



# VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Table of Contents

**Welcome to the Hamilton Township Animal Shelter’s Volunteer Program!**..... 2

**About Hamilton Township Animal Shelter**..... 3

**Contact Information**..... 4

**Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities**..... 5

**Volunteer Guidelines** ..... 6

**Volunteer Requirements**..... 7

**Volunteer Discipline Procedures** ..... 8

**Requests and Notifications from Volunteers** ..... 9

**Volunteer Opportunities**..... 10

**Adoption Policies and Guidelines** ..... 12

**Euthanasia** ..... 14

**Job Description – Cat socializer**..... 15

**Job description – Dog walking/handling** ..... 16

**Dog Handling for Volunteers** ..... 17

**Walking a shelter dog**..... 20

## Welcome to the Hamilton Township Animal Shelter's Volunteer Program!

Thank you for your commitment to the cause of helping homeless animals in your community. The purpose of this handbook is to outline the Hamilton Township Animal Shelter (HTAS) Volunteer Program in the clearest way possible. Our program, consistent with our work, is in a constant state of change, but our hope is that this handbook will guide you through your experience within our organization and make your time here as productive and enjoyable as possible.

Volunteering should be enjoyable, educational, and rewarding. It is through hard work and valuable service that you can get the most out of your experience here. We are seeking individuals who will dream of the big picture but who are also willing to do the hard work to get there. As a HTAS volunteer, you are extremely vital to our mission in ensuring the health, safety and welfare of the animals and citizens in our community. Our volunteers assist with enrichment, exercise, training and advocating for the animals in our shelter while they are in our care. The reason for our success is simple; we have a hardworking staff and a passionate base of volunteers! We encourage you to bring all your passion and enthusiasm through our doors every day. It is your energy that keeps our mission alive and supports our shelter's work.

We truly appreciate your service for the animals!

Warm regards,

Donielle Killian-Gioia

Shelter Management Specialist

Hamilton Township Animal Shelter

## About Hamilton Township Animal Shelter

The Township of Hamilton Small Animal Shelter was originally built in 1970 and consisted of 20 dog kennels and one larger room. In 1971, the shelter was dedicated to the Health Officer, Herman A. Lavan. The shelter received a much needed addition in 1989 under the Mayor John K. Rafferty. 25 years later the shelter underwent another expansion project in 2014 increasing the size and capacity of the existing shelter to the building in operation today.

The Hamilton Township Animal Shelter and Adoption Center (HTAS) serves a community of more than 87,000 residents and is one of the largest townships in New Jersey spanning over 40 square miles.

The shelter serves as headquarters for the Animal Control Program which serves and protects our residents and the animals, domestic and wild who live within our township.

The shelter is open six days a week to facilitate adoptions, reclaims of pets and any other work that needs to be done to care for the temporary residents in our shelter.

### **Mission**

The Hamilton Township Animal Shelter and Adoption Center ensures the Health, Safety and Welfare of the Animals and Citizens of our Community. Our goal is to place animals into humane environments through adoption and educate our community on responsible pet ownership.

# Contact Information

## Address

2100 Sylvan Avenue  
Hamilton, NJ 08610

## Phone and Social Media

609-890-3550

Website and Facebook

[www.HamiltonNJ.com/AnimalShelter](http://www.HamiltonNJ.com/AnimalShelter)

[www.facebook.com/HamiltonAnimalShelter](http://www.facebook.com/HamiltonAnimalShelter)

Instagram: @hamiltontownshipanimalshelter

## Email

For general information

[animal-shelter@hamiltonnj.com](mailto:animal-shelter@hamiltonnj.com)

Donielle Killian-Gioia, Shelter Manager

[dgioia@hamiltonnj.com](mailto:dgioia@hamiltonnj.com)

## Shelter Hours

Monday	10:30 am – 3:30 pm
Tuesday	10:30 am – 3:30 pm
Wednesday	10:30 am – 3:30 pm
Thursday	10:30 am – 7:00 pm
Friday	10:30 am – 3:30 pm
Saturday	10:30 am – 3:30 pm
Sunday	Closed

## Volunteer Hours

10:30 am – 3:30 pm
10:30 am – 3:30 pm
10:30 am – 3:30 pm
10:30 am – 7:00 pm
10:30 am – 3:30 pm
10:30 am – 3:30 pm
Closed

For after-hours emergencies call the Hamilton Township Police at 609-581-4000.

