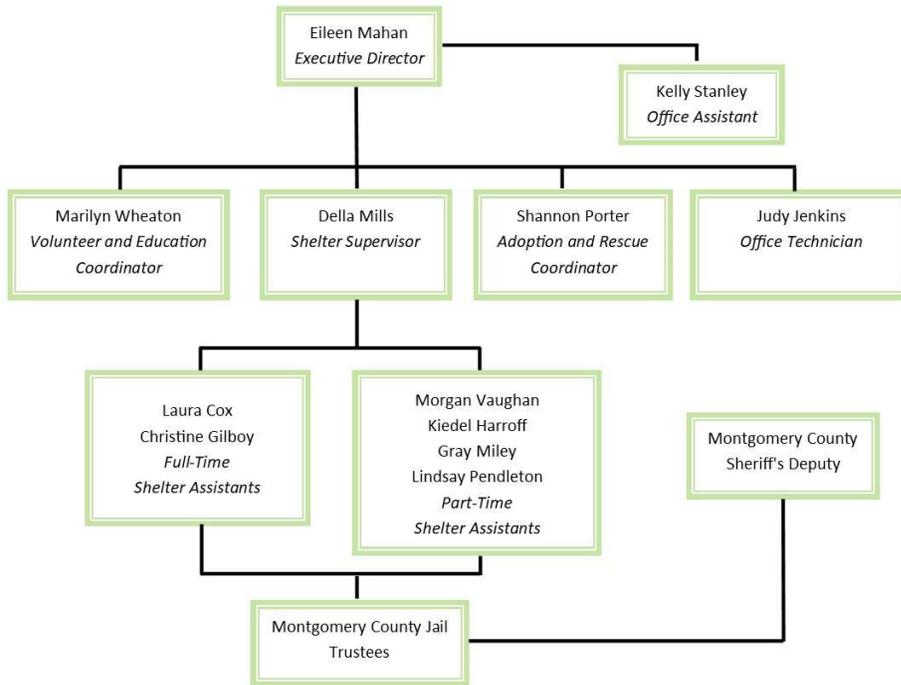
Staff Directory

	<u>Extension</u>
Executive Director: Eileen Mahan	57003
Volunteer and Education Coordinator: Marilyn Wheaton	57005
Adoption and Rescue Coordinator: Shannon Porter	57004
Shelter Supervisor: Della Mills	57006
Kennel Assistants: Christine Gilboy Morgan Vaughan Laura Cox Kiedell Harroff Gray Miley Lindsay Pendleton	
Office Assistant: Kelly Stanley	57013
Office Technician: Judy Jenkins	57015
Animal Control Officers: Chief Ray Helmick (80)	57010
Deputy Mavin Ogle (82)	57011
Deputy Lori Charett (83)	57012

