



## BENTON ANIMAL SERVICES

# Volunteer Program Handbook

*City of Benton, Arkansas*

Effective Date: 05 September 2026

Last Revised: 05 September 2026

## Welcome to Benton Animal Services

Welcome to the Benton Animal Services Volunteer Program.

Volunteers are an important part of our mission and provide valuable support to the animals, employees, and community we serve. Whether helping with enrichment, animal care, adoption activities, community events, photography, administrative projects, or other programs, volunteers help expand what Benton Animal Services can accomplish.

Our goal is to provide a volunteer program that is safe, organized, meaningful, welcoming, and focused on positive outcomes for both animals and people.

Volunteering in an animal shelter can be incredibly rewarding, but it also comes with significant responsibilities. Volunteers work around animals with unknown histories, interact with members of the public, and may encounter difficult or emotionally challenging situations.

For these reasons, volunteers are expected to complete required training, follow established procedures, respect staff direction, and perform only those activities for which they have been authorized.

Thank you for choosing to give your time to Benton Animal Services.

## 1. About This Handbook

This handbook provides general policies, procedures, expectations, and guidelines for individuals participating in the Benton Animal Services ("BAS") Volunteer Program.

It should be used together with the following materials:

- BAS Volunteer Agreement, Code of Conduct, and Waiver;
- Applicable City of Benton policies;
- Volunteer position descriptions;
- BAS standard operating procedures;
- Animal-handling protocols;
- Safety procedures; and
- Training materials applicable to each volunteer assignment.

This handbook is intended as a guide and does not create an employment contract, volunteer contract, entitlement to continued participation, or guarantee of any particular assignment, schedule, or level of access.

BAS may revise, suspend, replace, or modify volunteer policies and procedures as operational needs, laws, regulations, industry standards, or City policies change. Material changes will be communicated to volunteers as appropriate.

## 2. Our Purpose

Benton Animal Services serves the community by promoting responsible animal ownership, protecting public health and safety, providing humane care for animals in our custody, enforcing applicable animal-control laws, reuniting lost animals with their families, and helping animals find appropriate outcomes.

The Volunteer Program supports these responsibilities by providing trained community members with meaningful opportunities to contribute to animal welfare and public service.

### Our Volunteer Program Values

**Compassion:** Treat animals and people with patience, dignity, kindness, and respect.

**Safety:** Protect the safety of animals, employees, volunteers, visitors, and the community.

**Professionalism:** Remember that actions taken while volunteering can affect public confidence in Benton Animal Services and the City of Benton.

**Teamwork:** Employees and volunteers work together toward shared goals while respecting their different roles and responsibilities.

**Integrity:** Be honest, dependable, responsible, and accountable.

**Respect:** Treat different perspectives, experiences, backgrounds, and roles professionally.

**Continuous Improvement:** Remain willing to learn, receive feedback, adapt, and improve.

## 3. The Role of Volunteers

Volunteers supplement and support the work of BAS employees.

Volunteers do not replace the authority or responsibilities of City employees and may not independently exercise governmental or enforcement authority unless specifically authorized by law and the City.

Volunteer activities may include:

- Dog walking;
- Dog enrichment;
- Cat socialization;
- Cat enrichment;
- Animal grooming;
- Kennel support;
- Laundry and dishes;
- Adoption support;
- Photography and animal profiles;
- Community events;
- Administrative assistance;
- Donation organization;
- Transport assistance;
- Foster support;
- Community outreach;
- Grounds or facility projects;
- Special projects; and
- Other approved activities.

Available assignments may change according to shelter population, staffing, operational priorities, disease-control requirements, safety considerations, and community needs.

## **4. Becoming a BAS Volunteer**

Applicants must complete the BAS volunteer onboarding process before independently performing volunteer activities. Depending upon the position, onboarding may include:

1. Completing a volunteer application;
2. Meeting applicable minimum-age requirements;
3. Completing an orientation;
4. Reviewing this handbook;
5. Signing the BAS Volunteer Agreement, Code of Conduct, and Waiver;
6. Completing general safety training;
7. Completing position-specific training;
8. Demonstrating required skills or competencies;
9. Completing additional screening when required for a particular assignment; and
10. Receiving approval from BAS management or its designee.

