



# **VOLUNTEER GUIDE**

**Revised 08.16.2016**

This volunteer guide has been created for your reference as you begin and continue your experience as a volunteer at Austin Animal Center (AAC). Please take the time to read it carefully and to refer to it whenever you have questions. If you have questions that are not covered in this manual, please ask the Volunteer Coordinators.

# AUSTIN ANIMAL CENTER VOLUNTEER GUIDE

## WELCOME

Thank you for choosing to volunteer at Austin Animal Center (AAC)! Volunteers are a critical component of our programs and the key to the success of animal welfare in Austin. A “no-kill” community requires time, money and support from people like you.

## ABOUT THE GUIDE

This volunteer guide has been created for your reference as you begin and continue your experience as a volunteer at Austin Animal Center (AAC). Please take the time to read it carefully and refer to it whenever you have questions. It is periodically updated in order to have the most current information. The revision date is located at on the cover page. If you have questions that are not covered in this manual, please ask the Volunteer Coordinators.

## ABOUT THE CENTER

Austin Animal Center (AAC) runs the largest no-kill animal shelter in the United States, providing shelter to more than 18,000 animals each year and animal protection services to all of Austin and unincorporated areas of Travis County. AAC is an open-intake facility where lost and surrendered animals from Austin and the unincorporated areas of Travis County in need of shelter are accepted regardless of age, health, species or breed. The goal of AAC is to place all adoptable animals in forever homes.

### *Mission Statement*

*To provide public service and a safety net for lost and homeless animals in the community by providing necessary food, water, shelter and standard municipal veterinary care for animals in need.*

*To provide placement services that will assist lost, homeless or sheltered animals to their homes or find new homes when necessary, to provide live outcomes for at least 90% of sheltered animals.*

*To enforce animal regulations and assist the public with animal-related concerns, including impoundment, quarantine and other rabies control services in order to protect citizens and animals in our community.*

*To provide animal services to the public in order to educate and prevent animal homelessness and promote humane, compassionate treatment of animals and responsible pet ownership.*

## SHELTER MANAGEMENT AND STAFF

Tawny Hammond, Chief Animal Services Officer  
Kristen Auerbach, Deputy Animal Services Officer  
Lee Ann Shenefiel, Deputy Animal Services Officer  
Dr. Linda Czisny, Shelter Veterinarian  
Mike Gillis, Administrative Manager  
April Moore, Administrative Manager  
Kasey Spain, Marketing and PR Manager  
Sarah Luce, Volunteer Program Coordinator  
Amanda Wood, Volunteer Program Coordinator  
Lorian Epstein, Volunteer Groups Coordinator  
Kathryn Sharp, Rescue Coordinator  
Erin Herren, Foster Coordinator  
Holli Odom, Customer Service Supervisor  
Jordan Craig, Animal Care Supervisor  
Robert Golembeski, Animal Care Supervisor  
Wendy Beaupre, Veterinary Services Supervisor  
Mark Sloat, Field Services Program Manager

### CENTER HOURS OF OPERATION

#### **Adoption lobby:**

Mon.-Sun. 11am-7pm

#### **Intake lobby:**

Mon.-Fri. 11am-7pm

Sat.-Sun. 11am-5pm

#### **Main Campus Address:**

7201 Levander Loop, Bldg. A  
Austin, TX 78702

#### **TLAC Campus Address:**

1156 West Caesar Chavez  
Austin, TX 78701

#### **Main Center phone line:**

512.978.0500

#### **Volunteer Coordinators:**

Sarah Luce: 512.978.0533

Amanda Wood: 512.978.0532

[animalservicesvolunteers@austintexas.gov](mailto:animalservicesvolunteers@austintexas.gov)

## THE CENTER ONLINE

AAC has an active online presence and relies on social media to share our message and mission with the public. As a volunteer we hope you interact with us via our social media pages and share us with your communities.

- Website: <http://www.austinanimalcenter.org>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/austinanimalservices>
- Instagram: @austinanimalcenter
- Twitter: @austinanimals

## CENTER PROGRAMS

### Volunteer

Our volunteer program supports every area of AAC and TLAC. We need volunteer support with everything from administrative duties to anesthetic recovery. Volunteers are an integral part of providing a positive and healthy environment for the animals in our care and supporting the Austin community with our live outcome mission.

### Foster

Foster care takes vulnerable and at-risk pets out of AAC and places them into temporary homes. Foster candidates can be anything from an underage puppy or kitten to an injured, sick or elderly companion. Some animals may just need a break from the shelter environment or need to work on a specific skill in a home. If you are interested in becoming a foster please contact the foster program at [animal.foster@austintexas.gov](mailto:animal.foster@austintexas.gov).

### Rescue Partners

In addition to the volunteer, adoption and foster programs, AAC has developed a strong rescue partner program comprised of more than 150 rescue partners. These organizations network with the shelter on a regular basis and work diligently to help our pets find the perfect new homes they deserve. Approximately 34% of animals in the shelter are transferred to rescue partners. The participation of our partners is vital to AAC's live outcome goals.

### Outreach/Education

The goals of the outreach program are to reduce shelter intake, provide humane education and prevention based intervention, and build partnerships through community events, classes and presentations.

## ADOPTION OF SHELTER ANIMALS

AAC adopts out cats and dogs in our care on a first come, first served basis. Although wellness exams, vaccinations, and behavior screenings are conducted on all animals made available for adoption, AAC cannot guarantee the future medical or behavioral health of any adopted animal. All dogs and cats will be spayed or neutered before they are released, unless AAC Veterinarians determine that surgery is not advisable due to the age or health condition of the animal. If the animal cannot be spayed or neutered before going home, AAC will collect a Spay/Neuter Deposit from the adopter and set a deadline by which the procedure must be completed by the adopter's veterinarian. AAC will only allow the Spay/Neuter Deposit option for those individuals who live in Austin and unincorporated areas of Travis County. The adopter must be able to accept the agreement at the time offered as AAC will not hold an animal for an adopter to wait for spay/neuter eligibility. AAC will not require that pets currently in the home be altered; however, AAC will not allow an intact animal to be adopted into a home where another intact animal resides. AAC does not provide follow-up veterinary or behavioral care to adopted animals, unless the animal is sponsored by a Friends of Austin Animal Center (FoAAC) program.

AAC will not give priority to or discriminate against potential adopters based on age, gender, race, religion, disability or financial status. We provide counseling to help all adopters make sound decisions regarding the appropriateness of pet adoption and the appropriateness of a particular match.

AAC will not process “surprise gift adoptions.” A pet’s primary care-giver must be involved in the application and matching process. AAC offers Gift Certificates for adoption fees, and customers are encouraged to use those to pay the adoption fee in advance for the recipient.

The regular adoption fee for an AAC dog or cat is \$75 to help recover some of the cost of caring for the animals while at the shelter. However, an adoption may take place during a promotional event when the fee may be reduced. When adopters pick up their cat or dog, the animal will have a microchip implant and a rabies tag as long as the animal is over 3 months of age and has received a rabies vaccination. Counselors will also provide paperwork including medical and behavioral records on the animal as well as a rabies vaccination certificate if applicable. We provide additional information and counseling as needed to help ensure a successful transition into the home.

#### **Adoption Eligibility**

In order to adopt a pet from AAC, an individual is required to meet certain basic requirements and to meet with an Adoption Counselor for a discussion of expectations and management plans:

- The potential adopter must present a government issued ID to the adoption counselor during the application process and be at least eighteen (18) years of age.
- Potential adopters are asked to provide information about pets currently owned or residing in the home, to include fosters or animals being temporarily housed.
- Adopters can submit an application on our website or a paper copy in the lobby at AAC or TLAC prior to selecting or confirming on an animal. The application will then be processed by Customer Service staff and a confirmation e-mail will be sent to the adopter.

AAC *may* contact the applicants’ veterinarian to verify that any pets currently or recently (within the last 3 years) in the home have received adequate wellness and preventative care. AAC may also inquire as to the spay/neuter status of the pet(s), whether there are any medical issues that would be of concern as they pursue an adoption, and whether any dogs are currently on heartworm prevention.

AAC *may* approve the application of an individual or household that has surrendered a pet to the shelter in the past, depending upon the situation. Staff will carefully examine the circumstances surrounding the past relinquishment to prevent placing an animal in that household if similar circumstances are likely to occur in the future.

