

# **Volunteer Handbook**

## Guidelines



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**Welcome to the Adopt-A-Dog volunteer program!** We appreciate your interest in our organization. As a nonprofit animal shelter, we greatly depend on our volunteers. Your time and the variety of skills you offer support our organizational efforts and provide quality care for the animals at our shelter.

We are very committed to supporting your role as a volunteer by presenting you with a consistent and thorough training program to allow you to do your best at our shelter. The shelter's orientation and dog handling training are for your benefit and designed to keep you informed, safe and to teach you new and useful skills. Safety is a huge priority for Adopt-A-Dog and our main concern for all our volunteers.

We have many different positions that volunteers can choose from based on their skill and comfort level. Feel free to let the Volunteer Coordinator know if you are interested in another position so you can advance in the program. We will be more than happy to teach you another aspect of our shelter.

We hope you find volunteering at Adopt-A-Dog a fun and rewarding experience. We know that your time is valuable and that you are choosing to dedicate it to us. The staff and animals at Adopt-A-Dog truly appreciate your help!

## **About Adopt-A-Dog**

Adopt-A-Dog is a recognized 501(c)(3) charitable organization whose mission is to Save, Socialize and Secure Loving Homes for Unwanted or Abandoned Dogs. We have been serving the tri-state area and beyond for over three decades. Our shelter is open seven days a week. Our dedicated staff and volunteers strive to provide the best care possible while the animals wait for safe and permanent homes.

The purpose of the Adopt-A-Dog volunteer program is to provide a welcoming environment where our organization can create a positive impact on our community and give people the chance to dedicate their time making a difference in the lives of homeless animals any way they can.

## **About this Handbook**

This handbook summarizes the policies and guidelines for our onsite and at home volunteers. For any further questions or clarifications, please ask the Volunteer Coordinator. All policies and guidelines are subject to change at any time. We will notify you of these changes as soon as possible.

## **Principles of Adopt-A-Dog**

Adopt-A-Dog has principles that we want our volunteers to embrace:

- The Golden Rule: To treat all living things as we would wish to be treated.
- Kindness: To demonstrate compassion and respect for all living creatures.
- Positive Influence: To create a positive experience for yourself and others around you.
- Representation: To represent Adopt-A-Dog in a positive way to the public.

## **Volunteer Application**

When signing up to volunteer, everyone will need to fill out a volunteer application form. This is the first step. The information that you provide will allow us to get to know you and to determine where you will be placed in our program.

## **Onsite Volunteer Orientation**

Before you begin volunteering you will be required to attend a volunteer orientation which will be held at the shelter.

At this orientation you will:

- Complete the required forms
- Learn about the history of Adopt-A-Dog
- Understand the importance of basic training for an Adopt-A-Dog volunteer
- Get a brief overview of the current sheltered animals
- Learn about the online volunteer program system
- Learn about the different procedures at the shelter (quarantine, safety, and adoption procedures)
- Understand the euthanasia policy
- Tour the shelter

To participate in our Dog Walking program, you will need to have a consult with the Shelter & Behavior Manager. Once this initial consult is complete, and you participate in taking dogs for walks, to advance in the Dog Walking program to take more advanced dogs for walks and/or adventures another consult will be scheduled with the Shelter & Behavior Manager.

To set up your first volunteer session you will need to email the Volunteer Coordinator.

***\*Please know that this orientation is required, and you will not be allowed to begin volunteering until this step is complete.***

***\* Our Volunteer Policy requires all volunteers to begin on a one-month trial. During this time Adopt-A-Dog will assess your skills and work with you to determine how you can best help the dogs.***

***\* At any point at the discretion of the management of Adopt-A-Dog, the volunteer relationship can be terminated.***

## **At Home Volunteer Orientation**

Considering the current situation our shelter is closed to the public until further notice, but we still want to offer opportunities for our volunteers! The dogs we have at the shelter are being taken care of by our staff.

Before you begin volunteering you will be required to attend a mandatory volunteer orientation via Zoom. All required documents must be completed and submitted to the Volunteer Coordinator before your scheduled Zoom call.

During the orientation you will:

- Learn about the history of Adopt-A-Dog
- Understand the importance of basic training for an Adopt-A-Dog volunteer
- Get a brief overview of the current sheltered animals
- Learn about the online volunteer program system
- Learn about the different procedures at the shelter (quarantine, safety, and adoption procedures)
- Understand the euthanasia policy
- Go over the opportunities available for At Home Volunteers

***\* When the shelter reopens to the public all At Home Volunteers will have the opportunity to start our onsite volunteer programs.***

## **Volunteer Positions**

The positions are subject to change at any time depending upon our needs. We know that all volunteers have different strengths and levels of experience. The Volunteer Coordinator will keep track of each volunteer's progress and before advancing to any level there will be an evaluation by the Volunteer Coordinator utilizing staff feedback when necessary.