Hierarchy Flow Chart

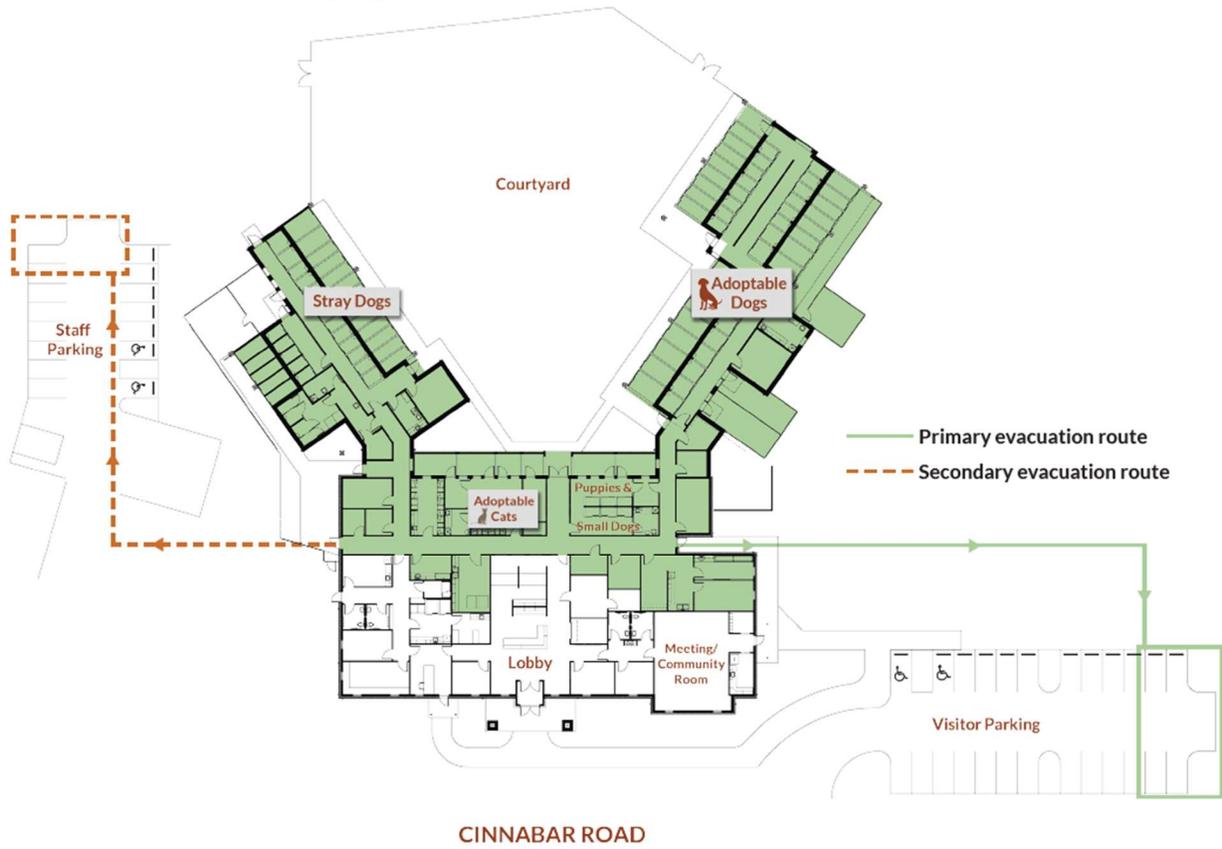


Animal Care and Adoption Center and Montgomery County Animal Control



Facility Map/ Evacuation Routes

Animal Care and Adoption Center | Evacuation Routes ANIMAL CARE AREAS (in green)



Local Rescue Partners

The following local groups are a huge asset in the creation of a no-kill community.

Montgomery County Friends of Animal Care and Control (MCFACC) – mcfacc.org

Animal Hope Alliance (AHA) – animalhopealliance.com

Humane Society of Montgomery County (HSMC) – hsmcshelter.com

Mountain Tails Animal Rescue (MTAR) – mountaintailsrescue.com

Crazy Cat Lady Animal Rescue – cclar.com

Animal Welfare Foster Program (AWFP) – awfpva.org

Summary of Shelter Policies

Intake

The Animal Care and Adoption Center (ACAC) is an open-admission shelter, meaning that we will not turn away animals surrendered by the public and will pick up any dogs that are running at large in the community. Occasionally we may ask that a person wait to bring his or her animal in due to space or personnel restraints but we will take the animal into the shelter as soon as possible. We do not take in healthy “stray” or feral cats.

Animal Control

Animal Control Officers (ACOs) are much more than the “dog catchers” of old. While they do pick up dogs that are running at large (there is no ordinance on cats, cats can roam freely) they also investigate cruelty cases, check the well-being of domestic animals, handle dangerous dogs, and educate the public. The ACOs goal is to ensure the proper care and maintenance of all animals in the county. This goal includes not only dogs and cats but livestock, poultry, and exotic pets as well.

Euthanasia

ACAC is also a no-kill shelter, meaning that no healthy or treatable animal is ever euthanized due to lack of space. Since we are an open admission shelter, however, we do sometimes receive animals that are gravely injured, sick, or have unstable or dangerous temperaments. If an animal is suffering mentally or physically in such a way that the prognosis for recovery and placement is poor, or if the animal is a danger to itself or the community, the animal will be humanely euthanized in the most low-stress manner possible by a licensed veterinarian or euthanasia technician.