AAC *may* verify home ownership through available tax records or, if the adopter rents, may verify that pets are allowed with the property owner of record or legal manager of property, and note any limitations or restrictions in the AAC database with the adoption application information.

If an individual does not meet the established criteria at the time of initial application, the application process may be delayed until required proofs are provided or criteria met.

AAC will not knowingly adopt an animal to a person who:

- Has a documented history of animal abuse or neglect.
- Plans to use the animal for experimentation, cult rites, blood sports, sex acts, or for food.
- Plans to allow a declawed cat to roam freely outside.
- Plans to confine a dog outdoors by a chain or tether for extended periods of time.
- Refuses to sign the Pet Care Agreement or to have current pets vaccinated.

Ages of animals will be reflected on kennel cards in age range categories. Ages and restrictions and adoption fees are as follows:

- Baby – Newborn - 1.99 months
  - Underage animals that are too young for adoption, will pursue foster or transfer
- Young Juvenile -2 months - 4.99 months
  - Available for adoption, but too young to walk or handle w/o wearing gloves
- Juvenile – 5 month - 11.99 months
  - Available for adoption, no restrictions
- Young Adult – 12 months - 3 years
  - Available for adoption, no restrictions
- Adult – 3.01 years - 6.99 years
  - Available for adoption, no restrictions
- Older Adult – 7 years plus
  - Available for adoption, fee waived

### **Adoption Process: Adoption during the stray hold period**

**Background:** In November 2015, we began piloting a first-come, first-serve process for animals when they came off their stray hold. During this pilot, no animals could have holds placed during the stray period, either by a rescue group or adopter. We saw no significant increase in adoptions or rescue placement during the pilot period. Placement rates remained constant. However, the pilot process proved to be stressful for staff because long lines often formed for one animal and potential adopters occasionally got into altercations. Additionally, it was burdensome for rescue partners who were unable to get to the center in time to get an animal they wanted to rescue. Because of these challenges, we are going to begin a new pilot process. We believe this revised process will address the weaknesses of both the original 'interest pending' system and the revised 'first-come, first-serve' process.

**What:** The new process is called 'Placement during stray period.'

What that means is that animals will be available for rescue placement or adoption as soon as they come in the building. Rescues can confirm that they want to pull and adopters can complete a special adoption contract which becomes null and void if the animal is reclaimed during the stray period. So the paperwork part of the adoption, as well as the visit, can happen during the stray period, but the animal will remain AT AAC until the stray period has ended.

**Why:** Unlike with the previous 'interest pending' system, adopters will actually complete all of the adoption process except payment (we may eventually accept payment too but we're not there yet). By asking adopters to make a real commitment versus just expressing 'interest,' it is our expectation that we'll decrease the number of people who make an initial commitment and then don't return to get their pet. Additionally, customer service will no longer call people if they don't show up. If an adopter does not show up by the agreed-upon time, the custody of the animal will revert immediately back to AAC and the animal will once again be made available. This will save staff time and will move animals through our system more quickly.

### **ANIMAL INTAKES**

AAC serves as a safety net for stray animals and as a last resort owner surrender option for the City of Austin and the unincorporated areas of Travis County. AAC cannot and will not accept animals from outside of our jurisdiction.

### **Owner Surrender**

AAC asks that owners exhaust all options before deciding to bring a pet to the shelter. Other options include:

- Checking with family, friends, coworkers and other rescue organizations, or advertising their pet for adoption.
- Consultation with the PASS (Positive Alternatives to Shelter Surrender) program is suggested for additional ideas for rehoming.

AAC may also provide guidance and counseling on ways to keep the animal with their owner. Animals are surrendered by appointment only to allow space for stray and injured animals needing immediate shelter first. To surrender an animal, owners may submit an Owner Surrender Request form on AAC's website, call AAC or walk-in to the intake office to make an appointment. To schedule an Owner Surrender (OS) appointment, the owner must provide a government issued ID, a reason for relinquishing their pet and if scheduling in person, allow the Intake/Vet Services staff to microchip their pet. Appointments are scheduled about three (3) weeks out from the time of appointment request. A person is considered an owner if he/she has cared for an animal approximately three (3) weeks.

At surrender, owners will fill out an Owner Surrender Profile to disclose information about the animal's behavior and medical history to the best of the owner's knowledge. This information is pertinent to placing the animal in a proper home or rescue. The owner also signs a document relinquishing ownership of the animal and transferring ownership to AAC and the City of Austin.

### **Stray Animals**

Stray animals are either brought in to the intake office by a resident or picked up by an animal control officer.

When an animal is brought into the intake office, staff scans for a microchip and follows up with any means to identify an owner of the animal, such as a collar and tag or rabies vaccination tag. Residents who bring in a stray have the option to leave the animal with AAC or complete a 'Found Report' with intake staff and hold on to the animal in their own home.

When an animal is left with AAC, Vet Services staff completes a brief medical exam and administers basic preventatives to all animals, unless an owner brings medical history showing vaccinations have already been administered.

AAC holds all stray animals on a "stray hold" for a State of Texas mandated 72 hour period (three days not including the day the animal arrived) to ensure the animal has time to be evaluated behaviorally and medically, let their intake vaccinations kick in and to give owners time to come to the shelter to find their lost pet.

Once an animal has completed the "stray hold" period without any potential owner coming forward to reclaim, the animal is evaluated by shelter staff for placement options. Volunteers and generally, customers may not interact with any animal that has not completed its "stray hold" period.

**Volunteers are not authorized to take animals out while on their stray hold period.** The exceptions to this are when a volunteer is asked to do so directly by staff due to special circumstances or dogs in Smallville. Volunteers are advised to direct customers asking to interact with animals on stray hold to an adoption counselor. Customers who are interested in interacting with an animal on stray hold must be approved to adopt first and may interact only with animals inside their kennels. Customers will be escorted by an adoption counselor to interact with animals in Smallville in their kennels.

**If a customer approaches you to take a dog or cat from them** and turn it into the intake building, please advise them that the customer is responsible for the intake of that stray animal. A volunteer can assist them in bringing the animals in (if it is safe to do so), but the visitor must be present at the time of intake of a stray or owned

animal. Vital information about the animal's disposition and location where it was found is lost when intake staff are not able to ask customers pertinent questions. Thank you for your help with this!

#### **Outcome of a Shelter Animal**

If you want to know what happens to an animal you can receive Outcome Reports via our Volunteer Program Yahoo group. Please contact a Volunteer Coordinator to gain access. If you are a cat volunteer, and join the Cat Enrichment subgroup in Givepulse, then you will automatically receive an Outcome Report via one of our cat mentors.

Our program also has two (2) groups in Yahoo to notify volunteers of animals at-risk of euthanasia or of euthanasia decisions: At-risk dogs and at-risk cats.

#### **Joining the at-risk Yahoo groups**

Members receive daily reports on dogs at risk of euthanasia and outcomes involving same. The reports come out just after 7p nightly. The behavior, medical and aggression codes used to characterize the animals may be found in documents section of GivePulse. *To join at-risk dogs, write to the Volunteer Program at [animalervicesvolunteers@austintexas.gov](mailto:animalervicesvolunteers@austintexas.gov). To join at-risk cats, write to Suzanne Carson at [suzannecarson@att.net](mailto:suzannecarson@att.net)*

#### The reports you receive are:

- At risk: dogs or cats with documented behavior, aggression or medical codes and no current interest by adopters or rescuers. This list goes to rescue partners. Most of these animals will never be considered for euthanasia, but may need help in getting into rescue or adoption. List is accompanied by behavior notes on the animal.
- At risk: Attn: dogs or cats who have been referred to APA! for consideration. APA! has a deadline for response. If they decline, then the animal moves onto the next list or may be euthanized. This list is also accompanied by behavior notes on each animal. For some volunteers, this list helps focus work in coordination with APA! on developing fosters or adoptive placements for particular animals.
- At risk: high. These are the dogs that APA! has declined, usually for space, but sometimes for other reasons, like documented aggression. Like AAC, APA! is not able to serve all the animals they would like to care for, although part of their stated mission is focusing on animals at highest risk. This list is also accompanied by behavior notes. Not all animals that go onto this list are euthanized. Staff again reviews, and may decide to try something again or take another approach. Some animals are found to have improved and are moved out of the at risk category altogether.

