



# THE ANTI-CRUELTY SOCIETY

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A Commitment to Caring *Since 1899*

**Volunteer Department**

157 West Grand Avenue, Chicago, IL 60654

[www.anticruelty.org](http://www.anticruelty.org)

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**VOLUNTEER GUIDES MANUAL**

# WELCOME

## **Welcome to the Volunteer Guides Program!**

As part of this program you become an 'ambassador' of The Anti-Cruelty Society by providing exceptional customer service to everyone who visits the shelter. You will serve as the first contact for individuals and families looking to visit, and possibly adopt, a new pet. By greeting and providing guests with general information on adoption room etiquette and adoption requirements you will be generating an inviting atmosphere for anyone who enters the adoption center.

## **Volunteer Guide Responsibilities:**

- 1) Welcome Potential Adopters
- 2) Help Other Visitors
- 3) Take Adoption Photos
- 4) Assist Customer Service Staff

## **Training Requirements**

- 1) Volunteer Orientation
- 2) Online Animal Behavior Videos
- 3) In-Shelter Training

## **Safety Guidelines**

Volunteer Guides primary duty is working with human visitors of the Anti-Cruelty Society. If a visitor or staff member requests you to transfer or in any other way handle an animal, only do so if you feel confident about your personal handling abilities. If not, decline the request.

In the event that you *do* handle an animal, it is important for you to observe safe animal handling guidelines as outlined in the Volunteer Handbook. These include observing an animal's body language and behavior, keeping animals leashed or contained in a crate at all times, never allowing two animals to meet, and washing your hands after any animal contact.

## **Importance of Following Procedure and Policy**

As a volunteer it is important to follow all procedures and policies. These have been compiled from the knowledge and experiences of other Anti-Cruelty Society volunteers and staff. They have been created in an effort to protect the animals and people who interact with them.

Adhering to these procedures will assist you with your Volunteer Guide responsibilities. If at any time you have any questions, issues or concerns, please bring them to the attention of the Volunteer Services Department.

## **Emotional Considerations**

As a Volunteer Guide you will be assisting visitors who are surrendering their animals or requesting euthanasia. Guests who seek our assistance with these services are at a heightened emotional state. Volunteers should offer assistance sensitively to anyone looking for such help.

At times volunteers themselves may also feel overwhelmed when encountering frequent relinquishments in the adoption lobby. It is natural to feel a deep sense of sympathy for these animals, and normal to experience compassion fatigue. If such an event occurs do not hesitate to take a break and contact the Volunteer Services Department.

### **Volunteer Mentors**

Experienced volunteers wear a yellow badge signifying that they are volunteer mentors. These volunteers are there to answer questions or assist new volunteers. You can check a mentor's schedule on the Volunteer Scheduler on the Anti-Cruelty website. New volunteers are encouraged to schedule their first volunteer sessions when a mentor is available.

## **Getting Started**

### **When You Can Volunteer**

- The Anti-Cruelty Society is open to the public 7 days a week for adoptions:
  - Monday-Friday: 12:00 pm – 7:00 pm. Last adoption application at 6:30pm
  - Saturday & Sunday: 12:00 pm - 5:00 pm. Last adoption application at 4:30pm
- The Anti-Cruelty Society is open to the public for the receiving of animals seven days a week from 9:00 am - 7:00 pm.
- Volunteer Guides should schedule their shifts for *peak adoption hours*, mainly Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. For volunteers who are not available on weekends, we recommend signing up for late afternoon or early evening hours on weekdays.

### **Holidays**

There are no adoptions on major holidays, but volunteers are encouraged to work with the animals on days where we are closed to the public.

### **Before you Volunteer**

Volunteer Guides are *required* to schedule their upcoming volunteer shifts using the online scheduler in advance. This tool is found on the volunteer department page of The Anti-Cruelty Society web site. The password is "ilovepets"

### **When You Arrive**

- *Sign in at the front desk.*
- *Store personal items and collect supplies.* Stop into the Volunteer Office to store your belongings in a locker with your personal lock. Then, collect supplies you may need for your program. Finally, locate your ID Badge. These are mandatory for each volunteer to wear while assisting in the shelter. If your volunteer badge is misplaced, check neighboring files—badges often get shuffled around and misfiled. If you cannot find it, please wear a

“Volunteer Trainee” badge and contact the Volunteer Services Department for a replacement.

