

2024

Volunteer Handbook

Pass

ATLANTA

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50,755
lives saved
since 1966

OUR FAMILY

Welcome to the PAWS Atlanta family and thank you for volunteering to support our mission. We hope you'll find your volunteer experience to be rewarding and fulfilling. Based on the feedback we've received from other volunteers, we developed this Volunteer Handbook as a resource to help our new volunteers get up to speed as quickly as possible. We are constantly looking for ways to streamline and improve our operations and welcome any suggestions you may have.



WELCOME



We are thrilled that you have joined our volunteer team! At PAWS Atlanta, we believe that people and pets bring out the best in each other, and you help make that happen. Our goal is to make PAWS Atlanta a great place to work, volunteer, and spend quality time. Together, we make a difference in the lives of our pets and the community we serve.

This handbook is for you. It's filled with the information you need to have an amazing volunteer experience with PAWS Atlanta.

You'll learn about how we treat each other and the animals that depend on us every day. You will also find important information about our operating policies and volunteer responsibilities.

I hope you'll find your volunteer experience at PAWS Atlanta to be fulfilling and please know that you have joined a growing group of passionate volunteers who are making a meaningful difference in the lives of so many pets and neighbors every year. I'm looking forward to doing great things together!

Regards,

Patty Lavelly
Chair, Board of Directors
PAWS Atlanta

ABOUT PAWS ATLANTA

We believe that people and pets bring out the best in each other. Therefore, **our mission** is to build a community of caring, by people helping pets and pets helping people. To accomplish this vision, we offer:

PROGRAMS:

- Adoptions
- Fostering
- Individual Volunteering
- Group Volunteering
- Wags N' Walks
- Puppy Therapy
- Educational Tours
- Community Service

SERVICES:

- Vaccine Clinics
- Discount Health Preventatives
- Pet Food Bank
- Community Cats
- Community Outreach and Education

PAWS Atlanta is governed by a Board of Directors and a small, but dedicated staff who cares for the animals in our free-roaming cat cottage, small and large dog shelter, dedicated isolation area for sick pets, and our animal intake areas. We also have a lovely walking trail and several off-leash areas where you can get to know us and our pets a little better. We invite you to visit PAWS Atlanta to see what we have to offer!

NO KILL PHILOSOPHY

Our no-kill philosophy is very simple. It means that we give all of the animals in our care the time, medical attention and behavioral training they need and deserve to thrive. Only terminally ill, where quality of life is suffering, or extremely aggressive animals who have been evaluated as such by independent, certified trainers will be euthanized. PAWS Atlanta never euthanizes a cat or dog due to space constraints.

OUR 2023 IMPACT



725

ADOPTIONS



911

ANIMALS HOUSED



1,347

ANIMALS VACCINATED



424

ANIMALS
SPAYED/NEUTERED



856

INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP
VOLUNTEERS



159

FOSTER HOMES

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES



ADMINISTRATION

For those that like to work behind the scenes, PAWS is always in need of **Administration Volunteers** to assist with tasks such as: answering phones, listening to voicemails, filing, data entry, fulfilling mailers, etc.



ANIMAL TRANSPORT

Using their own vehicles, **Animal Transport Volunteers** bring animals to the shelter from Animal Controls within Georgia. We also need assistance getting our animals to veterinary appointments and offsite events.



BUDDY PROJECT

As a **Buddy Project** volunteer, you are serving as an advocate for a shelter dog. You will be paired up with a dog and go for off-site adventures, promote them on social media platforms to increase their visibility, and give them additional one-on-one time with a new friend.



CAT CARE AND ENRICHMENT

Our **Cat Care and Enrichment Volunteers** work in collaboration with shelter staff and other volunteers to ensure the daily enrichment, socialization and care of our shelter cats. In this volunteer position you are highly visible to the public and will routinely interact with potential adopters, if you feel comfortable, to help them find their new best friend.