As a member of these groups, you agree to the following:

- You will be alerted, whenever possible, when a dog known to volunteers is going to be euthanized.
- You understand being a member of this group is not a guarantee of an advanced notice that dog will be euthanized.
- You will be informed whether other options may be considered and when they will not be. Whenever possible, we'll tell you what other options may be considered.
- If you are informed the shelter will NOT consider options other than euthanasia, you may still send any notes or information you think we need to [Kristen.auerbach@austintexas.gov](mailto:Kristen.auerbach@austintexas.gov). These notes will be attached to the dog's paperwork.
- If you would like to publicly plea for foster/adopt for an animal being considered for euthanasia, you are expected to e-mail me and obtain permission prior to publicly pleading for any animal. It is important we be able to review the plea to ensure it matches the information we have, particularly because the only dogs being considered for behavioral euthanasia are those who have been involved in some time of aggressive incident towards a person or other animal.

## **Euthanasia**

Unfortunately, even some great animals make mistakes or get into altercations that make it difficult or impossible for the shelter to adopt them out. We are constantly striving to do our jobs better (manage adopter and foster expectations, set clear guidelines, provide resources for problem behaviors) to minimize the occurrences. We are proud that we're consistently saving more than 95% of the 18,000 animals who come through our doors each year and with your help, we will continue to save more animals than ever. Please know that no euthanasia decisions are made without considering multiple other options and getting as much information as possible about any incident(s) that led to the decision being made.

- For every animal being considered for euthanasia for behavioral reasons, the full set of notes goes to Deputy Director Auerbach for review. If she agrees euthanasia is the likely outcome, she begins to work on a euthanasia approval form.
- There are several steps in the process towards possibly euthanizing an animal. They include:
  - Alerting the staff euthanasia review team and whenever possible, giving those staff members 24 hours to give input, advocate for an animal or respond. The team includes about 12 staff members representing every department. Moving forward, it will include a larger number of staff members.
  - We conduct a medical evaluation for most every animal to ensure there is not an underlying medical issue causing the animal to act aggressively.
  - We indicate on the form whether we have pled foster, made a public plea, a plea to rescue partners and/or consulted APA! We also indicate whether the owner has been contacted and alerted (Y call). All notes relating to any of these items are put into the shelter software system.
  - Every euthanasia requires FOUR signatures. The people who sign are the following: Chief or deputy chief, a manager, an administrative or customer service staff person and the person who prepares the form. The behavior team often works to complete these forms as part of their duty.
  - After the euthanasia has been carried out, the euthanasia form and all documentation related to the animal are stored in a binder on Deputy Chief Auerbach's desk. This binder is available for both staff and volunteer review.

## **VOLUNTEER ROLES & EXPECTATIONS**

Volunteers will perform all assignments in accordance with center policies and protocols, which requires you to read all related protocols prior to beginning your service. You should treat fellow volunteers, visitors and staff with courtesy and respect at all times, maintaining a positive attitude and professionalism in the course of all interactions during your volunteer shift. All volunteers must sign and agree to the AAC Workplace Culture Agreement and AAC Volunteer Agreement.

Some examples of what we look for in a volunteer include:

- Ability to follow oral and written instructions carefully and communicate clearly with fellow volunteers, staff and visitors.
- Kindness and compassion toward the animals in our care and the people caring for them.
- Willingness to learn and improve upon skills and receive constructive feedback.
- Flexibility, patience and understanding with fellow volunteers, staff and visitors.
- Team players who respect support and mentor other team members.
- Support Austin Animal Center's mission and goals.
- Understand the role that the municipal shelter plays in the community.
- Calm in the event of emergencies or unexpected situations.
- Capability to make decisions that keep people and animals safe.



## Appearance

Anytime you are representing the shelter, you must be wearing a volunteer T-shirt and your name tag, and your overall appearance should be neat and clean. Volunteers at the shelter should wear appropriate length shorts or pants and shoes must be non-slip with covered toes. Flip-flops are not safe, particularly for handling dogs. Large or dangling earrings or necklaces also present a safety hazard and should not be worn.

### **VOLUNTEER POSITIONS**

#### **Adoption Ambassador**

When customers are ready to adopt an animal, it's important that we can answer all their questions and concerns and ensure they select a new pet that will fit well into their home. Volunteer Adoption Ambassadors support our Customer Service team in making these matches and counseling new adopters.

#### **Playgroups Dog Runners**

Playgroups give dogs in our shelter time to exert some physical and mental energy and learn important skills or manners from other dogs. As dog runners, volunteers bring dogs from kennels to the play pen and return them to their kennels. Dog Runners are critical to playgroups running smoothly.

#### **Customer Service Greeter**

The first face customers see when they enter the Center. Greeters welcome customers, explain the adoption process, how they can "get in line" by phone, how to read a kennel card, which animals they may interact with, and how to do so safely. This is a key position to help potential adopters understand how the Center works so they can focus on finding the right pet.

#### **Cat Enrichment**

These volunteers socialize and provide general care to help cats feel more comfortable and safe in what can be a stressful and sometimes scary environment. This can include customer service, matching adopters to cats, cleaning kennels, providing extra food/water, and lots of TLC.

**Dog Enrichment** These volunteers take small and large breed dogs at our facility for walks, potty breaks, and general socialization and human interaction to help them feel safer and calmer in what can be a stressful environment. Dog volunteers also help our dogs become more adoptable by teaching them valuable life-skills and reinforcing good behavior to help them stand out in the crowd, while matching suitable dogs with potential adopters.

#### **Community Outreach Events**

Community Outreach volunteers assist staff at on-site and off-site shelter events. They also educate the public on responsible pet ownership and low-cost pet services in the community and assist with adoptions offsite.

#### **Cat Nebulization**

This team cares for cats with upper respiratory infections by feeding, administering breathing treatments, socializing and keeping records on their health and behavior.

#### **Cat Ringworm Treatment**

This team works closely with one of the shelter veterinarians and with other volunteer team members to treat ringworm (fungal infection of the skin) in cats and kittens. The team provides the bathing treatments and provides behavioral enrichment during the sometimes lengthy isolation period.

#### **"One-time" Groups Lead**

When groups of individuals from the same organization want to volunteer together at the same time, arrangements is made for a "one time opportunity". The One-time Group Lead signs up to instruct and guide these groups on how to safely walk dogs on campus.

**Mentor**

There are two types of mentors: Orientation mentors and First Shift mentors.

- Orientation mentors give potential volunteers a realistic “hands-on” experience with specific jobs during orientation.
- First shift mentors guide new volunteers on their first day of volunteering, providing individual support.

**Clean Team**

Provide essential support to animals in areas such as laundry, dishes, sorting donations, passing out toys to animals or washing and stuffing Kongs.

**Anesthetic Recovery**

Assist in post-surgery recovery. To help with Vet services you must be 18 years old and be available between the hours of 8:30 am to 12:30 pm. Surgeries are scheduled seven days a week.

**Administrative Assistant**

Help shelter staff with tasks or special projects across departments, depending upon the needs of the organization. This can include data entry, copying, filing, telephone follow-ups, updating program systems, creating documents, etc.

**Photography and/or Creative Team**

The dog & cat photo teams take glamour shots of the animals as they become available for interaction and adoption. These are more attractive photos that replace the intake photo, drawing attention to animals on our website.

**Media Volunteer**

Takes animals to televised Pet of the Week segments and shares their story with the community.

**VOLUNTEER SCHEDULING**

Volunteers must schedule shifts in Givepulse before arriving at the shelter or offsite event.

- Use the Givepulse instructions included in your shelter protocols email packet to guide you.
- The mobile Givepulse app for iPhone allows you to “add impact” only, not schedule shifts.
- To register for events or schedule shifts on the calendar, you must go to the givepulse.com website and log in.

Offsite, Outreach and other special events may include particular shifts. Volunteers are notified each time a new event is open for registration, and details with a direct link to the registration page are included in the notification.

**GETTING STARTED - SCHEDULING YOUR FIRST SHIFT**

You will be contacted by the Volunteer Coordinators to schedule your first shift, and be paired with a mentor.

**ALWAYS GET CONFIRMATION- PLEASE DO NOT ARRIVE WITHOUT AN APPOINTMENT.** You will receive your name badge & t-shirt and be partnered with a First Shift Mentor.