Completion of an application or orientation does not guarantee acceptance into the Volunteer Program or placement in a particular position. BAS will attempt to match volunteers with assignments appropriate to their interests, experience, skills, availability, and the operational needs of the department.

## **5. Volunteer Orientation**

All new volunteers must complete BAS orientation before beginning unsupervised volunteer activities.

Orientation may include:

- BAS mission and services;
- Facility tour;
- Volunteer roles;
- Chain of command;
- Professional conduct;
- Animal safety;
- Disease prevention;
- Emergency procedures;
- Confidentiality;
- Public interaction;
- Incident reporting;
- Scheduling and attendance;
- Restricted areas;
- Animal-handling expectations; and
- Questions and answers.

Completing orientation does not automatically authorize a volunteer to perform every volunteer activity.

## **6. Training and Levels of Authorization**

BAS uses training and authorization requirements to protect volunteers, employees, members of the public, and animals.

Volunteers may perform only activities for which they have been trained and authorized. Previous experience with animals does not automatically waive BAS training requirements.

### **Training May Include**

- Classroom or online instruction;
- Demonstration;
- Shadowing;
- Hands-on instruction;
- Mentoring;
- Staff observation;
- Skills assessment; and
- Periodic refresher training.

A volunteer may be asked to demonstrate competency before independently performing a particular activity. BAS may establish different authorization levels for animal handling or specialized activities. Volunteers must respect those levels. A volunteer who has not been authorized for a particular animal, activity, or area must not perform that activity simply because another volunteer is permitted to do so.

## **7. Chain of Command**

Clear communication is essential to an effective volunteer program.

Volunteers should generally direct questions regarding their assignments to:

Volunteer Coordinator/Designated Staff Member: \_\_\_\_\_

Operational questions should be directed to the employee supervising the applicable activity or area.

Serious safety, animal-welfare, harassment, misconduct, or security concerns should be reported promptly to BAS management.

Volunteers should not attempt to independently resolve personnel disputes, enforcement matters, complaints against City employees, or significant operational issues.

## **8. Staff and Volunteer Partnership**

BAS employees and volunteers are part of the same overall mission but have different responsibilities.

Employees are responsible for shelter operations and have authority to make decisions concerning:

- Animal disposition;
- Medical care;
- Behavioral management;
- Animal placement;
- Intake;
- Reclaim;
- Adoption approval;
- Rescue transfer;
- Quarantine;
- Isolation;
- Enforcement matters;
- Public safety;

- Facility operations; and
- Volunteer activities.

Volunteers are expected to follow staff direction concerning these matters. Disagreement with a decision does not authorize a volunteer to disregard an employee's instruction. Questions and constructive concerns are welcome and should be directed through the appropriate chain of command.

## 9. Volunteer Position Descriptions

BAS may establish written position descriptions for volunteer assignments. Position descriptions may identify:

- Purpose of the position;
- Responsibilities;
- Training requirements;
- Minimum age;
- Physical requirements;
- Time commitment;
- Required skills;
- Restrictions;
- Reporting structure; and
- Authorization level.

Volunteers should review the applicable position description before accepting an assignment. Position descriptions may be changed as operational needs evolve.

## 10. Scheduling and Attendance

Dependability is important because shelter activities are often planned around expected volunteer participation.

Volunteers should schedule their service using the BAS-approved scheduling process when applicable. Volunteers are expected to:

- Arrive as scheduled;
- Sign in and out using the approved system;
- Record volunteer hours accurately;
- Be prepared for their assignment;
- Notify BAS when they cannot attend a scheduled shift; and
- Avoid accepting assignments they cannot reasonably fulfill.