Adoption

While we do our best to find an animal that is the right fit for every adopter, ACAC reserves the right to refuse an adoption to a home that will not be a good fit for the animal in question or to individuals who indicate that they will not follow local, state, or federal law regarding animal care, running at large, or spay/neuter. No adopted animal may leave the premises until he or she has been spayed or neutered. We ask that if an adoption does not work out that the adopter returns the animal to our facility for rehoming. Adoption fees are non-refundable.

Return to Owner

To reclaim an animal, the owner must show proof of ownership of the animal. This may include a bill of sale, vet records, or pictures that can show the passage of time. The fee to reclaim an animal varies depending on how many times the animal has been at the shelter and how long he or she stayed at the shelter this time.

Animal Care

All animals are fed at least once daily with a diet appropriate for the species, age, and body condition of the animal. All dogs and cats are examined, vaccinated, and treated for internal and external parasites upon arrival at the shelter (as health and temperament allow). All animals are monitored for changes in weight and behavior that may indicate a health issue. Any suspected health issues are addressed promptly by a licensed veterinarian.

Background Checks

All Center employees and volunteers are required to pass a background check. Some types of volunteers may be exempt from this requirement at the discretion of the county Attorney after discussion with the Executive Director.

Code of Conduct

This code embodies everything that volunteers do while at the shelter or staffing shelter events. Please read it carefully and be sure that your actions follow this code at all times while volunteering with the ACAC. As a volunteer, you are representing the shelter as a whole and we want the public to have the best possible experience any time they interact with an ACAC representative!

- I understand that I am acting as a volunteer and will not be compensated monetarily for my time and participation in shelter activities.
- My actions while handling animals will, at all times, reflect the goal of making the animal more adoptable and I will treat them with kindness, respect, and patience.
- I will disclose any new information that I discover about an animal's health or temperament to a staff member or supervisor.
- I will abide by all written or verbal rules and instructions from a staff member or my supervisor.
- If I am in a situation in which a potential adopter or rescue is asking me questions about an animal I will not mislead them in any way about the temperament or health of the animal.
- I understand that my participation in scheduled events is important and will notify my supervisor or a staff member in a timely manner if I cannot fulfill my responsibilities.
- I will be courteous and respectful toward staff members, other volunteers, and members of the public when on shelter property or participating in shelter events.
- When using social media I will be courteous to shelter staff, volunteers, and members of the public in all issues pertaining to shelter business.
- I will not come to shelter premises or participate in overseeing or assisting with any shelter events while under the influence of alcohol or drugs as this poses a serious hazard to the people and animals I may come in contact with.
- I understand that, while the shelter will do everything in their power to place animals in homes and rescues, there will be times when animals must be euthanized. I understand that the shelter staff makes this decision only as a last resort and I will respect their decision to euthanize animals when necessary.

I understand that if I fail to abide by the shelter code of conduct I may be asked to leave the premises and can be barred from participating in future volunteer activities and shelter events.

Volunteer Role Definitions

**Please note that all volunteers must submit to a background check unless they wish ONLY to participate in exempt activities. As of January 2018 exempt activities include Dog, Cat, and Creative Teams and basic cleaning.*

Dog and Cat Teams

Staying at the shelter is stressful for any animal and the more stressed an animal is the harder it is to place him or her in a home. Your job is to reduce the animals' stress level and increase adoptability as much as possible through exercise, enrichment, and socialization. Dogs may need to go for walks, runs, playtime in the yard, or just have quiet time by your side. Cats might want to chase a laser, play fetch with a tinsel ball, or just lay in your lap and snuggle. Any time you are working with an animal you are either training it or un-training it, so you will use your knowledge from orientation and training to always be thinking of ways to help the animals you are working with become more adoptable.

Requirements:

- Complete the required volunteer training course and paperwork
- Read and understand the volunteer handbook
- Able to follow direction well
- A kind and patient demeanor when working with animals

Front Desk

Your job is to greet members of the public and other volunteers in a warm and welcoming fashion. You will be the first impression of the shelter, so we want it to be a good one! You will know the layout of the shelter and instruct people where to go. You will also be responsible for fielding phone calls and answering common questions or referring people to someone else who can help them. You may also bring animals up to the front for socialization or exposure as long as their health and temperament do not pose a risk to other animals or members of the public.

