



# **VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK**

Revised 08/2015

**THANK YOU**

On behalf of the animals in our care,  
thank you for volunteering!

**WWW.VAO.ORG**

856-627-9111

# Disclaimer

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### **Purpose of Volunteer Policies**

Volunteer policies are provided to offer guidance and direction to volunteers and staff engaged in the Voorhees Animal Orphanage (“VAO”) volunteer programs. These policies are intended to clarify the roles and responsibilities of volunteers and do not constitute, either implicitly or explicitly, a binding contractual or personnel agreement. Volunteers are not employees of VAO. VAO reserves the right to change any volunteer program or policy at any time, as well as any individual volunteer’s status. Although they are valued and vital, please note that VAO volunteers serve at the discretion of management.

### **Scope of Policies and Procedures**

Unless specifically stated, the volunteer program policies and procedures apply to all VAO volunteers, at all sites of operation.

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# Welcome!

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## **Volunteering at the Voorhees Animal Orphanage**

Welcome and thank you for volunteering at the VAO! Your efforts here will have a welcome and positive impact on the lives of our animals. Simple actions we take for granted in our homes, such as walks, cuddles, treats, and play time are in high demand at our shelter, where a significant number of animals may be housed during our busiest months.

As a direct result of volunteer efforts, animals find homes, orphans are nursed and weaned, sick and injured animals recover and thrive, dogs and cats get to play, and most importantly, lives are saved!

### **General Information**

Voorhees Animal Orphanage, Inc.

PO Box 1363, 419 Cooper Rd, Voorhees, NJ 08043

(856) 627-9111      Federal Tax ID#: 22-2914004

**Website:**    [www.vao.org](http://www.vao.org)

**Operations Director:**                                  Dawn Mason

**Kennel Manager:**    Laurie Ballard

**Cattery Manager:**                                         Bill Romaine

**Canine Conduct Coordinator:**                      Rafael Santos

**Hours of Operation:**      Monday-Friday, 12 - 7PM      Saturday & Sunday, 12 - 5PM

Closed to the public on Christmas Day, New Year’s Day, Easter, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, and Thanksgiving.

Closed to the public the second Wednesday of every month for cleaning and in-service training.

Volunteers are welcome at the shelter every day we’re open, from 11:00 to close.

### **How YOU can help at the VAO!**

Volunteers are essential to providing VAO animals with enrichment opportunities, promotions, and offsite outings. We need your help in every single department of the shelter.

- Animal walking/play and socialization
- Volunteering/organizing offsite adoption, promotional, and fundraising events
- Assisting with housekeeping, kennel/cage cleaning, laundry, and bed down
- Refilling water bowls, or distributing toys, and/or blankets
- Creating kennel enrichment toys for dogs and cats
- Bathing and grooming animals
- Taking animals on field trips (with appropriate experience, at staff’s discretion)
- Serving as a volunteer adoption counselor
- Serving on a volunteer committee
- Fostering animals
- Transporting animals

*Participants must be at least 21 years of age to volunteer at the shelter.*

# Volunteer Programs

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VAO is proud of our strong and creative volunteer community, which includes people from all walks of life. Contact the shelter if you're interested in the programs listed below.

## **Dog Handling**

Dog handling for the purpose of walks, training, and exercise is an important part of volunteer work here at the shelter. Volunteers who handle dogs must undergo orientation and training specific to the safe handling of animals. Dog handling, training, and orientation are coordinated by associated volunteers.

## **Cat Handling**

Cat handling for the purpose of socialization and exercise is an important part of volunteer work here at the shelter. Volunteers who handle cats must undergo orientation and training specific to the safe handling of animals. Cat handling, training, and orientation are coordinated by associated volunteers.

## **Events Team**

The Events Team is comprised of volunteers and staff members who schedule, organize, and attend onsite and offsite adoption and community events. VAO volunteers attend offsite adoption events at local pet stores throughout the year, spreading awareness of VAO and promoting animals in our care. Activities of the Events Team are coordinated by the volunteer Events Committee.