Repeated no-shows, excessive cancellations, or extended inactivity may result in reassignment or inactive volunteer status. BAS understands that volunteering is voluntary and that personal circumstances arise. Communication is generally more important than perfect attendance.

## 11. Sign-In and Volunteer Hours

Volunteers must accurately record their service hours using the system designated by BAS. Volunteer hours may be used for:

- Program evaluation;
- Grant reporting;

- Recognition;
- Risk management;
- City reporting;
- Staffing analysis; and
- Measuring community involvement.

Volunteers may not record hours they did not actually perform. Parents, friends, or family members may not receive volunteer hours for accompanying a volunteer unless they are separately approved participants.

## 12. Identification and Dress

Volunteers should present a clean, professional appearance appropriate for an animal shelter environment. BAS may require volunteers to wear:

- Volunteer identification;
- Name badges;
- BAS volunteer shirts;
- Closed-toe shoes;
- Long pants;
- Protective equipment; or
- Other assignment-specific clothing.

Clothing should permit safe movement around animals and equipment. Clothing displaying discriminatory, obscene, threatening, excessively political, or otherwise inappropriate material may not be worn while representing BAS. Volunteers should not wear clothing or identification that falsely suggests they are City employees, animal control officers, law enforcement officers, or authorized City spokespersons.

## 13. Professional Conduct

Volunteers are expected to treat animals, employees, other volunteers, adopters, rescue partners, visitors, vendors, public officials, and members of the public with professionalism and respect. While volunteering, volunteers must not engage in:

- Threatening behavior;
- Bullying;
- Harassment;
- Discrimination;
- Fighting;
- Abusive or profane confrontations;
- Deliberate interference with employees;
- Animal mistreatment;
- Theft;
- Falsification of records; or
- Other conduct that materially disrupts shelter operations.

Volunteers should attempt to de-escalate disagreements rather than argue with members of the public. When a situation becomes difficult, volunteers should obtain assistance from an employee.

## 14. Interaction With the Public

Volunteers often play an important role in creating a positive experience for shelter visitors. Volunteers are encouraged to be friendly, welcoming, and helpful.

If you know the answer to a routine question and are authorized to provide it, provide accurate information. If you are uncertain, say that you will find an employee who can help. Do not guess.

Volunteers may not:

- Promise that an individual will be approved to adopt;
- Guarantee an animal's behavior;
- Provide unauthorized veterinary advice;
- Make commitments on behalf of BAS;
- Interpret laws on behalf of the City;
- Promise that an animal will not be euthanized;
- Promise that a particular rescue will receive an animal; or
- Represent personal opinions as official BAS policy.

## 15. Representing Benton Animal Services

While performing volunteer duties, volunteers may reasonably be perceived as representatives of BAS. Volunteers are therefore expected to support and accurately communicate BAS policies while acting in their volunteer capacity.

If BAS has an established policy or position regarding an issue, volunteers should accurately represent that position when performing volunteer duties. If a volunteer disagrees with a policy, the volunteer may raise the concern through the appropriate internal process.

Volunteers remain private citizens outside their volunteer role. Nothing in this handbook is intended to prohibit lawful speech or activity protected by applicable law.

## 16. Social Media and Personal Communications

BAS recognizes that volunteers may use personal social-media accounts and express personal opinions. Volunteers are not authorized spokespersons for BAS merely because they participate in the Volunteer Program.

When discussing BAS publicly, volunteers should clearly distinguish personal opinions from official City statements when their BAS affiliation is identified or reasonably apparent.

Volunteers may not:

- Claim to speak officially for BAS without authorization;
- Use BAS social-media accounts without authorization;
- Disclose legally protected, confidential, or restricted information;
- Publish information obtained through restricted volunteer access when disclosure is prohibited;
- Use BAS logos or branding in a manner that falsely implies official authorization;
- Represent personal opinions as official BAS positions; or
- Use volunteer access to obtain information or materials for an unauthorized purpose.

Questions regarding whether information may be shared should be directed to BAS management.

