



ORANGE COUNTY ANIMAL SHELTER

Volunteer Handbook 2023



RESCUE



REHABILITATE



REHOME



Welcome!

Dear Animal Shelter Volunteer,

On behalf of the Orange County Animal Shelter staff, and the residents of our community, I would like to thank you and welcome you to our team! Volunteers are essential to helping us achieve our mission of providing humane care to the animals entrusted to us.

Many tasks must be performed by many hands before an adoption or transfer to a reputable rescue can take place. Activities such as transporting animals to and from adoption sites, bathing, grooming, walking, socializing cats and dogs, fostering animals in your homes, compiling adoption profiles, photographing pets for the website, and many other important jobs are essential to our success. We value your help greatly and look forward to working with you.

The following pages provide an overview of our policies and operations. We want you to have a safe, educational, enjoyable, and rewarding volunteer experience while at our shelter. The volunteer policies summarized in this manual have been adopted to ensure that your volunteer experience is mutually beneficial to all involved, including staff, animals, other volunteers, our community, and you.

Sincerely,

Gina Jenkins

Director, Orange County Animal Shelter

Our Commitment to You

The staff of Orange County Animal Shelter value your contributions to our shelter. We want your experience to be positive and fulfilling. Our staff members strive to:

1. Provide information, training, and help so that you may successfully complete your volunteer assignments.
2. Outline goals and provide guidance and feedback.
3. Treat you as a valued and respected member of our team.
4. Be open-minded to your comments and suggestions and address any concerns to the best of our ability.

Our Mission

The Orange County Animal Shelter operates under the guidelines of the Commonwealth of Virginia providing humane sheltering, care, adoption, and redemption of stray and surrendered animals. We strive to increase public awareness by educating our citizens on responsible pet ownership and to prevent animal cruelty.

Rescue. Rehabilitate. Rehome.

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Setting an Example, Making a Difference

When you are working as a volunteer for the Orange County Animal Shelter, whether at the shelter or other locations, you represent Orange County and our organization. Therefore, it is essential that you follow a few simple, but very important, rules.

1. Treat everyone with respect and courtesy.
2. Remember, the shelter staff is always in charge. The staff is responsible for the animals, the shelter, and you, the volunteer.
3. Be kind to the animals. Under no circumstances should you harm or punish any animal. Positive reinforcement is always advised.
4. Do not openly criticize the Shelter Director, Shelter Manager, Staff, other volunteers, or County Officials. If you have complaints and/or recommendations, we sincerely want to hear them. You may give us your ideas and suggestions in writing or verbally to the Shelter Director or Manager. Do not complain to the public.
5. Please honor your schedule. Be on time or advise the Shelter Director or Manager as soon as you know you will not be able to meet your schedule.

Disclaimer

Purpose of Volunteer Policies

Orange County Animal Shelter policies and procedures are provided to offer guidance and direction to volunteers and staff engaged in the volunteer program. These policies are intended to clarify the responsibilities and roles of volunteers but do not constitute, either implicitly or explicitly, a binding contractual or personnel agreement. Volunteers are not employees of Orange County. Orange County Animal Shelter reserves the right to change any volunteer programs or policies at any time.

Scope of Policies and Procedures

Unless specifically stated, the volunteer program policies and procedures outlined in this manual apply to all volunteers.

Volunteer Policies & Procedures

For the safety of our animals, as well as our volunteers, we have policies and procedures that all volunteers must follow. All policies and procedures will be explained during the volunteer training process. Some policies and procedures are explained in this section.

Age Requirements

- Ages 18 and older may volunteer by themselves.
- Ages 16-17 may volunteer by themselves if their parent/legal guardian signs a permission form. The volunteer's parent/legal guardian must also attend the orientation with the youth volunteer.
- Ages 15 and younger may volunteer with a parent/legal guardian during community events, or on a specialized basis.

Volunteer Orientation/ Training

Our orientation and training program is approximately 30 minutes. Completion of orientation is required before reporting for any volunteer appointment. Additional training may be required depending on your specific volunteer activities. The majority of training will be hands-on learning at the shelter.