CLEANING AND ORGANIZING

As a **Cleaning and Organizing Volunteer**, we need your help to keep our shelter tidy and presentable for our animals and potential adopters. Help us put our best paw forward!



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Awareness is step one! Assist as a **Community Outreach Volunteer** providing education to our community about PAWS Atlanta and our mission.



DOG CARE AND ENRICHMENT

Our **Dog Care and Enrichment Volunteers** work in collaboration with shelter staff and other volunteers to ensure the daily enrichment, socialization, and care of the shelter dogs. In this volunteer position you are highly visible to the public and will routinely interact with potential adopters, if you feel comfortable, to help them find their new best friend.



DOG CARE AND ENRICHMENT VOLUNTEER MENTOR

Our **Dog Care and Enrichment Volunteer Mentors** work in collaboration with the Volunteer Coordinator to provide guidance, support, and hands-on training to volunteers who are just starting to walk dogs at the shelter. Volunteer Mentors must be well-established as a Dog Care and Enrichment Volunteer and are asked to commit a minimum of two hours per month for new volunteer training sessions.



EVENTS

Represent PAWS Atlanta as an **Events Volunteer** at special events and community events by handling adoptable animals and assisting with event tasks like registration and auction assistance.



FUNDRAISING AND MARKETING

Our **Fundraising and Marketing Volunteers** help us to develop, organize, and promote opportunities that raise awareness and valuable funds to support our lifesaving mission.



KEYBOARD WARRIORS

Our Keyboard Warrior Volunteers will help our team raise awareness and promote upcoming PAWS Atlanta events and happenings by posting through their online social media channels, news boards, and community groups/channels. Volunteers in this role will be asked to commit to posting twice per month, remain engaged with the post and follow up as needed, and may also be asked to print flyers at home (or collect them from the shelter) to post in frequently visited cafés, restaurants, and businesses.



LANDSCAPING AND MAINTENANCE

As a Landscaping and Maintenance Volunteer you will assist with general maintenance of the shelter, equipment, and grounds.



NEWSPAPER TEAM

As a Newspaper Team Volunteer, you will collect newspapers from PAWS Atlanta partner organizations and generous members of the community, and transport them to the shelter. This will be either on an ongoing or as-needed basis.



PUPPY THERAPY

Puppy Therapy volunteers meet PAWS Atlanta staff and volunteers at an off-site location such as a company, organization, or university. You will be a dog handler for the duration of the event, which lasts approximately 60-120 minutes in duration. If you enjoy being a Puppy Therapy volunteer, ask Sam on how to get more involved! We are also looking to fill Puppy Therapy Team Lead positions.



VACCINE CLINIC

Assist our medical team as a Vaccine Clinic Volunteer by checking in our clinic patients and educating our community on Heartworms, Fleas and Ticks.

WHAT DO WE ASK OF OUR VOLUNTEERS?

- Support PAWS Atlanta’s philosophies and policies inside and outside the shelter.
- Attend required orientation, training, and events that you register for.
- Volunteering is a commitment. Please ensure you are honest with yourself and us concerning your needs, wishes, and availability.
- Be able to follow detailed instructions and work independently with limited to no supervision.
- Maintain an active email account so we can easily communicate with you.
- Be at least 18 years of age or older.

WHAT DO YOU GET IN RETURN?

- Licks, purrs, cuddles & tail wags!
- In-depth knowledge about animals through hands-on volunteer work and a variety of educational opportunities.
- A range of meaningful opportunities.
- A chance to develop new skills and polish up old ones.
- Support and feedback from PAWS Atlanta staff.
- An opportunity to meet others who share your interests and passion for animal welfare.



MYIMPACT VOLUNTEER SOFTWARE

The volunteer software used at PAWS Atlanta is called MyImpact. When completing the volunteer application, prospective volunteers will be prompted to create a username and password. Volunteers should remember these credentials as they will be used to access their PAWS Atlanta MyImpact portal to register for an upcoming orientation and to access volunteer opportunities after they have attended a volunteer orientation.