## 17. Media Contacts

Volunteers are not authorized to speak to news media on behalf of Benton Animal Services or the City of Benton unless specifically authorized. Media inquiries should be referred to the appropriate BAS or City representative. This includes requests concerning:

- Individual animals;
- Investigations;
- Enforcement activity;
- Euthanasia;
- Animal cruelty cases;
- Personnel matters;
- Shelter statistics;
- City policy; or
- Controversial or sensitive incidents.

Volunteers may speak as private citizens on their own behalf but should not falsely represent themselves as authorized City spokespersons.

## 18. Confidentiality

Volunteers may encounter sensitive or legally protected information through their service. Examples may include:

- Personal information about citizens;
- Employee information;
- Volunteer information;
- Information concerning active investigations;
- Restricted animal records;
- Veterinary information;
- Security procedures;
- Passwords or access credentials;
- Internal communications; and
- Other information designated confidential or protected by law.

Volunteers may access information only when necessary for an authorized volunteer assignment. Volunteer access does not create authority to publicly release information.

Because BAS is a municipal department, some records may be subject to the Arkansas Freedom of Information Act. Decisions concerning disclosure of City records will be handled by authorized City personnel. Volunteers should refer requests for records to BAS management rather than attempting to determine independently whether a record must be released.

## 19. Photography and Video

Photography can be valuable for adoption promotion, education, outreach, and documenting shelter animals. However, volunteers must follow BAS photography requirements. Volunteers may not photograph or record:

- Confidential records;
- Computer screens containing protected information;
- Restricted areas;

- Veterinary procedures without authorization;
- Law-enforcement or cruelty investigations without authorization;
- Members of the public in circumstances prohibited by BAS policy;
- Employees in circumstances prohibited by City policy; or
- Animals subject to photography restrictions.

Photos taken specifically as part of an assigned BAS activity should be handled according to BAS procedures.

## **20. Animal Handling**

Animal handling is a privilege requiring training and sound judgment. Volunteers must:

- Handle only animals they are authorized to handle;
- Follow kennel signage and restrictions;
- Use required equipment;
- Follow BAS handling procedures;
- Observe animal body language;
- Report behavioral concerns;
- Avoid unnecessary risks; and
- Follow employee instructions immediately.

Never enter an enclosure or handle an animal marked as restricted without authorization. Never assume an animal is safe based solely on breed, size, age, appearance, or previous interactions.

## **21. Dog Walking**

Only authorized volunteers may walk shelter dogs. Before removing a dog from its kennel:

- Review applicable kennel information;
- Confirm the dog is eligible for volunteer handling;
- Use required leash and safety equipment;
- Check surrounding areas before opening the kennel; and
- Follow BAS removal procedures.

During walks, volunteers must maintain control of the dog, avoid unauthorized dog-to-dog introductions, remain in approved areas, avoid permitting members of the public to handle the dog unless authorized, observe behavior, follow weather and temperature restrictions, and immediately report incidents. Dogs may not be taken off BAS property without specific authorization.

## **22. Cat Handling and Socialization**

Volunteers working with cats must follow applicable handling and sanitation procedures. Volunteers should:

- Review cage signage;
- Observe body language;
- Avoid forcing interaction;
- Use appropriate toys and enrichment;
- Maintain sanitation between animals;
- Prevent escapes; and
- Report medical or behavioral concerns.

Cats under quarantine, isolation, medical restriction, or behavioral restriction may only be handled when specifically authorized.

## 23. Animal Enrichment

Enrichment is an important part of shelter animal care. Approved enrichment may include:

- Walking;
- Play;
- Training exercises;
- Toys;
- Food enrichment;
- Social interaction;
- Sensory enrichment; and
- Quiet companionship.

Only approved enrichment items and techniques may be used. Do not give animals unapproved food, treats, toys, medications, supplements, or other items.

## 24. Feeding and Medication

Volunteers may feed animals only as authorized. Diet instructions must be followed exactly. Animals may have:

- Allergies;
- Medical diets;
- Feeding restrictions;
- Scheduled procedures;
- Medication requirements; or
- Behavioral feeding plans.