- *After locating your badge and supplies you are ready to begin.* Go directly to the Adoption Lobby and quickly introduce yourself to staff and other volunteers who are also assigned to that space. Let them know how long you will be staying for your shift. Please note that you do not have to check-in with the Volunteer Coordinator, but should you have any questions, they will be available to assist you.

### **Before Leaving**

- *Notify staff and other volunteers that you are leaving for the day.* This way personnel knows how many people are currently in the room and that you are no longer available to assist them with the dogs.
- *Log your hours in your Volunteer Profile.* Using a volunteer computer, open a browser window and go to the following website:. Your profile was initially created by the Volunteer Department, and your username and password is your first and last name, one word, all lower case, eg: janesmith. It is important that all hours volunteered are entered. Volunteer hours are tracked and reported monthly and annually, so please log your hours immediately after you volunteer.

## **VOLUNTEER GUIDE RESPONSIBILITIES**

As a Volunteer Guide it is your mission to make every visitor who walks in through the Adoption Lobby feel welcome and informed. First impressions speak volumes. In addition to greeting guests, volunteer guides are also responsible for taking photos of adopters and their new pets before leaving the shelter.

### **Welcoming Potential Adopters**

The shelter can be an intimidating place for people to come and visit. As a Volunteer Guide you have an opportunity to make their experience stress free and pleasant by giving each person or family a warm welcome. Follow each step below to ensure that guests have a positive experience when entering the building.

#### **1. Greeting Visitors**

The simplest way to build an inviting atmosphere is with a smile. Greet each visitor in your own style, but don't forget that body language and facial mannerisms are vital to setting the tone. Even as the lobby capacity fills it is important to acknowledge the presence of a new guest – and sometimes at peak hours – the only way to do that may be with a smile and eye contact.

#### **2. Have Guests Sign the Visitor Log**

In addition to welcoming visitors, Volunteer Guides should also direct one member from each party to sign the visitor log.

### 3. Gather Visitor Information

Once the guests have signed-in, Volunteer Guides should welcome the group again and ask them if they are here to visit with cats or dogs. Also inquire if the person or family is interested in adopting that day, and if so, briefly review the Adoption Requirements and Adoption Match program handouts that are available at the front desk. If there are any adoption promotions, share those as well. If the visitor/s have brought a kennel or carrier with them – instruct them to leave it behind the customer service desk.

### 4. Share Etiquette

Before leading guests into their room of choice, share the following:

- **Do not touch animals between cages:** Inform visitors that they can help minimize illness and infection between animals by not placing fingers in cages, or touching animals who are reaching out beyond their kennels. Be candid with visitors explaining that once an animal becomes sick it is moved to a rehabilitation center and loses valuable Adoption Room time. The key is to make them understand that *they* directly affect the well-being of the animal if they do not follow this policy.
- **Only staff and volunteers can remove an animal from its kennel:** For the visitor and animal's safety, only staff and volunteers should pull an animal from its cage. If there is an animal the visitor/s would like to meet, instruct them to speak with an attendant.
- **Animals should not meet:** Explain to guests that when handling an animal out of its kennel, they should not allow for them to physically come in contact with any other animal. You may elaborate on this by saying that it exposes the animals to stress, potential illness, and may make them defensive.
- **Children should not be left unattended:** Children under the age of 18 should remain supervised by their guardians at all times. In addition, kids should never be allowed to hold an animal by themselves or their leash.

### 5. Answer Questions

After sharing basic shelter etiquette, ask if the guest/s have any questions. This is the moment when someone may ask you about a policy or specific breed question. Answer questions to the best of your ability, and if you are unsure, escort them to their room and let them know that you will seek out a manager and will return to inform them of the answer.

### 6. Adoption Room Introductions

After escorting the guest/s to their room of choice, introduce them to staff and volunteers who are not currently with other guests. Reiterate that if they want to meet an animal they will need a staff or volunteer to facilitate the interaction. Point out the flow of the room and sanitation stations, i.e. hand sanitizer locations and sinks. Advise visitors to keep their bags and valuables with them at all times. Ask the guests one final time if they have any questions. If so, address what you can, and if not, thank them for choosing The Anti-Cruelty Society and wish them well with their visit.