GETTING STARTED

1

COMPLETE THE APPLICATION

All volunteers are required to fill out an application which can be found on our website.

2

ATTEND A VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION

After submitting the application, you will receive an email with instructions on how to register for an upcoming orientation.

3

SIGN UP FOR AN ACTIVITY

Through your MyImpact portal or the MyImpact mobile app, you can select a volunteer activity you wish to attend.

Onsite volunteering activities such as Dog Care and Enrichment, Cat Care and Enrichment, and Cleaning/organizing, will not require volunteers to sign up in advance. However, if volunteers would like to sign up in advance, they are welcome to do so.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

ORIENTATION

All volunteers must complete a Volunteer Orientation and sign the Volunteer Waiver and Release Form and Volunteer Photo Release Form before you begin volunteering with us.

HOURS

PAWS Atlanta is open to volunteers from 8:30am to 5:00pm every day of the week. These times will be subject to change on major holidays or during special events.

AGE REQUIREMENTS

All volunteers must be **18 years or older** to volunteer at PAWS Atlanta. If you are under 18 years old, you can learn about other ways you can help our animals on the Get Involved section of our website.

VISITORS AND PERSONAL GUESTS

Visitors and personal guests over the age of 18 are welcome to tour the facility if prearranged with our Volunteer Coordinator. Guests can accompany you in public areas but are not allowed to handle animals. Please encourage friends and guests to complete a volunteer application and attend a volunteer orientation if they are interested in walking or socializing our animals.

DRESS CODE

On-site Volunteering: Most, if not all, of our volunteer opportunities will be completed outside – so dress for the weather! When working with our animals, long pants or capri-style pants are strongly recommended so you do not get scratched. Please refrain from wearing dangling/hoop jewelry or loose clothing that could catch on paws, claws, door handles, cages, etc. All volunteers must wear closed-toe shoes.

Off-site Volunteering: All volunteers must wear closed-toe shoes and a PAWS Atlanta shirt (preferred) or plain colored top. No bleach stains, logos, or branding for other companies or organizations, please.

Dress for handling animals should be casual and practical but also tidy and clean. Certain volunteer opportunities may require different or more professional attire.

PAWS ATLANTA MERCHANDISE

PAWS Atlanta maintains an online store with PAWS Atlanta-themed merchandise available to purchase. To access our online store, please visit our website, and click on the “Shop” button. As a thank-you to our volunteers for their hard work, we have a discount code available for volunteers to use. We kindly ask that volunteers do not share this discount code with friends or family. Volunteers can find the discount code on the Volunteer Newsboard in the main shelter building or by contacting our Volunteer Coordinator.

PERSONAL PROPERTY

PAWS Atlanta is not responsible for the loss, theft, or damage of personal items. Volunteers are advised not to bring excessive cash or valuables with them while completing volunteer work at the shelter and should keep valuables with them or not visible and locked in their cars.

COMMUNICATION

Our direct communication is online through email. Any notices, updates, events, reminders, and surveys will be emailed or posted on our PAWS Atlanta Volunteers Facebook page. If you do not have computer or email access, please let the Volunteer Coordinator know so that we can contact you through other methods.

CELL PHONES / HEADPHONES

For the safety of our animals, volunteers and staff need to be aware of their surroundings when on-site at PAWS Atlanta. For this reason, we do not allow volunteers to wear headphones, text, or talk on the phone while walking or socializing our dogs. Phones can be used during a break or other assigned duties. If you wish to take photos of the dogs while you are out on the trail or in an off-leash area, please ensure you have control of your dog and are mindful of your surroundings.

ANNUAL VOLUNTEER SURVEY

PAWS Atlanta believes that every volunteer voice should be heard and conducts an annual volunteer survey towards the end of each calendar year. Whether you have volunteered with us for several years or have just gotten started, we want to hear your thoughts, opinions, and feedback. Participation in this survey is entirely voluntary, and responses and feedback will remain confidential. Our volunteer opinions are critical for making positive change.