Requirements:

- Complete volunteer training, required paperwork, and background check
- Friendly and welcoming demeanor
- Able to hear and speak clearly enough to answer phones
- Organized
- Able to follow a written guidebook of procedures

Creative Team

Your job is to use your creativity and artistic skill to show the shelter animals in a way that is novel, unexpected, or particularly candid. The public is used to seeing standard cell phone pictures of dogs and cats, but with your talent you can bring the beauty of every day events to life. Unique pictures and well-shot video of animals showing off their talents or personality go a long way to finding their forever homes!

Requirements:

- Complete volunteer training and related paperwork
- Provide your own materials
- Follow ACAC position statements
- Confirm all information on animals and policies before posting information

Transport Team

Shelter animals frequently need transport to areas outside of the shelter such as rescues and veterinarian's offices. Members of the transport team should have a valid driver's license and be comfortable handling and transporting animals of various species and temperaments. Your job is to get the animal from point A to point B safely and on time. Availability to transport an animal on short notice is helpful but not required.

Requirements:

- Complete the required volunteer training, paperwork, and background check
- Comfortable handling animals of various temperaments and species
- Comfortable driving to unknown places to meet shelter-approved strangers
- Able to be on-time to scheduled meeting places

Social Media Ambassadors

Our social media relationship is an important part of our interaction with the community. It is an easy way for people to connect with the shelter and the animals and many people use it as a place to ask questions and voice grievances. Your job is to communicate with the public via our social media in friendly, accurate, and non-confrontational way.

Requirements:

- Complete the required volunteer training, paperwork, and background check
- Knowledge of the shelter's policies and procedures
- Able to diplomatically communicate over social media
- Good knowledge of how to use various forms of social media properly

Specialized Ambassadors (Pit Crew, etc.)

There are several segments of the shelter population that members of the community are not as willing to accept. Your goal is to educate the community not only about these specific adoptable animals but on other animals of the same type, breed, or condition. We want to show people that all animals are individuals – regardless of breed, age, color, size, disability, or number of homes the animal has had – he or she is still just as capable of being a loving companion!

Requirements:

- Complete volunteer training, related paperwork, and background check
- Willing to follow ACAC position statements
- Able to recognize subtle animal body language
- Comfortable taking animals out in public
- Friendly and helpful demeanor, never condescending!

Adoption Counselors

While you may not be able to do the actual adoption paperwork, talking to potential adopters about whether the animal they are adopting is the right fit for their home is an important job! You will talk to owners about whether they are looking for anything specific in a new pet, whether they have cleared the new pet with their homeowner's association or leasing company, and whether they are prepared for the responsibility level and expense that comes along with that individual animal. You will try your best to find an animal that is the right fit for the individual or family so the adoption has the best chance of being successful.

Requirements:

- Complete required volunteer training, paperwork, and background check
- Friendly and helpful demeanor
- Tactful in potentially sensitive situations
- Maintain a list of the animal regulations of local leasing agencies

Foster Home Providers

Foster homes are an important part of keeping our animals mentally and physically healthy to make them more adoptable. ACAC will only place animals in foster care if there is a defined end date and exit strategy for the animal, we will not place an animal in foster care for an indefinite amount of time. Foster providers will receive all the necessary food, medication, and equipment for the animal – you just provide the love!

Requirements:

- Complete the required volunteer training, paperwork, and background check
- Have an approved foster application and home check
- A meet and greet between the new animal and all residents of the foster home
- Knowledge of how to properly care for the animals you wish to foster

Intake Team

Members of the Intake Team must be comfortable with working with all types and temperaments of animals. Your job is to get all the required information during intake about the animal, owner, and/or finder. You must be able to communicate with the public in a compassionate and non-judgmental way. You will be trained to ask the right questions at intake, enter the animal's information in the computer, and examine the animal for signs of illness or injury.