## **Foster Program**

The primary reason for foster care is to provide temporary homes for dogs and cats due to overcrowding, or for animals whose conditions aren't manageable in a shelter setting. Foster care is needed for healthy, sick and injured dogs and cats of all sizes and breeds, and for litters of puppies and kittens too young for adoption. All foster volunteers must undergo training and orientation, which is coordinated by the volunteer Foster Committee.

## **Pet Pal Program**

The Pet Pal Program aims to improve the quality of life for long-term residents, and prioritize their adoption. Volunteers pair with an animal to focus on marketing, socialization, and post-adoption support. Pet Pal volunteers must undergo training and orientation, which is coordinated by associated volunteers.

## **Remote Adoptions Team**

We maintain several remote adoption sites with vendors such as PetValu and PetSmart. A number of long-time volunteers help to manage the animals at these sites, and they're always looking for help to provide care for the animals. Let us know if you'd like to help!

## **Support Team**

This team helps out with the housekeeping, laundry, dishes, cleaning, feeding, bed-down... all of these things and more are part of running a successful shelter. We couldn't do it without your help!

# Important Things to Know

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## General Information

- Familiarize yourself with and abide by all VAO policies and procedures as presented during orientation, during other trainings, and in written materials provided by VAO. This includes all signs and memos posted in the shelter;
- A minimum of 10 hours/month must be documented in order to remain active as a volunteer;
- Carry out instructions provided by the leadership team, work to support their efforts;
- Be mindful of staff time and responsibilities, and do not unnecessarily disrupt their work;
- Working only in your chosen area of experience or preference is entirely appropriate;
- For insurance purposes, volunteers may not enter a dog kennel for any reason. Additionally, volunteers may not open kennel doors for any reason without staff authorization or approval.

## Dress Code

- Volunteers must be easily identifiable to others, and should wear their name badges at all times.
- Long pants and closed-toe shoes are recommended while working with animals.
- Unprofessional, inappropriate, or offensively branded clothing is prohibited.
- For your safety, excessively loose clothing and hoop or dangling jewelry is prohibited while working with animals.

## Communication

Unless the need is immediate or critical, volunteers may not engage staff to discuss operations, suggestions, or concerns. Make an appointment to meet with the Executive Director to discuss any issues you may have. Under no circumstances should a volunteer interrupt a staff member's work day.

## Recording Hours

For several reasons, including our ability to qualify for certain grant funding, as well as the requirements of our insurance coverage, all volunteers must sign in and out when volunteering at the shelter.

## Evaluations

- The shelter's management staff will evaluate all volunteers periodically.
- New volunteers are probationary for 30 days, starting with the day they begin working at the shelter.
- Established volunteers will be evaluated annually, on or about the anniversary of their first day. Evaluations are confidential, and based on compliance with the standards contained in this handbook.

## Off-Limits Areas

Certain areas are or may be deemed *employee only* areas for reasons of safety, security, or disease control. The VAO utilizes federally controlled substances for veterinary procedures in certain areas of the shelter, and volunteers are restricted from these areas without supervision. Additionally, the following areas are off limits to volunteers:

- Volunteers are not permitted in the Operations Director's office without permission.
- Volunteers are not permitted in the vet shed without permission or accompanied by staff.
- Volunteers are not permitted in the quarantined dog area, feral cat, or feline ICU rooms.
- Volunteers are not permitted behind the front desk without permission or accompanied by staff.
- Volunteers are not permitted to review adoption applications without permission or accompanied by staff.
- Volunteers are not permitted to take dogs through the front office/lobby area during business hours.
- Volunteers are not permitted to enter any room marked *Employees Only* or *Staff Only*.

### **Animal Handling**

Volunteers may not handle animals before completion of associated training. Training takes place periodically with experienced volunteers. You are responsible for following the training. Retraining must take place after an absence of 30 days. Retraining is at the discretion of staff. Failure to follow guidelines may lead to a loss of volunteer status.