SIGNING IN AND LOGGING HOURS

All volunteers must sign in at the kiosk in our main lobby or through the MyImpact mobile app. Volunteers are expected to start their timeclock when they arrive to volunteer and stop their timeclock when they depart for the day.

Dog Care and Enrichment Volunteers must wear a wristband identifying them as a PAWS Atlanta Volunteer while walking dogs. The wristband color corresponds to the level of dogs they are allowed to walk, and wristbands can be found behind the kiosk in the main lobby. Volunteers must adhere to the color-coded paw print chart.

ATTENDANCE

As a valuable member of our team, we ask you to be punctual and reliable for any events or activities you are scheduled to attend. For that reason, please do not make a commitment that you can't fulfill, or take on responsibilities for which you feel unqualified. If for any reason you are unable to fulfill your commitment, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Sam Long.

In order to maintain your status as an active PAWS Atlanta volunteer, we ask that you contribute in some capacity at least once per calendar year. If you cannot fulfill this requirement, please contact Sam.

If you no longer wish to volunteer, please contact Sam, and your profile will be archived in our volunteer system. This status is important for our volunteer reporting requirements and saves us valuable resources. Don't worry - you will remain in our database for one year so that if you wish to continue volunteering later, you can be switched back to active. After one year of inactivity, your profile will be removed. If you would like

to volunteer after that, simply complete another volunteer application and email Sam for further instructions. Volunteers may be asked to attend another volunteer orientation to refresh themselves on PAWS Atlanta and learn about any policies that may have changed since your last visit.

ACCIDENT OR INJURY

Any accident or injury that occurs while at PAWS Atlanta must be reported to the Shelter Manager, Laura McKelvey, immediately. You may also report this to any member of our front desk team. Bites and scratches are considered an injury and must be reported. When working with animals, volunteers accept the risk of injury through our volunteer waiver and release and PAWS Atlanta is not liable. In the event an accident does occur, volunteers are covered by PAWS Atlanta's accident policy which subsidizes volunteer health benefit deductibles and co-insurance.

MISTREATMENT OF ANIMALS

Always treat every animal with kindness and respect. We believe in rewards-based training as opposed to punishment or harsh corrections. Mistreatment of animals will not be tolerated. If a volunteer is found mistreating an animal, the volunteer will be asked to leave and will not be allowed back on-site.

EQUAL VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITY

PAWS Atlanta provides equal volunteering opportunity for everyone regardless of age, sex, color, race, creed, national origin, religious persuasion, marital status, sexual orientation, gender expression, political belief, or disability that does not prohibit performance of essential job functions. All matters relating to volunteering are based upon ability to perform the job, as well as dependability and reliability.

REQUESTS FOR ANIMAL ASSISTANCE

As a PAWS Atlanta volunteer, you may be asked by friends, family, and people in your community for help with specific animal situations. Here are some ways to handle these requests:

- To help people find solutions to common problems, direct them to the [resources](#) tab on our website.

- Stray animals need to be taken to their local county animal control (this needs to be the closest county animal control to where the animal was found) to ensure the owner has the opportunity to be reunited with their pet. It is not possible for an owner to check every animal rescue across the state of Georgia, therefore Animal Control is the central location for lost pets to be found. When Animal Control is adhering to emergency intake only protocols, the finder must contact the closest county shelter to register the animal as a lost pet.
- [Petco Love Lost](#) is a free service that uses Facial Recognition technology to reunite lost pets with their families.
- PAWS Atlanta is able to accept owners surrendering animals on a case-by-case basis when we have space available. For assistance with rehoming a pet, consider researching reputable breed-specific rescue organizations or visiting the [No-Kill Network](#) website for no-kill shelters and rescue groups.
- If someone has witnessed animal abuse or neglect, tell them to report it to local authorities — the local police, animal control departments, or humane society. Encourage people to report the abuse not only to help the animal in distress, but also to make local officials aware of the severity of the problem.
 - DeKalb County Animal Control: (404) 294-2996 | 3280 Chamblee Dunwoody Rd, Chamblee, 30341
 - Fulton County Animal Control: (404) 613-0358 | 860 Marietta Blvd NW, Atlanta, 30318
 - Rockdale County Animal Control: (770) 278-8403 | 1506 Rockbridge Rd NW, Conyers, 30012

