



# THE ANTI-CRUELTY SOCIETY

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A Commitment to Caring *Since 1899*

**Volunteer Department**

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**CAT CARE III TRAINING MANUAL**

## INTRODUCTION

### **Welcome to the Cat Care III Program!**

As a member of the Cat Care III team you will have the opportunity to help new feline arrivals adjust to the sights, sounds and stress of the shelter. With your help, cats who are not eating, withdrawn or in need of added attention, will have the opportunity for some extra socialization.

Working closely with our Animal Behavior & Training staff, Cat Care III volunteers engage pre-selected holding room cats to help ensure their ongoing social, emotional, mental, behavioral, and physical well-being.

### **Program Levels:**

#### **Cat Care I:**

This level teaches the basics of classical conditioning and reward training. Classical conditioning helps teach cats to associate their kennel and people with positive things. Reward training techniques help us teach more appealing kennel presentation by rewarding appropriate behaviors and not reinforcing inappropriate behaviors. Cat Care I introduces various beneficial enrichment activities that can be prepared and implemented by staff and volunteers in a short amount of time.

Cat Care I training also teaches how to desensitize cats to common items and events that often trigger undesirable behavior. These triggers include people approaching kennels, opening and closing kennel latches and doors, as well as removing cats from their kennels. Through consistency and progressive desensitization, volunteers will help teach cats to display polite behavior when people approach their kennel for any reason. Volunteers will learn more about how to increase polite behavior (and prevent impolite behavior), both in and out of the kennel, through appropriate reinforcement and management.

#### **Cat Care II**

Cat Care II training is offered to volunteers who have demonstrated proficiency in the CCI program and have completed 25 hours in the Cat Care program.

In Cat Care II volunteers will work with special needs cats who need additional one-on-one intervention to address behavioral issues. Volunteers will also learn how to effectively apply the concepts of progressive desensitization and classical conditioning to various situations.

#### **Cat Care III:**

In this highly specialized program volunteers work with designated cats in the Cat Holding areas with Animal Behavior & Training supervision. Focusing on cats needing additional socialization, as well as those who are not eating, Cat Care III volunteers help cats adjust to stressful shelter surroundings.

### **Cat Care III Responsibilities:**

- 1) Identify cats who have been pre-selected for socialization.
- 2) Tend to each cat's physical needs.
- 3) Provide cats with one-on-one enrichment
- 4) Document activities and notes on each cat interaction.

**Cat Care III Training Requirements**

- 1) Volunteer Orientation
- 2) Animal [Body Language Videos](#)
- 3) Review of Volunteer Handbook & Program Manuals
- 4) 25 hours in Cat Care I Program
- 5) 25 hours in Cat Care II Program
- 6) Staff or Volunteer nomination

**Safety Guidelines**

Always read the kennel card and additional notes before interacting with ANY resident animal. Remember to follow all other volunteer guidelines (such as dress code) for safety when interacting with the animals.

For your safety, the safety of the cats, please do not perform care duties you have not received instruction for via an Anti-Cruelty Society staff member or volunteer mentor.

If you have cats of your own at home, be sure that they are current on all of their vaccinations before you begin to volunteer with our feline population. Illnesses such as Distemper are rare in our shelter environment, but when they do appear, can be lethal to kittens and unvaccinated cats. To protect your own pets, they should be up-to-date on their vaccines.

**Bites and Scratches**

If at any time you are bitten or scratched by a cat it should be reported immediately to a manager on duty. Animals who bite, and draw blood, must undergo a 10 day rabies quarantine on-site per the Illinois Department of Agriculture. Animals who bite are typically reassessed after the rabies quarantine to ensure their continued adoptability.

**Importance of Following Procedure and Policy**

As a volunteer it is important to follow all procedures and policies. These have been compiled from the knowledge and experiences of other Anti-Cruelty Society volunteers and staff. They have been created in an effort to protect the animals and people who interact with them. Adhering to these procedures will assist you with your volunteer responsibilities.

If at any time you have any questions, issues or concerns, please bring them to the attention of the Volunteer Services Department.

Failure to follow volunteer guidelines may result in immediate dismissal from your program.

**Animal Sickness**

To ensure the safety and protection of all animals in the shelter requires continual observation of their health and temperament. If a cat or kitten shows any sign of illness (such as sneezing, vomiting, discharge from the nose or eyes, runny or bloody stool or urine, or unusual behavior), it is important to immediately notify a shelter staff member.

**Emotional Considerations**

Working with animals can become emotionally exhausting at times. Whether seeing a pet sit in their cage for an elongated stay, or parting with an animal upon their adoption, there are many emotional considerations to keep in mind when working directly with the animals.

Whether you feel overwhelmed by an animal's adoption return, or a recent relinquishment, it's important to focus on the positives and what you can personally do to make an impact in each animal's life. Whether they are here for a short period of time, are transferred out to one of our partners, or euthanized, you have a unique opportunity to care for that pet during your volunteer visit.