## The shelter is closed for the following holidays:

New Year's Day	Martin Luther King Day
President's Day (2 days)	Good Friday
Memorial Day	Independence Day
Labor Day	Columbus Day
Election Day	Veteran's Day
Thanksgiving	Day after Thanksgiving
Christmas Day	

# Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities

As a volunteer of the Hamilton Township Animal Shelter, you are entitled to certain rights and are expected to fulfill certain obligations.

You have the right to:

- Work in a safe environment
- Be treated with respect and appreciated
- Receive proper training and orientation
- Know your responsibilities
- Receive written copy of volunteer policies and procedures
- Receive supplies and equipment (if applicable) to perform volunteer activities

Your responsibilities include:

- Handle all animals in a loving and compassionate manner
- Being a positive representative and advocate for HTAS both on and off premises
- Acting professionally and courteously when dealing with the public, staff and other volunteers
- When required, respectfully accepting supervision and direction from staff
- Reading and adhering to all posted signs, notices, and e-mail communications
- Dressing appropriately
- Notifying the HTAS staff of an unsafe condition
- Fulfilling your commitment as required
- Maintaining a level of confidentiality based on your specific assignment

# Volunteer Guidelines

Hamilton Township Animal Shelter relies on its volunteers to be dependable and effective. By meeting that commitment, the program operates smoothly and maximum benefit is derived for the animals.

- Wear your volunteer badge while volunteering and arrive appropriately dressed by wearing close-toed shoes, pants, and clothing appropriate for your position. If you are wearing shorts or open-toed shoes, you may be asked to leave due to safety risks. Because each volunteer is a representative of the animal shelter in the eyes of the public, we ask that you cover any visible tattoos of an offensive nature. For safety reasons, we ask that you cover or refrain from wearing visible body piercings and large, dangling jewelry.
- All volunteer hours must be recorded. Volunteers will be able to sign in and out at the computer kiosk station located in the lobby. You will be assigned a Volunteer ID number or PIN after orientation training.
- Please respect the amount of work the staff needs to accomplish every day. Do not spend time socializing with humans; your valuable time is better spent caring for the animals.
- Sanitation is very important! Always wash your hands before handling animals, between handling animals, and before leaving the shelter.
- You are responsible for your own transportation.
- Do not answer questions from the public. If you are unsure of the correct response, refer them to a staff member.
- Only perform tasks for which you have received specific training.
- Do not enter designated "Employees Only" areas such as isolation, intake areas, kennels, and offices. If you are asked to work in an "employees only" area, you must be accompanied by a staff member.
- Cell phone use is discouraged while interacting with animals. If you must make or receive a phone call, do so with consideration of our animals' safety in mind.
- Volunteers must leave the building at closing time.
- Volunteers can be dismissed at any time for inappropriate behavior, including but not limited to, rough handling of the animals; behaving rudely to the public, staff, and other volunteers; arriving under the influence of drugs or alcohol; failing to comply with guidelines; failing to respect the philosophy of the organization.

# Volunteer Requirements

## **Dress Code**

Volunteers will be required to wear volunteer t-shirt and/or name badges at all offsite events. You must wear closed toed shoes, such as sneakers or hiking shoes. No sandals or flip flops.

## **Sign-In**

Volunteers MUST sign in and out at the volunteer station, located in the front lobby. You will be assigned a Volunteer ID number/PIN after orientation training. The manual log for entry of volunteer hours when the iPad/computer is down will be located next to the computer in a binder. You can email the shelter manager for any volunteer hours performed off-site such as adoption events.

## **Age Requirement**

To volunteer at Hamilton Township Animal Shelter, you must be at least 18 years old.

## **Volunteer Hours Commitment**

Volunteers must commit to at least 6 hours per month to remain in an active status. This may consist of a combination of any activities included in our volunteer positions. Example, you may do 2 hours at an event and 4 hours of dog handling to be considered active for that month. Volunteers with zero hours accumulated for a period of 4 months will be considered inactive. Volunteers may remain active with zero hours accrued with written explanation and anticipated re-start date. Refresher animal handling training may be required.