Requirements:

- Complete the required volunteer training, paperwork, and background check
- Exceptional animal handling skills
- Extensive knowledge of the shelter policies and procedures
- Ability to use shelter manager software
- Additional training on how to examine animals, administer medications

Animal Help Desk

Our goal as a shelter is to save as many animals as possible, whether by finding them new homes or by helping their owners keep them in their current homes. Your job is to counsel people who are struggling to care for their animals and help them retain their animals as often as possible. This may include communicating over the phone, electronically, or in person. You will provide owners with online and print resources as well as information on local trainers or rescue programs, simple training techniques and tools, or alternate options for rehoming their animals.

Requirements:

- Complete volunteer training, paperwork, and background check
- Working knowledge of basic, non-aversive animal training techniques
- Ability to be friendly and patient with people you may disagree with
- Able to find online or local resources to help with specific problems

Volunteer Supervisors

Your job is to train new volunteers in the tasks they have chosen to undertake and to supervise and instruct them as they are working. We want the volunteer experience to be a fun and rewarding one, but we also want to make sure that all animals and people are safe! You will make sure that animals are handled responsibly, equipment is used properly and is in good working order, and that all rules, protocols, and instructions are followed by the volunteers you are supervising.

Requirements:

- Complete required training, paperwork, and background check
- Able to communicate instructions clearly and confidently
- Friendly and welcoming demeanor
- Appointed by staff members based on experience and supervisory ability
- Extensive knowledge of the shelter operations and regulations

Animal Care Team

The Center is often home to over 100 animals at a time, so we need lots of help taking care of them! Volunteers who are members of the Animal Care team will be trained in many of the same areas that the Shelter Assistants are so that any time we are short staffed we have volunteers to back us up. Tasks may include washing dishes, using the pressure washing system, preparing pet food, sweeping and mopping, and cleaning kennels.

Requirements:

- Complete required training, paperwork, and background check
- Able to follow directions and then work independently
- Physically capable of doing the required tasks
- Kind and patient demeanor when working with animals
- Attention to detail

Rules and Regulations

Volunteer Requirements

All volunteers must complete the volunteer orientation and training process before handling any shelter animals or participating in the management of shelter events.

Volunteers are required to undergo a background check unless they wish to ONLY participate in exempt activities as determined by collaboration between the Executive Director and the County Attorney.

Volunteers under 18 years of age must be accompanied by a parent or guardian at all times. Children should be within the line of sight of their guardian and the guardian is responsible for ensuring that the children interact with animals in a safe and respectful manner. (This does not include programs specifically tailored toward underage volunteers that are supervised by staff.)

No one under the age of 18 should ever have sole control of an animal (example: holding a dog's leash).

No individual who has been investigated for, convicted of, or charged with animal neglect, cruelty, or abandonment will have contact with or be allowed near the animals at any time.

Volunteer Conduct

Please come to the Volunteer Coordinator with any concerns or conflicts you may have with other volunteers, staff members, animal care, etc. We welcome your input and want to hear about any concerns you may have.

Please schedule your chosen volunteer time and activity with the appropriate staff member or supervisor. If you need to change your schedule, please let your supervisor or the Volunteer Coordinator know in a timely manner. Unscheduled volunteers may not be able to be accommodated, especially if coming in a group. Volunteers who repeatedly miss or are late for their scheduled duties will be asked to volunteer only in areas that are not schedule-sensitive.

Volunteers should not make statements to the media in a way that appears to represent the positions or opinions of the shelter. All media contact should go through our Executive Director or the County Public Information Officer.

Volunteers should always sign in and out so we can track volunteer hours.

Privacy

Feel free to take pictures of the animals and post them on social media if desired, just be careful not to post any information about their temperament and health or the adoption and rescue policies of the shelter without verifying the information with a staff member or your supervisor first.

You may overhear or come across private information about owners, adopters, other volunteers, or employees while volunteering at the shelter. This information will be kept private and will not be shared with other volunteers or members of the public.

Safety

All bites and scratches, no matter how small, must be reported to a staff member immediately so appropriate action can be taken.

Please do not hand an animal over to a potential adopter unless instructed to do so by your supervisor or a staff member. Potential adopters should talk to the front desk about meeting an animal.

Visiting friends and family members who are not interested in becoming official volunteers may walk with an established volunteer after signing a waiver. They may not have control of the animal (ex: holding the leash) at any time unless they have gone through the volunteer orientation and training.

