

VOLUNTEER FAQ

What are your volunteer requirements?

- Be at least 16 years of age
- Be able to volunteer independently
- 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 knowledgeably 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 walk/restrain large, strong dogs
- Cat Concierges must be able to pick up and carry cats

How do I get started volunteering as an individual?

- Submit a [volunteer application](#), and then sign up for a General Volunteer Orientation (orientations are virtual, and held via Zoom). Once you have attended Volunteer Orientation, you can begin training in the volunteer role of your choice! *There will be more shift availability and training opportunities for most-needed roles.*

Can I volunteer with my child who is under 16 if I supervise them at all times?

- Unfortunately, we cannot accept volunteers under the age of 16. We do welcome children to become involved in the Maryland SPCA through our humane education programs.

What ways do volunteers support the MD SPCA?

- Dog Deputy
- Cat Concierge
- Enrichment
- Kibble Connection
- [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
- [Front Desk Concierge](#)
- Humane Education – Shape the next generation of pet owners by assisting at our 'Wagging Tails' program
- Pro-Bono and Special Skills Volunteers. Email us at volunteer@mdspca.org to share information about your skills

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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 that assist as dishes/laundry volunteers or do ringworm enrichment with our cats have minimal interaction with members of the public.

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

- Monday–Friday: 9am–7pm
- Saturday–Sunday: Sun 9am–5pm
- Volunteer shifts are on average 2–4 hours. The specific timing for the shift will depend on the volunteer role. For example, we need morning help in dishes and laundry and morning dog walking help.

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 with events, and with animal transport, which we occasionally will need. On your volunteer application, please specify your interest and time commitment so we can help determine the best way for you to support the shelter!

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 within the shelter building or working with the 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 HumaneEd@mdspca.org to set up a time to discuss potential projects with us!

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Do I need experience to volunteer?

- We supply all training needed for our 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 the animal handling roles, short-term volunteer opportunities are limited to the non-animal handling roles such as dishes and laundry, Kibble Connection pet food pantry, and events.

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 16 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