



Essential Capabilities of Volunteers

The Montgomery County Humane Society welcomes the assistance of volunteers who wish to work side-by-side with MCHS staff to help homeless cats and dogs. Work in animal welfare comes with risks, however. It is essential that all volunteers possess certain physical, mental and emotional capabilities to ensure the safety of people and animals at all times.

Your signature on this form indicates that you believe you possess these essential capabilities. If the area you have chosen for volunteer service is not compatible with your abilities, and accommodations cannot be made, you may be reassigned to another area, or be unable to volunteer at MCHS. **Your safety and that of the animals is our top priority.**

Essential Physical Capabilities

- **Quick reflexes** and ability to use both hands simultaneously (example: open cage door while handling animals)
- High level of **manual dexterity** to handle/restrain animals, leash/harness animals, handle small tools
- Ability to **walk unaided** on unpaved, uneven, rough and sometimes muddy and slippery terrain
- Ability to **work in a variety of environmental conditions** including rain, snow and heat
- Ability to **bend and squat** in order to restrain and pick up an animal
- Ability to **stand or walk** for significant periods of time on concrete surfaces
- **Average vision** (with or without correction) to move around safely, to be able to observe and detect animal body language without difficulty, and to be able to read notes and instructions on cages
- Ability to **hear if an animal is hissing, growling or making sounds** indicating fear, pain or aggression
- Ability to **speak clearly and effectively communicate** in English verbally and in written form
- Ability to **move and react quickly**, and maneuver around obstacles
- **No strong allergies to animals or chemicals**, such as those used in cleaning, that cannot be managed by medication
- Ability to **deal with strong and unpleasant odors**, fleas, feces and possible wounds of injured animals with whom we come into contact
- Ability to effectively perform tasks in a **noisy environment** (i.e., barking dogs, train whistles)
- Average **strength to lift up to 50 lbs.** when handling small to medium sized animals, bags of food, cat litter, etc.
- Ability to **tolerate exposure to zoonotic diseases** such as ringworm and mange

- Ability to **perform cleaning assignments** (dishes, cages, laundry) with the possibility of coming in contact with bodily soil, excrement, etc.
- Ability to **be quiet, speak softly and approach and handle animals calmly** and in the most sensitive way possible

Essential Mental/Social Capabilities

- Comfortable **working independently** as well as with others
- Ability to **understand, remember and follow instructions** and procedures with minimal direction
- **High level of English** reading, writing, spelling and communication skills
- Possess **problem solving skills** and understand when to seek help
- Ability to **recognize body language expressed by cats and dogs** as indicators of the need to adjust your behavior to avoid dangerous situations, injuries, escapes, etc.
- When walking dogs, **ability to hold, control and redirect dogs** of all sizes during interactions both in the rescue environment and in public
- Ability to effectively and humanely **restrain fractious animals** to avoid injury to people and animals
- Ability to **recognize potentially dangerous situations** when working with animals, including the ability to remain calm with animals who are upset, are fearful, behave sensitively, behave confidently, show good judgement and act appropriately in these situations.
- Ability to **receive, incorporate and retain instruction** and feedback
- Ability to **understand that animals at MCHS are not familiar to you**, and can be unpredictable
- Ability to **work congenially** with the public, other volunteers, and staff, and know when to exercise prudent authority over the situation, such as during an adoption visit, to avoid injury to people or the animal

Essential Emotional Capabilities

- Ability to **cope with unexpected animal behavior** without assistance
- Ability to **cope within an emotionally charged environment**
- Ability to **understand MCHS policies and procedures**, and possess a willingness to accurately and politely represent those policies when interacting with the public
- Ability to **interact with a variety of people** effectively and without judgement or negative commentary
- Willingness to **approach volunteering with flexibility**, and cooperate with the ebb and flow of rescue work (i.e., willingness to change duties without prior notification if different duties are required)