### **Zoonotic Disease**

Zoonotic diseases are those that can be transmitted from animals to humans and may be present within the shelter at any time. Potential agents of zoonotic disease transmission include fungi, bacteria, viruses, parasites and arthropods. The most effective means to preventing transmission include: washing hands frequently; wearing long-pants and closed toed shoes (consider bringing a pair of rubber boots to wear while working); wearing gloves when handling litter pans, food or water dishes or when cleaning up feces, urine or vomit; and staying up-to-date with tetanus vaccinations. Persons with suppressed immune systems or other medical conditions may be more susceptible to zoonotic disease. If you have questions or concerns, we urge you to speak with your physician about your risks.

### **Incident/Accident Reporting**

All injuries and accidents must be reported to a manager or the Executive Director so that the appropriate incident forms may be completed, including insurance documents and bite reports to be filed with the Health Department. Completion of all forms is required. Failure to report an injury or accident may result in loss or suspension of your volunteer status. If you are bitten or scratched, wash the injured area with soap and water immediately and contact a staff member. If the skin is broken or you have concerns, see your physician immediately.

### **Emergency Action Plan**

Map of evacuation routes and instructions for evacuation are posted next to every exterior exit in the building. Please make yourself familiar with their content, and be prepared to act accordingly in the event of an emergency. A copy of the shelter's Emergency Action Plan is available for review in the front office.

## **General Conduct**

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### **Your Relationship with Shelter Staff**

Whereas the support and hard work of our volunteers is vital to running the shelter, it's important that you understand your relationship with the staff. As paid employees they are solely responsible for the care and safety of our animals. Employees are answerable to their supervisors and the Operations Director. Management should never be questioned in front of other employees or customers, and it's not appropriate for a volunteer to direct, criticize, or distract any employee from doing their job. Please bring any concerns you have to the Operations Director. Refrain from undermining staff or speculating on their efforts or motives. The most effective volunteers offer their time and expertise with a humble and collaborative spirit. Let's do everything we can to create and maintain an atmosphere we all can enjoy, and support each other in our efforts.

### **Respectful Behavior**

As a member of the VAO volunteer community, you are a representative of the Voorhees Animal Orphanage brand and image and are expected to conduct yourself in a professional manner. You must be respectful and courteous in your interactions with the public, staff, and other volunteers. Disrespectful or unprofessional behavior, harassment of any kind, threats, disparaging remarks, discrimination, or vulgar language will not be tolerated. Your volunteer status may be terminated as a result of such conduct. This expectation of conduct applies to online behavior (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), as well as interactions with staff, volunteers and members of the public.

## **Tolerance Policy**

VAO's clientele is widely diverse in race, language, socio-economic status, education, background, and other factors. VAO maintains a policy of treating all clients with respect and accepts that most people love their pets, even if they do not have the same resources to care for them as other owners might. As a VAO volunteer, you will be asked to set aside negative assumptions when interacting with clients, volunteers, or staff members. There is more than one way to appropriately care for a companion animal, and a stable life in a home – whether it's exactly like your own or not – is always preferable to life in a shelter for any animal.

## **Confidentiality and Privacy Policy**

VAO volunteers may have access to confidential information (e.g., name, address, financial, or personal information) about the organization's clients, donors, fellow volunteers, and families that adopt animals through our organization. It is of the utmost importance to VAO that this information is maintained in the highest degree of confidence, and that it is accessed only on a need-to-know basis. For that reason, unauthorized use of confidential information may result in loss or suspension of volunteer status.

## **Parking**

Volunteers may park in the staff/volunteer parking lot. Please do not park lengthwise at the base of the small hill that runs alongside the lot, as it blocks those trying to back out of the spaces that face the fence.

## **Tobacco-Free Workplace**

VAO is dedicated to providing a healthy and comfortable work environment for our employees, volunteers, and visitors. Smoking is not permitted in any company building or vehicle. Smoking is prohibited while handling animals. This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, clients, and visitors. Smoking is permitted in the designated smoking area, next to the dumpster in the staff/volunteer parking lot. Please dispose of cigarette butts responsibly.

