



## Alaska SPCA Volunteer Orientation

Welcome to volunteering with the Alaska SPCA! We are delighted to have you join us and appreciate the time and talents you contribute to helping achieve our mission of ending suffering for Alaska's companion animals. Before we can schedule you for any volunteer opportunities, we need to help you understand the organization, some of our policies, and how you can safely interact with pets.

We want your volunteer experience with the Alaska SPCA to be safe, rewarding, and meaningful, so we do require that you complete the orientation before you participate in any of the opportunities offered.

### General Background and History

The Alaska Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (AK SPCA) was founded in 1955 by a group of volunteer animal advocates committed to making Alaska a better place for companion animals. **Although people often think we are not affiliated with the ASPCA.** It means that all contributions stay right here in Alaska helping Alaska's pets. The organization was formed in 1955 and is one of the oldest animal welfare organizations in the state. Our mission is to prevent suffering in Alaska's companion animals, and we provide services across the state. Our Guiding Principles are The Five Freedoms that you may be familiar with. We believe that all animals deserve freedom from:

- *Hunger and thirst*
- *Discomfort*
- *Pain, injury, or disease*
- *Penalty for exhibiting normal behavior*
- *Fear and distress*

To fulfill our mission, we run multiple programs across two locations. We have an Adoption Center, a Pet Resource Center, and a Veterinary Clinic that provides affordable and accessible veterinary care to the local community. Additionally, we conduct rural outreach efforts, extending veterinary services to communities in need.

### **Clinic and Adoption Center Connection:**

One of the unique aspects of our business is that we provide onsite veterinary care for the animals that come into our shelter. The vets take turns spending part of an afternoon each week at the Adoption Center (AC), providing wellness exams, assessments, vaccines, and checks on animals receiving some type of ongoing treatment. Additionally, spays, neuters, and other veterinary needs that don't fit into the weekly visits are added to the schedule as we can fit. Our goal is to help animals in our care go to new caring homes vaccinated, spayed, or neutered and have treatment plans for any ongoing issues. We get animals from all over the state, so don't be surprised. Most of our work at the AC is supported by donations, with a small percentage (roughly 13%) coming from adoption fees.

### **Nonprofit Status**

The Alaska SPCA is a federally designated nonprofit organization. That means there isn't an owner per se, and that profit isn't the motive behind the cost of our services. As a nonprofit, we are governed by a volunteer board of directors who are prohibited by state law from accepting compensation and the executive director, who is the legal representative and leader of the organization. No one at the Alaska SPCA receives a commission for the work we do. Our vets and vet techs all work on a salary or wage basis. We do not pay income taxes as we are exempt and file what's called a 990 with the IRS each year. Those returns are available for review upon request. Because we are a nonprofit, there are specific requirements for management that we must adhere to, and some of that impacts your work, particularly how we collect and track payments. We gladly accept donations from the public.

For more information about the organization's history, status, or other management issues, contact Kelly Donnelly, Executive Director, at [kdonnelly@alaskasPCA.org](mailto:kdonnelly@alaskasPCA.org)

### **Volunteer Expectations**

We are delighted you're willing to share your time and talents with the Alaska SPCA and the animals in our care. Here are our expectations:

- You will report on the shifts for which you've volunteered.
- You will follow the directions of your shift supervisor. If you are not sure of something, you will ask. There's no such thing as a bad question.
- You will become familiar with our safety practices, including those related to animal interaction.

## **SAFETY**

This next section informs you of strategies that are in place or techniques for you to use to ensure that you are safe during your volunteer experience. When we consider safety, we reference interpersonal and environmental safety with the animals in our care.

### **Interpersonal Safety**

The AKSPCA expects employees and volunteers to behave in a way that reinforces the mission and principles of the organization. Every employee and volunteer must be accorded respect and consideration and feel that the AKSPCA provides a safe and productive workplace.

#### **ALL EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS ARE PROHIBITED FROM ENGAGING IN HARASSMENT OF ANY OTHER EMPLOYEE OR VOLUNTEER.**

Harassment is defined as sexual harassment of any kind, discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, age, sex, marital status, pregnancy, sexual orientation, or physical handicap, and includes, but is not limited to, ethnic, racial, sexual, or religious remarks, animosity, unwelcome sexual advances, and requests for sexual favors, or other conduct which does not belong in the workplace, and verbal harassment (derogatory statements or slurs), physical harassment (assault, physical interference with normal work involvement), visual harassment (poster, cartoons, and drawings), pranks, and innuendoes of or to employees or applicants for positions.

Sexual harassment is a violation of state and federal law. It includes sexually-motivated physical conduct, other verbal or physical conduct, or visual forms of harassment of a sexual nature when submission to such conduct is either explicitly or implicitly made a term or condition of employment, is used as the basis for employment decisions, or when such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an employee's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

### **Environmental Safety**

#### **Tobacco and Vaping**

- Tobacco users are expected to refrain from smoking in or around any AKSPCA property. If you do choose to smoke (in your car, for example), we expect you to dispose of cigarette butts in the proper receptacle and avoid smelling cigarette smoke when returning to the work site. Those who use chewing tobacco are prohibited from spitting on the grounds of any property the Alaska SPCA owns or rents. For individuals who vape, the same rules apply as those for smokers.