You are required to shadow a mentor for your first two hours of volunteer service. Your mentor(s) will be a point of contact for you while you get acquainted with the center and your job area.

**CAMPUS GUIDELINES****Entering when the Shelter is closed**

AAC location: Volunteers are allowed to enter the facility outside of business hours to perform their volunteer jobs. Volunteers can be on AAC campus as early as 7am and stay as late as 10pm by using the volunteer gate on south perimeter of the campus between the 100 and 200 dog runs or the volunteer gate on the east side of the campus near the 500s run. ***\*Please contact a Volunteer Coordinator or your mentor to get the gate code.\****

TLAC location: TLAC closes at 5:30p daily. Volunteers are allowed on premise as long as TLAC staff is present, 8am-7:30pm daily.

**Always remember that safety is FIRST when you are here outside of business hours:**

1. Register on the GivePulse calendar prior to coming to the shelter for all of your shifts.
2. Never let another person (volunteer or not) into the facility during, before or after hours including all facility doors or restricted entrances/exits. Find a staff member for assistance.
3. Never share the code to the combination lock with anyone else. Ask them to contact a staff member for assistance.
4. Carry your cell phone at all times.
5. Staff is very limited in the evening. Most staff leave by 7:30pm and there is no Vet Services staff present past closing.
6. Due to the limited night staff, volunteers cannot be here alone after hours! Check the calendar to make sure there will be another volunteer on the grounds & keep track of each other. Use the buddy system.
7. Once on the property, enter the facility to access restrooms, lobby dog kennels, and small dog hallway kennels through the courtyard lobby doors. The courtyard lobby doors are unlocked 7am-10pm.
8. If you exit through the lobby doors outside of business hours, always ensure that the door shuts and locks properly behind you.
9. Always wear your volunteer t-shirt and name badge to ensure staff knows you are allowed to be on campus.
10. **The automobile gate to the campus closes at 7pm.** To exit the campus, pull your car up to the gate and the sensor will open it. **Contact a Volunteer Coordinator if you need the code to enter the facility between 7pm and 10pm.**

Volunteers performing jobs requiring key card access within the shelter, such as Anesthetic Recovery, will be issued an access card. In the event that your card is lost or stolen, a recovery fee of \$10 will be necessary to be issued a new card.

***IN CASE OF EMERGENCY WHILE AT AAC OUTSIDE OF BUSINESS HOURS***

1. Use a radio (volunteer radios are in the 100s, 300s and the "H" cat building) to get help from a staff member.
2. Animal Care night staff can be reached by pager at (512)802-1763.
3. As a last resort, dial 311 if staff can't be found. Keep a copy of these numbers handy when volunteering after 7pm.
4. Do NOT use the Fire Exit gate nearest the breakroom door except in the event of a fire or other emergency.

As with any organization, it is impossible to predict every type of situation that will occur. Please exercise common sense and good judgement in these instances.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

**Duties**

Do not take responsibility for duties you have not been authorized or trained to assume. If you are asked to do something with which you feel uncomfortable, you may decline.

**Communication with Volunteers**

Most communication for the volunteer program will occur via GivePulse and email. Please ensure that your contact information stays up to date in GivePulse and with the Volunteer Coordinators.

#### **Family, Friends and Pets**

While volunteering, you may not bring members of your family or friends with you outside of public hours (11am-7pm daily) unless they are also shelter volunteers (including children). Do not bring your pets while volunteering.

#### **Rescue Groups**

Do not contact rescue groups on behalf of the shelter unless you have been given authorization to do so. We have staff managing our rescue partnership network, and unsolicited volunteer involvement can lead to confusion.

#### **Personal Items**

We recommend you bring as few personal items with you to a volunteer shift as possible. If you do have some things to store, you may use the volunteer drawers in the volunteer office. However, the shelter and the City of Austin are not responsible for the loss, theft or damage of volunteers' personal items.

Also, a microwave and mini-fridge is available for volunteer use in the volunteer office. Thank you in advance for cleaning them after your use for others.

#### **Parking**

Volunteers should use available parking spaces anywhere in the loop, but attempt to leave the front lot open for customers.

#### **Questions from the Public**

It is very important that we give correct information regarding animals, the shelter and our policies. If you are ever unsure how to answer a question, please do not hesitate to ask a staff member for assistance.

#### **Cell Phones**

Cell phone use should be limited so as not to interfere with service to our visitors or distract from supervising animals. Do not use your cell phone for calling/texting etc. while walking dogs or handling animals. All after hour's volunteers should have a cell phone on them for safety.

#### **Confidential Information**

In performing your volunteer duties, you may have access to a wide variety of previous owner, adopter, volunteer, staff and/or animal information. Treat all personal information as strictly confidential. This includes information related to court cases. Do not contact members of the public on your own without prior authorization from a staff member. If you have any questions as to what is considered confidential, ask a Volunteer Coordinator.

The AAC database stores information about animals coming through AAC, and staff and customers. Having access to the animal related information is often helpful to volunteers in carrying out various duties, such as helping customers choose an animal or handling an animal appropriately. Volunteers may gain a password to access the database by taking a class, which you can register for in GivePulse. The system also has some standard reports, such as rescue groups, long stay dogs, etc., which volunteers find helpful.

#### **Drugs and Alcohol**

The shelter will not tolerate any volunteer's reporting to duty, either on shelter premises or at any offsite or other event where (s) he is representing the shelter, while under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol. The legal use of prescribed drugs is permitted as long as it does not impair a volunteer's ability to safely perform duties and does not endanger the animals or other individuals.

#### **Shelter Animal Illness & Disease Control**

Follow shelter health and disease control procedures at all times. It is extremely important that you sanitize your hands when moving between animals. If a shelter animal shows signs or symptoms of illness, immediately fill out a pink medical form and place it on the door to Vet Services, located near the customer restrooms. Medical forms are located in each run, small dog rooms, and cat rooms. Back-stock forms are located in the Volunteer Office.

### **Friends of Austin Animal Center (FoAAC)**

This is a non-profit, all-volunteer organization dedicated to improving the lives of the animals at AAC and supporting the programs, customers, and staff of the Center. The organization's primary mission is to bridge the gap between budgeted funds and animal needs at the AAC. They support the following volunteer managed programs:

- Hard Luck Hounds – Program Lead: Katie Gentempo [kgentempo@gmail.com](mailto:kgentempo@gmail.com)
- Desperate Housecats – Program Leads: Maggie Warpenburg [magwarp@yahoo.com](mailto:magwarp@yahoo.com) & Shawna Rai [Shawna.foaac@gmail.com](mailto:Shawna.foaac@gmail.com)
- Classic Canines – Program Lead: Jean Hubrath [ClassicCaninesATX@yahoo.com](mailto:ClassicCaninesATX@yahoo.com)
- PawAid – Program Lead: Lora Cousins [loracousins@yahoo.com](mailto:loracousins@yahoo.com)

Reach out to the Leads listed above for more information about their individual programs. You can also visit <http://www.friendsofaustinanimalcenter.com/foaac/>

### **INJURIES, BITES & ACCIDENTS**

All volunteers are required to use caution and follow established procedures when working with shelter animals. By remaining vigilant and careful, we can avoid most accidents. However, no matter how careful or well-trained you are, accidents can still happen.

Please notify a staff person for all bites and injuries immediately. For the safety of the animal, visiting public, volunteers and staff, all bites that break the skin must be reported. Texas State law requires us to quarantine an animal for 10 days if the bite breaks the skin. A bite report and/or injury report will be completed by a Staff Member.

#### **Please note:**

You must also report any bites that you witness. First Aid kits are located in the break room hallway and on the lobby wall nearest the women's restroom. For the safety of others and our shelter animals, failure to report a bite that breaks the skin could result in removal from the volunteer program.

### **VOLUNTEERING AND YOUR PETS**

#### **Precautions**

Because some diseases can be spread from animal to animal by humans (on clothing, shoes or hands), it is important to adhere to strict standards of cleanliness.

- Sanitize your hands between each kennel interaction and at the end of your shift.
- Make sure your pets at home are up to date on vaccines.
- Consider keeping a pair of shoes just for use while volunteering at the shelter and changing clothes before interacting with your own pets.
- If you have a puppy or immune-suppressed pet at home, discuss your volunteer activity with your veterinarian before your first shift.