Do not provide additional food or treats without authorization. Volunteers may administer medication only when specifically trained and authorized to do so.

## 25. Disease Prevention and Sanitation

Animal shelters must actively manage infectious disease. Volunteers are required to follow BAS sanitation and disease-control protocols. This may include:

- Hand washing;
- Use of gloves;
- Personal protective equipment;
- Footwear sanitation;
- Changing protective clothing;
- Cleaning equipment between animals;
- Following isolation procedures; and
- Handling animal populations in a designated order.

Never move an animal from isolation or quarantine without authorization. Volunteers should report coughing, sneezing, nasal discharge, vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy, skin lesions, loss of appetite, or unusual behavior. Do not diagnose the animal yourself.

## 26. Bites, Scratches, Injuries, and Exposures

All bites, scratches, injuries, or potentially significant disease exposures must be reported immediately. This applies even when an injury appears minor. Volunteers should:

11. Secure the animal safely if possible;
12. Notify an employee immediately;
13. Follow first-aid instructions;
14. Complete required incident documentation; and
15. Cooperate with any required follow-up.

Never conceal a bite or scratch because you are concerned that reporting it may negatively affect the animal. Accurate reporting protects both people and animals.

## 27. Animal Escapes

If an animal escapes, do not chase the animal unless directed to do so. Immediately:

16. Alert staff;
17. Secure doors or gates when safe;
18. Follow employee instructions;
19. Keep visitors away from the affected area when instructed; and
20. Assist only as directed.

Preventing additional escapes is often more important than immediately pursuing the animal.

## 28. Restricted Areas and Activities

Certain areas or activities may be restricted to authorized personnel. Examples may include:

- Medication storage;
- Controlled substances;
- Evidence storage;
- Animal-control vehicles;
- Certain isolation areas;
- Dangerous-animal areas;
- Secure records;
- Employee-only workspaces;
- Euthanasia activities;
- Active investigations; and
- Other areas designated by BAS management.

Volunteers may enter restricted areas only when authorized.

## 29. Euthanasia and Sensitive Situations

Animal sheltering sometimes involves difficult outcomes.

Euthanasia decisions are made by authorized personnel according to applicable law, City policy, medical considerations, behavioral considerations, public safety, available resources, and individual circumstances.

Volunteers do not make euthanasia decisions unless specifically authorized by law and City policy as part of another official role. Volunteers may have emotional reactions or questions regarding these decisions. Questions should be directed respectfully to appropriate BAS personnel.

Information concerning individual cases may sometimes be restricted because of legal, medical, investigative, personnel, or privacy considerations.

### 30. Adoption and Placement Decisions

Volunteers can be extremely helpful in providing observations about an animal. Those observations are welcome.

Final decisions concerning adoption, foster placement, rescue transfer, medical treatment, behavior plans, reclaim, or other disposition remain with authorized BAS personnel. Volunteers may not reserve, promise, transfer, release, or independently place BAS animals.

### 31. Rescue and Community Partners

BAS values productive relationships with rescue organizations, veterinarians, fosters, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and other community partners. Volunteers should treat partners professionally.

Unless specifically authorized, volunteers may not negotiate the following on behalf of BAS:

- Rescue agreements;
- Transfer terms;
- Veterinary arrangements;
- Financial commitments;
- Contracts;
- Animal disposition; or
- Official partnerships.

### 32. Drugs, Alcohol, and Impairment

Volunteers may not perform volunteer activities while impaired by alcohol, illegal drugs, or another substance that makes them unable to safely perform their duties.

Volunteers taking medications that could affect their ability to safely handle animals or equipment should avoid activities that would create an unreasonable safety risk. Illegal drug possession or use on City property is prohibited.

### 33. Weapons

Weapons on City property and during BAS volunteer activities are governed by applicable federal and Arkansas law and City of Benton policy. Volunteers are responsible for complying with all applicable requirements. Nothing in this handbook should be interpreted as expanding or restricting rights established by law.

