



ORPHANS OF THE STORM<sup>®</sup>  
*animal shelter*

## Volunteer Handbook

Welcome to the Orphans of the Storm team! We are excited for you to join our community. We hope you will find your experience rewarding and fun. Our success relies on every individual's unique talent and collaborative efforts, including staff members and volunteers.

Our Mission: To take responsibility for each and every orphaned, abandoned, abused, or neglected dog and cat who reaches our doors; to take them in and shelter them; to provide the best medical and physical care possible for them; to nurture them back to health if need be; and finally, to place them into warm, loving, adoptive homes where they can enjoy the lives they deserve. You are an important part of achieving this mission.

This handbook provides guidelines for your relationship with us here at Orphans. It has been developed to acquaint you with Orphans' policies and expectations as they pertain to you as a volunteer. This handbook is not a contract. We may add, modify, suspend, or terminate any policies or procedures described in this handbook at any time, with or without notice.

This handbook supersedes all previous handbooks and all prior policies, notices, letters, memoranda, or communications on the same subject matter. Please take the time to read the handbook carefully. If you have questions or need clarification, please discuss it with **Elliott Serrano, our Volunteer & Community Engagement Strategist.**

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### **1. Staff**

- You will be working side by side with our staff, so it's important you know who everyone is! We have "Meet the Staff" binders, where you can learn about the staff at Orphans. Binders are located on the cat reception desk, on the dog-walking table in the garage, and at the Hawthorn Adoption Showcase.
- Your primary staff liaison is Elliott Serrano, Volunteer & Community Engagement Strategist. You can email him at [Elliott@orphansofthestorm.org](mailto:Elliott@orphansofthestorm.org).

## 2. Dress Code

- We have a few basic requirements to ensure you are easily identifiable as a volunteer and are dressed with safety in mind.
- Volunteer uniform t-shirts are available at the front desk of all locations for a nominal donation and must be worn while volunteering. Name tags are provided and must be worn at all times while onsite or while in public representing Orphans of the Storm.
- Wear appropriate clothes for working with animals:
  - Easy to clean - you will get dirty.
  - Skid-resistant and closed-toed shoes are important for safety. Do not wear sandals, heels, or Crocs while volunteering.
  - During the summer, shorts are permitted, but pants are strongly encouraged due to the nature of working with animals and the potential for cuts and scrapes.
  - For direct animal care positions, large hoops or dangling earrings or necklaces represent a safety hazard and should not be worn.

## 3. Friends/Children/Pets/Guests

- For the safety of everyone involved, personal pets are not allowed at the shelter and may not be left unattended in vehicles.
- Guests - All volunteers must be registered and trained before working with our animals. Please do not bring friends or family to the shelter during your shift.
- You may take guests on tours of the shelter's public areas during regular business hours. If you would like to bring a guest for a behind-the-scenes tour where the public is not permitted, please contact your Volunteer Coordinator. Tours should not occur during scheduled volunteer shifts. Self-guided tours of private areas are not approved for safety reasons.

## 4. Organizational Representation

- Volunteer Coordinator - Elliott Serrano, Volunteer & Community Engagement Strategist [Elliott@orphansofthestorm.org](mailto:Elliott@orphansofthestorm.org)
- Volunteer Advisory Committee

## 5. Suggestions and Concerns

We're always learning and improving, and we appreciate your volunteer perspective.

- We have a Volunteer Advisory Committee with representatives from the various volunteer positions who serve as liaisons between volunteers and staff. If you are interested in joining or would like a list of subcommittee leads, please email [volunteer@orphansofthestorm.org](mailto:volunteer@orphansofthestorm.org).
- Ideas should be presented in writing with name and contact information provided. Ideas and suggestions should be submitted via email to your volunteer coordinator at [Elliott@orphansofthestorm.org](mailto:Elliott@orphansofthestorm.org) or to members of the Volunteer Advisory Committee.
- The Volunteer Advisory Committee will review and respond to and/or implement suggestions after review.
- Any unsafe conditions or urgent concerns should be reported to a staff member immediately.
- Suggestions are welcome with the understanding that they will be thoroughly reviewed and considered. However, the staff of Orphans of the Storm ultimately make decisions on the most effective ways to manage the shelter.

## 6. Training

- We use an online portal called VolunteerHub to manage our volunteers. Every volunteer should have a profile in VolunteerHub, acknowledge the liability waiver, and upload a current photo ID. You are responsible for making sure your ID is current within our system and can set a notice to remind you to update it. Anyone under 18 needs a parent or guardian to sign a waiver on their behalf.
- Each volunteer role has specific requirements, which are outlined in VolunteerHub. You will receive individual training for each role as appropriate.

## 7. Media Procedures, Social Media, and Public Relations

- Many of our dogs and cats find their home because of social media sharing, so we hope you'll share our Facebook and Instagram posts with your friends and family. You're also welcome to create your own promotional posts.
- If you're promoting Orphans of the Storm online, please keep these guidelines in mind:
  - Speak as yourself, not as a representative of Orphans of the Storm.
  - Stay positive. Let's keep things upbeat and supportive of our mission.
  - Kindness matters. Please avoid harsh comments. Unsure about a post? Ask: "Does this help our animals or shelter by providing important information to help an animal get adopted or offer inspiration and support to your fellow volunteers?"
  - We have private Dog Walker and Cat Volunteer Facebook Groups that you will be invited to once you complete the respective training. You are not required to join the groups, but they are a fun way to build a community around volunteers' shared passion for our pets. A positive, informative space for volunteers to mingle and share information about our animals!
- Any questions or requests from the media for information should be passed to Sandy DeLisle, Head of Development & Community Engagement at [Sandy@orphansofthestorm.org](mailto:Sandy@orphansofthestorm.org).