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment constitutes discrimination and is illegal under federal, state, and local laws. Sexual harassment involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that create a hostile or offensive environment.

Sexual harassment may include a range of subtle and not-so-subtle behaviors and may involve individuals of the same or opposite gender. Depending on the circumstances, these behaviors may include, but are not limited to:

- Physical assaults or physical conduct that is sexual in nature; physical contact such as petting, pinching, or brushing against another's body
- Unwanted sexual advances or requests for sexual favors

- Verbal abuse of a sexual nature; commentary about an individual's body, sexual prowess or sexual deficiencies; leering or whistling; groping, touching or other forms of physical contact
- Unwanted sexual advances or propositions; sexual jokes, innuendo or other sexual comments, such as sexually oriented gestures, noises, remarks, jokes, or comments about a person's sexuality or sexual experience; foul or obscene language or gestures
- Displays of sexually explicit or sexually suggestive objects, pictures, clothing; other physical, verbal, or visual conduct of a sexual nature

Volunteers who feel they are being harassed should immediately contact any member of PAWS Atlanta management. All complaints will be promptly and thoroughly investigated. Complaints of harassment will be kept confidential, except as necessary to complete the investigation.

Violations of this policy will not be tolerated and will result in corrective action, up to and including asking the volunteer to leave and not be allowed back on-site.

ALCOHOL, DRUGS AND SMOKING

Individuals under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs pose a threat to the health and safety of PAWS Atlanta animals, employees, volunteers, potential adopters, and foster parents and to the security of the company's equipment and facilities. For these reasons, we are committed to the elimination of drug and alcohol use and abuse at PAWS Atlanta.

- During volunteer hours, possessing, distributing, being under the influence of, or selling alcohol or illegal drugs on our campus, event site or vehicle, is strictly prohibited.
- Consuming alcohol or illegal substances while at PAWS Atlanta or at an off-site event or during volunteer hours is a dischargeable offense. Any illegal substances discovered on shelter property will be turned over to the appropriate law enforcement agency and may result in criminal prosecution. The **exception** to this rule is at Party for the PAWS and other events where staff and volunteers are allowed to consume alcohol. You will be notified in advance.

Volunteers will not be permitted to volunteer their time while under the influence of illegally used drugs, alcohol and/or other intoxicants. Individuals who appear to be unfit to fulfill their volunteer task(s) will be asked to leave the property immediately.

Smoking, including e-cigarettes and vapor cigarettes, is prohibited in the shelter and the cat cottage and is permitted in authorized areas only. Our current designated smoking areas include the picnic bench to the side of our parking area and the field behind the D2 dogs runs.

GRIEVANCES

All grievances should be brought to the attention of our Volunteer and Database Coordinator, Sam Long. Sam will make every effort to provide you with an opportunity to raise your questions in confidence and without fear of reprisal or discrimination. Every effort will be made to investigate promptly and settle the issue on a fair and equitable basis.