## **Restricted Areas**

Volunteers are prohibited from entering isolation rooms, cat intake, dog kennels, or any area identified as "Employees Only" unless accompanied by a staff member.

## **Parking**

Shelter volunteers are requested to park on the streets near the shelter, or in parking spaces furthest from the shelter entrance, leaving the limited parking spots available for adopters and customers. Only handicapped volunteers may park in the parking lot at any time.

## **Entering and exiting the building**

Volunteers must use the front door to enter or exit the building.

# Volunteer Discipline Procedures

We strive to provide a safe and enjoyable experience for all our volunteers. The policies and procedures that are in place serve as guidelines for appropriate behavior. Volunteering is a privilege, not a right. Those volunteers who commit minor violations of policies and procedures will be verbally counseled in an effort to achieve acceptable behavior. Continued violations could result in additional counseling or dismissal. Serious violations will result in immediate termination.

## **Zero Tolerance Policy for:**

- Physical or verbal abuse of any staff or volunteer.
- Abusive behavior toward any animal.
- Volunteering under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or other substances that may impair judgement or functions.

## **Volunteer Dismissal**

Management reserves the right to permanently dismiss volunteers for repeat offenses. In the event of performance problems or behavior concerns, Hamilton Township Animal Shelter may take disciplinary action in the form of any or all of the following four steps not in consecutive order:

- verbal warning
- written warning
- suspension
- termination (depending on the severity of the situation and number of occurrences)

All verbal and written warnings to volunteers will be documented. Volunteers who have been terminated will be asked to relinquish any ID/name tags, in certain cases may be asked to notify a staff member if returning to the premises in a public capacity.

# Requests and Notifications from Volunteers

## **Animal Bites and Scratches**

All volunteers are required to use caution and follow established procedures when working with shelter animals. A bite may be an indication of an animal's health or behavioral problem and must be checked out for the safety of the animal, visiting public, volunteers and staff. All bites must be reported, including accidental and superficial.

If you choose to seek treatment for an injury incurred at the shelter or at a shelter-sponsored event, please follow these instructions.

1. Report injury to the shelter manager or Animal Control Officer on duty, administer first aid, if required, and determine if additional medical treatment is necessary.
2. Fill out an Injury Report form located at the front desk.
3. If you choose to go to the hospital, any and all expenses will be covered by your personal insurance.

## **Medical Alerts**

Contact a staff member regarding any medical issues pertaining to an animal. These medical concerns will include, but not limited to, diarrhea or blood in stools, sore paws, sneezing, coughing, scratching, or hair loss. Complete an illness/injury report and leave with employee so that we may follow up with the veterinarian.

## **Behavior Alerts**

Contact a staff member regarding any behavior issues concerning an animal. These issues will include, but not limited to bouncing off walls, spinning in cage, growling, lunging, jumping, and any aggressive interaction with another dog and/or person.

## **Public Relations and Social Media**

Volunteers are not permitted to speak on behalf of Hamilton Township and/or Hamilton Township Animal Shelter. All volunteers are expected to follow the Social Media Policy discussed at your shelter orientation and sign the agreement included in the Volunteer Application and Agreement.

## **Leave of Absence**

Volunteers will be expected to communicate with written notice that you will be taking a leave of absence. You will need to state whether or not you plan to return and specify approximate dates of your absence, reason for absence, and anticipated date of return. After 4 months of inactivity, you will be considered inactive. Prior to returning to active status, you may be required to recommit by completing the volunteer application an agreement and complete a refresher course in animal handling.

## Volunteer Opportunities

Below are the various opportunities available at Hamilton Township Animal Shelter. As a volunteer, you are not limited to any one position. Enjoy as many activities as you like remembering there is a 6-hour monthly minimum of activity.

