



# VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

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## Welcome to One Step Closer Animal Rescue, Inc. Volunteer Program!

Thank you for your commitment to the cause of helping homeless animals in your community. The purpose of this handbook is to outline One Step Closer Animal Rescue, Inc. (OSCAR) Volunteer Program in the clearest way possible. Our program, consistent with our work, is in a constant state of change, but our hope is that this handbook will guide you through your experience within our organization and make your time here as productive and enjoyable as possible.

Volunteering should be enjoyable, educational, and rewarding. It is through hard work and valuable service that you can get the most out of your experience here. We are seeking individuals who will dream of the big picture but who are also willing to do the hard work to get there. As a OSCAR volunteer, you are extremely vital to our mission in ensuring the health, safety and welfare of the animals and citizens in our community. Our volunteers assist with enrichment, exercise, training and advocating for the animals in our shelter while they are in our care. The reason for our success is simple; we have a hardworking staff and a passionate base of volunteers! We encourage you to bring all your passion and enthusiasm through our doors every day. It is your energy that keeps our mission alive and supports our shelter's work.

We truly appreciate your service for the animals!

Warm regards,

Cassie Kowalchuk

President

One Step Closer Animal Rescue, Inc.

## About One Step Closer Animal Rescue, Inc.

One Step Closer Animal Rescue, Inc. is a 501c3 NJ non-profit rescue organization that saves dogs and cats from desperate situations. We rescue pets from overcrowded shelters where animals are euthanized due to lack of space. O.S.C.A.R. cares for these pets and gives them the loving care they deserve. We ensure that all pets in our care receive the proper veterinary attention and vaccinations, and that the animals are spayed/neutered. All of O.S.C.A.R.'s dogs and cats are great animals that deserve loving homes. In addition, OSCAR helps the local community with strays, re-homing animals, and TNR (trap neuter release of feral cats). We strongly believe in working with the community to benefit animals now and in the future through our outreach programs.

One Step Closer Animal Rescue, Inc. was originally started in 2010 as a foster based rescue in Sparta, NJ. In 2016, we had the opportunity to purchase an abandoned boarding facility. We spent most of 2016 turning the run down facility into a safe haven for animals in need. Our kennel has 40 dog runs, a cat room, a quarantine room, kitchen/meal prep area and welcome area. We also have a separate building for supply storage, adoption rooms, and office space.

### **Mission**

Our Rescue was created through the desire to save the lives of innocent animals. All of our members have a strong passion to save as many dogs and cats as we can, as well as a commitment to ensure great futures for all of the pets we rescue.

## Contact Information

### Address

155 Stanhope Sparta Road  
Andover, NJ 07821

### Phone and Website

973-810-2853

Website

[www.OscarAnimalRescue.org](http://www.OscarAnimalRescue.org)

### Email:

For general information

[OscarRescue@yahoo.com](mailto:OscarRescue@yahoo.com)

### Shelter Hours

Monday	8:00 am – 5:00 pm
Tuesday	8:00 am – 5:00 pm
Wednesday	8:00 am – 5:00 pm
Thursday	8:00 am – 5:00 pm
Friday	8:00 am – 5:00 pm
Saturday	8:00 am – 5:00 pm
Sunday	8:00 am – 5:00 pm

### The shelter has limited volunteer hours for the following holidays:

New Year's Day  
Thanksgiving  
Christmas Day  
Christmas Eve

# Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities

As a volunteer of One Step Closer Animal Rescue, Inc., you are entitled to certain rights and are expected to fulfill certain obligations.

You have the right to:

- Work in a safe environment
- Be treated with respect and appreciated
- Receive proper training and orientation
- Know your responsibilities
- Receive written copy of volunteer policies and procedures
- Receive supplies and equipment (if applicable) to perform volunteer activities

Your responsibilities include:

- Handle all animals in a loving and compassionate manner
- Being a positive representative and advocate for OSCAR both on and off premises
- Acting professionally and courteously when dealing with the public, staff and other volunteers
- When required, respectfully accepting supervision and direction from staff
- Reading and adhering to all posted signs, notices, and e-mail communications
- Dressing appropriately
- Notifying the OSCAR staff of an unsafe condition
- Fulfilling your commitment as required
- Maintaining a level of confidentiality based on your specific assignment

## Volunteer Guidelines

One Step Closer Animal Rescue, Inc. relies on its volunteers to be dependable and effective. By meeting that commitment, the program operates smoothly and maximum benefit is derived for the animals.