Cat Care III volunteers should also note that not all of the cats who are housed in Holding Rooms may become available for adoption through the Society. We are an "open-admission" facility, which means that every companion animal in need of shelter and care is welcome here. We offer all animals refuge, regardless of whether we believe that animal is adoptable. We are dedicated to preventing animal suffering and cruelty and to providing quality care for every animal.

While this means that thousands of cats will make their way through our doors and into permanent adoptive homes this year, it also means that some will not. Some cats may require additional medical or behavioral treatment, which may result in transfer to another organization or, if unavailable, euthanasia.

For this reason volunteers need to take extra consideration in their involvement in this project before participating. The emotional weight of working in these spaces is much greater than that of the adoption rooms and we want everyone to know this in advance.

Euthanasia is an emotional and heart-wrenching process for those involved. It's a decision no staff member wants to make or carry out. For this reason, volunteers working in the holding rooms must respect decisions as they are made. Failure to do so may result in a volunteer's removal from the project, or a discontinuation of the Holding Room socialization effort.

### **Working Alongside Staff**

Volunteers should note that staff have priority access to the Holding rooms at any given time. If you are working in a space where a staff person is cleaning or feeding, please give them a wide berth and respect their space.

The Animal Behavior & Training team will be the main point of contact for volunteers participating in the Cat Care III program. They will work alongside volunteers to help those cats who are abnormally stressed by the shelter environment. Volunteers are welcome to reach out to this staff team directly should they want to ask a question or make an observation. Their contact info can be found at the end of this manual.

## **GETTING STARTED**

Once you have completed the required training for the Cat Care III Program your volunteer profile will be updated with your new qualifications and you will be ready to begin!

### **When You Can Volunteer**

Cat Care III volunteers may be in the shelter 7 days a week between 8:00 am and 7:00 pm. Priority times of socialization are 8am-12pm and 3pm-7pm. Volunteers may come between 12-3pm but should note that the rooms may be being cleaned during this time which will make proper socialization difficult.

## Holidays

There are no adoptions on major holidays, but volunteers are encouraged to work with the animals on days when we are closed to the public.

## Where You Can Volunteer

Cat Care III volunteers will spend the majority of their time working with cats who are currently housed in one of our three Cat Holding Rooms. Many of these cats are new arrivals and are under a significant amount of stress, , which is why volunteer involvement in this area is so important.

## Working with Anti-Cruelty Society Staff and Other Volunteers

When you enter a Cat Holding Room, introduce yourself as a Cat Care III volunteer to the personnel in the room. Let them know you will be helping cats who have been nominated for socialization by the Animal Behavior & Training team.

Anti-Cruelty Society staff members are in the room to tend to the cats, feed and clean. Please ask a staff member for assistance before taking on any responsibilities that are not outlined in this manual.

## When You Arrive

### 1) Sign in at the front desk

### 2) Store personal items

- Store your belongings in the provided lockers within the Volunteer Office. Be sure to bring your own lock – these are not provided.

### 3) Collect supplies

- Collect supplies you may need for your program like hand sanitizer, toys and treats. Supplies and enrichment materials can be found in the Holding rooms and Volunteer Office. If there is something you need but cannot find, please contact a member of the Animal Behavior & Training team or the Volunteer Department.
- Grab a volunteer apron.
- Locate your ID Badge.

**4) After locating your badge and supplies you are ready to begin.** Once prepared, go directly to the Cat Holding area and introduce yourself to staff and other volunteers who are also assigned to that space.

## Before Leaving

### 1) Disinfect and replace supplies

- Be sure discard disposable toys (like straws, pipe cleaners, etc.) , place grooming supplies and reusable toys in the Cat Holding Room kitchen sink and put away any special foods you may have used.

### 2) Store badge and apron

- Head back to the volunteer office and put away your ID Badge, taking off the clothing clop, and place the apron in the hamper. Please make sure apron pockets have been emptied.

### 3) Log your hours

- Using a volunteer computer, open a browser window and go to the following website:  
[www.myvolunteerpage.com](http://www.myvolunteerpage.com).
- It is important that all hours volunteered are entered. Volunteer hours are tracked and reported monthly and annually.
- You are also welcome to log your volunteer hours from home.

## CAT CARE III RESPONSIBILITIES

### Procedural Notes

Working in the Holding Rooms is a different experience, and because there's a unique animal population present, there are several protocols that each volunteer must keep in mind during each visit:

- Volunteers are asked to work with each individual cat no more than a total of six times. This is our attempt to expose each cat to a wide variety of people.
- Reinforcing the positive adoptable behaviors of individual cats with treats is welcome and encouraged. Please remember to use treats in moderation and only when appropriate.
- A socialization session should last between 5-15 minutes, based upon the cat's needs.
- You're not alone in your efforts! AB&T and shelter staff may spray Bliss Miss on cages, add Rescue Remedy to water bowls, will assist cats in eating and/or do other socialization as needed. Reach out to staff should you need help or have questions about a specific cat.
- Volunteers are welcome to take cats down to a counseling room, using a carrier for transport.