***The City of Austin/AAC is not responsible for costs incurred in the event that a volunteer's pet(s) becomes ill and/or requires veterinary treatment.***

#### **Diseases**

Panleukopenia (cats) and Parvo (dogs) are viruses transmitted via fecal matter or vomit. They are very hardy viruses able to live in an environment for up to a year. They can be life threatening to other animals.

Upper respiratory infection (kennel cough, URI) is a less serious disease, but common in a shelter setting. It is an airborne disease similar to a human cold, but can become serious in puppies, kittens or animals with a comprised immune system.

### **Commitment Requirements**

The monthly minimum requirement for volunteering is six (6) hours. You will show us that you are still active in our program by recording your impacts in GivePulse. If you have an extenuating situation and cannot fulfill the six (6) hour minimum requirement in a month, email the Volunteer Coordinators immediately with a brief detail of your situation.

*If you wish to resign from the program, please let the Volunteer Coordinators know so you will be removed from our list. Please note that any volunteer that is inactive for a period of two consecutive months who has not made previous arrangements with the Volunteer Coordinators will automatically be dropped from the program.*

### **Communication and Grievances**

We want you to have an enjoyable and rewarding volunteer experience. From time to time you may want more clarification on communications. The best way to handle any misunderstanding is to communicate honestly and respectfully directly with the person(s) involved in a timely manner. If you are having an issue with another volunteer or staff member or with program responsibilities, see a Volunteer Coordinator.

All volunteers are expected to communicate any concerns or problems in the appropriate manner. If you are not satisfied your concerns were addressed by the Volunteer Coordinators, you may speak to the Administrative Manager over the volunteer program or one of the Deputy Chief Animal Services Officers.

Your volunteer assignment may be concluded if you fail to abide by the guidelines outlined in the volunteer handbook, the workplace culture agreement or the volunteer agreement.

**All Volunteers** are asked to please support staff by not interrupting them while they are actively processing adoptions. Volunteers are asked to use the Daily Communication Log located next to the Givepulse kiosk in the lobby, for routine items that need staff assistance. Examples of the types of request that go on the log are: changing names, facility needs, and animals that need to be re-evaluated for a behavior lock. Animal Care and the Behavior Team look at the log daily. Items that are not handled are followed up on by the Volunteer Coordinators

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **FOSTER**

#### **Which animals need foster care?**

- Kittens and puppies (with and without a mother) that are under 8 weeks of age.
- Cats and dogs recovering from illnesses or injuries.
- Displaced dogs and cats needing a temporary home.
- Long stay cats and dogs that need a break from the shelter.

If a volunteer believes that a specific animal would benefit from foster care, (s) he may contact the Foster Coordinator at [animal.foster@austintexas.gov](mailto:animal.foster@austintexas.gov).

#### **How long do animals need foster care?**

Animals average 2-6 weeks in foster care, but the foster animal's specific needs may require longer or shorter fosters.

#### **What are the potential risks of fostering an animal?**

- Owned pets and/or people catching a disease and/or a parasite from a foster animal.
- Sick animals could pass away in foster care or have to return to the shelter for humane euthanasia.
- Owned pets and/or people could be injured by a foster animal.

**What do foster care providers need?**

- Regular internet and email access.
- Transportation to and from AAC.
- Permission from the landlord if renting.
- Enough room in the foster home to isolate foster pets from owned pets.
- Up-to-date rabies vaccinations for all pets currently in the home.

We strongly encourage foster care providers to discuss fostering with their veterinarian, as their veterinarian may suggest additional vaccinations to protect owned pets.

**Housing expectations for fosters:**

- Kittens and cats in foster care should be kept indoors only.
- Puppies (under 5 months of age) should be kept primarily indoors, but can go outside for supervised potty breaks and play time/exercise. High traffic areas, such as the park, pet stores, public sidewalks/trails, etc. should be avoided, as puppies can be susceptible to deadly diseases.
- Dogs (over 5 months of age) in foster care should be kept primarily indoors, but can go outside for supervised potty breaks and play time/exercise. Short periods of unsupervised outside time are acceptable as long as you have ensured that your yard is secure. Some dogs can jump/climb over or dig under fences surprisingly quickly, so please be cautious when leaving foster dogs unsupervised.

**Restraint expectations for fosters:**

- Unless contained in a securely fenced yard or another appropriate enclosure, all puppies and dogs must be kept on leash while outside. A person must be holding the leash and be in control of the animal at all times.
- Since the history or behavior of foster dogs is not always well known, taking foster dogs to off leash dog parks is prohibited.

**How can someone become a foster care provider?**

Complete a [Foster Care Provider Application](#). Once the application is approved, you will receive a welcome email/packet and be invited to join the foster subgroup in GivePulse, which is how AAC communicates with its foster care providers when there are pets in need.

**OUTREACH****What kind of jobs do volunteers do at a rabies clinic?**

Volunteers assist with crowd control; answer questions from the public about services offered, help citizens register their animal for a rabies vaccination, assist staff with handling animals, perform event set-up and break-down.

**Who can use the rabies clinic services?**

Free vaccinations are available to residents of Austin and the unincorporated areas of Travis County. Visit our website for details and future dates.

**Where can I get my pet spayed or neutered at a low cost?**

Both Animal Trustees of Austin and Emancipet offer Spay/Neuter services at low cost. To make an appointment for a surgery at Animal Trustees of Austin, please call 512-450-0111 or request your appointment online <http://www.animaltrustees.org/services/spay-neuter-surgery>

Low cost Spay/Neuter is available at Emancipet's stationary clinics at three central Texas locations: Austin, Pflugerville, and Killeen. Appointments required for low-cost spay/neuter only. To make an appointment phone (512) 587-7729 or visit their website <http://emancipet.org/austin/>

**Where can I get low-cost preventative veterinary care?**

Both Animal Trustees of Austin and Emancipet offer low cost preventative services, including Rabies, DHPP, FeLV and FVRCP vaccinations, FeLV/FIV and canine heartworm tests, microchipping and ID tags, flea prevention spot-on and tablets and prescription heartworm prevention medicines.

**What happens to stray cats that are brought into the center by citizens?**

One option for stray cats is the Shelter-Neuter- Return program (SNR). This is a partnership between AAC and the Austin Humane Society.

Here is a brief recorded presentation about the SNR program: <http://www.maddiesfund.org/austin-animal-services-stray-cat-return-program.htm>

*Some history:* In 2011, 375 cats and kittens went through the program and it has grown every year since, with 1,069 cats and kittens being released through shelter-neuter-return in 2015. Between January and June of 2016, there has been a decrease in the number of cats entering the program, with just 516 in the first nine months of the year. This decrease is in part due to a decision by shelter management to not release some friendly cats during the cooler winter months when cat population is not at capacity.

*Eligibility:* To be eligible for the program, cats must enter the shelter as strays and be no younger than three months and no fewer than three pounds. They must be in healthy body weight with a body condition score between four and seven and they must not be sick or injured. Declawed cats are not eligible for release. Cats will not be released to high traffic or other unsafe locations.

*How it works:* Cats and kittens enter the shelter as strays. The finder is alerted at the time of drop off that the cat will likely be examined by a vet, sterilized, vaccinated, microchipped and returned to the spot where it was found. The cat is then taken in and given a cursory evaluation by the intake counselor to determine if it meets qualifications for program inclusion. If it does, the cat is transferred to AHS where it is spayed or neutered and received a rabies vaccine and microchip. The cat is microchipped and the microchip is registered to the Austin Humane Society. 24 hours following this procedure, the cat transported back to the place where it was found and is released.

*Why this program matters:* AAC operates at or near capacity the majority of the year. Without the SNR program, the shelter would run out of kennels and many cats would have to be euthanized due to a lack of space.

*Recent changes to the program:* Due to a slight, overall reduction in intake of cats since 2011, AAC and AHS leadership agrees that outside of seasonal space crises, it is no longer necessary at this time to enroll friendly kittens under six months into the program. This means that unless the shelter is at capacity, the shelter will no longer send friendly kittens under six month back to the community.

**Are cats required to be licensed in Austin/Travis County?**

Cats (and dogs) in Austin/Travis County are not required to be licensed. While we strongly encourage that all owned cats wear a collar and pet ID tag, cats are legally allowed to be free-roaming with or without identification.