- Arrive appropriately dressed by wearing close-toed shoes, pants, and clothing appropriate for your position. If you are wearing shorts or open-toed shoes, you may be asked to leave due to safety risks. Because each volunteer is a representative of the animal shelter in the eyes of the public, we ask that you cover any visible tattoos of an offensive nature. For safety reasons, we ask that you cover or refrain from wearing visible body piercings and large, dangling jewelry.
- All volunteer hours must be recorded. Volunteers will be able to sign in and out at the clip board in the kennel lobby.
- Please respect the amount of work the staff needs to accomplish every day. Do not spend time socializing with humans; your valuable time is better spent caring for the animals.
- Sanitation is very important! Always wash your hands before handling animals, between handling animals, and before leaving the shelter.
- You are responsible for your own transportation.
- Do not answer questions from the public. If you are unsure of the correct response, refer them to a staff member.
- Only perform tasks for which you have received specific training.
- Do not enter designated "Employees Only" areas such as isolation, intake areas, kennels, and offices. If you are asked to work in an "employees only" area, you must be accompanied by a staff member.
- Cell phone use is discouraged while interacting with animals. If you must make or receive a phone call, do so with consideration of our animals' safety in mind.
- Volunteers must leave the building at closing time.
- Volunteers can be dismissed at any time for inappropriate behavior, including but not limited to, rough handling of the animals; behaving rudely to the public, staff, and other volunteers; arriving under the influence of drugs or alcohol; failing to comply with guidelines; failing to respect the philosophy of the organization.

# Volunteer Requirements

## **Dress Code**

Volunteers will be required to wear volunteer t-shirt at all offsite events. You must wear closed toed shoes, such as sneakers or hiking shoes. No sandals or flip flops.

## **Sign-In**

Volunteers MUST sign in and out at the volunteer station, located in the kennel lobby.

## **Age Requirement**

To volunteer at One Step Closer Animal Rescue, Inc, you must be at least 18 years old to volunteer directly with the animals and volunteer to our kennel.

## **Volunteer Hours Commitment**

Volunteers must commit to at least 6 hours per month to remain in an active status. This may consist of a combination of any activities included in our volunteer positions. Example, you may do 2 hours at an event and 4 hours of dog handling to be considered active for that month. Volunteers with zero hours accumulated for a period of 4 months will be considered inactive. Refresher animal handling training may be required.

## **Restricted Areas**

Volunteers are prohibited from entering isolation rooms, cat intake, dog kennels, or any area identified as "Employees Only" unless accompanied by a staff member.

## **Parking**

Shelter volunteers are requested to park in parking spaces furthest from the adoption room entrance, leaving the limited parking spots available for adopters. Only handicapped volunteers may park in the parking lot near the adoption room.

## **Entering and exiting the building**

Volunteers must use the front door to enter or exit the building.



## Volunteer Discipline Procedures

We strive to provide a safe and enjoyable experience for all our volunteers. The policies and procedures that are in place serve as guidelines for appropriate behavior. Volunteering is a privilege, not a right. Those volunteers who commit minor violations of policies and procedures will be verbally counseled in an effort to achieve acceptable behavior. Continued violations could result in additional counseling or dismissal. Serious violations will result in immediate termination.

### **Zero Tolerance Policy for:**

- Physical or verbal abuse of any staff or volunteer.
- Abusive behavior toward any animal.
- Volunteering under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or other substances that may impair judgement or functions.

### **Volunteer Dismissal**

Management reserves the right to permanently dismiss volunteers for repeat offenses. In the event of performance problems or behavior concerns, One Step Closer Animal Rescue, Inc. may take disciplinary action in the form of any or all of the following four steps not in consecutive order:

- verbal warning
- written warning
- suspension
- termination (depending on the severity of the situation and number of occurrences)

All verbal and written warnings to volunteers will be documented.

# Requests and Notifications from Volunteers

## **Animal Bites and Scratches**

All volunteers are required to use caution and follow established procedures when working with shelter animals. A bite may be an indication of an animal's health or behavioral problem and must be checked out for the safety of the animal, visiting public, volunteers and staff. All bites must be reported, including accidental and superficial.

If you choose to seek treatment for an injury incurred at the shelter or at a shelter-sponsored event, please follow these instructions.

1. Report injury to the shelter manager, administer first aid, if required, and determine if additional medical treatment is necessary.
2. Fill out an Injury Report form located in the office.
3. If you choose to go to the hospital, any and all expenses will be covered by your personal insurance.

## **Medical Alerts**

Contact a staff member regarding any medical issues pertaining to an animal. These medical concerns will include, but not limited to, diarrhea or blood in stools, sore paws, sneezing, coughing, scratching, or hair loss.