### **Dog Walking:**

This involves walking, playing, socializing and/or transporting adoptable dogs. Being a dog walker/handler is much more than just walking a dog, it's a commitment to bettering the lives of shelter pets before they have the opportunity to be welcomed into their forever home. Our handling program is broken down into four colored levels to better explain the level of difficulty in handling each dog. To become an official dog walker, volunteers need to attend the in-person, hands-on Skills Class. See our *Dog Handling for Volunteers* for more detailed information. (See *job description page 16*)

### **Cat Socializer:**

Petting, playing, socializing and/or transporting adoptable cats. Cat socializers assist the team with providing enrichment and affection to our adoptable cats in the adult and kitten rooms. Understanding feline behavior and body language is important to provide comfort and minimize stress for our cats in residence. Socializing can mean holding, petting, giving treats or even just sitting and reading to give the cats in residence individual attention while they wait for their adoption day. (See *Cat Socializer Job Description page 15*)

### **Cat Cage Room Cleaner:**

Cleaning cages in cat and kitten adoption rooms. This is a scheduled shift, to schedule a morning shift please speak to the shelter manager. Cat Room Cleaners will be trained on procedures and protocols by an experienced staff member. Cleaning begins at 8:00am to ensure the room is clean, odor-free and ready for adoption hours to begin. This position involves bending, cleaning, exposure to cleaning agents, cat litter, feces, etc. PPE will be provided.

### **Off-site Event Volunteer:**

Transporting shelter animals to adoption events, speaking to interested adopters, explaining adoption process. Volunteers will have the opportunity to assist with and work at various off-site events to promote our adoptable pets. Volunteers are not to remove animals from the shelter without the prior written consent of the shelter manager or shelter administration team.

Volunteers working at off-site events will be expected to know how to answer questions commonly asked regarding the animals being shown at the event, other animals that are available for adoption at the shelter and general questions surrounding the adoption process, fees, and the customers' responsibilities. If you do not know the answer, do not

give anyone incorrect information, but rather advise them you will find out and then get back to them.

Our reputation is of utmost importance. Because many of the customers served at off-site events may not visit our shelter, these customers' experiences and opinion of Hamilton Township's Animal Shelter will come solely from the interaction they will have with off-site event volunteers. Therefore, these volunteers will be considered ambassadors for the HTAS and must possess the skill to conduct themselves in a professional and courteous manner with all customers. The main objectives for these volunteers to accomplish will be to showcase the animals currently available for adoption, foster, to answer the customers' questions and to promote a positive image of the Hamilton Township Animal Shelter.

Speak to the shelter manager to receive information about opportunities at future events.

# Adoption Policies and Guidelines

Hamilton Township Animal Shelter believes in an open adoption process. Staff strive to make the best match between people and the animals.

## Adoption Process Overview

1. Potential adopters are able to view any cat and dog available for adoption.
2. Cage cards provide information about the animal. Many of our dogs and cats are strays brought in by our Animal Control Officers. We often do not know much about these pets prior to coming to HTAS.
3. Each dog is behaviorally assessed for signs of aggression before being placed up for adoption. These assessments are a snapshot of the dog but cannot predict its every behavior in differing situations.
4. We will do same day adoptions when possible, but cannot guarantee this timeline. “Holds” are used for the following reasons:
  - a. a pet needs to be sterilized,
  - b. a family needs time to bring in other family members, and/or do a dog-to-dog meet.
  - c. Holds are for 24 hours only unless awaiting surgery appointment.
5. Adoption Policy
  - a. Must be over the age of 18 to legally sign the contract.
  - b. Not under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of adoption.
  - c. All HTAS adopted pets are meant to be companion animals and not kept outside.
  - d. HTAS does its best to disclose all information known about a specific pet. This is not fool-proof and any adopter must accept that he/she is taking into their care a living creature.
  - e. Staff reserves the right to deny an adoption if in the best interest and interest of safety for the pet and people applying to adopt.