**How is Austin/Travis County helping cats in our community?**

AAC in partnership with Austin Humane Society has a program called Community Cats. This is a volunteer program that uses a method called Trap-Neuter-Release or TNR. TNR with the Community Cats Program provides free sterilization, rabies vaccinations, and a place for cats to recover after surgery.

**How can I get involved in TNR?**

- Become a volunteer trapper with Austin Animal Center or Austin Humane Society.
- Receive a brief program orientation and get a quick lesson on how traps work.
- Set traps in your community
- Bring in trapped cats to be sterilized and vaccinated.
- After recovery, pick up the cats and return them where they were found.

**What if I want to help the community cats in my neighborhood, but don't want to trap?**

Contact 311 for Austin Animal Center or Mike DiTullio, Feral Cat Program Supervisor (512) 646-7387 or [mditullio@austinhumanesociety.org](mailto:mditullio@austinhumanesociety.org) at Austin Humane Society.

**If there are unwanted stray cats on a person's property, can AAC remove them?**

Because cats are legally allowed to be free roaming in Austin/Travis County, the Animal Protection Unit does not trap stray cats. To discourage cats from entering a yard, residents should take the following steps:

- Do not leave out any food items, including scraps, cat food or dog food.
- Consider using a non-harmful, non-toxic cat repellent, commonly sold at hardware and home goods stores.



- Check with neighbors to make sure they are not leaving out food for cats.
- Minimize shelter opportunities by closing off holes in sheds and garages.

## **MARKETING/MEDIA PROGRAM**

### **How can I get a pet on TV?**

Contact the Media Coordinator. [lauralei.combs@austintexas.gov](mailto:lauralei.combs@austintexas.gov)

### **Can I be on TV?**

Yes, once you have completed AAC media training and are a volunteer in good standing.

### **Can you promote this pet on Social Media?**

Yes, join our private AAC Volunteer/Foster Facebook page to promote an AAC animal on social media. If you would like to market your foster pet, please email [animal.foster@austintexas.gov](mailto:animal.foster@austintexas.gov). Include the pet's animal ID, name, high-resolution photo and a short biography.

### **How can I propose that the shelter participate in an event that I or someone I know is involved with or organizing?**

Use the request form on this page for all event requests: <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/special-events-1>

## **RESCUE PARTNER PROGRAM**

Due to AAC's open intake process, not all animals in the shelter will be posted by the Rescue Coordinator. AAC reminds our partners that we are rescue friendly and open 7 days a week 11 am to 7 pm for their convenience. Partners are encouraged to visit the shelter as often as they wish.

Here is a snapshot of how animals are picked for posting to rescue partners:

- Animals are identified as possible rescue candidates by the Rescue Coordinator from a daily triage of animals recently received (a brief evaluation is done for animals that arrived the previous day). Additionally, AAC staff recommends animals for posting to rescue.
- Long stay animals will be marketed to the AAC rescue community via postings.
- AAC medical and behavior staff recommend 'special needs' animals that would benefit from placement with foster based groups who can provide a home environment.

### **How do I know if a group is an AAC approved partner?**

A list of approved partners is on our website <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/approved-partners>

### **What is the AAC approval process for rescue groups?**

- The AAC rescue screening packet includes a one page application, 8 basic questions regarding the operations of the organization, shelter and veterinarian reference checks and a short interview.
- 501c3 tax exempt status from the IRS is recommended, but not required.
- AAC requires a site visit for any organizations that houses animals in a kennel or facility (instead of a foster home.)

## **VET SERVICES**

### **If I notice an animal is sick how do I report it to vet services?**

There are pink medical slips in all the kennel runs and back stock in the volunteer office. Please fill a slip completely and report only the facts on the form. The forms then get turned in on the sleeve on the door to vet services (next to the lobby restrooms).

### **Why is that animal on medical lock?**

Each medical case is different and the best way to find out why an animal is on treatment is to view the animal's individual record in the AAC database. If you do not have access to the database, you may check with the Volunteer Coordinator.

#### **May I pay for a medical procedure for a particular animal?**

Many medical procedures are funded by the AAC general fund. Specialty medical procedures are paid for using public donations or, sometimes, with the help of Friends of Austin Animal Center (FoAAC). Please donate to Friends of Austin Animal Center if you would like to help fund medical care for injured and sick animals. Friends of Austin Animal Center does have control over how donations are used specifically, but rely on a vote by their board to decide if those funds will be used for a particular animal.

## **CUSTOMER SERVICE**

#### **Where are you located?**

The main campus is located at 7201 Levander Loop, Bldg. A, Austin, Texas 78702. Overflow animals are housed at Town Lake Animal Center (TLAC) located at 1156 W. Caesar Chavez, Austin, Texas 78701

#### **What are the hours for AAC?**

- Adoptions and Reclaims: 11am to 7pm daily
- Animal Intake: 11am to 7pm Monday – Friday  
11am to 5 pm Saturday & Sunday

#### **What are the hours for TLAC?**

Adoptions: 11:30 am to 7pm daily

#### **Are you a “no-kill” shelter?**

The nationally accepted standard for a no-kill community is a community that has a live outcome rate of over 90% on a month-to-month basis. Year to date and monthly reports with intake and outcome statistics can be found here:

<http://www.austintexas.gov/departments/animal-services/reports>

#### **Do you have a veterinary clinic at your shelter?**

No. The animals sheltered at the AAC are under the care of City of Austin veterinarians.

#### **Do I need to bring anything if I have found an animal and want to bring it in?**

Yes, you must bring a photo ID or Driver's License. We like to get as much information about who found an animal and where the animal was found when they are brought in in order to reunite them with their family and best understand their circumstances. We encourage volunteers to assist customers in finding the intake lobby, but please do not take an animal into intake for a customer. Our staff need to speak directly to whomever found the animal.

#### **Will AAC take an animal from anywhere?**

Animals must be from or found in the city of Austin or the unincorporated areas of Travis County only. AAC cannot take in animals from other counties.

#### **What do I need to do if I want to surrender an animal?**

If you are unable to find another home for your pet after considerable effort, you can arrange to surrender your pet to AAC. Owner surrenders must be done by appointment. Follow these steps:

1. Go to our website <http://www.austintexas.gov/departments/surrendering-pet>
2. Fill out a behavior profile. [Dog profile](#), [Cat profile](#), or [Litter profile](#)
3. Staff will contact you to discuss the profile and schedule an appointment.
4. Bring your pet to AAC with any veterinary and/or vaccination records at the time of your appointment.

#### **I found a litter of kittens with no mom and I think they've been abandoned. What should I do?**

Please leave them alone. Do not assume the litter has been abandoned, even if there is no mother cat in sight. The mother frequently leaves her litter in order to find food/water, and can be gone for hours at a time. This is normal behavior for all animals. Very young kittens must be with their mothers during their first weeks of life in order to survive, and most shelter and good Samaritans don't have the ability to keep them alive at a very young age.

**I found a dog/cat and I don't mind holding on to it while looking for the owner. What should I do?**

- If you can keep the found pet temporarily, call or contact 311 online to submit a Found Animal Report which will appear on our website.
- Take the found pet to AAC or nearest veterinarian to have them scanned for a microchip.
- If you cannot keep a found pet, then you can contact 311 or bring the pet in to our facility.

**My animal is missing, what should I do?**

- Come to the shelter every other day to search the kennels.
- Check our website <http://www.austintexas.gov/page/view-all-pets>
- Check the stray map and twitter feed @austinanimals.
- Talk to your neighbors and search the neighborhood and surrounding areas.
- Create a Lost Dog/Cat poster and post in these areas.
- Create a post and search on Craigslist, Finding Rover, NextDoor, etc.
- If your pet has a microchip, contact the chip company to report your missing pet and update your contact info.

**I found a dog/cat online that looks similar to my dog/cat that is missing – what should I do?**

Write down the Animal ID number listed on the website and come to the shelter during business hours to check in with the cashier's office with the ID number so we can look up the animal for you. Bring photos and/or vet records to prove ownership, and bring your photo ID.

**What do I need to bring to adopt?**

All you need to bring is a valid photo ID at the time of your adoption application.