Tour

- Facility
- Off-limit areas
- Equipment, materials, and supply storage locations
- First aid cabinet/binders
- Material safety data sheets
- Emergency eye-wash stations

Volunteer Activities

- Cleaning Cat Cages
- Feline Enrichment
- Laundry
- Washing Dishes, Pet Carriers, Cubbies
- Washing/Cleaning Vehicles
- General Cleaning
- Socializing, Walking, Leash Training Dogs
- Grooming and Bathing
- Organizing Donations
- Photographing our Animals

Dress Code

All volunteers must be clearly identified as a volunteer while performing a service at the shelter or while participating in any special project or event representing the Orange County Animal Shelter.

Upon arriving for your first day, each volunteer will be given a temporary self-adhesive name tag. A permanent badge will be provided after 30 days.

Additional dress code requirements:

1. Long pants
2. Sturdy close toed shoes with non-slip soles (no crocs)
3. Appropriate clothing that can get dirty and furry if handling animals (shirts with graphics are ok but content must **NOT** include references to drugs, alcohol, sexual conduct, racial discrimination, or related topics)
4. No loose or dangling jewelry
5. No heavy perfume, cologne, or strongly scented lotion

Arrival

When first reporting in and after you sign-in, please check with a staff member to let them know that you are there and ask them if there is anything specific you may need to know for that day. Volunteers coming to walk dogs should check the dog walking board to read updates and restrictions regarding specific dogs.

Personal Snacks and Beverages

Consumption of food and drinks is not permitted in any of the animal housing areas. Please keep all food and drinks confined to the kitchen and outside sitting area.

****Do NOT feed human food to Shelter Animals.****

Off-Limits Areas

Volunteers and the general public are not permitted in the Medical Housing Areas, Recovery Rooms, and any areas identified as **“Authorized Personnel Only”**

Signage on Kennels

On the front of each kennel is a card with details regarding the dog, their name, special needs, and kennel number. Kennel techs will bring and return each dog from dog walking volunteers and will handle the cats as well. In the event a volunteer is allowed to get animals in and out of kennels it is IMPERATIVE that the animals are put back in the correct kennel/ cage (only authorized volunteers are allowed to get dogs and cats in and out of kennel/ cage).

Feeding Animals

The animals in our shelter are fed their meals on a set daily schedule, they are fed certain types and amounts of food in accordance with their specific needs. **Volunteers are not permitted to feed animals under any circumstances.**

Volunteers are permitted to feed shelter animals small amounts of approved treats during their enrichment period, unless directed otherwise.

Bites and Other Injuries

We require volunteers to report all bites, scratches, and other injuries that occur while they are volunteering. For any animal bite which breaks the skin, a behavior report and incident report must be completed. For all other injuries, an incident report must be completed. Staff will assist volunteers in completing forms, if needed.

Standards of Conduct and Customer Service

As a volunteer for the Orange County Animal Shelter, what you say and do reflects on the whole of our organization. Please be mindful of what you say and do when wearing any volunteer apparel or otherwise identifying as a volunteer. Prior to sharing any information relating to the shelter with the public or with other volunteers, please ensure that the information you are sharing is correct, not confidential, and supports the mission of the shelter. As a volunteer, you are expected to uphold the same standards of conduct and customer service that we require of our staff.

Please adhere to the following guidelines:

- **Be Positive**

We strive to give every person who comes through our shelter a positive experience, regardless of their reason for being at the shelter.

- **Be Courteous and Helpful**

Being courteous and helpful is crucial in creating a positive experience for those who come to Orange County Animal Shelter. Please also be courteous and helpful to your fellow volunteers and staff.

- **Be Professional**

It is important to present a professional image to the public while volunteering at Orange County Animal Shelter. Doing so supports the credibility of the shelter and its programs in the minds of the public.

- **Be Knowledgeable**

It is likely that while volunteering, you may be asked questions about Orange County Animal Shelter by members of the public. As a representative of our shelter, you need to be able to provide accurate responses to these questions OR know who to direct their question to.

Cell Phones

Use of cell phones or other handheld communication devices is discouraged while volunteering at Orange County Animal Shelter. If you are volunteering as a dog walker, you are encouraged to carry your phone with you in case of emergency.

Parking

Parking at our facility is limited. We encourage staff and volunteers to park in spaces farther away from the building entrance so that the spaces near the shelter are free for adopters and other customers. Detailed parking procedures for special events will be provided before each event.

Personal Belongings

Leave all valuables at home or in your personal vehicle. The shelter, and its staff, are not responsible for any personal items left in the shelter or in the parking lots.