## Adoptions

All puppies and dogs are:

- Spayed or neutered
- Heartworm tested (if over 6 months)
- Dewormed for intestinal parasites
- Treated for fleas and ticks
- Up to date with vaccinations (for puppies, the first in a series of vaccinations that should be completed by the adoptive family through their veterinarian)
- Vaccinated for rabies (if older than 13 weeks of age)
- Microchipped and registered

All cats and kittens are:

- Spayed or neutered
- Dewormed for intestinal parasites
- Treated for fleas and ticks
- Up to date with vaccinations (for kittens, the first in a series of vaccinations that should be completed by the adoptive family through their veterinarian)
- Vaccinated for rabies (if older than 13 weeks of age)
- Tested for Feline Immunodeficiency Virus and Feline Leukemia Virus
- Microchipped and registered

### **View Animals Online**

You can view all of our cats and dogs ready for adoption online at [www.Hamiltonnj.com/animalshelter](http://www.Hamiltonnj.com/animalshelter)

### **Adoption fees:**

Adult dog	\$ 75
Puppy < 6 months	\$100
Adult cat	\$ 45
Kitten <6 month	\$ 60
Other animals	\$ 30

## Euthanasia

Euthanasia is an unfortunate part of the work carried out by animal shelters across the country and a topic that most people would rather not think about. But it is probably the most difficult subject to understand, it is a very real part of the work conducted by animal shelters. Countless dogs and cats are brought to private and public animal shelters annually because they are unwanted, abandoned or lost. While an animal shelter may work very hard to place each of the animals they take in, there are always some that are beyond the help of medical intervention, suffering or display behaviors that are not considered safe for the public and the community at large.

Medical euthanasia decisions will be made with the veterinarian treating the animal and the animal shelter administration. Any animal that may be considered for euthanasia based on behavior must meet a number of set criteria and the case must be discussed by our lifesaving team prior to this occurring. No one single person will make a euthanasia decision for any animal at the Hamilton Township Animal Shelter. Court ordered euthanasia's will be performed by a veterinarian in accordance with the Court Order.

All euthanasia procedures will be performed at an animal hospital and not at the Hamilton Township Animal Shelter.

As animal lovers, we all share a common goal for the pets in our community; we want them to have a warm place to sleep, good food to eat, a loving family, plenty of exercise and regular veterinary care. Unfortunately, there are times when the outcome may not be achieved.

If the decision is made to euthanize an animal, the animal will be transported to the appropriate facilities where a licensed veterinarian will perform the most humane and painless euthanasia procedure. The animal will be held by the HTAS staff member who speaks to the animal in a gentle manner during the procedure. It is unfortunate that this procedure must be conducted and it is no doubt very difficult for our staff. This task requires the HTAS staff cope both emotionally and psychologically. Knowing that these challenges exist, we ask you to respect what our staff deals with and to be sensitive when talking about this topic. We do not want to add to anyone's challenges by insinuating that they are the "bad guys/gals", "culprit" or reason why this task is performed. Always remember, no euthanasia decision is made by any one person when it comes to our animals.

## Job Description – Cat socializer

- Job summary:** Socialize, groom, and train cats.
- Time commitment:** 2 hours per week (scheduled, during adoption hours only)
- Qualifications:** Must be 18 years of age or older. Must have viewed online training and attended orientation.

[www.aspcapro.org](http://www.aspcapro.org)

Training > Webinars > Topic > Enrichment & Behavior >

Stress Reduction & Enrichment for Shelter Cats

Feline Communication

Training > Webinars > Topic > Adoption and Placement

How to Help and Ultimately Adopt Out Under socialized Kittens

### Duties:

1. Cat socializers will work with specific cats, handling and grooming them to make him/her more comfortable with being handled and being around people. For example, handle each paw and extend claws to prepare cat for having nails trimmed.
2. Train cats to perform simple tricks for treats, if time permits.
3. If cat has special needs, ensure that visitors handle the cat properly to help both the visitor and cat have a safe and pleasant experience.

## Job description – Dog walking/handling

- Job summary:** Walk, socialize, and provide basic training to dogs.
- Time commitment:** 2 hours per week (between 10:30am – 3:00pm)
- Qualifications:** Must be 18 years of age or older. Must have attended orientation and the in-person, hands-on Skills class hosted by our dog trainer.
- Position requires a tolerance for loud noise, and volunteer must be able to deal with adverse weather conditions, be in good-to-moderate physical condition because of the high level of physical activity involved.