## **Behavior Alerts**

Contact a staff member regarding any behavior issues concerning an animal. These issues will include, but not limited to bouncing off walls, spinning in cage, growling, lunging, jumping, and any aggressive interaction with another dog and/or person.

## **Public Relations and Social Media**

Volunteers are not permitted to speak on behalf of One Step Closer Animal Rescue, Inc.

## **Leave of Absence**

Volunteers will be expected to communicate with written notice that you will be taking a leave of absence. You will need to state whether or not you plan to return and specify approximate dates of your absence, reason for absence, and anticipated date of return. After 4 months of inactivity, you will be considered inactive. Prior to returning to active status, you may be required to recommit by completing the volunteer application an agreement and complete a refresher course in animal handling.

## Volunteer Opportunities

Below are the various opportunities available at One Step Closer Animal Rescue. As a volunteer, you are not limited to any one position. Enjoy as many activities as you like remembering there is a 6-hour monthly minimum of activity.

### **Dog Walking:**

This involves walking, playing, socializing and/or transporting adoptable dogs. Being a dog walker/handler is much more than just walking a dog, it's a commitment to bettering the lives of shelter pets before they have the opportunity to be welcomed into their forever home. To become an official dog walker, volunteers need to attend the in-person, hands-on training with our dog walking coordinator. See our *Dog Handling for Volunteers* for more detailed information. (See *job description page 16*)

### **Cat Socializer:**

Petting, playing, socializing and/or transporting adoptable cats. Cat socializers assist the team with providing enrichment and affection to our adoptable cats in the adult and kitten rooms. Understanding feline behavior and body language is important to provide comfort and minimize stress for our cats in residence. Socializing can mean holding, petting, giving treats or even just sitting and reading to give the cats in residence individual attention while they wait for their adoption day. (See *Cat Socializer Job Description page 15*)

### **Dog / Cat Cage Room Cleaner:**

Cleaning cages in the animal shelter. This is a scheduled shift, to schedule a morning shift please speak to the shelter manager. Cleaners will be trained on procedures and protocols by an experienced staff member. Cleaning begins at 8:00am to ensure the room is clean, odor-free and ready for adoption hours to begin. This position involves bending, cleaning, exposure to cleaning agents, feces, etc. PPE will be provided.

### **Off-site Event Volunteer:**

Transporting shelter animals to adoption events, speaking to interested adopters, explaining adoption process. Volunteers will have the opportunity to assist with and work at various off-site events to promote our adoptable pets. Volunteers are not to remove animals from the shelter without the prior written consent of the shelter manager or shelter administration team.

Volunteers working at off-site events will be expected to know how to answer questions commonly asked regarding the animals being shown at the event, other animals that are available for adoption at the shelter and general questions surrounding the adoption process, fees, and the customers' responsibilities. If you do not know the answer, do not

give anyone incorrect information, but rather advise them you will find out and then get back to them.

Our reputation is of utmost importance. Because many of the customers served at off-site events may not visit our shelter, these customers' experiences and opinion of One Step Closer Animal Rescue Inc. will come solely from the interaction they will have with off-site event volunteers. Therefore, these volunteers will be considered ambassadors for OSCAR and must possess the skill to conduct themselves in a professional and courteous manner with all customers. The main objectives for these volunteers to accomplish will be to showcase the animals currently available for adoption, foster, to answer the customers' questions and to promote a positive image of OSCAR.

Speak to the shelter manager to receive information about opportunities at future events.

# Adoption Policies and Guidelines

One Step Closer Animal Rescue, Inc. believes in an by appointment adoption process. Staff strive to make the best match between people and the animals.

## Adoption Process Overview

1. Potential adopters are able to view any cat and dog available for adoption.
2. Cage cards provide information about the animal.
3. We will do same day adoptions when possible, but cannot guarantee this timeline. "Holds" are used for the following reasons:
  - a. a pets needs to be sterilized,
  - b. a family needs time to bring in other family members, and/or do a dog-to-dog meet.
  - c. Medical hold to undergo treatment
4. Adoption Policy
  - a. Must be over the age of 18 to legally sign the contract.
  - b. Not under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of adoption.
  - c. All OSCAR adopted pets are meant to be companion animals and not kept outside.
  - d. OSCAR does its best to disclose all information know about a specific pet. This is not fool-proof and any adopter must accept that he/she is taking into their care a living creature.
  - e. Staff reserves the right to deny an adoption if in the best interest and interest of safety for the pet and people applying to adopt.