- Dog Socialization
- Dog Walker
- Office Assistance
- Adoptions Assistant
- Event Assistant
- Event Handler

## **Youth Volunteers**

Adopt-A-Dog welcomes youth volunteers in many different positions. This program can be a fun and rewarding experience for people of all ages.

All volunteers under the age of 18, unless part of an approved educational group, must always have a parent or guardian onsite. An adult must supervise a group of minors onsite. All adults and anyone that comes to Adopt-A-Dog needs to attend a volunteer orientation. There will be no exceptions.

## **Youth Volunteer Positions** (Youth must always have a parent/guardian present to volunteer)

- Dog Tails
- Donation Drive
- Wish List Collections
- Sponsor A Dog in need
- Help at our Offsite Events
- Community Service Opportunities

**Volunteer ages 15, 16 and 17** can participate in our Dog Socialization Program with a parent or guardian present.

**For At Home Positions:** We will email you the at home packet with opportunities available for you.

## **Volunteer Responsibilities**

- Be responsible. Do not be afraid to ask for help from the staff when you need it. Always use your best judgment.
- Be positive. Please approach your assignment in a positive way. You are volunteering to help Adopt-A-Dog.
- Raise Concerns. Share ideas in a positive light.
- Respond positively to complaints. Never argue with anyone or dismiss someone's point of view.
- Offer additional services and information. Add value to each interaction.
- Be friendly, courteous, and helpful. Common courtesy goes a long way toward making a favorable impression on our current and potential members, volunteers, adopters, donors, and the public.
- Be knowledgeable. While at an event, please be able to speak highly of Adopt-A-Dog and who we are.

Above all, enjoy the time you are spending at Adopt-A-Dog and believe in the work that you are helping make happen.

\*Please note these are guidelines; always use your best judgment should a situation arise that you need to handle on the spot.

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## **Attendance**

When you commit to a volunteer position, you become a valuable member of our team and play an important role at Adopt-A-Dog. We ask that if you are unable to keep your commitment you inform the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible.

***\*To set up your first volunteer session you will need to email the Volunteer Coordinator.***

We understand that life happens, and you may not always be able to make it to your volunteer shift. If you are not available to attend the volunteer shift(s) for which you have registered, please log into the online system to cancel your shift(s) or contact the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible.

For volunteers that do not sign up for volunteering activities or have not made contact with the shelter for a 6-month period, their status will be changed to “inactive volunteer”.

No-shows are extremely inconvenient and frequent absences will result in release from the program. A total of three no shows will result in dismissal from the program. This no-show policy applies to adult and youth volunteers.

Before coming to volunteer at Adopt-A-Dog, remember to sign up online. You will receive instructions on how to do so at orientation.

Every time you come to the shelter to volunteer remember to sign in and out when you leave.

### **Working with the Staff**

The staff members at Adopt-A-Dog will be informed of the volunteer schedule and when volunteers will be onsite. Our staff need extra help at times and is very appreciative of the assistance that volunteers bring to our organization.

Our staff will:

- Provide you with important information, training, and assistance so you can be successful in your volunteer position.
- Provide you with guidance, goals, and feedback.
- Respect your skills, dignity, and individual needs.
- Be open-minded.

### **Shelter Safety**

It is extremely important to Adopt-A-Dog that we maintain a safe environment. Please follow these rules:

- Do not go up to the kennel for any reason unless told otherwise by a staff member.
- Follow the directions of the staff.

- When in the yard with the dogs, keep the gates locked and follow the directions of how to handle the dogs.
- Do not take any dog out of the kennel for any reason.
- Do not leave toys in the yard.
- Report any injury immediately to the Volunteer Coordinator or staff.
- Do not handle any dog unless told otherwise by staff

### **Representing Adopt-A-Dog**

As an Adopt-A-Dog volunteer and ambassador, please present yourself in a way that is both professional and appropriate to your working conditions. Remember, you represent Adopt-A-Dog and the first impression you create is very important. Keep the following in mind:

You should have a well-groomed appearance.

Adopt-A-Dog t-shirts and name tags (if issued) should always be worn while representing Adopt-A-Dog in public. Other attire should be clean and appropriate for the setting.

No volunteer should ever smoke, drink alcohol or use drugs when representing Adopt-A-Dog. Inappropriate behavior will result in termination of your relationship with Adopt-A-Dog.