TERMINATION

PAWS Atlanta requires volunteers to follow all appropriate standards of conduct covered in preceding policy statements. Prohibited conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Discriminatory or harassing behavior
- Insubordination or failure to follow the instructions of any staff member
- Falsification of any PAWS Atlanta record
- Dishonesty, stealing from the shelter, staff, or fellow volunteers
- Gambling on the PAWS Atlanta premises. The **exception** is Casino Night take place annually during Party for the PAWS.
- Fighting, horseplay, or disorderly conduct while on PAWS Atlanta premises or while on duty
- Possession of unauthorized weapons, explosives, firearms, or dangerous materials
- Use, possession, sale, or transfer of alcohol or illegal substances on PAWS Atlanta premises or in a PAWS Atlanta vehicle
- Careless or reckless conduct which could endanger life (human or animal) or property
- Failing to follow all applicable laws while operating a PAWS Atlanta vehicle or on company business using a personal vehicle

Exhibiting these behaviors will result in disciplinary action, up to and including, volunteer termination.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Community service is separate from our general volunteers and is not part of our volunteer program. Those looking to complete community service hours should reach out to our front desk team at info@pawsatlanta.org.

Community service requests are accepted on an individual basis and cannot work directly with the animals. Community service will be assigned cleaning duties at the shelter or will assist in other needed roles. Once community service hours are completed, an individual can attend orientation and participate in other volunteer opportunities.

- We are only able to accept traffic, DUI, and misdemeanor possession of marijuana citations.
- You must be 18 years of age or older.
- All community service hours begin between 8:00am to 8:30am
- Sneakers, boots, or other sturdy closed-toe shoes should be worn.
- Wear clothes that are okay to get dirty.

Most, if not all, community service work is done outside, rain or shine.

Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT HAPPENS AT A VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION?

During the orientation you will learn about PAWS Atlanta's history, policies and procedures, learn about our volunteer opportunities, and be given a tour of the facility.

I DON'T SEE ANY VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES AVAILABLE ON MYIMPACT. WHY IS THIS?

If you have not yet attended a volunteer orientation, you will not be able to see any volunteer activities other than volunteer orientation. After you have attended orientation, you will be able to see more volunteering opportunities. Some volunteering activities may only require only a few volunteers. Once these activities are filled, they will disappear from the calendar. You can always sign up to be backup in case someone cancels.

I AM UNDER THE AGE OF 18. CAN I VOLUNTEER WITH A PARENT OR GUARDIAN?

All volunteers must be 18 years of age or older to volunteer with us onsite. Those under the age of 18 can check out the Youth Volunteering section on our website for ways to get involved. These volunteering opportunities are run independently, with minimal assistance from the PAWS Atlanta team, and take place offsite. For additional questions regarding Youth Volunteering, please contact Sam.

I WOULD LIKE TO VOLUNTEER WITH MY COMPANY. HOW CAN WE GET INVOLVED?

PAWS Atlanta offers year-round group volunteering opportunities for groups, clubs, and civic organizations. For more information on how to schedule a group volunteering opportunity, please visit the Get Involved – Groups, section of our website.

VOLUNTEER PAW PRINT CODE

Our PAWS Atlanta Volunteer Paw Print Code is important for the safety of both yourself and our animals.



BLACK - BEGINNER

You have just begun volunteering with us. **ALL** volunteers begin at this level no matter what experience you have. **ALL** volunteers can walk **ALL** dogs at this level.

Our black paw print dogs are easier to handle and are great beginner dogs for learning how to navigate the shelter.



YELLOW - INTERMEDIATE

A staff member has approved your ability to move up a level from beginner. **ALL** approved yellow paw print volunteers can walk **ALL** dogs at this level.

Our yellow paw print dogs are a little more excitable with handling and require more knowledge on safe handling practices.



PURPLE – ADVANCED (SPECIFIC DOG ASSIGNED TO YOU)

A staff member will introduce you to an individual dog. Purple paw print volunteers can **only** walk the dogs they have been approved to handle.

Our purple paw print dogs have specific requirements with handling and require knowledge of their individual needs.



RED – STAFF ONLY

Only staff can handle this dog. If any exceptions, we will list the volunteers name on a specific dog's cage card.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Sam Long

Volunteer and Database Coordinator

slong@pawatlanta.org

(770) 593- 1155 ext. 5

Laura McKelvey

Shelter Manager

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