## COVID and other Public Health Risks

- The Alaska SPCA will abide by all local, state, and federal requirements for protecting public health. That may include masking, limiting client access to facilities, temperature checks, PPE use, and other mandated measures.

## Natural Disasters and Emergencies

- In the event of a natural (flood or earthquake) or man-made disaster (fire, hazardous chemical release, etc.), the safety of employees, volunteers, and animals in our care is the number one priority. If building integrity is compromised by the event, animals and employees will be evacuated. Cats and small dogs at the Clinic should be placed in carriers or kennels and removed from the building. Larger dogs must be secured on a slip leash. Given that these animals may be at risk of hypothermia, at least one person must be designated to grab extra blankets to be used to assist in maintaining adequate body temperatures. The evacuation destination could include another unaffected suite in the building, vehicles, or over at another Alaska SPCA site. Please note that the Adoption Center has been designated as an emergency evacuation/recovery site for pets in the Anchorage area. If the event is at the Adoption Center, pets should be loaded into the mobile clinic or van and evacuated to the Woodland Dr. location.

## Emergency Closure Information

- Alaska has its share of events that might cause an emergency closure. If our facilities are closed, you will not be expected to show up for your volunteer shift. For non-emergency cancellations, we will notify you by phone or email.

## General Safety Reminders

- Identify and remember the location of fire extinguishers and emergency exits. NEVER block these areas with materials or equipment.
- Keep floors and walkways free of obstructions and debris.
- Seat belts are to be always worn when driving on business, whether in agency vehicles or personal automobiles.
- When restraining animals over 50 lbs., seek assistance.
- Any person known or observed to be under the apparent influence of drugs or alcohol will not be allowed to work and will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.
- Do not eat, drink, smoke, apply cosmetics, or store food in areas where animals are handled.
- ALWAYS wash your hands or use hand sanitizer 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 is placed in the area until the floor is dry. The aisles should always be kept clear.
- Report all hazards to your shift manager immediately.

## Safety with Animals

The animals you should expect to see in the Clinic are dogs, cats, and rabbits. You will interact with them when they come in for vaccines, exams, surgeries, and procedures. These are all stressful situations, and the risk of injury to the pet, employee, or volunteer if you are careless is increased. If in doubt, ask a more experienced staff member to assist you. The following requirements are in place to minimize the risk to you and other animals:

- **Cats and Rabbits:** Must be in a carrier or small kennel. If the owner does not have one, carriers are available for purchase at low cost in the Pet Resource Center. Do not attempt to handle a community (feral) cat.
- **Dogs:** All dogs must be under control using a slip leash. Dogs can be required to be muzzled if there is any indication or history of biting. Animals that cannot be handled safely must be returned to the owner. The owner can try to bring the animal back another day or make an appointment with their regular veterinarian for sedated vaccinations. High-risk dogs for procedures will be marked with a "CAUTION" notice on the animal's record and the kennel in which it is recovering. **Do not attempt to remove one of these dogs from the kennel.** Ask a tech for assistance.

## Virus Prevention

We vaccinate to limit widespread disease in the population and protect each individual animal as much as possible, but vaccines are not a guarantee against infection.

Disease can be transmitted in several ways, and we must work diligently to prevent transmission as much as possible. The 5 main modes of disease transmission are:

- Direct contact (one animal to another, such as nose to nose)
- Fomite (indirect) transmission (germ transmission on an inanimate object, such as a mop, hand, or shirt)
- Aerosol (in the air, such as via a fan)
- Droplet (sneezing, coughing, less than 1 meter distance transmission)
- Vector (via a flea, mouse, tick)

Common diseases in clinic and shelter environments include feline upper respiratory infection and canine infectious upper respiratory disease (kennel cough). These are spread mainly through aerosol, droplet transmission, and fomite transmissions, such as via the hands, feet, and even on the clothing of staff and volunteers.

**For this reason, please wash your hands (use hand sanitizer) when handling each animal and/or wear disposable gloves. Sanitizer bottles and dispensers are located throughout the areas. You do not have to sanitize your hands between the mother and puppies or kittens in a litter, but you must do so before you interact with another dog or cat.**

Other diseases, such as parvovirus in dogs and panleukopenia (the cat form of parvovirus), are spread mainly through fomite transmission of bodily secretions, such as vomit and feces. These viruses are very environmentally hardy and can be difficult to eradicate from the shelter environment if proper sanitation procedures are not in place.

Staff or volunteers who observe animals exhibiting any signs of illness (such as diarrhea, vomiting, sneezing, coughing, nasal discharge, etc.) should immediately notify the clinic manager or veterinarian.