## Helping Other Visitors

In addition to escorting potential adopters to the adoption rooms, Volunteer Guides will be interfacing with other members of the public visiting our organization. This may include individuals looking to make a donation, volunteer, relinquish, or seek medical attention for their pets. In all of these circumstances it is important that volunteers provide the best possible customer service to these unique visitors.

- Many visitors who are coming in through the lobby are relinquishing their animals. Please be sensitive to their questions and needs, and as comfort level allows, console them before they leave. Some guests are coming to also euthanize their pets, in which case, please tell them about our pet loss support group which meets on Wednesdays, at 6pm, in our auditorium. Guests can register without cost for “Working through Pet Loss” by contacting Tammie Bouschor at [tbouschor@anticruelty.org](mailto:tbouschor@anticruelty.org) or by calling her at 312-644-8338 x.344.
- Visitors may be coming to the shelter with an injured pet and are seeking medical assistance. In these circumstances please direct them to a Customer Service staff member so that they can direct the pet owner to the appropriate resource.

## Assisting Staff

The front desk may become very crowded with individuals seeking services beyond relinquishment or adoption. If this happens, ask a staff member if there is any task in which you can assist them. This can include paging managers or doctors, refilling printer paper, or sharpening pencils.

At times because of heavy loads or inclement weather, staff may ask Volunteer Guides to escort visitors out of the adoption lobby and to the garage via a back hallway. Be sure that the hallway is clear before entering with the visitor. Field Services and Receiving staff use this hallway for moving animals to and from vehicles and clinic rooms – so be mindful.

If at any time you feel uncertain about helping in a different capacity, let staff know, so that they can seek other assistance.

## Customer Service Tips & Insights

- Greet guests within the first 20-30 seconds they are in the building.
- Make guests feel important and appreciated. Treat them as individuals. Always be informative, patient and friendly, but be sincere. People value sincerity.
- Give visitors the benefit of the doubt. Proving they’re wrong and you’re right isn’t worth losing a potential adopter. Only intercede when etiquette is being blatantly disregarded.
- Be a good listener. Take time to answer any questions with clarity. If you are unable to provide the information needed escort the guest to the adoption room and locate a manager to fill you in. Then follow up with the visitor.

- Make sure your tone of voice is in sync with your words. Your tone of voice can completely contradict your message.
- In addition to cats who are available in the CA and CCC rooms, there are adult cats in our holding rooms who are currently available for adoption. There is a list in the Cat Adopts kitchen which showcases these incredible kitties. Please mention them to visitors.
- Cats who are placed in Charlotte's Cat Corner (CCC) must be at the shelter for at least one month before becoming 'residents.' This is great to know in the event a guest asks why there are no kittens in the room – it's because they get snatched up too fast!
- If a visitor leaves the adoption rooms empty handed because they did not find what they were looking for – refer them to our online adoption gallery at [www.anticruelty.org](http://www.anticruelty.org) and inform them that animals become available daily, and that they can check the site for new additions.

## ADDITIONAL POLICIES & PROGRAMS

### Open Admissions Policy

Some visitors may ask whether this shelter is an adoption guaranteed, or "no-kill" shelter. To the contrary, the Anti-Cruelty Society has established itself in the community as an *open-admissions shelter*, or in other terms, we accept *all* animals.

All animals that come through our doors receive the most humane treatment possible. No one will be turned away, whether they are sick, injured, ill-tempered, young, old, feral, not wanted, or a stray. Maintaining an open admission shelter allows The Anti-Cruelty Society to take in animals that might otherwise be abandoned, neglected, or abused.

While the adoption guarantee organization is performing a valuable service, in many communities it is not enough. These shelters are limited admission facilities that only accept animals that are highly adoptable and on a space-available basis. The Anti-Cruelty Society recognizes the limitations of these low-capacity shelters, and for this reason has always implemented an open-admission policy. As a volunteer, you play an important role as a source of information about these, and other issues, for the visiting public.

### Euthanasia

Knowing that the shelter performs euthanasia is often the most difficult reality faced by volunteers and a topic that may be breached by visitors. Here is some general information you can share:

- If an animal's quality of life is severely compromised, euthanasia is a humane alternative.
- 57% of euthanasia's performed in 2009 were at the request of an owner due to an animal's illness, age, or behavior. In these cases, The Anti-Cruelty Society reserves the right to abstain from euthanizing a healthy animal.

