

Volunteer Resources

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Volunteer Department by phone: 410-235-8826 ext. 148 or by email: volunteer@mdspca.org.



Volunteer FAQ

What are your volunteer requirements?

- Be at least 17 years of age.
- Be able to volunteer independently, or with a trained job coach.
- Be able to observe and make good decisions about appropriate animal handling based on an individual pet's body language.
- Be able to communicate positively and knowledgably with clients as a representative of the MD SPCA.
- Have their own health insurance.
- Sign a volunteer agreement, agreeing not to hold the MD SPCA liable if they are injured or bitten.
- Commit to volunteer at least twice a month for the next six months.
- Complete all assigned trainings for their volunteer area of choice.
- Dog Deputies must be able to restrain large, strong dogs, which means being able to lift at least 50 pounds.
- Cat Cuddlers must be able to pick up and carry cats.

How do I get started volunteering as an individual?

Sign up to attend a volunteer orientation. After you attend an orientation, we will send you an e-mail with a link to our volunteer application and we will be in touch to set up training classes.

Can I volunteer with my child who is under 17 if I supervise them at all times?

Unfortunately, we cannot accept volunteers under the age of 17. We do welcome children to become involved in the Maryland SPCA through our humane education programs.

How do volunteers help beyond 'Dog Deputy' and 'Cat Cuddler'?

- We have many additional roles beyond 'Dog Deputy' and 'Cat Cuddler.'
- [Events Ambassador](#)
- Ringworm Enrichment - socializing animals in our ringworm trailer
- Nursery Nanny – Helping kittens and puppies as become socialized and introducing them to potential adopters
- [Spay/Neuter Volunteer](#) – Assist staff in our spay/neuter clinic
- [Front Desk Concierge](#)
- Humane Education – Shape the next generation of pet owners by assisting at our 'Wagging Tails' and 'Read to the Animals' program.
- Photography Volunteers – Take photos of our animals for our website and social media!
- Pro-Bono and Special Skills Volunteers – Do you have special skills to share? Email us at volunteer@mdspca.org to share information about your skills.

My organization would like to volunteer for a Day of Service. How do we get started?

The Maryland SPCA, a local 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, relies on community support to save and find homes for more than 3,000 dogs and cats each year. Our robust volunteer program is vital to helping pets and people in our community.

For more information about employee engagement, please [click here](#) to learn more.

For more information about Days of Service for student groups and non-profit organizations, please [click here](#).

Do I need to be a “people person” to volunteer?

We believe “Happy People, Happy Pets.” Volunteers are representative of the Maryland SPCA and are our greatest public relations asset when they are out in the community or at the shelter. Some volunteer roles are more animal focused and others are more focused on serving potential adopters. Volunteers who serve in our kennel, cat room, front desk, or as humane educators experience significant interaction with members of the public. Volunteers who assist as spay/neuter tech assistants or do ringworm enrichment with our cats have minimal interaction with members of the public.

I am not able to volunteer independently. Can I bring a helper with me when I volunteer?

Yes, you can volunteer with a job coach you choose who can be a friend, family member or professional from a local organization. You and your job coach must fill out separate volunteer applications, attend a Volunteer Orientation, attend all training and volunteer sessions together. You and your job coach must commit to at least two shifts per month for a minimum of six months. The same job coach must partner with you from week to week. If your job coach must leave before the six months is over, a replacement can take over. The replacement job coach must fill out a volunteer application, attend the volunteer orientation, and all trainings. We do not allow a job coach to be assisting more than one person at any one time.

What times do volunteers come to the shelter for the shifts?

- Monday and Tuesday 12:15 p.m.- 6:30 p.m.
- Wednesday- Friday 9:15 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.
- Saturday and Sunday 8:15 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.

Shifts are typically in 2-3 hour blocks. When volunteers assist is with events, they may volunteer in the early morning, evening, or weekends outside of our typical shelter schedule.

What animal handling and training methods will I be taught as a volunteer?

We use all positive reinforcement-based training. This has been shown to be the most effective, to build the best relationship with the pet, and to lead to the fewest negative consequences. We primarily manage or ignore problematic behaviors, and reward good behaviors with attention, praise, treats, and play.

I can't volunteer regularly during your shelter hours, but I would like to help sporadically.

What can I do?

You can help us at events, such as Festival for the Animals, which is our largest annual event. If you are interested, please e-mail volunteer@mdspca.org with the subject line “Festival for the Animals Volunteer.”

Do I need to buy any special clothing or equipment to volunteer?

There are no fees or upfront costs associated with volunteer. Volunteers must wear closed-toed shoes, pants, skirts longer than the knee, and no tank tops when volunteering with pets. After completing 10 hours of service, all volunteers will receive one free MD SPCA t-shirt.

I would like to do an Eagle Scouts and Gold Award Projects project at the Maryland SPCA.

How do I get started?

Please e-mail volunteer@mdspca.org to set up a time to discuss potential projects with us!

Do I need experience to volunteer?

We supply all training needed for our entry-level volunteer positions, and no previous animal handling experience is needed.

Do you have short-term or summer-only volunteer positions?

Due to limited resources and the required training for each volunteer position, we are not able to offer short-term volunteering opportunities.

What if I can't volunteer for at least twice a month for the next six months?

In order to provide the animals in our facilities with the best care and support, we do require volunteers to commit to six months of volunteering on a regular basis. This requirement helps us ensure quality training and consistent volunteer coverage. We do understand that volunteers take vacations and that schedules change, and volunteers do take leaves from volunteering for life events. Volunteer shifts are typically 2-3 hours, so our ask is for between 4-6 hours per month.

Do I need to volunteer at the same time each week? Do I have to pick a day?

Volunteers are welcome to choose their shifts, and can come in on different days of the week at different times. Volunteers typically range from 2-4 hours.

Do you accept volunteers with court-ordered community service?

We do accept volunteers with court-ordered community service to fulfill on a limited basis. We do not allow individuals to perform community service hours who have charges relating felonies or for charges related to animal abuse.

Court-ordered community service volunteers must meet the following requirements:

- You must be 18 years of age or older.
- Your charge must be a misdemeanor offense or "PBJ."
- You must be able to provide documentation that the charges meet our guidelines.
- Court-ordered community service volunteers will only be granted hours by performing duties such as laundry/dishes, cleaning our shelter or cleaning other areas of the grounds as deemed appropriate.
- Court-ordered community service volunteers must be able to work in a self-directed environment.
- Volunteers must be able to complete hours during our business hours or when the appropriate staff member is available.
- Schedules will be based on shelter needs and once a schedule is set, volunteers must follow the schedule unless previous arrangements have been made with the Volunteer Manager.

To learn more please visit our ['Court Ordered Community Service' page](#).