



Essential Capabilities of HSFN Volunteers

There are several animal care needs within The Humane Society for Greater Nashua (HSFN) that are typically fulfilled by volunteers who work with companion cats, dogs, and a variety of small mammals. To safely and effectively serve as a volunteer at the Animal Shelter, volunteers need to possess the following physical, mental, and emotional capacities.

If the areas you have chosen for volunteer activities are not compatible with your abilities you may be reassigned to another area or you may not be allowed to volunteer at HSFN.

Essential Physical Capabilities

- Quick reflexes and ability to use both hands simultaneously (example: open cage door while handling animal).
- High level of manual dexterity to leash/harness animals, handle small tools and to properly groom animals.
- Ability to walk unaided on unpaved, uneven, rugged and sometimes muddy and slippery exercise kennels, lawn areas and walking trails (when walking dogs outdoors).
- Ability to bend and squat in order to leash/harness and pick up an animal.
- Ability to stand for significant periods of time while walking dogs, assisting the public with visits, or cleaning cages/kennels.
- Average vision to move safely around the building, to be able to observe animal body language without difficulty, and to be able to read notes on animals' paperwork.
- Average sense of smell and touch in order to assess body condition of animals, and to note signs of illness or injury.
- Ability to hear if animal is growling or making sounds indicating fear or pain.
- Ability to speak and effectively communicate verbally as well as in written form.
- Ability to maneuver well in tight spaces and react and move quickly in order to prevent dogs or cats from escaping (example: ability to quickly pursue and retrieve any cats or dogs who have escaped from a kennel or cage).
- Ability to handle and restrain animals of small to large size (up to 110 pounds) with extreme caution and care. This requires average vision, hearing, steadiness of hands and body, quick reflexes, physical strength, and mental alertness.
- Must not have strong allergies to dogs, cats or other companion animals that can't be managed by medication, or to chemicals used in grooming or cleaning.
- Ability to deal with strong and unpleasant odors, fleas, feces and possible wounds or injuries to animals in our care.
- Ability to cope with a very loud environment due to animal noises.
- Must have the ability to judge an animal's reaction and to change voice to a soft or strong, authoritative tone in order to calm a dog's response or to give commands.
- Ability to reach cabinets and cages at least six feet in height, using a step stool as needed.
- Ability to load and unload washer and dryer; fold clean laundry and put away, reaching shelves from ground level up to six feet, using a step stool as needed.
- Ability to wash dishes and put away in cabinets and drawers from ground level up to eight feet in height with use of step stool as needed.

Essential Mental Capabilities

- Ability to understand, remember and follow instructions and procedures.
- High level reading, writing, spelling and communication skills (example: understand words such as quarantine, euthanize and other common industry-related terms), and a mastery of the English language.
- Possess problem-solving capability.
- Ability to observe and evaluate response to handling, as well as health and behavioral problems that are revealed during socialization.
- Must be aware of potentially dangerous situations when working with the animals, must be able to remain calm with animals that are upset; behave sensitively and confidently; show good judgment and act appropriately in these situations.

Essential Emotional Capabilities

- Ability to cope with unexpected animal behavior without assistance.
- Ability to cope with a highly emotionally charged environment with some animals that are homeless, abandoned and/or abused, as well as the reality that some of the animals in our care may be euthanized.
- Ability to understand HSFN's policies and positions regarding companion animals, and other key animal welfare issues and an ability and willingness to appropriately and accurately represent those policies when interacting with the public or otherwise representing HSFN.

Level of supervision

- Once trained, must be able to work with minimal supervision, yet must recognize limitations in knowledge and abilities, and ask for help when needed.
- Should be able to work independently for long periods of time, as well as work within a team atmosphere with other volunteers or staff.

Other

- A fairly high level of experience and familiarity with cats and dogs and their anatomy is desirable.
- All animal care positions involve some cleaning, and can involve the use of hazardous or toxic chemicals.