Booth and exhibit areas should be kept neat and clean. Literature should be displayed neatly and be easily accessible.

### **Euthanasia Policy**

- We acknowledge that not every home is right for every dog and consider making the right match one of our greatest responsibilities. Similarly, we believe not every dog is well-suited for adoption and the safety of the individuals, families, and other animals with whom we work and that of our volunteers comes first and foremost.

- We will take every action to provide training, rehabilitation, and lifetime sanctuary for an animal in our care if that animal's behavior is deemed predictable and that animal's quality of life can be preserved. If our trainers, behaviorists, and veterinarians determine that an animal poses an untenable threat, our obligation is always to protect the human beings involved and that animal may be humanely euthanized.
- Additionally, in the case of an animal that is suffering medically, we will exhaust all options to alleviate that suffering. If our best efforts are unsuccessful, that animal may be humanely euthanized.

## **Confidentiality and Nondisclosure**

As a volunteer, you are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information of Adopt-A-Dog to which you are exposed while serving as a volunteer. Failure to maintain confidentiality will result in termination of your relationship with Adopt-A-Dog.

When signing up to volunteer with Adopt-A-Dog you will need to sign the following agreement with Adopt-A-Dog:

1. I realize that Adopt-A-Dog's volunteer program has guidelines and rules that I will be asked to follow for the safety of myself, others, and the animals. I understand that if I do not follow these rules and regulations, I may be asked to leave the program.
2. I understand that public relations are an important part of volunteering at Adopt-A-Dog and I consent to allow Adopt-A-Dog Inc., or its representatives, to use any photos taken of or by me or comments for use in public relations materials.
3. With the Adopt-A-Dog volunteer program, you may be asked to attend various courses to achieve a specific level of volunteering or to maintain your volunteer status. It is my responsibility to complete these courses, whereas otherwise I will be held back from advancement. At certain levels, advancement is at the discretion of shelter management and advancement is based upon various metrics and the ability to prove knowledge and understanding of these metrics.
4. I recognize that in handling animals and performing other volunteer tasks, there exists a risk of injury, including physical harm caused by the animals, and that all services to be performed by me are at my own risk. Additionally, I am aware there are zoonotic diseases and the possibility of transferring other animal related illnesses to my own or other animals. On behalf of myself, my heirs, personal representatives and executors, I hereby release, discharge, indemnify and hold harmless Adopt-A-Dog, Inc., its' agents, servants, board members, and employees from any and all claims, causes of action, or demands, or any nature or cause, including costs and attorney's fees incurred by Adopt-A-Dog, Inc. in connection with the same, based on damages or injuries which may be incurred or sustained by me in any way connected with my services for Adopt-A-Dog including but not limited to animal bites, accidents, injuries. I acknowledge that my services are provided strictly on a volunteer basis, without any pay or compensation of any kind.
5. I understand that I am responsible for any supplies needed to complete an at home project unless specifically told that supplies will be provided for me (Ex- Kongs for Kong N' Dash).

6. I understand that any written material, photos, or anything else submitted to Adopt-A-Dog will be used for public display via social media.
7. I understand that if I am injured while acting as an unpaid member of the volunteer staff, I **AM NOT** covered by New York State Worker's Compensations Law. I certify that I am covered under a group medical plan either professionally or personally. I have carefully read and understand the foregoing and have the right and wish to execute this instrument, and so acknowledge.

### **Release from volunteer service**

These are some potential causes for release from Adopt-A-Dogs Volunteer Program:

- Breaking of confidentiality
- Failure to adhere to policies or follow procedures
- Failure to report volunteer hours
- Inappropriate drug or alcohol use
- Inappropriate or unprofessional conduct
- Excessive “no-show” for volunteer shifts
- Not fulfilling the duties of the volunteer position
- Misrepresentation of Adopt-A-Dog
- Theft
- Violence or implication of violence

### **Animal Help**

While volunteering at Adopt-A-Dog, people may come to you with concerns about other animals in the community. Here are some tips of what to do in that situation.

If you or someone else is concerned for an animal, please inform a member of the staff at Adopt-A-Dog.

If the person has witnessed animal abuse or neglect, tell him or her to report it to local authorities — the local police, The Briarcliff SPCA Law Enforcement, animal control departments or a local animal shelter. Encourage people to report the abuse not only to help the animal in distress, but also to make local officials aware of the severity of the problem.

**Thank You!**

Thank you for choosing to spend your free time with Adopt-A-Dog. We appreciate all the hard work and time you put into our organization. By volunteering at our shelter or at home, you are helping enrich the lives of our shelter dogs!