## **Drug and Alcohol-Free Workplace**

In order to provide a safe, healthy, and encouraging work environment for our employees, volunteers, and visitors, the use, possession, trade, or sale of alcohol, illegal drugs, or intoxicants is prohibited.

## **Veterinary Drugs**

VAO utilizes federally controlled substances for certain veterinary procedures. Any unauthorized possession, use, or theft of those substances is grounds for loss or suspension of volunteer status.

## **Searches**

VAO has the right to conduct inspections of all VAO property and premises. Entering the organization's property constitutes consent to searches and inspections. An individual suspected of violating the drug-free workplace policy may be asked to submit to a search or inspection. Refusal to submit to such a search may be grounds for loss or suspension of volunteer status.

## **Behaviors That May Result in Termination of Your Volunteer Status**

- Causing injury, distress, or death by inappropriate handling of an animal;
- Disregarding safety or security policies and procedures, or shelter management directives or requirements;
- A negative or unhelpful demeanor;
- Directing or attempting to direct, publicly criticizing, or actively undermining VAO employees;
- Theft or removal of VAO property (including sheltered animals);
- Unauthorized possession of weapons on VAO premises or while on VAO business offsite;

- Violating the client confidentiality policy;
- Acting on behalf of the organization without authorization;
- Attempting to diagnose or treat a VAO shelter animal in opposition to staff directives;
- Contacting staff members outside of business hours without their permission;
- Contacting board members without notifying VAO staff, or without the board member's permission.

*Stated plainly, the work we do here requires cooperation, enthusiasm, and good cheer. People who are selfless, hardworking, and humble help us deliver our mission effectively. If you're volunteering to agitate for change, forward a personal agenda, or concern yourself with one (or one type) of animal to the exclusion of others or the shelter's mission, you'll be happier volunteering at another charitable organization.*

### **Company and Personal Property**

Equipment provided by VAO should not be taken for personal use or removed from VAO, unless approved for use in off-site volunteer activities. Use caution and safeguard any personal belongings brought to VAO or off-site locations. VAO cannot reimburse you for lost or stolen property.

### **Workplace Harassment Policy**

VAO intends to provide a professional environment that is pleasant, welcoming, and free from intimidation, hostility, or other offenses. Unlawful harassment of any sort will not be tolerated, particularly against employees or volunteers in protected classes. These classes include, but are not necessarily limited to race, color, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, medical condition, marital status; veteran status, or any other protected status defined by law.

#### ***What is harassment?***

*Unlawful workplace harassment can take many forms. It may be, but is not limited to, words, signs, offensive jokes, cartoons, pictures, posters, e-mail messages, pranks, intimidation, defamation, physical contact, or violence. Harassment is not always sexual in nature. It may also take the form of other activity including derogatory statements not directed to the targeted individual but taking place within their hearing or posted online. Other prohibited conduct includes written material such as notes, photographs, cartoons, articles of a harassing or offensive nature, and taking retaliatory action against an employee or volunteers for discussing or making a harassment complaint.*

Any volunteer that becomes aware of an incident of harassment must report it to a VAO staff member, who will report it to management. VAO management, once aware of any incidents of harassment, will take prompt and appropriate action, up to and including suspension or termination of volunteer status.

## **Working with VAO**

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### **News Media Requests**

VAO is occasionally in the news, and sometime representatives from the media will ask volunteers for interviews, information, or comments. Volunteers should inform the media representative that they are a volunteer and cannot speak on behalf of the agency. Volunteers should direct any media requests to a staff member. The term "media" includes all TV, radio, print, film, video, internet, or other outlets, as well as reporters, producers, photographers, and anyone else associated with these media.