Review Dog Handling for Volunteers (*next page*)

[www.aspcapro.org](http://www.aspcapro.org)

Training > Webinars > Topic > Enrichment & Behavior >

- Speaking Dog! Canine Communication #1 of 3
- Speaking Dog! Canine Communication #2 of 3
- Speaking Dog! Canine Communication #3 of 3
- Enrichment for Shelter Dogs
- Canine Behavior: Dog Introductions
- Defensive Dog Handling
- Human Body Language and Dog Behavior
- Increasing the Odds of a Successful Adoption

### Duties:

1. Individually walk shelter dog for a minimum of 20 minutes.
2. Teach basic obedience commands with the goal of making their stay at the shelter more stimulating while increasing adoptability.
3. Preparing and giving dogs treats and enrichment items.
4. Reporting any behaviors observed during walk.

# Dog Handling for Volunteers

## Why we walk

Walking shelter dogs has multiple benefits.

- Good for the mental health of the dog
- Exercises the dog for health and weight control
- Socializing with continuous positive experiences with new people
- Provides opportunity to work on basic skills like loose-leash walking which helps pet retention after adoption

## Greeting a new dog

- Approach from an angle, turn sideways, making yourself smaller and less intimidating.
- Bend at the knees to get at the dog's level. For safety reasons, do not sit on the ground.
- Never lean over a dog. Looming may be intimidating to a fearful dog.
- Offer the back of your hand for sniffing.
- Allow the dog to make the approach.
- Do not stare the dog in the eyes, keep a soft gentle gaze, averting your eyes.
- Do not take a dog's food or other high value items (toys, bones, treats).

## Body language

- A dog's ears:
  - Ears up, forward = alert
  - Ears back = submissive or cautious
  - Ears flat back = fearful or defensive
  - Airplane ears = mixed emotions
- A dog's mouth
  - Air snap = This is a warning. If a dog bites the air near you this is a sign that they mean business. The did not bite you because they do not want to, but you have been warned they will bite if needed.
  - Open mouth = relaxed, play (exception –with excessive panting can also mean tension)
  - Closed mouth = tension, which may also be seen in the face
  - Tongue flick, lip lick = a sign of stress
- A dog's tail
  - High tail, quick tight wag = aroused
  - Neutral tail, relaxed wag = neutral height held straight at attention is alert and attentive
  - Low, tucked tail = stress, fearfulness
  - Neutral tail, still = relaxed

## Behavior combinations

- Fearful dogs (a different combination of the following may occur)
  - Head: avert their gaze, lower or turn their head
  - Body: Lower their body, slump, roll over, urinate
  - Tail: Tail tucked between their legs, low tail wag
  - Ears: Ears flattened back
  - Mouth: Pant, bark, sniff the floor, excessively salivate, yawn or lip licking
  - Remember that dogs do not want to be comforted the way a friend would. Hugs, overcrowding or cornering will only make the dog more uncomfortable. Give a fearful dog his/her space.
- Aggressive dogs
  - Defensive aggression: A dog showing signs of aggressive behavior who is not acting on its threats is letting you know that it has the ability to become aggressive if the need presents itself. Respect the signs being given and allow the dog its space. If you are away from the shelter, call for a staff person to assist.
  - Head: aggressive = facing you; defensive aggressive = may have its head turned
  - Eyes: Stare, whale eye
  - Ears: Erect or flattened back
  - Body: Tense, stiff, lunging, biting, air snap
  - Head: Teeth bared, growl, body aligned towards you
- Happy dogs
  - Head: relaxed muscles in the face, looks to you when called
  - Body: Approach the kennel, looking forward, play bow, a looseness or wiggle in the walk
  - Tail: neutral, wide range slow wag
  - Ears: Loose relaxed ears (not noteworthy forward or back)
  - Mouth: Loose, open mouth or closed without tension

## Color-coding

All volunteers will be assigned a color code/lanyard after hands-on Skills Class. These color codes correspond to the color code of the dogs which are assigned by the dog trainer after a behavior assessment. To progress to next level/color code for handling, volunteers must practice handling skills by performing a minimum of 20 hours of dog-handling and be reassessed by the dog trainer to demonstrate handling skills.