Personal Pets on Shelter Property

Orange County Animal Shelter does not allow personal pets on the premises unless they have a meet and greet appointment for a potential adoption or foster home. Do not leave your personal pets in your car while you volunteer. This is for the safety of your pets, our shelter animals, other volunteers, staff, and the public.

Guests

For safety reasons, volunteers are not permitted to bring friends, family, or any other guests with them to the shelter while volunteering. An exception to this are parents/guardians required to be with underage volunteers.

Smoking/ Vaping

Smoking is not allowed in any portion of the building, within 30 feet of any building entrance on shelter property, or in meet and greet areas.

Zoonotic Diseases

Zoonotic diseases are diseases that can be transferred from animals to humans. Potential zoonotic agents include bacteria, viruses, fungi, internal parasites, and external parasites. To protect yourself from potentially catching a zoonotic disease:

- sanitize and wash your hands thoroughly after handling an animal
- change your clothing and shoes after visiting the shelter
- avoid touching your face to an animal's face, or allowing an animal to lick you

Resignation and Termination

The Orange County Animal Shelter has established certain rules of conduct so that we can all work together in an efficient and effective manner. We believe that volunteers are accountable for their actions, and failure on the part of the volunteer to adhere to these codes of conduct may result in disciplinary action. Volunteers who commit minor violations of the Volunteer Program policies and procedures will be verbally counseled in an effort to correct the issue immediately, through education. Minor violations could include endangering an animal, not following safety rules, etc. Continued violations could result in additional counseling or dismissal. Serious violations may result in immediate dismissal without counseling or notice. All volunteers are at-will, meaning that their volunteer status can be severed at any time, for any non-discriminatory reason, without cause by either the volunteer or Orange County Animal Shelter.

Some specific behaviors are so egregious that they will be cause for immediate dismissal. These include, but are not limited to:

1. Unauthorized removal of an animal from OCAS property
2. Willful damage to Shelter and/or County property
3. Endangering humans or animals
4. Use, sale, possession, or distribution of a controlled substance or being under the influence of a controlled substance including alcohol while at the Shelter or a Shelter Event
5. Falsification of any document
6. Intentionally misrepresenting the Shelter, the County, or its policies
7. Verbally harassing other volunteers, staff, or members of the public

8. Openly challenging the authority of any staff member
9. Violating the Orange County Animal Shelter social media policy
10. Unauthorized disclosure of internal communications, documents, or client's personal information

Social Media Policy

In today's world, having an online presence is vital for any organization to stay in contact with the community. Orange County Animal Shelter works hard to keep its online presence clean, consistent, positive, and productive. Orange County Animal Shelter must always uphold the trust of our community, donors, and customers, so it is critical that we tell our story responsibly.

Orange County Animal Shelter uses Facebook to promote all the amazing moments at the shelter with the hope that people will share information on their pages. Imagine all the people across the world we could reach if all our fans shared all our posts!

Orange County Animal Shelter expects employees and volunteers to respect the mission, vision, and values of the organization by reading and following these online guidelines.

Remember that anyone, including your colleagues, may be actively reading what you publish online. In choosing your words and your content, it's a good practice to imagine that your supervisor and your family are reading everything you post. It's all about judgment: using your personal online communications to undermine Orange County Animal Shelter's programs or philosophies, our community members, our donors, or your co-workers isn't professional and damages our mission of saving lives. If you have suggestions for improvements, please go through the proper channels to convey your concerns and share your suggestions.

Disrespectful or threatening comments toward other employees, volunteers, donors, customers or others will not be tolerated and can result in termination. As will comments that undermine our programs or are detrimental to the shelter's image. This is inclusive of all Orange County Animal Shelter branded social media sites as well as all personal social media sites (such as your own Facebook, etc.)

Below are some rules and guidelines for participating on the Orange County Animal Shelter branded social media sites. If you have specific questions, please contact your immediate supervisor.