### 34. Harassment and Discrimination

BAS is committed to maintaining a professional volunteer environment. Harassment, sexual harassment, discriminatory conduct, threats, intimidation, and retaliation are prohibited to the extent provided by applicable City policy and law.

Volunteers experiencing or witnessing concerning behavior should report it to BAS management or through the appropriate City reporting process.

### 35. Conflict Resolution

Disagreements can occur in any organization. When possible, volunteers should address routine questions respectfully and directly through the appropriate supervisor. If the matter cannot be resolved, it may be elevated through the BAS chain of command.

Volunteers should avoid:

- Public confrontations;
- Arguments in animal-care areas;
- Involving shelter visitors in internal disagreements;
- Gossip intended to disrupt working relationships; or
- Retaliation against someone for raising a good-faith concern.

The goal of conflict resolution is to address the issue while maintaining effective working relationships and uninterrupted animal care.

### 36. Raising Concerns

BAS welcomes good-faith concerns involving:

- Animal welfare;
- Public safety;
- Volunteer safety;
- Policy compliance;
- Workplace conduct;
- Operational problems;
- Potential legal violations; or
- Opportunities for improvement.

Volunteers should normally report concerns to their designated staff contact or BAS management. If the concern involves the person who would ordinarily receive the report, volunteers may use another appropriate City reporting channel. Good-faith reporting should be distinguished from knowingly making false allegations or intentionally disrupting operations.

### 37. Feedback and Coaching

Volunteer development is an ongoing process. BAS employees may provide:

- Coaching;
- Instruction;
- Retraining;
- Constructive feedback;
- Mentoring;
- Reassignment; or
- Additional supervision.

Receiving corrective feedback does not necessarily mean that a volunteer is being disciplined. Volunteers are expected to remain receptive to instruction. Animal sheltering involves safety-sensitive work, and an

employee may immediately stop an activity when the employee believes it presents a safety, welfare, or operational concern.

### 38. Corrective Action

When a concern occurs, BAS may use progressive corrective action when appropriate. Depending upon the circumstances, this may include coaching or retraining, verbal counseling, written corrective action, reassignment or restriction, suspension, or removal.

BAS is not required to use these steps in sequence.

### 39. Immediate Suspension or Removal

Some conduct may warrant immediate action. Examples include:

- Animal abuse;
- Intentional animal neglect;
- Theft;
- Violence;
- Credible threats;
- Serious harassment;
- Serious discriminatory misconduct;
- Intentional falsification of records;
- Unauthorized removal of an animal;
- Serious breach of confidentiality;
- Deliberately releasing an animal without authorization;
- Significant safety violations;
- Deliberately entering restricted areas;
- Performing prohibited activities;
- Reporting for service while significantly impaired;
- Deliberate interference with shelter operations; or
- Other serious conduct creating a substantial safety, legal, animal-welfare, security, or operational risk.

Management may immediately restrict access while an incident is reviewed.

### 40. Ending the Volunteer Relationship

Volunteer service is based upon mutual participation. A volunteer may discontinue participation at any time.

BAS may also discontinue, suspend, restrict, or decline to renew a volunteer's participation when management determines that continued service is inconsistent with program requirements, safety, animal welfare, operational needs, volunteer expectations, City policies, applicable law, or the effective functioning of Benton Animal Services.

Removal from the Volunteer Program is not an employment termination because volunteers are not City employees by virtue of their volunteer participation.

### 41. Volunteer Inactivity

BAS may designate volunteers as inactive after a period without volunteer participation. This period will usually start after six months without recorded volunteer activity.

An inactive volunteer may be required to contact the Volunteer Coordinator, review updated policies, sign current agreements, attend refresher orientation, or repeat certain training before returning. Longer absences may require complete retraining.