## Adoptions

All puppies and dogs are:

- Spayed or neutered
- 4DX Tested - Heartworm & tick disease tested (if over 6 months)
- Dewormed for intestinal parasites
- Treated for fleas and ticks
- Up to date with vaccinations
- Vaccinated for rabies (if over 6 months)
- Microchipped

All cats and kittens are:

- Spayed or neutered
- Dewormed for intestinal parasites
- Treated for fleas and ticks
- Up to date with vaccinations
- Vaccinated for rabies (if over 6 months)
- Tested for Feline Immunodeficiency Virus and Feline Leukemia Virus
- Microchipped

### **View Animals Online**

You can view all of our cats and dogs ready for adoption online at [www.OscarAnimalRescue.org](http://www.OscarAnimalRescue.org)

### **Adoption fees:**

Adoption fees vary and are listed in each animals profile.

## Job Description – Cat socializer

**Job summary:** Socialize, groom, and train cats.

**Time commitment:** 2 hours per week (scheduled)

**Qualifications:** Must be 18 years of age or older. Must have viewed online training and attended orientation.

[www.aspcapro.org](http://www.aspcapro.org)

Training > Webinars > Topic > Enrichment & Behavior >

Stress Reduction & Enrichment for Shelter Cats

Feline Communication

Training > Webinars > Topic > Adoption and Placement

How to Help and Ultimately Adopt Out Under socialized Kittens

### **Duties:**

1. Cat socializers will work with specific cats, handling and grooming them to make him/her more comfortable with being handled and being around people. For example, handle each paw and extend claws to prepare cat for having nails trimmed.
2. Train cats to perform simple tricks for treats, if time permits.
3. If cat has special needs, ensure that visitors handle the cat properly to help both the visitor and cat have a safe and pleasant experience.

## Job description – Dog walking/handling

**Job summary:** Walk, socialize, and provide basic training to dogs.

**Time commitment:** 2 hours per week

**Qualifications:** Must be 18 years of age or older. Must have attended orientation and the in-person, hands-on training hosted by our dog walking coordinator.

Position requires a tolerance for loud noise, and volunteer must be able to deal with adverse weather conditions, be in good-to-moderate physical condition because of the high level of physical activity involved.

Review Dog Handling for Volunteers (*next page*)

[www.aspcapro.org](http://www.aspcapro.org)

Training > Webinars > Topic > Enrichment & Behavior >

- Speaking Dog! Canine Communication #1 of 3
- Speaking Dog! Canine Communication #2 of 3
- Speaking Dog! Canine Communication #3 of 3
- Enrichment for Shelter Dogs
- Canine Behavior: Dog Introductions
- Defensive Dog Handling
- Human Body Language and Dog Behavior
- Increasing the Odds of a Successful Adoption

### **Duties:**

1. Individually walk shelter dog for a minimum of 20 minutes.
2. Teach basic obedience commands with the goal of making their stay at the shelter more stimulating while increasing adoptability.
3. Preparing and giving dogs treats and enrichment items.
4. Reporting any behaviors observed during walk.



# Dog Handling for Volunteers

## Why we walk

Walking shelter dogs has multiple benefits.

- Good for the mental health of the dog
- Exercises the dog for health and weight control
- Socializing with continuous positive experiences with new people
- Provides opportunity to work on basic skills like loose-leash walking which helps pet retention after adoption

## Greeting a new dog

- Approach from an angle, turn sideways, making yourself smaller and less intimidating.
- Bend at the knees to get at the dog's level. For safety reasons, do not sit on the ground.
- Never lean over a dog. Looming may be intimidating to a fearful dog.
- Offer the back of your hand for sniffing.
- Allow the dog to make the approach.
- Do not stare the dog in the eyes, keep a soft gentle gaze, averting your eyes.
- Do not take a dog's food or other high value items (toys, bones, treats).

## Body language

- A dog's ears:
  - Ears up, forward = alert
  - Ears back = submissive or cautious
  - Ears flat back = fearful or defensive
  - Airplane ears = mixed emotions
- A dog's mouth
  - Air snap = This is a warning. If a dog bites the air near you this is a sign that they mean business. They did not bite you because they do not want to, but you have been warned they will bite if needed.
  - Open mouth = relaxed, play (exception –with excessive panting can also mean tension)
  - Closed mouth = tension, which may also be seen in the face
  - Tongue flick, lip lick = a sign of stress
- A dog's tail
  - High tail, quick tight wag = aroused
  - Neutral tail, relaxed wag = neutral height held straight at attention is alert and attentive
  - Low, tucked tail = stress, fearfulness
  - Neutral tail, still = relaxed