Volunteers should not bring their own animals to the shelter unless specifically asked to do so by a supervisor or staff member.

When transporting animals for the shelter seatbelts should be worn by all parties and animals should be secured in an appropriate manner to account for their comfort and the driver's safety.

Dress and Hygiene

Closed-toed, non-slip shoes should be worn at all times when volunteering. Clothes should be appropriate for a representative of the shelter. Long pants are recommended, shorts can be worn at your own risk. You will get dirty, so don't wear anything that you don't want to get stained or torn!

Good hygiene is an important part of protecting the health of the animals in our care. Please abide by all signs and instructions about hand washing or other sanitation procedures before handling animals.

Animal Handling

Please make sure that each animal you handle is one that is designated for volunteers by staying in your assigned area and checking all signs on the animal's enclosure before handling the animal. Do not attempt to approach or handle any animal that is showing signs of aggression or fear such as growling, hissing, or cowering. If an animal designated for volunteer handling is showing any of these signs please alert your supervisor or a staff member immediately.

Do not allow the animals to interact with one another unless expressly asked to do so by your supervisor or a staff member. Use caution when distracted by conversation or going around corners as you may not see another animal coming until they are next to you.

Animals should not be removed from the room they are in without express permission from a staff member or supervisor (excluding approved dogs for walking during designated hours). This reduces the risk of disease transmission and potential for escape.

Volunteers will use only shelter-approved, non-aversive training techniques. Leash-popping, alpha-rolling, and use of prong collars or shock collars is prohibited.

Facility Regulations

No smoking is permitted inside the animal shelter or within 25 feet of any shelter entrance, animal enclosure, or leashed animal. Smoking will be confined to the employee parking lot near the dumpsters.

Dog waste MUST be picked up and disposed of properly. Failure to do so could result in temporary revocation of your dog handling privileges and reassignment to cleaning duty.

Keep all doors, kennel doors, and gates closed at all times. Do not prop any door or gate open without the expressed permission of a supervisor or staff members. Be sure to close all doors and gates securely behind you.

Please prevent dogs from urinating or defecating inside the building to the best of your ability. If an accident does occur, please clean the mess with the materials provided or alert your supervisor or another volunteer or staff member so the mess can be cleaned promptly.

When walking dogs, please be sure that your phone number has been left on the dog's kennel so that we can get in touch with you should we need that dog to return to the Center.

Volunteers or visitors are not permitted to bring their own animals to the Center to walk with the dogs or play with the cats unless they are doing a meet-and-greet with an animal they are interested in adopting.

Retractable leashes should not be used for walking shelter dogs or doing meet-and-greets.

Handling Dogs

Equipment

Each dog has a collar and harness in a labeled pocket in the lobby. Leashes and waste bags are available nearby. Tools that we generally use include:

- **Martingale Collars** – limited-slip collars that, when adjusted properly, will not slip over the dog’s head. The rings of the collar should never touch when the dog pulls!
- **Easy Walk Harness** – this front-attach harness that encourages the dog to turn back toward you and prevents him or her from pulling too hard. When properly adjusted, the harness should fit snugly behind the dog’s shoulders. The back and belly pieces should form a straight line when viewed from the side. The chest piece should not be sagging downward or pulling the rest of the harness forward onto the shoulder. Consistent pulling by a dog wearing this type of harness can cause irritation in the under arm area, especially when improperly adjusted.

Any frayed, worn, or ill-fitting equipment should not be used and should be reported to your supervisor. If you are unsure about how to use any form of equipment, please ask for help!

Please use ONLY the equipment provided and use it ONLY in the manner instructed. Outside equipment, such as retractable leashes, is not acceptable. Using the equipment provided in a manner other than that described in Volunteer Orientation or this handbook is not acceptable.



Left: A properly fitted Easy Walk harness and martingale collar. Note that the collar fits flush against the neck and the harness does not sag.

Right: An improperly fitted Easy Walk harness. Note how it sags down on the dog’s chest and does not form a straight line when viewed from the side.