**IMPORTANT:** Dogs and cats with unknown vaccination history that are ill or have been exposed to illness are placed in Quarantine rooms at the Adoption Center. Under no circumstances are volunteers allowed in Quarantine Rooms. This is for your safety and the safety of any other animal with which you may come in contact.

### Every-day Practices that Help Prevent the Spread of Disease

- Report any animal that appears sick to your site supervisor.
- **Wash your hands between animals.**
- Do not let animals housed apart interact or touch noses.
- Immediately pick up all feces once a dog has defecated.
- After picking up feces, wash and disinfect any cement or solid surface.
- Any time you disinfect, rinse, or wipe the area thoroughly.
- Wash the laundry and dishes according to the posted written protocol.
- Change trash liners on a regular basis; don't let the trash receptacles overflow.
- Sanitize equipment such as leashes, 'box down' boxes; disinfect control poles and pooper scoopers between use.

If we all follow the same procedures, the risk of having a disease problem will be greatly minimized.

### APPROACHING FEARFUL ANIMALS

When approaching a fearful animal, you should make every effort to be as non-threatening as possible. Remember that a caged animal may not show you signs of fear until it feels cornered (i.e., when you close off the only visible exit path).

- **Remember that the animal may PERCEIVE a threat,** even though you do not intend to threaten.
- **Move slowly and deliberately.** Quick, sudden, or tentative movements may produce more fearful reactions. Be sure that the animal sees you.
- **Do not make direct eye contact.** While you obviously need to watch where you are going and what you are doing, direct eye contact is very intimidating and threatening to the animal. Look to the side, above the head, or toward the floor.
- **Approach at the animal's level.** Even if you are not a very large person, you are taller than the animal and may seem to loom over it. Crouch down (bending at the knees) or kneel or sit on the floor; you should be stable in whatever position you choose. (When

working with higher cages, try to bring your hand in from the bottom, rather than the top, of the cage.

- **Do not reach over the animal's head.** Reach out and touch under the chest or chin, or behind and under the ears, rather than over the head. Allow the animal to sniff your fingers first if he wants to investigate you. (Cats will generally “tell” you where they prefer your finger to touch them; the jawbone is often selected!)

**Rushing an animal increases stress for the animal and the situation. Increased stress means more unpredictable circumstances, which lead to dangerous situations.** Refer to the Fear Free Scales in the appendix for more information on interpreting stress behaviors in pets.

### Bites and Scratches

Animals housed and/or treated by the Alaska SPCA pose a risk to safety, regardless of how affectionate they might appear. There is a risk that a volunteer may be scratched or bitten by an animal. All injuries must be reported using the Alaska SPCA Incident Report Form, as well as your supervisor. The following common-sense steps should be taken:

- Wash the wound thoroughly with soap and warm water.
- Apply a sterile dressing.
- Report the injury to the site supervisor for further assessment/action.

Depending on the severity of the injury, your supervisor may instruct you to seek medical attention at the nearest urgent care facility. If the injury is a bite and it is severe enough to require medical attention, the incident must be reported to Animal Care and Control. Call 343-8119 to make a report.

The **incident must be reported** in the patient file as a memo, and the owner must be informed. Based on the incident, the Executive Director will determine whether there is an ongoing safety risk to employees or volunteers. Animals deemed a safety risk may be banned from the Clinic. Shelter animals that cannot be safely handled will be referred for review by the veterinarians, the Shelter Manager, and the Executive Director.

### Safe Body Mechanics

We do not want you to injure yourself while working. Do not attempt to lift an animal or item that is more than 70 lbs. The following guidelines are to be followed when lifting heavy objects:

- **Keep a wide base of support.** Your feet should be shoulder-width apart, with one foot slightly ahead of the other (karate stance).
- **Squat** down, bending at the hips and knees only. If needed, put one knee on the floor, and your other knee in front of you bent at a right angle (half kneeling).

- **Keep good posture.** Look straight ahead, and keep your back straight, your chest out, and your shoulders back. This helps keep your upper back straight while having a slight arch in your lower back.
- **Slowly lift** by straightening your hips and knees (not your back). Keep your back straight, and don't twist as you lift.
- **Hold** the load as close to your body as possible, at the level of your belly button.
- **Use your feet** to change direction, taking small steps.
- **Lead with your hips** as you change direction. Keep your shoulders in line with your hips as you move.
- **Set down** your load carefully, squatting with the knees and hips only.

Keep in mind:

- Do not attempt to lift by bending forward. Bend your hips and knees to squat down to your load, keep it close to your body, and straighten your legs to lift.
- Never lift a heavy object above shoulder level.
- Avoid turning or twisting your body while lifting or holding a heavy object.
- If you are lifting an animal, reach around all four legs with your arms, hold the animal close to your body, and use your knees to lift it, not your back.

**Report all injuries**, no matter how slight, to your supervisor.

**You are ready to go!**

These are the basics we expect of all volunteers. The Secret Word is Critter (if you've been following the orientation instructions, you'll be asked for it). Specific opportunities may have unique qualifications, and you may have to provide documentation or describe your experience to meet those qualifications.