## **Brand Use & Social Media**

VAO understands that many of its volunteers have Facebook and other social media accounts. To ensure information is not misinterpreted as official VAO communications, please do not use the VAO's name or logo as a part of an identity for any social media account, website, blog or other communications. Likewise, please do not use the VAO's name in or as a part of personal email addresses created by email services, as this may be misinterpreted as an official VAO email communication by the receiver. The VAO name and logo may only accompany official VAO communications, unless permission is granted by VAO.

## **Representation of VAO**

Volunteers must take care not to present themselves as employees of VAO and may not:

- Enter or make any contractual or financial agreements or obligations on behalf of VAO;
- Use the VAO's logo or name on printed or electronic materials without permission;
- Fundraise using the VAO's name, logo, or public materials without permission;
- Attempt to create a partnership or coalition on behalf of the VAO without permission;
- Make any public statements, written or verbal, appearing to represent the VAO;
- Lobby individuals, organizations, or government bodies on behalf of the VAO without permission.

## **Photographs & Video**

Periodically, volunteers are asked to be included in photographs and/or video for marketing purposes; permission for the use of your image is implied as part of your volunteer agreement.

# End of Assignment

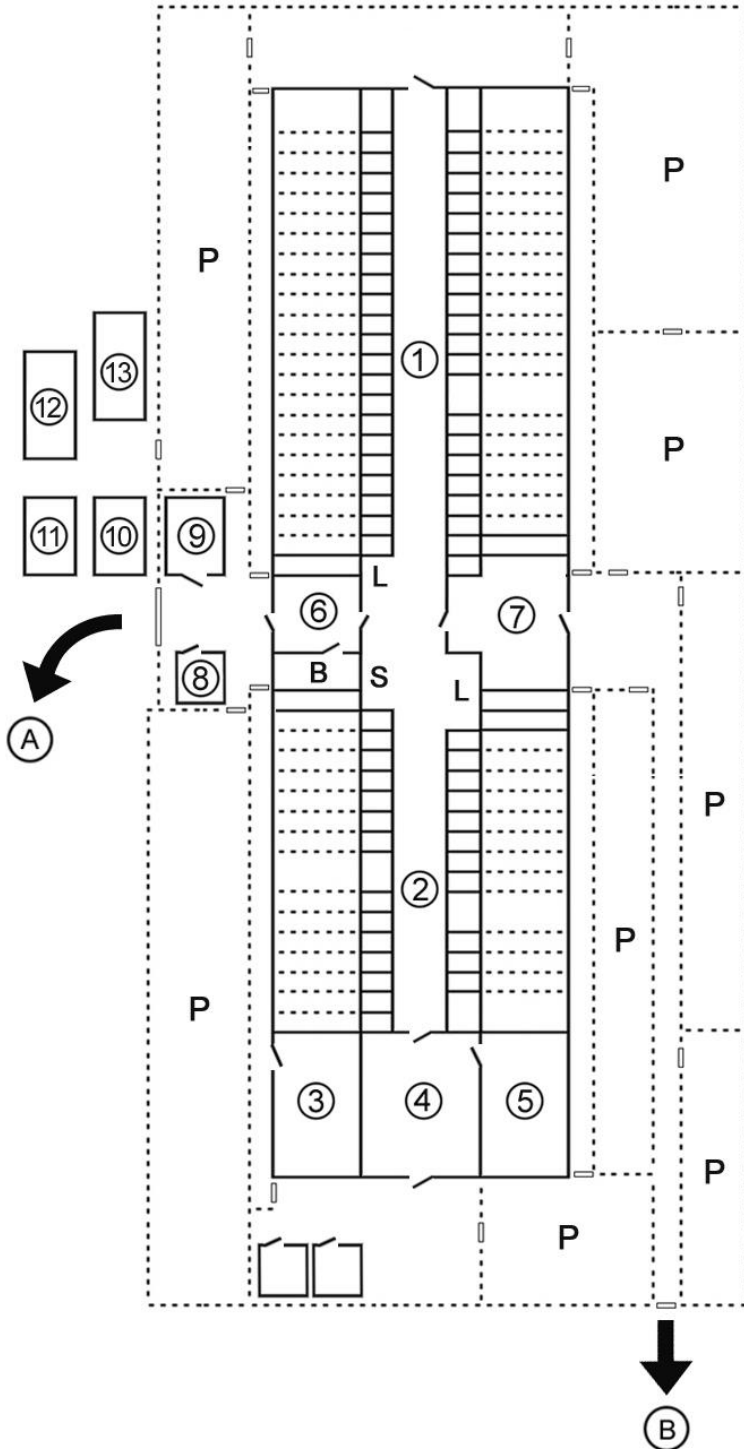
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We hope that you find your volunteer experience rewarding and enjoyable, and that you will remain with us for many years. If you do find it necessary to resign your volunteer assignment, please contact the Executive Director to do so. Additionally, we may ask you for a brief exit interview before you go – your feedback helps us to improve the volunteer experience at VAO.