Color-Coded Doors

We have color-coded the doors in the dog adoption wing in order to help volunteers identify the easiest way to exit the property. Each dog has a colored arrow on their kennel pointing you in one direction or the other. Following this arrow will lead you to a door with a sign of the same color, which will give you the next step of instructions to exit the building.

Eventually, everyone will exit a door with a teal sign to find the gate in the fence. By following these instructions, you only have to pass a maximum of three other dogs and will find it much easier to get on and off the property.



Taking a Dog Out – This list outlines how things would go in a perfect world, please do the best you can based on your ability and the dog's personality! Every tiny improvement is a step in the right direction.

- Make a tag at the front desk with your name and phone number. You will put this tag on each dog's kennel as you walk them so we can get in touch with you.
- Gather the dog's harness and collar from the organizer in the lobby. Get a leash and poop bags and check the dog walking white board to see who has been out.
- Once you walk to the kennel area, slip your nametag into the plastic sleeve on the front of the kennel of the dog you are going to walk with their cage card. Look for signs or notes about the dog.
- If the dog shows signs of aggression or significant fearfulness, please ask for help or choose another dog. If you are uncomfortable at any point please do not continue and ask for help right away.
- Wait for the dog to sit or stand quietly before opening the kennel door. Even half a second is enough!
- Block the door of the kennel with a knee or a foot so the dog cannot push past you. Open the kennel door just wide enough for your arms and slip the collar over the dog's head.
- Hold on to the collar or leash as you enter the kennel so the dog cannot push past you.
- Enter the kennel and pull the door shut behind you. Wait for your dog to sit or stand quietly before giving him or her any attention. This might take a while!
- Place the harness correctly on your dog and reward him or her for allowing you to do so. Wait for the dog to sit or stand quietly before opening the kennel door.
- Open the kennel door and wait until the dog is not pulling you to walk out. As long as the dog waits a second or so before exiting the kennel that is acceptable.
- Please do not let your dog interact with other dogs in kennels as you pass or when out walking.
- To avoid being pulled by the dog, keep your back straight, bend your knees, lean back, and keep the leash short and close to your body to prevent being knocked off-balance.
- Use caution when going through doors or around corners as there may be another dog on the other side. Keep your dog near you when opening doors and don't allow him or her to rush ahead of you.
- Make sure you close all doors and gates behind you when entering or exiting shelter property.
- During your time with the dog, do anything you can to make the dog more adoptable. Work on teaching him or her new tricks or find out what his or her favorite toy is!
- Please report any concerns about the health and the behavior of the animal (such as skin abrasions, behavioral issues, or digestive upset) to a staff member.
- When returning a dog to his or her kennel, let the dog enter the kennel while you stay outside. Block the kennel door with your knee or foot, let the dog turn to face you, and remove the martingale collar and harness by unbuckling the harness sliding both items over the dog's head.
- Never remove a dog's collar outside of the kennel and attempt to push him or her inside, this is likely to lead to an escape!
- On the white board in the lobby, write the amount of time that you walked the dog in the appropriate box so other volunteers know that dog has been out. Return equipment to its proper location.

Body Language

A wagging tail does not always mean the dog is friendly! A wagging tail just means excitement of some sort. Look for other body language to determine how a dog is reacting to you and to other dogs. Is the dog stiff and still? Staring at you from the corner of his or her eye? Overly focused on another dog? Leaning farther and farther away from you? These can be signs that the dog may be about to react negatively by biting or lunging. When directed toward another dog, try to distract and redirect your dog as quickly as possible by walking in the opposite direction or calling to your dog and giving him or her a treat. If directed toward you, do not approach the dog any further. Unless the dog has a medical issue, bites never happen “out of nowhere”! Watch for subtle clues and do not proceed if you are unsure.

A happy dog will be loose and wiggly all over, move toward you when you try to initiate contact, and will often have his or her mouth open with the tongue hanging loosely out to the side. The dog’s eyes may be slightly closed and his or her ears will lay back against the head. Some dogs will be enthusiastic – play-bowing, pawing at you, and offering you their toys. Other dogs may show their happiness by leaning against you, rolling over and asking for a belly rub, or licking you with a broad, relaxed tongue.