- Tests and evaluations are performed by clinic and behavioral staff to deem whether a cat or dog is fit for adoption. Animals who may be rehabilitated through veterinary care or behavioral therapy are placed in special programs.
- Animals are never euthanized for their age or for lack of space.
- Once an animal is placed in the Adoption Room, it will stay there until it is adopted. There is no time limit on an animal that is up for adoption.
  - If an animal becomes sick while in an Adoption Room, it may be moved to an isolation room, the Bruckner or Butts-Berger Rehabilitation Centers, placed in a foster home until the pet recuperates, or given to a rescue organization.
  - If the previously mentioned options are unavailable, the animal may be euthanized.

### **Behavior Screening Reports**

It is important to know that some animals will be given a behavior evaluation, or Behavior Screening Report (BSR), by an Anti-Cruelty Society Animal Behavior and Training (ABT) staff member.

The Behaviorist staff interacts with adoption room cats and dogs for sociability, friendliness, and placement determination. The BSR report provides additional information about the animal's personality, characteristics, and behavior in certain situations. Animals with a BSR report on file will have a red BSR stamp on the left-hand side of their kennel card. The reports can be found at the customer service desk.

### **Adoption Requirements**

Anti-Cruelty basic adoption requirements are as follows:

- The adoption fee is \$95 for dogs, \$125 for puppies, \$60 for cats, and \$95 for kittens.
- The adopter must be 18 years or older.
- The adopter must have a picture ID with their current address on it.
- *Note: A visitor who moved recently may not have updated her picture ID for their current address. In this case, they must provide a picture ID and some other documentation (lease, utility/phone bill) that contain their current address.*
- The adopter must provide their landlord's name and phone number (or copy of current lease)
- If any other adults live in the adopter's home, they must either be present or must be reachable on the phone during the screening process. The Anti Cruelty Society needs to confirm that all adults in the household approve of the adoption.
- Guests cannot adopt an animal as a gift for someone else. Tell the visitor to bring the owner down to the shelter or they can purchase a gift certificate at the customer service desk, but they cannot adopt the cat for someone else.

- If you observe any questionable behavior or overhear comments from a visitor that you believe the screener should be made aware, please let a shelter manager or adoption screener know.
- In addition to the basic qualifications concerning age, landlord approval, and the standard adoption requirements, other ACS policy considerations may result in the adoption being delayed or denied.

The Adoption Fee Includes:

- Spay/neuter Surgery
- Microchip
- Complete health screening
- Updates on all shots and vaccinations
- Collar, leash or carry-home box
- Free follow up veterinary care within 15 days of adoption (if necessary).

### **Adoption Match Program**

The Adoption Match Program is a tool designed to increase successful adoptions while helping personnel make the best match between adopters and pets. Our goal is to make the adoption process more fluid and guest-friendly by providing volunteers and staff with easy-to-read Adoption Match cards on each cat's kennel. These cards will categorize animals by Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, and Special. They help volunteers and staff connect visitors with a pet that best meets their experience, knowledge, and expectations. You will find the category descriptions for each animal category in the appendix at the end of this manual.

The category in which an individual animal is placed is determined after a Behavior Screening Report (BSR) has been generated. Only staff from the Behavior and Training Department have clearance to designate an animal's category and write on their corresponding Adoption Match card. Volunteers and staff are welcome to nominate animals for a changed stage as rehabilitation and enrichment programs impact an animal's personality. These requests should be submitted in writing and given to a B&T staff member.

This program is *not* meant to be used as a screening tool to filter out adopters. Instead – it helps personnel make a good match for adopters while in the adoption room. Too often visitors fall in love with a pet that is not appropriate for their lifestyle and are later denied in the adoption screening process. With this program adopters connect with the animal best suited for them from the onset – and not after they are already attached and then heartbroken when denied.

### **Special Adoption Programs**

#### **Pets for the Elderly Adoption Program**

The goal of this program is to match senior citizens with pets that are appropriate for their lifestyle, bringing them both love and companionship for life. Any individual who is 60 years or

older is eligible for this program and must meet standard adoption criteria. The adoption fee is waived and The Anti-Cruelty Society is reimbursed by the program sponsors.