**What is the process to adopt and how long does it take?**

You can get in line to speak with an adoption counselor by calling the Q-less phone number 512-687-1472. This enables you to look around the shelter and write down all of the Animal ID #'s of the animals that you are interested in knowing more about, and potentially adopting, without having to physically wait in a line. The system will call your phone and tell you which customer service station to report to when it is your turn.

**I am interested in an animal I saw on your website, what do I do next?**

Visit AAC during regular business hours to meet with an Adoption Counselor.

**How much does it cost to adopt and what does it include?**

The adoption fee for cats and dogs is \$75, but is waived if the animal is at least seven years old.

The adoption includes:

- Spay/neuter surgery for healthy animals that weigh at least two pounds.
- All vaccinations the animal is old enough to receive, including a one-year rabies vaccination.
- Home Again Microchip.
- Adjustable nylon collar (dogs only).
- Fees are due at the time the animal is picked up.
- Cash, checks, and all major credit cards, excluding American Express, are accepted.

**I do not live in Austin nor Travis County, may I still adopt from your shelter?**

Yes, however, we recommend that adopters personally interact with an animal before deciding to adopt or adopt from a shelter or rescue in their local community. Find a listing of shelters in your area at PetFinder or Petango, local classifieds listings, or through a general internet search.

**New Adoption Process: Adoption during the stray hold period questions****Do interested adopters have to come in to adopt or can they place a hold via phone or e-mail?**

Customers with approved applications will be able to place a confirmation adoption on an animal while in its stray time. Customers will only be allowed to place confirmation in person. Customer Service will not place confirmation via email, CSR request, or telephone. However, rescue groups can confirm via e-mail or telephone.

**How does it work?**

The adopter must sign a special adoption addendum that has a scheduled pick up date. The customer service reps will go over all the necessary paperwork with the customer at the time of confirmation. When the customer comes to pick up the animal on the scheduled date, they only have to pay and pick the animal up at station nine. The adopter does not have to sign into Qless and wait.

**What if the animal is adopted and then the owner comes forward to reclaim it?**

If an animal with a confirmed adopter is reclaimed, customer service will contact the confirmed adopter immediately and let them know.

**What if the pet comes in with identification?**

If an animal has identification and customer service is in the process of trying to contact the owner, we will still complete the special adoption and let the interested adopter know that if the animal is not claimed, we will contact them with a pick up date. There is an adoption clause specific to these situations.

**What if someone adopts or a rescue confirms and then they don't come back for the animal?**

The adoption addendum also stipulates that if the adopter or rescue does not pick up the animal on the scheduled date, the custody will revert back to the shelter and the animal will be made available for rescue/adoption.

**Won't this be confusing for adopters?**

When an animal in stray hold gets a confirmed adopter/rescue partner, a brightly colored laminated sign will be placed on the kennel card/holder by the adopter or rescue/foster coordinator. The sign will say, "Yay, I'm going home! Please consider adopting one of my shelter friends." It is our goal that each kennel card will make it very clear if an animal is or is not available.

**Can people interact with stray animals?**

We will allow interested adopters to interact with animals in their stray hold time under staff/volunteer supervision in their kennels.

**Can people do dog to dog meet and greets during stray hold?**

Meet and greets with dogs on stray hold and owned animals will be at the discretion of the customer service reps. If customer service feels that a meet and greet should only be performed after the animal is city property, customer service will allow one extra day to hold the dog if it is still intact. If the dog is already altered, customer service will schedule the meet and greet on the day the dog becomes city property.

**ANIMAL PROTECTION****There is a dog locked in a car in the AAC parking lot! What should I do?**

Ask customer service to page the car owner or call 311 for assistance if you see an animal locked in a car.

**There is a loose dog down on XYZ Street. What should I do?**

Call 311 to report any loose animals.

**There is a tethered/neglected dog at .....?**

Call 311 to report neglected animals.

**EUTHANASIA****If I want to help save an animal on the euthanasia list, how do I do it?**

In some cases, staff and volunteers will be given the opportunity to advocate for an animal. In other cases, we have already determined that the nature of the incident or behavior is severe enough we will not consider placing the animal in any circumstance.

**What if I am concerned that an animal available for euthanasia is unsafe? Can I advocate for euthanasia?**

Documenting information about shelter pets, good and bad, is all our responsibility. If you witness behavior you believe to be unsafe or you read notes that concern you, you should bring that animal to staff attention, and it will be reviewed by our behavior team. If there is a particular animal you think has slipped through the cracks, please send an e-mail to your Volunteer Coordinators to share with the behavior team and Deputy Director.

**Sometimes it seems like an animal gets euthanized for something and then another animal who did something similar doesn't get euthanized. What's the logic?**

Every situation is considered on a case-by-case basis and a number of factors are considered, including: overall behavior, behavior history, context and circumstances around any incidents of aggression, and possible placement options.

**If APA! declines on a dog, does that mean it is immediately euthanized?**

In many cases, the reason APA! declines is also a reason we don't feel comfortable moving forward to consider placement options for a dog. In other cases, we may explore other options, always considering the particular information about each, individual dog. Sometimes we contact the previous owner, vets and others to get more information. Whatever the outcome, we work closely with the behavior team at APA! on nearly every dog being considered for euthanasia.

In one recent case for instance, we elected to send a dog to a trainer for a week where she would be safe and secure, receive additional training and assessment, while we reviewed her case and looked at viable options. For a dog like this, she may still be euthanized, but we will have explored all options before making that decision.

In other situations, we may make a public plea, providing full disclosure that the dog is in danger and allowing for a possible adopter to come forward. As in every case, we provide complete notes and comprehensive counseling so the adopter understands the known or observed behaviors.

**When you are looking at options for a dog that could be euthanized for behavior, what specific options do you consider?** It depends on the dog and the situation, but we sometimes consider the following options: sanctuary placement, adoption, behavioral foster to get further assessment, in shelter behavior improvement plan, rescue placement, placement with Austin Pets Alive!, placement in a working dog or police program, temporary placement with a trainer with experience working with dogs with behavioral challenges.

**Who should I contact if I have questions about a euthanasia decision?**

The behavior team has opened their door to volunteers who have questions about euthanasia or particular animal cases. Please ask the Volunteer Coordinators to connect you.

## **VOLUNTEER**

**What are the requirements to become a volunteer?**

- Register via Givepulse to attend an Information Session at AAC.
- Complete a criminal background investigation – at no cost to you.
- Complete a fingerprint scan (those who have lived outside Texas in the last 10 years) – no cost to you.
- Be at least 13 years of age with an adult of 21+ enrolling as a volunteer with you.
- Be at least 15 years of age with an adult of 21+ attending orientation with you.
- Contribute at least six hours monthly for a minimum of six months.

**My child is under 13 years of age. How can they help AAC?**

There are at-home volunteer opportunities for youth under the age of 13, such as making cat/dog beds, cat toys, fleece tug toys, and leading donation drives for the shelter dogs and cats. Contact the Volunteer Coordinators to learn how to perform this valuable volunteer service.

**Does AAC have any one-time volunteer opportunities?**

Yes! Groups of 6-16 individuals, both adult & youth, from the same organization (sorority/fraternity, religious, business, troops, etc.) may volunteer together for a one-time opportunity walking dogs and/or socializing and caring for the cats. Individuals affiliated with the group do not complete the criminal background investigation or the application. Scheduling requests can be made using the online form here: <http://www.austintexas.gov/page/aac-volunteer-group>

**Can I assist in leading or training one-time group volunteers?**

Yes, you can! Join our One-time Group Lead team to guide groups of adults or youth in activities at the shelter. Contact the Group Coordinator, Lorian Epstein for more details on how you can help at 512-978-0559.

## **WAYS TO PROMOTE THE ANIMALS AT THE CENTER!**

### **AAC STAFF, VOLUNTEER and FOSTER FACEBOOK GROUP**

This group is open to current, active volunteers, fosters and staff members.

#### **What is the purpose of the page?**

There are several ways this page can be used:

- Fosters and volunteers are urged to take candid, cute photos and videos of shelter pets. We use these, along with your stories and observations, to construct posts for the shelter's external Facebook page. This helps find homes for more difficult-to-adopt animals. Always include the Animal ID of the pet you are photographing at the end of your post so they can be easily identified at the shelter.
- Have non-urgent medical or behavioral questions about a foster pet? Ask it to the group and you're likely to get immediate responses.
- Want to share a happy story or informative article with the group? Go ahead. We all love to learn and there are so many great resources out there! Consider following ASPCAPro and Animal Sheltering to find out the latest in animal welfare.
- Can't make your volunteer shift? Alert other volunteers – we often have people step in when they hear there is a need.