On what we anticipate to be very rare occasions, it may be necessary to coach, counsel, or ultimately ask volunteers to relinquish their status. In each case it must be understood that VAO volunteers participate in our programs at the sole discretion of the Executive Director.



# VOORHEES ANIMAL ORPHANAGE



1. West Kennels
2. East Kennels
3. Feral Cat Room
4. Main Cat Room
5. ICU Cat Room
6. Food Prep Area
7. Lobby
8. Director's Office
9. Laundry Shed
10. Vet Shed
11. Supplies Shed
12. Supplies Shed
13. Training Shed

P Play Yards

L Laundry

B Bathroom

S Sink

A Staff/Volunteer Parking

B Customer Parking



# VOORHEES ANIMAL ORPHANAGE

## RECEIPT AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

After reviewing this handbook, please read the following statements, sign below, and return one copy to the office to be included in your file.

**Understanding and Acknowledging Receipt of the VAO's Volunteer Handbook:** I have received a copy of VAO's Volunteer Handbook. I acknowledge it is my duty to read and understand the contents of the handbook. I understand that the policies and benefits described in it are subject to change at the sole discretion of VAO at any time. I agree to maintain this Volunteer Handbook and attach any future additions or modifications hereto.

I further understand that all VAO volunteers, including myself, are here at the discretion of VAO staff, managers, and the Executive Director. This means that the volunteer relationship can be terminated by me or VAO at any time, for any reason, without cause or prior notice. I understand that the policies and procedures of VAO are not binding, do not constitute a contract of employment between VAO and its volunteers, and do not constitute any type of promise or agreement of any kind by VAO. I also understand that the information contained in this handbook may be revoked, withdrawn or changed by VAO at any time and are not intended to affect in any way either the right of VAO or of any volunteer to end the relationship at any time for any reason. VAO reserves the right to change the terms or conditions of volunteering without notice to, or consultation or agreement with, any participant.

I understand that this handbook supersedes all previous handbooks, manuals and other oral or written directives. I understand it is my responsibility to attach any revisions or changes to the content of this manual if provided by VAO staff.

**Behaviors That Will Result in Loss or Suspension of Your Volunteer Status:** I have read and understand the VAO's list of behaviors that will result in loss or suspension of volunteer status. I understand that my role as a volunteer can be ended or suspended at any time at the discretion of the VAO staff, managers, and Operations Director.

**Policies on Harassment and Tolerance:** I have read and understand VAO's policies on harassment and tolerance contained in this manual, and agree to abide and be governed by such policies and any revisions made to them.

**Policies on Tobacco, Drugs, and Alcohol:** I have read and understand VAO's policies on tobacco, drugs, and alcohol, and agree to abide and be governed by such policies and any revisions made to them.

**Policies on Dog and Cat Handling:** I have read and understand VAO's policies on dog and cat handling, and agree to abide and be governed by such policies and any revisions made to them.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*Note: This form must be signed and returned by the volunteer to VAO upon receipt and review of the Volunteer Handbook. Your status as a volunteer will be active at that time. Thank you!*