## 42. Volunteer Recognition

BAS recognizes that volunteers donate something extremely valuable: their time. BAS may recognize volunteers through:

- Appreciation events;
- Service-hour milestones;
- Certificates;
- Social-media recognition;
- Awards;
- Volunteer spotlights;
- Letters of appreciation; or
- Other recognition programs.

Recognition is intended to celebrate service and strengthen the partnership between BAS and its volunteers.

## 43. Volunteer Suggestions

Volunteers often see shelter operations from a different perspective and may identify useful ideas. Suggestions are welcome.

Volunteer Coordinator: Anya Littlefield  
Email: [anya.littlefield@bentonar.gov](mailto:anya.littlefield@bentonar.gov)  
Other Method: 501-776-5972

Submission of an idea does not guarantee implementation, but constructive feedback is encouraged.

## 44. Emergency Procedures

During an emergency, volunteers must follow employee instructions immediately. Emergencies may include:

- Fire;
- Severe weather;
- Tornado warnings;
- Medical emergencies;
- Animal escapes;
- Aggressive-animal incidents;
- Facility emergencies;
- Hazardous-material incidents;
- Security threats; or
- Evacuations.

Volunteers should familiarize themselves with emergency exits, shelter locations, fire extinguishers, first-aid locations, emergency contact procedures, and evacuation routes. Animal evacuation should be attempted only as directed. Human safety takes priority during an emergency.

## 45. Severe Weather

BAS may restrict or cancel volunteer activities because of extreme heat, extreme cold, severe thunderstorms, tornado conditions, ice or snow, flooding, or other dangerous conditions. Outdoor animal activities may also be restricted because of temperature or weather conditions. Volunteers must follow staff direction regarding weather restrictions.

## 46. Children and Youth Volunteers

Youth participation will be governed by BAS's established age and supervision requirements. BAS may establish different minimum ages for different activities based on safety and liability considerations. Minors may be required to have:

- Parent or legal guardian consent;
- Direct adult supervision;
- Restricted animal access;
- Modified assignments; or
- Additional documentation.

Parents or guardians may not leave an unsupervised child at BAS unless the child has been specifically approved to participate independently under BAS policy.

## 47. Guests

Volunteer status does not authorize a volunteer to bring another person into volunteer-only or restricted areas. Friends, family members, children, and other guests may participate only through approved BAS processes. Volunteers may not allow another person to use their volunteer credentials, access privileges, keys, codes, or identification.

## 48. Personal Animals

Volunteers should not bring personally owned animals to BAS unless specifically authorized. This protects both shelter animals and privately owned animals from infectious disease, behavioral conflicts, injury, and unnecessary stress. Service animals will be handled in accordance with applicable law and City policy.

## 49. Personal Property

Volunteers are encouraged to bring only items necessary for their service. BAS cannot guarantee the security of personal belongings. Valuables should be secured appropriately. Volunteers should not leave items where they create a safety hazard or where animals can access them.

## 50. Keys, Codes, and Facility Access

Any key, badge, access code, password, or credential issued to a volunteer remains under City control. Volunteers may not duplicate keys, share access codes, share passwords, allow unauthorized entry, loan credentials, or use access privileges outside authorized activities. Lost or compromised credentials must be reported immediately. All City-issued access items must be returned upon request or when volunteer service ends.

## 51. Shelter Records and Computer Systems

Volunteers may use BAS systems only when authorized. Access should be limited to information necessary for the assigned volunteer activity. Volunteers may not:

- Browse records out of curiosity;
- Access information about acquaintances without a legitimate volunteer purpose;
- Alter records without authorization;
- Share login credentials;
- Download information for personal use; or
- Remove City records without authorization.

System activity may be subject to applicable City security and records policies.

## 52. Donations and Money

Volunteers may accept or handle money only when specifically authorized. All donations must be processed according to City procedures. Volunteers may not:

- Personally retain donations intended for BAS;
- Establish fundraising campaigns in BAS's name without approval;
- Collect money while representing BAS without authorization;
- Promise tax treatment; or
- Commit BAS funds.

