



# Volunteer Handbook

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## **Policies and Procedures**

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**Multnomah County Animal Shelter**  
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## **1. Welcome**

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Welcome to the volunteer team at Multnomah County Animal Services (MCAS), a division of the Multnomah County Department of Community Services. We appreciate your interest and enthusiasm in supporting shelter operations as we work “to protect the health, safety and welfare of people and pets of Multnomah County through the delivery of innovative programming and community education/information services.” (MCAS mission statement)

Shelter staff and volunteers work hard to make MCAS an inviting place for the community to visit and a great place to find a family pet. Shelter volunteers spend countless hours serving in support roles at MCAS. All volunteers help with critical daily needs such as providing excellent customer service to shelter visitors, washing dishes, doing laundry, assisting with daily cleaning and upkeep of public facing areas, preparing and providing enrichment activities for animals, and some also help provide exercise to our canine residents.

Volunteers at the shelter are often drawn to this work due to their connection to, and compassion toward, animals. We value each volunteer’s connection to the work and ask that volunteers abide by the protocols in place regarding confidentiality, including background information about animals or current court cases involving animals, and all applicable policies in place at MCAS. This means that volunteers often care for animals with limited, or no, background information and that volunteers are not typically informed of specific outcomes for each animal.

Multnomah County Animal Services realizes about a 90% live release rate for dogs and cats. While there is so much to celebrate, it is also important to note that the shelter environment can also be difficult for some. Volunteers are expected to be able to mentally and emotionally process the reality of serving in the shelter environment and we ask that you make an informed decision about your ability to volunteer with us.

We look forward to getting to know you.

**With Gratitude,**

**Tara Sturges**  
**Volunteer Coordinator**



## 2. Shelter Information

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### Mission Statement

To protect the health, safety and welfare of people and pets of Multnomah County through the delivery of innovative programming and community education/information services.

### Vision Statement

Multnomah County is recognized as a progressive, safe, compassionate, and livable community for people and their pets. MCAS is aligned with the community's values to deliver proactive and equitable support for people and their pets by providing necessary resources, early-interventions, and vital services to reduce the stressful shelter experience for pets, and reduce barriers for pet owners to provide adequate care, retain their animals, and reclaim impounded animals from the shelter.

### Guiding Principles - Our North Star

- **Excellence in the quality of care for the animals in our shelter**
- **Providing equitable services to our community.**

### Shelter Website

Information about the programs and services that we offer, in addition to contact information, can be found on our website, [www.multcopets.org](http://www.multcopets.org)



### 3. Volunteer Expectations

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#### Expectations

Volunteers are expected to act professionally at all times when engaging in MCAS activities. This includes adhering to, and showing support of, the policies and directives of MCAS staff and refraining from allowing conflicting personal views to overshadow the expertise and purpose of MCAS.

Volunteers at MCAS are considered to be representatives of MCAS both while at the shelter and while representing the shelter at events. As a representative of MCAS it is expected that volunteers promote and advocate for the mission of MCAS.

#### Training

Volunteer training will consist of a combination of virtual and in person training.

#### Appropriate Attire

Volunteers are required to wear appropriate attire while volunteering either at the shelter or at an event away from the shelter.

- Any volunteer who participates in any type of animal-handling related activities, including but not limited to, kennel cleaning/feeding, dog walking, socializing, veterinary care, and transportation:
  - Must wear close-toed shoes with non-skid soles.
  - Shall not wear dangling or large-hooped earrings, necklaces, or any other item that may be accidentally pulled or entangled by an animal
- Clothing should cover the full torso, legs, and should maintain full coverage while bending, stooping, squatting, etc.
- Most volunteers wear jeans, a comfortable t-shirt, tank tops or sweatshirt, and tennis shoes or hiking boots.



### Prohibited Attire

- Torn, faded, stained, discolored, patched, ripped, overstretched or frayed clothing (exception: staff and volunteers who are cleaning kennels during closed business hours)
- Workout or bathing wear (sweat pants, yoga pants, spaghetti strap tank tops, bathing suits, or other similar attire),
- Clothing with profanity, political statements, nude or semi-nude pictures, offensive gestures or suggestive cartoons; derogatory or offensive words.

### Volunteer Conduct

#### Volunteers must:

- Provide a courteous, friendly, and welcoming environment for shelter visitors
- Take their commitment seriously - be punctual and present while on duty.
- Put their work first while serving at MCAS - focus on tasks at hand while limiting personal distractions.
- Conduct themselves in a professional manner in all interactions with staff, volunteers, animals, and shelter visitors.
- Keep all client information confidential: Names and specific case information must be kept confidential and may not be shared outside of the shelter.
- Provide accurate information to all shelter visitors
- Ask for assistance when needed



### Customer Service

Volunteers are responsible for providing excellent customer service at MCAS. Customer service at the shelter includes greeting customers, maintaining a clean and welcoming environment in the animal adoption areas, guiding potential adopters through the application process, ensuring that all required documents are completed prior to adoption counseling sessions, and serving as a proud advocate for the services provided by MCAS.