The Facebook group is a wonderful tool and is a key part of our Volunteer and Foster program. There are certain things we ask you not to post on the Facebook group page, as they are better addressed with the Volunteer Coordinators. Two of these are:

- Concerns or complaints about a staff member, another volunteer or an issue at the shelter.
- Complaints, suggestions or concerns about shelter policies and procedures.

All group members are expected to conduct themselves with respect and compassion towards everyone else on the page. The shelter reserves the right to moderate comments and posts. Posts may be removed from the page at any time. The author of the removed post will always receive an e-mail or message from the moderator, explaining why their post or comment was removed.

If you have a Facebook account and would like to be in the group, request to join here:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/AACvolunteersandstaff>

**AAC Cat Enrichment team – you have your own special FB group!** The purpose of this group remains the same as the above, but the focus is on cats in the shelter. It is a great way to communicate with your fellow Cat Enrichment volunteers and share shelter cat stories with staff.

If you have a Facebook account and would like to be in the group, request to join here:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/AACcatvolunteers/>

### **VOLUNTEER PICKS PROGRAM!**

Want to help your favorite cat or dog get a home? There is one thing you can do that may help more than anything else. Make a VOLUNTEER PICK sign!

1. Use a word document and make it only ONE page.
2. Use a catchy headline at the top with ONE photo underneath (preferably with a person in it) and a very brief description below.
3. Focus on telling the potential adopter what makes THAT animal special. Talk about why you love that animal, or why someone might want to adopt it. You've only got a couple of sentences so make the words count.
4. Bring in your sheet or print it at the shelter and we'll show you how to laminate it or hang it.
5. If you're not sure you've done it right, send your draft to Kristen and she'll review it for you.

Studies show that the BEST way to get an adopter's attention is with an effective kennel card. Until we make some bigger changes, our kennel cards are not going to be great, so you can help us get attention to the dogs and cats who need it most by making your signs. You can call them "VOLUNTEER PICKS" or just use the pet's name and a hook on that first line to get people to stop and read on.

## Communication Resources

As a volunteer it is important for you to know who to contact when you have questions or concerns. It is always appropriate to contact any staff member in the event of an emergency or urgent situation. However, for day to day questions, please adhere to the guidelines below. Should you have questions that are not listed, email [AnimalServicesVolunteers@austintexas.gov](mailto:AnimalServicesVolunteers@austintexas.gov)

1. **Urgent situations** may require a volunteer to seek the immediate attention of a staff member.

For example:

- a) A medical emergency for a person or animal.
- b) An observed public safety risk of an animal.
- c) A kennel not locked when it should be locked.
- d) A red dot turned to green or blue when it should be red.
- e) Intake of animals outside of business hours.
- f) Supplies that volunteers need immediately to do their job. (Example: nebbing solution, wet food, cat litter, etc.)

2. **For day to day questions** use the **Daily Communications Log** located at AAC GivePulse kiosk and at TLAC. The Daily Communication Log is a communication tool available for volunteers to bring routine issues to our attention. **The volunteers are directed to use the Log for: non-emergency issues, relevant operational questions, or items that need to be checked.** Please note that due to volume, kennel change requests are only considered for: public safety issue (example: highly reactive, fence fighting, etc.) or a true concern for the health or well-being of an animal.

Examples of common day to day concerns:

- a) Facility issues that need attention.
- b) Kennel cards or other signage missing.
- c) An animal that needs to be named.
- d) Photo requests for animals that needs a new photo.

3. **For medical and behavior information of an animal utilize the Chameleon database located in the volunteer office.** Volunteers that have already completed Chameleon training and received a computer access account may directly access the information they need. For volunteers who do not have access to Chameleon, but have scheduled themselves to attend the class, please request through the Daily Communication Log. Chameleon training is available to all volunteers to learn how to look up information. The training schedule is posted in Givepulse.

4. **How to report observed behavior or medical issues:**

- a) Submit online OBS form at [tinyurl.com/AACdogobs](https://tinyurl.com/AACdogobs) to add observed behavior to an animal record.
- b) Fill out a pink medical form for animal health concerns that need Vet Services attention.
- c) Place the form in the plastic sleeve located on the door to the Vet Services hallway adjacent to the restrooms.
- d) All forms are located in the resource rooms in each kennel run and in the volunteer office.

5. Contact a Volunteer Coordinator for concerns with other volunteers, visitors or staff via email at [AnimalServicesVolunteers@austintexas.gov](mailto:AnimalServicesVolunteers@austintexas.gov). Please allow five days for response for all questions submitted via email.

# **Austin Animal Center**

## **Workplace Culture Expectations**

### **Create and Maintain a Safe Workplace**

- Take responsibility for keeping yourself, coworkers, volunteers, visitors and animals safe.
- Be part of creating and maintaining a culture of safety, even when you're in a hurry.
- Know your own limitations and seek help when needed.
- Bring safety concerns to the attention of your supervisor.

### **Strive for Excellence**

- Make customer service a priority and strive to constantly improve the customer experience, both internally and externally.
- Be willing to continue to learn and improve oneself professionally through training, reading and other learning opportunities.
- Educate yourself on national and regional best practices in animal welfare.
- Be thorough, careful and precise in all work.
- Think and act constructively and look for solutions to make things better for animals and people.

### **Support a Collaborative Animal Shelter**

- Practice "we" thinking. We achieve goals together or not at all.
- Understand that whether as an individual or work groups, we all share the same goals and play different, valuable roles in achieving them.
- Support, mentor and uplift coworkers.
- When faced with conflict with individuals or between teams, focus on the situation or problem rather than the individual(s).
- Maintain constructive relationships with coworkers and between teams.
- Lead by example.
- Set each other up for success by sharing information, helping each other and keeping workspaces organized and stocked with supplies.

### **Demonstrate a Commitment to Healthy Communication**

- Communicate with staff, volunteers, other professionals and the public in a professional, positive and helpful manner.
- Respond to emails, phone calls and in-person requests in a timely manner.
- Deliver and receive complaints, suggestions and other communications in a respectful and open-minded manner.
- Share information that affects others with them in a timely manner.
- Take a stand to stop gossip, grudges, cliques, conflicts and negativity and be part of solutions.
- Take time to listen and understand before responding.

### **Be Respectful**

- Respect different opinions and workstyles.
- Respect decisions made and directives given.
- Show compassion for and have patience with your co-workers.
- Respect all employees and volunteers equally, regardless of job title, seniority, position or opinion.
- Expect differences, know differences are not wrong and how to handle conflict with individuals or teams constructively.
- Look for the contribution each person makes in helping animals and people in need.

### **Promote Trust**

- Take responsibility for yourself and be accountable for your own actions.



- Commit to working for a safe, humane future for animals and people.
- Build trust in all your interactions, regardless of who they are with.
- If you have questions or concerns, communicate upward, rather than complaining to or gossiping with others.
- Provide accurate, thorough, objective documentation.
- Follow instructions carefully, meet deadlines when assigned.
- Ask for help and training when you don't understand something.

### **Acknowledge the Emotional Aspect of Our Work**

- Remember to have a sense of humor, but never at the expense of others or professionalism.
- Identify healthy ways to reduce and relieve stress.
- Take care of yourself, paying attention to your work/life balance.
- Find appropriate ways to express strong emotions as they arise.
- Respect others' response to emotions - they may be different than yours.
- Treat your colleagues as members of your Animal Services family.
- Have fun!

### **Show Appreciation**

- Remember why you have chosen to work in animal welfare.
- Practice appreciation at all levels and every day.
- Acknowledge people when they do good things. Shout-outs should be a daily occurrence!
- Thank others when they make your day better and brighter.

### **Be Safe and Compassionate When Handling Animals**

- Treat all animals in your care with patience, kindness and compassion.
- Become adept at reading animal behavior to make sound, safe handling decisions.
- Pursue and take advantage of training opportunities offered at the shelter to help you become a better animal handler.
- Recognize each animal is an individual and should be treated as such. Avoid stereotypes and generalizations about breed, type, etc.
- Model safe, humane handling to other staff, volunteers and the public. You are the expert.