Questions about donations should be referred to appropriate staff.

## 53. Off-Site Events

Volunteers participating in BAS events away from the shelter remain subject to this handbook. At events, volunteers should:

- Follow the event leader's instructions;
- Wear required identification;
- Maintain control of animals;
- Provide accurate information;
- Maintain a professional appearance;
- Protect animals from excessive stress;
- Follow transportation requirements; and
- Immediately report incidents.

Volunteers should remember that public visibility is often particularly high at community events.

## 54. Volunteer Driving and Animal Transport

Volunteers may transport animals or operate vehicles on behalf of BAS only when specifically authorized. Additional requirements may include:

- Valid driver's license;
- Acceptable driving record;
- Insurance requirements;
- Vehicle approval;

- Transport training;
- Secure animal containment; and
- Compliance with City vehicle policies.

Volunteers should never transport an animal without documented authorization.

## 55. Foster Volunteers

Foster care is a specialized volunteer activity and may require a separate foster agreement. Foster volunteers must follow BAS requirements concerning:

- Animal custody;
- Veterinary treatment;
- Housing;
- Other household animals;
- Adoption;
- Emergency care;
- Supplies;
- Transportation;
- Communication;
- Lost animals; and
- Returning animals to BAS.

The foster animal remains subject to BAS custody and placement authority unless otherwise documented.

## 56. Volunteer Well-Being

Animal welfare work can be emotionally challenging. Volunteers may encounter:

- Injured animals;
- Neglect;
- Cruelty cases;
- Severely ill animals;
- Euthanasia;
- Difficult interactions with members of the public; and
- Animals whose outcomes are emotionally difficult.

Volunteers are encouraged to recognize their own limits. It is acceptable to request a different assignment, take a break, or speak with the Volunteer Coordinator when an activity becomes emotionally overwhelming. Supporting volunteers helps create a sustainable and compassionate program.

## 57. Maintaining Professional Boundaries

Volunteers may form strong emotional connections with animals. Those relationships can be positive and valuable. However, volunteers must remember that BAS is responsible for managing the animal's overall care and disposition.

Volunteers should not allow attachment to an animal to result in:

- Disregarding staff instructions;
- Interfering with an adoption;

- Interfering with rescue placement;
- Concealing information;
- Removing an animal;
- Making unauthorized promises;
- Publicly releasing restricted case information; or
- Disrupting shelter operations.

Concerns about an animal should be brought to appropriate staff.

## 58. Policy Questions

If you are uncertain about a policy: ask before acting.

BAS would rather answer a question before an activity occurs than address a preventable safety or policy issue afterward. Volunteer policies cannot anticipate every possible situation. When a situation is not specifically addressed in this handbook, volunteers should seek guidance from BAS personnel.

## 59. Volunteer Handbook Acknowledgment

I acknowledge that I have received or been provided access to the Benton Animal Services Volunteer Program Handbook.

I understand that:

- The handbook contains policies and expectations applicable to my volunteer participation;
- I am responsible for reviewing and following applicable policies;
- I may ask BAS personnel questions when I need clarification;
- I may perform only activities for which I have been trained and authorized;
- I am expected to follow lawful instructions from BAS employees;
- This handbook does not create an employment relationship or contractual right to continued volunteer participation;
- BAS may modify volunteer policies and procedures as necessary; and
- Failure to comply with volunteer policies may result in coaching, retraining, reassignment, restriction, suspension, or removal from the Volunteer Program.

I understand that this acknowledgment supplements, and does not replace, the Benton Animal Services Volunteer Agreement, Code of Conduct, and Waiver.

Volunteer Name \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Legal Guardian (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

BAS Representative \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Benton Animal Services Volunteer Program**

Benton Animal Services • City of Benton, Arkansas

Volunteer Coordinator: Anya Littlefield

Phone: 501-776-5972

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Emergency/After-Hours Contact: Phone or email listed above

*Thank you for giving your time, skills, and compassion to the animals and people of our community.*