It is important that visitors receive the correct information so if a shelter visitor asks questions that you do not know the answers to, the best approach is to find someone else who does.

### Scheduling and Attendance

We ask that each volunteer is scheduled for recurring shifts on a weekly basis. This helps establish a predictable schedule for staff and the animals at the shelter. Volunteers are also welcome to fill additional vacant slots in the schedule as their schedules allow.

**If, for any reason, you are unable to report for your shift please notify your supervisor as soon as possible so alternate arrangements can be made.**

#### Checking in and out for Your Shift and Recording Volunteer Time:

Volunteers are required to **Sign in** at the beginning of their shift and **sign out** and the end of their shift. The tablet used for signing in and out is located in the volunteer check in area.

- If a volunteer forgets to sign in or out, they should inform the Volunteer Coordinator via email so their hours can be recorded properly.

### Safety Culture

Volunteers are required to comply with all safety guidelines in place at MCAS. Every individual at MCAS must consider safety as a top priority and carry out all MCAS safety protocols. It is important that volunteers recognize their own limitations and seek assistance when needed, especially in the event of animal behavior concerns.



Volunteers are required to immediately report any unsafe conditions, including accidents or injuries to a staff member within 10 minutes of the incident.

## 4. Volunteer Policies

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### Privacy and Confidentiality

Confidentiality regarding personal information about clients and the outcome of individual animal situations must be maintained at all times. All information pertaining to an individual client is confidential and shall not be repeated or shared in any manner, including on social media. Volunteers who break this confidentiality agreement may be dismissed from their volunteer duties.

#### Protective Custody:

Because MCAS also cares for animals that are involved in active court cases, there are additional confidentiality requirements for animals in protective custody. Volunteers may not produce or share photographs of animals in protective custody. Photos of animals in protective custody could be considered evidence and could result in being subpoenaed by a court of law.

### Safety Procedure: Scratches, Bites, and Injuries

Any accident or injury occurring on site (volunteer or visitor) must be reported to management staff immediately (for example, within 10 minutes). Surface scratches must be cleaned and covered with antibiotic cream and a bandage if bleeding. All injuries require a completed incident/injury report to be completed by a staff member.

In the event of an incident involving an animal, return the animal immediately to their kennel (if able to do so) and immediately notify staff. If the animal cannot be returned to the kennel, seek immediate assistance from staff.

### Phone and Internet Use

- Cell phones should be put away while volunteering. Volunteers serving in roles that have elevated safety risks should carry an MCAS radio that can be used to call for help if needed.





- Personal phone use, including texting, is not allowed while working with animals in the shelter or while walking dogs.

### Personal Property

Volunteers should not bring anything of value with them to the shelter. MCAS is not responsible for damage, loss, or theft of personal items.

### Personal Visitors

Personal visitors are not allowed during volunteer shifts.

### Parking

Volunteers should park in the main lot, in the spots furthest away from the main building entrance as possible. This helps keep parking spaces open to potential adopters and other shelter visitors.

### Media Inquiries

Volunteers are not authorized to communicate on behalf of MCAS or the County to the media including social media. All media requests should be forwarded to a shelter manager.

#### **Social Media:**

The following activities are prohibited:

- \* Posting MCAS' proprietary or other confidential business information, including but not limited to private information about MCAS' donors, volunteers, employees, clients, investigation cases, service providers and suppliers, MCAS' financial information, non-public operational procedures and techniques that have a commercial value and strategic business plans.
- \* Posting social media content that purports to represent the position, viewpoint, statements, opinions or conclusions of MCAS, its donors, business partners, service providers or vendors.



### Unauthorized Areas

Volunteers must adhere to all signage regarding unauthorized areas.

### Animal Dispositions and Outcomes

Multnomah County Animal Services maintains the sole discretion to determine animal dispositions and outcomes. Volunteers may not solicit changes to determined dispositions or individual outcomes without express approval from MCAS, including seeking rescue for animals on behalf of MCAS, seeking adoption placement for animals that are not available for adoption, or otherwise disregarding the disposition determination processes in place at MCAS. These activities undermine the mission of MCAS.

### Prohibited Substances and Weapons

- The sale, use, possession, or transfer of illegal and/or controlled substance or alcohol on the MCAS premises or during work time is prohibited.
- Weapons are not allowed on the MCAS property or at any MCAS sponsored events.
- Tobacco use is also prohibited on MCAS property, including dog walking trails.

### Harassment, Discrimination and Retaliation

Multnomah County and MCAS are committed to creating and maintaining an environment in which each person is respected without regard to protected status (race, sex, national origin, religion, etc.). This policy applies to volunteers and interns as well as employees. Volunteers are expected to serve the public with the same respect and to protect and respect the privacy of clients, partners and employees. Harassment, Discrimination and Retaliation are prohibited.



## **5. Volunteer Performance:**

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Volunteers are expected to follow MCAS policies regardless of conflicting personal views. Volunteers may be coached if expectations are not being met, however, MCAS may terminate or modify the terms of this volunteer agreement without cause, at any time. Any egregious behavior regarding animal welfare and other policies detailed here may result in immediate dismissal by any supervising staff member.