Breaking up a Dog Fight

If you follow the training and instruction you receive during volunteer orientation it is unlikely that you will ever come into this situation, however we want you to be safe if you do. The most important thing to remember is to NEVER get in the middle to separate the dogs! You could accidentally get bitten or the dog could mistakenly redirect onto you. If you can easily separate the dogs by pulling them apart by the leash then do so. If you cannot separate the dogs easily by pulling the leashes, place (don’t throw) an object between them such as a chair or large branch if possible. If this does not work, quickly get help by sending a third party to find a staff member or volunteer supervisor. Please report any conflicts between dogs to a staff member immediately so all dogs involved can be examined for injury by a staff member and taken to a veterinarian if necessary.

Loose Dogs

It happens to all of us – a dog slips past you out of a kennel or gets off of his or her leash. When this happens to you (it WILL happen at some point!) do not panic. If you cannot grab the leash immediately do not chase the dog, he or she will either become frightened or will think you are running with him or her – which is such fun! Instead, try running away from the dog and encouraging him or her to chase you by calling in a happy, excited voice and patting your leg. Try to get the dog to follow you, a toy, or another dog (if both dogs are friendly) into an enclosed area such as a yard or the shelter building. Talk to the dog in a friendly manner, if you reprimand the dog he or she is unlikely to come back to you. Once you have control over the dog again, tell him or her how good he or she is and give them lots of praise and/or treats. This will encourage the dog to accept being caught if he or she gets loose in the future. Never reprimand the dog after he or she has been caught. Dogs do not understand that you are angry about the earlier event of running away, they will associate your reprimand with coming back to you and being caught.

Handling Cats

The Basics

Cats should never be carried out of the cat adoption wing in your arms. If you are asked to move a cat to another area, always use a secure carrier. Do not remove a cat without permission from your supervisor or a staff member.

When approaching a cat, offer your hand and see how the cat responds. If he or she sniffs or rubs on you, you can attempt to pet the cat. If the cat flinches backward or does not approach you withdraw your hand and try to coax the cat toward you by talking quietly.

If a cat hisses, pins his or her ears, leans away from you, or swats do not continue to approach the cat. Close the door quietly and allow someone else to handle the cat or give him or her some space to adjust.

Cats are not like dogs, they do not take well to being reprimanded. Punishing or “correcting” a cat (including yelling and/or pointing) will often cause his or her aggressive behavior to escalate. If a cat is being unfriendly place the cat back in his or her kennel and alert your supervisor or a staff member. If a young cat or kitten is exhibiting mouthy behavior or rough play talk to your supervisor or a staff member about how to discourage this.

Taking a Cat Out

Cats can be taken into the Meet and Greet room or Catos for attention and playtime or their kennel doors can be opened so they can be petted and played with in the kennel. Please do not let cats wander around the room that they are housed in unless they reside in a Cat Community Room.

Body Language

Not all cats will show their displeasure with overt signs such as growling, hissing or swatting. Keep a close eye on the cat’s pupil size, ear position, tail movement, and body tension. Large pupils and pinned ears can be a sign of irritation, especially when combined with quick, small tail movements. A cat that is leaning away from you and/or flinches when touched is telling you to back off! Unless there is an underlying medical condition, no animal bites “out of nowhere”, however the signs can be much more subtle and convoluted with cats than with dogs. Immediately stop handling any cat that is showing signs of irritation. If you are unsure why a cat seemed to change suddenly from happy to angry please discuss the situation in detail with your supervisor or a staff member. If you are ever unsure about a cat’s body language do not proceed with handling the cat!

Breaking up a Cat Fight

Never attempt to separate two fighting cats with your body. Making a loud noise or dousing the cats with water is generally enough to get them to stop fighting. Alert your supervisor or a staff member immediately so they can place the cats in separate areas, check for wounds, and get vet treatment.

Loose Cats

Since cats should be in carriers at all times when removed from the cat wing, it is unlikely that a cat would get loose in the Center or outside. If a cat does get loose, it will most likely try to run and hide. Do not chase or attempt to grab the cat! Make sure all exits are closed or blocked. Once the cat settles in one place, quietly and calmly approach the cat. Alert your supervisor or a staff member of any loose cat and allow them to approach the cat if he or she is scared or unfriendly toward you.