



Humane Society of Walden

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

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About Us

The Humane Society of Walden (HSW) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, no-kill organization dedicated to helping stray and abandoned animals. Operating since 1974, our animal shelter serves the towns of Montgomery, Walden, Maybrook, Crawford, Deerpark, Mamakating, Wawarsing and Shawangunk, but will not turn away pets from across the country in need. We also often rescue from high-kill shelters mainly in the southern part of the U.S. HSW believes that all animals have a natural right to humane treatment including proper care, respect and safe shelter. Our primary mission is to provide care while finding permanent, loving homes for the many animals that come in our door.

PetSmart Adoption Centers

HSW volunteers also run PetSmart adoption centers in Middletown and Monroe. The coordinator for each location will give you further details on the procedures for your PetSmart location. In this handbook please review the Prohibited Conduct, Harassment Policy, Hygiene, Exposure to Infectious Disease, Social Media Policy and Thank You sections.

Welcome

Volunteers are the backbone of our facility and aid our staff in daily operations. While we do have individuals that prefer to concentrate on one specific area the majority of our volunteers are multifaceted. Some of the volunteer experience at the shelter includes:

- Dog walking / feeding / handling
- Cat socializing / feeding / handling
- Cleaning animal areas and facility
- Adoption events
- Photography / PR / social media
- Yard and building maintenance
- Onsite Yard Sale Room: The room is open for shopping twice a month. Volunteers can help by bringing in donations, organizing the donations or working on yard sale days.

Volunteer Policies and Procedures

Dress Code

- **Proper footwear:** Floors are often wet and slippery so shoes with good traction are a must. Your feet also need to be protected from animal waste, cleaning chemicals and disinfectants. Tennis shoes or work style boots with low heeled, non-slip soles are recommended. Open toed shoes, clogs, slip-ons, or sandals are not permitted.
- **Clothing:** While here, you are a shelter representative, so you should always have a tidy appearance. Please only wear comfortable items that can also be easily washed. Long pants are recommended to protect you from chemicals, bites and scratches even in the summer. Torn or frayed clothing, and potentially offensive graphics or logos are not permitted. All clothing should be laundered between visits to the shelter. This reduces the spread of viruses and disease.
- **Jewelry:** Please limit jewelry while volunteering. Large or dangling jewelry can get caught on cages, and in claws or fur, potentially injuring you or the animals. Jewelry is especially hazardous to animals that are attracted to it, like cats, who could easily remove and ingest it

- **Nametag:** Volunteers must wear a nametag at all times. This ensures that staff and the public recognize you as a volunteer and helps us get to know you.

Minimum age to volunteer

Due to safety and legal restrictions volunteers under 16 years old must be accompanied by an adult or guardian. Volunteers must be 21 or older to walk a dog offsite.

Personal Belongings

It is recommended that anything of value to you be left in your vehicle or at home. Coats can be left in the break room, but please don't wear your favorite or most expensive. HSW cannot guarantee the safety of your personal items. Members of the public as well as volunteers are not always supervised while in the shelter and it is a very rare occurrence, but unfortunately, items have been lost in the past.

Volunteering Hours

Upon successful completion of our 60-minute orientation class you are welcome volunteer. HSW is open daily to the public from 12 – 4 PM. If you are interested in dog walking and animal socialization your volunteer hours can be anytime from 12 - 4 PM. If you are interested in helping staff clean and feed the animals your volunteer hours can be anytime from 8 AM – 4 PM. The bulk of the cleaning and feeding is completed from 8 AM – 12 PM, before the shelter opens to the public. We also hold several offsite adoption events year round, if you are interested in participating in adoption events please email vc@waldenhumane.org.

Logging Your Volunteer Time

Volunteers must sign-in at the Volunteer Services area (to the immediate right of the front door) at the start of each shift. Signing-in is required to ensure that you are covered under our volunteer liability policy. We also need to know who has been in the building, and when, for health and safety reasons. We care about the time each of you generously devotes to HSW, and we need these hours to report for grants and other fundraising opportunities.

Community Service

If you are volunteering to fulfill school, court-ordered, or other required volunteer hours in excess of 20 hours please speak to shelter staff after you complete your orientation. You are responsible for tracking the hours you need to complete. If needed, HSW can provide you with a letter of service once your hours are complete.

Court-ordered community service volunteers generally do not work directly with the animals, but assist with cleaning, feeding and other tasks and projects as available.