**GREEN:** Green labeled dogs are non-aggressive dogs that interact well with people. with consideration to their strength, energy levels, or size. Green dogs require more confidence and technique to control comfortably. These dogs typically have low aggression levels and their negative behavior is more play oriented. They may pull or jump or may be a small dog with mild issues but gives plenty of signals; mostly a training issue not a behavior issue.

**BLUE:** Dogs labeled as blue are best for seasoned walkers. These are dogs that have certain behaviors that require attention while handling, however show positive growth in most other aspects of handling. Blue dogs may have specific traits that should be recognized as well as communicated when handling. Some dogs may be designated blue for showing signs of low to midlevel aggressive actions, these actions include but are not limited too; Leash tugging, Jumping, difficulty returning to kennels etc. Blue dogs may have more troublesome issues, like fear of certain strangers or resource guarding, which would require a more experienced handler; a mild behavior issue requiring behavior modification. Blue dogs may be handled by blue-lanyard volunteers or as a Buddy Project dog for a green-lanyard volunteer.

**YELLOW:** Yellow dogs take the highest level of skill and comfort to walk. A yellow dog is one that shows extreme behavior that needs direct attention while handling or the physical ability of the dog is one that would require an experienced walker to handle. Yellow dogs require a specific plan to help curb any unwanted behavior to help them become more adoptable to potential families. Yellow dogs may appear aggressive due to a number of factors and it is our goal that yellow handlers are able to help these dogs become calmer and better adjusted to increase their adoptability. Yellow dogs may have a cluster or issues or an extreme issue that requires a handler to have personal instruction on how to work with and handle the dog; often a “special-adoption-behavior” dog. Yellow dogs may be handled as a Buddy Project dog by blue-lanyard volunteers.

**RED:** A STAFF-ONLY dog with a cluster of serious issues or an extreme issue that makes this dog currently unavailable for adoption; may be designated rescue only.

## **Do's and Don'ts in Handling**

**DO OBSERVE:** Always start with observing the dog within the kennel. Are there any concerning behaviors that you are not trained or comfortable to work with? If so, do NOT take that dog out.

**DO GET ACQUAINTED:** Let the dog get used to your presence, smell, voice and give the dog a treat. Once the dog appears more calm than aroused, you may ask a staff member to get the dog for you.

**DON'T USE PUNISHMENT:** Hamilton Township Animal Shelter staff and volunteers use positive reinforcement only. At no time are you to strike an animal. Never correct a dog by jerking the leash. Always apply gradual pressure to redirect the dog while on a walk.

**DON'T CORNER A DOG:** At any time for any reason. If a dog will not approach the front of the kennel for its walk, it does not want to go with you. The dog will be walked by shelter staff.

**DO KEEP YOUR BALANCE:** Always keep your balance while with the dog. With neighborhood cats and wildlife in the area, you never know when a dog with prey drive may spot an animal to chase.

**DON'T ENTER A DOG'S KENNEL:** Never enter into an adult dog's kennel. This is the dog's space, respect its space.

## Walking a shelter dog

Each of the dog's kennels are locked and must be unlocked by shelter staff. A staff member will leash up dog and bring the dog to the volunteer.

Each volunteer is responsible for picking up after each dog that they are walking. Put all waste in trash receptacle located outside of the building. Make sure you have more than one poop-bag with you when walking.

If you notice a health issue or concern about the dog being walked, please complete an *illness/injury report* (found at the front desk) to report it to a staff member so that the veterinarian can address the concern.

Only dogs who are beyond their emancipation date (7-day old), have been behaviorally assessed, and have received vaccinations are eligible for walks with volunteers.

All dogs must be leashed with a handler in control at all times. You must maintain a six-foot distance between you and other dogs. NEVER allow dogs to meet with other dogs on a walk.

Dogs going out with volunteers are going out for quality time beyond good toiletry habits. Watch the dog for signs of fatigue, over heating or becoming too cold. A walk could be 20 minutes to an hour.

Avoid distractions while on your walk. Do not talk on or use your cellphone, but DO bring your cellphone in case of an emergency. Program the phone number of the shelter into the phone.

Thank you for being part of our team!