## Behavior combinations

- Fearful dogs (a different combination of the following may occur)
  - Head: avert their gaze, lower or turn their head
  - Body: Lower their body, slump, roll over, urinate
  - Tail: Tail tucked between their legs, low tail wag
  - Ears: Ears flattened back
  - Mouth: Pant, bark, sniff the floor, excessively salivate, yawn or lip licking
  - Remember that dogs do not want to be comforted the way a friend would. Hugs, overcrowding or cornering will only make the dog more uncomfortable. Give a fearful dog his/her space.
- Aggressive dogs
  - Defensive aggression: A dog showing signs of aggressive behavior who is not acting on its threats is letting you know that it has the ability to become aggressive if the need presents itself. Respect the signs being given and allow the dog its space. If you are away from the shelter, call for a staff person to assist.
  - Head: aggressive = facing you; defensive aggressive = may have its head turned
  - Eyes: Stare, whale eye
  - Ears: Erect or flattened back
  - Body: Tense, stiff, lunging, biting, air snap
  - Head: Teeth bared, growl, body aligned towards you
- Happy dogs
  - Head: relaxed muscles in the face, looks to you when called
  - Body: Approach the kennel, looking forward, play bow, a looseness or wiggle in the walk
  - Tail: neutral, wide range slow wag
  - Ears: Loose relaxed ears (not noteworthy forward or back)
  - Mouth: Loose, open mouth or closed without tension

## Kennel Signage

Please listen to the signs that are up on the dog kennels. Many times we will put signs up to indicate a dog is sick, temperamental, or new intake.

Puppy Handling - These are brand new puppies we have intake into the shelter. Puppies have weakened immune systems which make them susceptible to getting sick. We want limited handling of these puppies. ALWAYS ask the shelter manager if they can be walked. Please do not stick your hands into the runs to touch them, Saliva carries germs.

Sick/Quarantine Room - Do not go in this room or touch these animals. These are typically highly contagious animals that are on medication recovering from sickness.

Kennel Staff Only - These are temperamental dogs that we want only the kennel staff walking. We want to limit the handling of these animals

Please spray dog leashes with lysol spray in between dogs and hand sanitize in between dogs.

The back smaller playyard is for sick/kennel cough dogs only. The two larger playyards are for the health/normal dogs.

Once crates come back from events, please put them in the outside run area and the kennel staff will clean them. We don't want to use crates that have not been properly cleaned on different dogs.

The animal shelter manager makes the decision on which dogs require which signs and are able to be taken out by who. This is typically determined by the dogs professional evaluations.

## **Do's and Don'ts in Handling**

**DO OBSERVE:** Always start with observing the dog within the kennel. Are there any concerning behaviors that you are not trained or comfortable to work with? If so, do NOT take that dog out.

**DO GET ACQUAINTED:** Let the dog get used to your presence, smell, voice and give the dog a treat. Once the dog appears more calm than aroused, you may ask a staff member to get the dog for you.

**DON'T USE PUNISHMENT:** One Step Closer Animal Rescue staff and volunteers use positive reinforcement only. At no time are you to strike an animal. Never correct a dog by jerking the leash. Always apply gradual pressure to redirect the dog while on a walk.

**DON'T CORNER A DOG:** At any time for any reason. If a dog will not approach the front of the kennel for its walk, it does not want to go with you. The dog will be walked by shelter staff.

**DO KEEP YOUR BALANCE:** Always keep your balance while with the dog. With neighborhood cats and wildlife in the area, you never know when a dog with prey drive may spot an animal to chase.

**DON'T ENTER A DOG'S KENNEL:** Never enter into an adult dog's kennel. This is the dog's space, respect its space.

## Walking a shelter dog

Each of the dog's kennels are locked and must be unlocked by shelter staff.

Each volunteer is responsible for picking up after each dog that they are walking. Put all waste in trash receptacle located outside of the building. Make sure you have more than one poop-bag with you when walking.

If you notice a health issue or concern about the dog being walked, please report it to a staff member so that the veterinarian can address the concern.

All dogs must be leashed with a handler in control at all times. You must maintain a six-foot distance between you and other dogs. NEVER allow dogs to meet with other dogs on a walk.

Dogs going out with volunteers are going out for quality time beyond good toiletry habits. Watch the dog for signs of fatigue, over heating or becoming too cold. A walk could be 20 minutes to an hour.

Avoid distractions while on your walk. Do not talk on or use your cellphone, but DO bring your cellphone in case of an emergency. Program the phone number of the shelter into the phone.

Thank you for being part of our team!