Communication

Almost all communication in the volunteer program is done via e-mail, through our Facebook page [@WaldenHumane](#), and our Facebook Group "HSW Volunteers". Due to the large number of volunteers, phone calls are not possible and sending mail via the postal service is cost prohibitive. Volunteer newsletters, notices, updates, and other important information about the volunteer program will be e-mailed and posted to Facebook.

If this is not an option for you please check in frequently with the volunteer coordinator when you come in to ensure that you aren't missing any important communications. The volunteer coordinator's contact info is on the front of this handbook. If you have an urgent need or concern that cannot wait, please see the shelter manager.

Prohibited Conduct

While volunteering you are expected to conduct yourself in a manner, which respects our guests, staff and other volunteers. If you fail to follow the policies and guidelines outlined in this handbook or other training classes you attend you will be counseled again in our policies. However, repeated deviation from protocol, a consistently poor/insubordinate attitude or exhibiting any of the behaviors listed below as prohibited conduct may result in immediate termination of your volunteer privileges. The following is a list of conduct that is prohibited while you are volunteering for HSW in any capacity:

- Mistreatment of animals, including rough handling and shouting
- Intimidation or harassment of staff, volunteers or members of the public
- Possession of firearms or weapons on WHS property (including off site events)
- Consumption, possession or being under the influence of illegal substances, non-prescribed pharmaceutical drugs, or alcohol during your volunteer shift
- Use of abusive, profane, inappropriate or threatening language
- Theft of property or funds

We value our volunteers and consider them a huge asset, so we want to ensure your experiences with staff and other volunteers at HSW are pleasant. Please inform the volunteer coordinator or the shelter manager if anything occurs that makes you feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

Harassment Policy

HSW is committed to an environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Each individual has the right to volunteer in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal opportunities and prohibits discriminatory practices, including harassment. Therefore, HSW expects that all relationships among persons at HSW will be business-like and free of bias, prejudice, discrimination, and harassment. In order to keep this commitment, HSW maintains a strict policy of prohibiting unlawful harassment of any kind, including sexual harassment and harassment based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, sex, age, physical or mental disability or any other characteristic protected by state, federal or local employment discrimination laws. If you would like more information regarding HSW's Harassment Policy please email your volunteer coordinator.

Please inform the volunteer coordinator or the shelter manager if anything occurs that makes you feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

Customer Service Expectations

Volunteers are considered shelter ambassadors, so how you conduct yourself while in view of the public is very important. Be friendly. Smile. Say hello. Ask a guest if they need assistance and help direct them to the appropriate staff member. Your appearance and the way you treat our guests will affect the reputation of HSW in the community. If HSW is perceived as an ineffective or hostile organization, the animals will suffer for it.

Please leave adoption counseling and advice to our experienced staff. The staff has access to each pet's extensive behavior and medical profile. While you may have the best of intentions, your

personal opinion may not serve in the best interest of an adopter or the pet. Our adoption counselors go through extensive training in order to identify the right home for the right animal. Be mindful of the privacy of our guests. Refrain from joining in on conversations staff are having with them.

Safety and Health Guidelines

Practicing Safety around Animals

The animals that our volunteers handle are animals that the staff have evaluated and consider good candidates for adoption. The shelter environment can be stressful for many animals; therefore behaviors cannot always be predicted. For the safety of pets and people, handling of animals is strictly prohibited until you have completed volunteer orientation. This includes putting fingers or arms into cages and kennels. If you discover a loose animal, NEVER reach out and grab it. If possible, close any doors in the immediate area and alert a staff member, who will safely retrieve the animal. Remember that all animals must be kept separate unless approved by a staff member. Keeping animals separate reduces the spread of disease, and not all animals at HSW are friendly towards other animals, especially under times of stress. If you witness a fight, DO NOT attempt to break it up. Fights often sound worse than they really are, and trained staff members are the only ones who should intervene.

Even when every precaution is taken, accidents can happen. While very rare, bites and scratches do occur. Cleaning any injury is important to avoid infection. You must report any bite, scratch, or other injury to a staff member immediately, no matter how small or insignificant it may seem. Medical history is uncertain on many of the animals here. Additionally, state law requires that most pets be quarantined temporarily after biting. ***If a cat bites you notify the shelter staff immediately.*** Cat bites have a high likelihood of infection. Because of previous experience HSW asks that you see a doctor within a few hours of a cat bite to ensure that no infection is present. Report the injury to the volunteer coordinator so that an incident report can be written.