## 8. Safety Protocols & Guidelines

- Our top priority is the safety of our volunteers, staff, visitors, and animals.
- Use or possession of drugs, alcohol, or weapons while volunteering is strictly forbidden.
- No one convicted of a violent offense, including domestic battery and other domestic-violence related offenses, will be allowed to volunteer with Orphans of the Storm. Failure to report a violent offense to the volunteer coordinator will result in immediate

dismissal.

- Volunteers must take the time to learn the correct and safe methods of performing their tasks, and all training protocols must be followed.
- Please only attempt work for which you are authorized and qualified. If you need clarification, ask a member of staff.
- Specific safety guidelines will be provided as part of your specific job training.
- Report any unsafe conditions or equipment to a staff member immediately.

## **9. Accidents and Injuries**

- No injury is too small to report.
- Report all bites, scratches, falls, and other injuries to a staff member immediately.
- First aid kits are located in the cat room closet, behind the reception desk in the front office, in the conference room closet, and at all remote locations. Ask your volunteer supervisor if you're unsure how to locate a kit.

## **10. Parking**

- When volunteering at the main shelter, please park in the main parking lot at 2200 Riverwoods Road.
- If you volunteer when the shelter is closed to the public, the gate will be closed but unlocked. Please open the gate, pull your car in, close the gate, and park. It's important members of the public do not follow you in, as we will not be appropriately staffed to welcome visitors when we are closed to the public.

## **11. Storage of personal items**

- We encourage you to keep personal items to a minimum because we do not have a place for secure storage. We do not recommend bringing/leaving anything of value. Orphans of the Storm does not take any responsibility for the safety of personal belongings.

## **12. Euthanasia Policy**

- With a 98.4% save rate, Orphans of the Storm is well within the

industry definition of a no-kill shelter. However, this is a term we don't use publicly to describe ourselves because it can be disheartening for our partner shelters who have fewer resources, limited community support, and must make daily difficult euthanasia decisions. These shelter workers care deeply about their animals and being referred to as a "kill shelter" can harm their mental health and contribute to compassion fatigue.

- We require that all Orphans of the Storm volunteers understand and support the need for euthanasia, at times, for safety and humane reasons. We could not be a humane organization without it.
- At Orphans, we limit euthanasia to animals with severe medical or behavioral concerns. We believe in transparency and have a separate email list for volunteers who want to be notified about euthanasia decisions.
- If this is a topic you are unsure about, or if you'd like to discuss this more in-depth, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator.

### **13. Dismissal Policy**

- We value our volunteers and know we couldn't achieve our mission without you.
- Our Volunteer Program encourages growth and improvement.
- Volunteers who commit minor violations of policy and procedure will be verbally counseled to achieve acceptable compliance.
- Continued violations could result in additional counseling or dismissal. Serious violations (animal abuse, abusive, threatening, harassing behavior to staff, volunteers, or customers; disclosure of confidential information, etc.) could result in the immediate termination of service.
- Orphans' management reserves the right to terminate a volunteer at any time in line with the shelter's best interests.

### **14. Confidentiality**

At Orphans of the Storm, we all as volunteers have a responsibility to keep sensitive information confidential. Such information includes but shall not be limited to:

- Confidential information of customers, volunteers, or employees, including but not limited to addresses, phone numbers, donations, or personal information.
- Disclosure of information that could defame or damage the reputation of Orphans of the Storm or its relationship with customers.
- Donor information such as donation amount, addresses, telephone numbers, or other personal information.
- Policies and procedures regarding the care of the animals.

All files, documents, and working papers of Orphans of the Storm are the property of the Orphans of the Storm. Any volunteer who purposely, or through a failure to exercise reasonable care, causes confidential information to be disclosed will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. The obligation to keep information confidential continues after a volunteer ceases to be affiliated with Orphans of the Storm.

At the end of a volunteer's services, he or she shall return, at the request of Orphans of the Storm, all documents, papers, and other materials, regardless of medium, that may contain or be derived from confidential information in his or her possession.

I agree to follow Orphans of the Storm confidentiality policy and if I fail to follow the policy, I will be subject to disciplinary action which might include termination of my services as a volunteer.

## **15. Expectations Orphans of the Storm Can Have of Volunteers**

- We require dedication, compassion, and reliability, including a commitment to scheduled shifts and shelter protocols.
- Teamwork is valued, so collaboration with staff and fellow volunteers is essential. Equally crucial is maintaining a positive attitude, following safety guidelines, and representing the shelter professionally in public interactions.

## **16. Expectations Volunteers Can Have of Orphans of the Storm**

- You can expect clear guidance, flexibility, and adequate training.
- A supportive and inclusive atmosphere where your contributions are valued and acknowledged.
- Opportunities for personal growth and a shared passion for animal welfare, aiming for a fulfilling experience while positively impacting our animals and our community.

Document updated as of March 5, 2026