1. Use of Orange County Animal Shelter name, logo, likeness, and any accompanying assets is prohibited without the express permission of our Shelter Director
 - a. This includes creating related private group pages, profiles, and accounts without approval from the Shelter Director.
2. The Shelter's Facebook page is not your personal page. All communications about events, animals or shelter information should come from the "brand," not individuals.
3. If you would like for something to be considered for posting on the page, please contact the Shelter Director at gjenkins@orangecountyva.gov.
4. If you are a volunteer giving advice or speaking in "we" or "our" language social media pages is strictly prohibited. This is not because your opinions are not valued, but rather because Orange County Animal Shelter is liable for any advice given on its pages.
5. Do not promote animals that are unavailable, such as those on behavior, medical, cruelty, or stray hold. We have so many animals ready to go home at the shelter, so let's focus on them.
 - a. Instead, we encourage you to share photos of your foster animals with the Shelter Director at gjenkins@orangecountyva.gov
6. When we promote our animals on our page, you can give your personal positive experience with a certain animal, and we encourage you to do so. DO NOT suggest that a certain animal would do well in a home without children or make comments about why an animal was returned. DO NOT give advice or recommendations on which animals to adopt.
 - a. Orange County Animal Shelter will always respond to people's comments about certain animals with: "Please check out our website to find the right pet for you!" All our adoptable pets have a brief bio that explains what home they would do best in. We want to protect ourselves from any upset customers that think our vets, behaviorists, or customer service reps misled them.
 - b. What is okay: "I love walking Speedy!" or "I enjoy spending time with Fluffy." or "Peewee had fun hanging out in my office today."
 - c. What is not okay: "Rex got adopted!" or [in answer to an inquiry] "We think Reuben would do well with dogs."
 - d. If you're not sure: Contact the Shelter Director

7. Occasionally, Orange County Animal Shelter might be involved in cruelty investigations that are covered by the media. It is vital that staff and volunteers refrain from commenting on such events (both on shelter sites and personal pages) as to keep our messaging consistent and not harm any potential legal cases that might arise from the event. Any media-related questions or inquiries should be directed to the Shelter Director.

8. Do not make announcements about who was adopted or answer questions about who is still at the shelter. The policy is to always refer people to the shelter by email, phone, or visiting the website to get their questions answered.

9. We will re-post pictures that the adopters themselves have posted on our page with a “thank you for adopting.” The happy news in general, should come from them first, not us. This also helps us avoid the questions in the event the animal is returned and is promoted again.

10. While we want to engage with our supporters and community members on our social media channels in fun, light-hearted ways, we don’t want to encourage debate or drawn-out back-and-forth dialogue related to serious, complicated, or in-depth issues. Please feel free to join the conversation, but questions and comments around services, programs, mission, structure, etc., are to be answered by the appropriate shelter page directly. If you’re posting or sharing information about the shelter, its programs, its pets, etc. on your own page, please direct all questions to the website or ask people to email/call our shelter for the most up to date information. Too often, information given out on social media can become out of date very quickly!

11. Please feel free to share the links, updates, and information from Facebook pages on your personal pages or accounts.

Programs & Services

Sheltering of Homeless Animals

Orange County Animal Shelter serves our community as a shelter to which the public may bring homeless, abandoned, or unwanted animals. We also house stray animals and animals that are brought in by Animal Control for pending court cases. For specific information regarding surrender procedures please see our website

<https://orangecountyva.gov/158/Animal-Shelter> Our trained and dedicated staff provides a high standard of humane care for each animal in our facility. Volunteers are essential to helping the shelter continue to meet this high standard of care for each shelter animal.

Adoptions/ Foster Care Programs

The Orange County Animal Shelter adopts out a variety of animals but the most common are dogs, cats, puppies, and kittens. All dogs and cats that are adopted from us are spayed or neutered, and up to date on vaccinations, deworming, heartworm preventative, flea & tick preventative, and microchipped. For information on how to adopt one of our pets please see our website <https://orangecountyva.gov/adoptapet>.

Our foster care program provides temporary homes for animals that may require special handling, training, medical needs, or other needs that may not be manageable in a shelter setting. Depending on your needs, interests, and abilities we can pair the best foster pet for you. For information on how to foster one of our pets please see our website

<https://orangecountyva.gov/1013/Foster-a-Pet>

Volunteer Adoptions

If a current Volunteer wishes to adopt an animal from our shelter, it is imperative that all our regular requirements for adopters are followed. Animals will not be placed on hold for volunteer adopters. Adoption counsels will take place on a first-come, first-served basis during regular adoption hours. A thorough adoption meet & greet should take place to ensure that the adopter has all information about the animal, including medical and behavioral, and to ensure that the animal is a good fit for the adopter.

For dog adoptions, all household members must meet the dog and a dog meet and greet must occur between all resident dogs and the potential adoptive dog. Any changes or exceptions to this protocol must be approved by the Shelter Director.