*****Bringing your own pet to the shelter while volunteering is not permitted.*****

Children and Guests

Children who are not active volunteers cannot accompany a parent/adult while they are volunteering. Guests are also not permitted to accompany volunteers while they are performing their volunteer duties. Please invite your friends and family to attend an upcoming volunteer orientation session. If you have a friend or family member in town feel free to email the volunteer coordinator and see if a special orientation can be held for your guest. If someone will be picking you up or dropping you off please meet them in the front lobby. They won't be permitted to search the shelter to find you.

Off-Limit Areas

For the safety of the animals and volunteers, volunteers are not permitted in any area marked with signs alerting you that these are STAFF ONLY areas. Housed in these areas are stray animals, animals under bite quarantine, sick animals, or new arrivals that have not yet been evaluated for adoption. The temperaments of these animals have not yet been evaluated. **Do not enter these areas, even if you see other volunteers doing so.**

Hygiene

Please wash or disinfect your hands after handling each animal and before handling the next one. Washing your hands will help eliminate the risk of becoming ill yourself, and also help prevent the spread of disease and germs throughout the shelter. Hands can be washed in the restrooms, or animal kitchens. Wall dispensers with disinfectant gel can be found in the kennel and cat areas. Please ask a staff member to refill the wall dispensers when they run out.

Exposure to Infectious Disease

While volunteering at HSW you may be exposed to infectious disease. Usually these diseases will be contagious only to other animals. However, some diseases can spread from animal to human. HSW will notify you if we have reason to believe that you were exposed to a disease that could affect humans while you were at the facility. Please take extra precautions to launder your clothes and wash your hands. Notify the volunteer coordinator immediately if you develop symptoms. If you develop symptoms of an infection do not return to volunteer until you have completely healed. You may re-expose animals, other volunteers and staff members who have otherwise been cleared from infection.

Social Media Policy

HSW volunteers who engage in blogging, social media, and social networking (“social media”) should be mindful that their postings, even if done off premises, could have an adverse affect on HSW’s legitimate business interests and the privacy interests of its employees, donors and others. For example, the information posted could be considered HSW proprietary or confidential information, or place HSW or its donors or employees in a bad light. In addition, some readers may view you as a *de facto* spokesperson for HSW. To reduce the likelihood that your personal social media posts will have an adverse affect on HSW and the clients we serve, we require that you observe the following guidelines:

1. Do not engage in social media using company property or HSW resources. This means that HSW’s property, including but not limited to Internet access, computer hardware and software, may not be used by a volunteer for social media without the express written consent of the Board of Directors.
2. Your social media is subject to this Social Media Policy and the policies contained in HSW’s Employee or Volunteer Handbook, including but not limited to the policies related to confidentiality and employee/volunteer conduct, even when done during off-duty or non-volunteer time.
3. If your social media includes any information related to HSW, and even if you are posting anonymously, you are required to do as follows:
 - a. Make it clear to your readers that the views are yours alone and that they do not reflect the views of HSW by stating, for example, “*The views expressed in this post are my own. They have not been reviewed or approved by HSW.*” [Another option: “*The views expressed in this post are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of HSW.*”]
 - b. Do not discredit, disparage or defame the mission or services of HSW, its staff, affiliates, supporters, or partners.
 - c. Do not use HSW’s logo, trademark, or proprietary graphics, photographs of HSW’s premises, employees, or rescued animals (other than those available for adoption and posted on HSW’s website as such).
4. Being disrespectful of fellow volunteers or HSW staff may expose you to a defamation lawsuit and much unwanted publicity. You are also more likely to resolve HSW related complaints by speaking directly with the HSW volunteer coordinator than by posting

complaints on social media. If you nonetheless decide to post complaints or criticism, avoid doing so in a way that is defamatory or damaging to HSW or any of its employees or volunteers or be prepared to face possible consequences.

These policies apply even if your posting is anonymous or under a pseudonym. If you do engage in such posts, you should be aware that in appropriate circumstances HSW will take steps to determine your identity. If HSW determines that it is necessary or advisable to ensure compliance with law or protect the interests of HSW or those of its clients, HSW may require in its sole and absolute discretion that you temporarily confine your posting to matters unrelated to HSW. Please remember, HSW has spent substantial time and resources building its reputation and good will. These are valuable and important assets. Before you make any social media post that identifies yourself as a volunteer of HSW, or that identifies HSW, please consider whether what you are posting could affect HSW and whether you might be damaging HSW's reputation. If you are uncertain, you should consult your volunteer coordinator or the Board of Directors before making the posting.

Thank you

Thank you for your generous service to the animals in our care. We couldn't do what we do without you. If you have any questions or concerns about the content of this handbook please contact your volunteer coordinator.