### **Aged to Perfection Adoption Program**

The Aged to Perfection Program encourages the adoption of pets who are 7 years old or older. Adopters taking home these adult dogs or cats are eligible for an adoption fee refund after 90 days. The adopters must submit a request for the fee to be returned.

address how ECOP or EDOP behaviors will be handled by the person wanting to adopt.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Health Issues**

#### **Are the animals at The Anti-Cruelty Society healthy?**

- All animals are examined by a veterinarian at the shelter and are tested before being admitted into an adoption room.
- Visitors should be aware, however, that there are incubation periods for certain diseases (such as Upper Respiratory Infection and Kennel Cough) so it is possible that an animal may have caught something and is not yet showing signs.
- If an animal is adopted and begins showing signs of illness within 15 days, the owner can bring the animal back to Anti-Cruelty and we will treat it free of charge.
- Anti-Cruelty recommends that adopters take their new companions to their own veterinarians for a full examination as soon as possible after adoption to establish a new relationship.

#### **Have the animals had their shots?**

- When animals come into the shelter, they are treated as if they have never been vaccinated before and are given the initial vaccinations for rabies and distemper.
- After an animal is adopted, the new owner will need to take them to their own vet to get one or more rounds of booster shots.
- After these initial booster shots the owner will be responsible for keeping the animal up-to-date on its vaccinations. This involves having them vaccinated once a year.

#### **Do the animals have worms?**

- All animals are given de-worming medicine when they arrive at the shelter. This medicine kills most common types of intestinal parasites but, when the new owner takes their animal to their own veterinarian for a full examination, the vet should check to make sure the cat or dog does not have additional parasites.

## Spaying & Neutering

### **If I adopt today, can I take my new pet home today?**

- If the animal is already spayed or neutered, it will go home on the day of adoption. If not, it will have surgery the next business day, and go home the afternoon following their surgery.

### **What if I can't pick up the animal right when it's ready after its surgery?**

- Unfortunately, due to space constraints, we cannot hold animals in the clinic after surgery. The new owner will need to make arrangements to have their pet picked up when it is ready to be released. If necessary, they can have a friend or relative pick the animal up.

### **Can I have the animal spayed/neutered by my own vet?**

- No. Illinois law states that all animals must be spayed or neutered before leaving the shelter. The only exception is when an animal is sick and needs to recover at the new owner's home before undergoing surgery.
- This question may be asked because new cat owners want to have their felines altered and declawed at the same time. The Anti-Cruelty Society does not condone declawing and considers it an inhumane practice.

### **Will spaying/neutering change an animal's personality?**

- It won't change the personality, but it may change some behavior if it is hormonally driven (such as spraying). It depends on how long the animal has been doing the behavior.

### **Do all male cats spray?**

- No, spraying is not the normal way of urinating. They spray to mark territory and when the cat feels as if its territory is threatened. Some females spray, but being spayed or neutered is not a guarantee that the cat will not spray.

### **Will my application be denied if I plan to have the cat declawed?**

- No. While ACS recommends that adopters try to train their cats to use scratching posts, we will not deny an application because a new owner plans to have their cat declawed. The adoption packet provided to new owners includes tips on how to train cats to use scratching posts.

### **Can ACS declaw my cat?**

- No. ACS does not perform cosmetic surgeries and considers declawing inhumane. Owners who want to have their cats declawed will have to use their own veterinarians.

## General Questions

### **How long do the cats and dogs stay in the Adoption Room before they are euthanized?**

- There is no "time limit" for animals in the Adoption Rooms. Once they are placed in this room, they stay here until they are adopted, unless they get sick or their temperament changes.

**Can you “reserve” this cat or dog for me until tomorrow/for an hour/for any period of time?**

- No. ACS does not place animals “on hold.”

## CONCLUSION

Over the years, a tremendous amount of success and progress has been achieved in the care provided to animals and educating the community. However, more work needs to be done.

Together with the help of volunteers like yourself, who selflessly contribute thousands of hours annually, the companion animals of Chicago have a voice and advocates to provide them with the love, care, and attention they all need and deserve. Your assistance as a Volunteer Guide will help us to fulfill this mission by providing the visitor support and customer service necessary to accomplish our goals.

We thank you again for your decision to volunteer with us and for choosing to help the animals in our care in this program. Your efforts make a significant difference in The Anti-Cruelty Society’s work and our mission to find loving homes for shelter pets.

**ROUTE BETWEEN ADOPTS & GARAGE**