### 1) Identify cats who have been pre-selected for socialization.

Volunteers should only be socializing with cats who fall into the categories listed below. Cats who are not staff-nominated may have questionable temperaments or may have not been examined by a veterinarian yet. For your safety, and the safety of other cats, do not touch or handle these un-listed felines.

### **Animal Behavior & Training Nominated Cats**

Animal Behavior & Training staff perform "rounds" in the Holding Rooms throughout the week to note and monitor the behavior of each animal. During rounds staff observe a cat's eating habits, litter box use, body language and general demeanor. Summaries of their findings are sent to all directors, managers, and veterinarians each day, who then disseminate the information to the appropriate staff.

During these sessions AB&T staff identify animals requiring extra assistance and nominate them for volunteer work by filling out an orange slip. These forms are then placed in the animal's kennel card holder.

Each orange slip has suggested exercises and actions that have been prescribed by the AB&T team. These are designed for each individual cat and will help in making your socialization more effective.

I am being monitored for:

- Fearful/non-aggressive beh.**
- Not eating**
- Not urinating**
- Not defecating**
- Litter box use**
- Handling issues**

**Date begin:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date end:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Agent #/initials** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Additional Cats for Socialization**

After working with cats who have been nominated by staff, Cat Care III volunteers are also welcome to socialize with cats awaiting transfer to the Cat Adoption room.

Volunteers will know which cats are awaiting this move as they will have “transfer to adopts” signs posted on their kennel. Cats who are awaiting adoption transfer and who have a “waiting for test results” sign may also be socialized.

Note that only cats who are in the Adoption room are available for visitor introductions. Under no circumstance should volunteers be bringing cats down from the Holding Rooms to Adopts.

### **2) Tend to each cat’s physical needs.**

**Helping cats eat:** Some of the cats who are in the Holding Rooms may be so stressed that they are not eating – which can lead to devastating health consequences. One of the main goals for Cat Care III volunteers is to ensure that each cat is taking in some kind of food. Alternative foods are stored in the Holding Room kitchen and are available for volunteer use.

It is important to note the following guidelines when feeding so that cats are not overwhelmed with too many food choices at once.

- Place only 1 tablespoon of dry food and 1 tablespoon of wet food in a dish and offer it to the cat. If the cat eats what is offered, give the cat a second, more generous serving of that food. You should be able to get 12 servings of wet food from a 5.5oz can of cat food.

- If the cat won't eat the first food offering, try again by giving one 1tablespoon of a different wet food and 1 tablespoon of a different dry food. If the cat eats what is offered, give the cat a second, more generous helping.
- Continue to try various food brands and flavors in such a fashion until you find one that works – and note your findings on the orange slip so future volunteers (and staff) know what worked.
- Volunteers can also try smearing a bit of wet food on cat's paw. When the cat grooms themselves they'll lick it off, which can help stimulate their appetites.
- Volunteers should never force feed a cat.

### **3) Provide cats with one-on-one enrichment.**

**Activities:** Below is a list of activities that staff and volunteers perform with cats in the Cat Adoption room. These same games and interactions can be performed in the Holding Rooms, when appropriate.

**Paper ball** – get a stack of scratch paper from Customer Service, crumple the paper, and give to the cat.

**Rattle** – give each cat a “rattle” – a small plastic capsule with a dried bean inside; remove and replace to bin for disinfection after a couple of hours.

**Treats** – give two or three treats; shy cats should be given treats near where they are lying; more outgoing or busy cats should have the treats spread around the cage (on the shelf, under the corner of the bedding, in opposite corners, etc.).

**Zoom Groom** – brush each cat for about 30 seconds with the Zoom Groom; this brush has massaging properties so can be soothing to cats, more so than regular grooming; watch for signs of discomfort or over-stimulation (twitching tail or muscles, sudden head orientation toward the brush, etc.) and stop when they occur.

**Cat Perches:** Behavior staff may remove a cat's perch from their kennel if they believe it is hindering their socialability. Though it may sound counter-intuitive, this action may help some cats come out of their shells. When staff do this they will write a note on the orange slip so that volunteers know the intention. If you think a particular cat is having anxiety because their perch was removed, connect with the AB&T team to share your observations.

### **Socialization Supplies**

Remember to utilize a variety of supplies such as toys, brushes, and straws located in the volunteer office for your socialization time with the cat. These supplies can be found in the white Cat Program cabinets against the back wall.

- If any of the supplies are running low, please notify the Volunteer Services Department.
- Supplies must be disinfected or discarded after each use (that is, between cats) unless you are leaving the toy with the cat in their kennel.
  - Use the sink and wash area in the Cat Adoption Room or in the Clean & Preen Room to do so. Remember to return the supplies to the Cat Program cabinet when you are finished.

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- When using treats, they should be given in small amounts and used to create a relationship with the cat and to reward social behavior. If a cat responds positively to the treats, you should make a note of the type in the socialization log. This will help the next volunteer know exactly when and what type of treats the cat was given.

#### **4) Document activities and notes on each cat interaction.**

Volunteers should record their objective behavior observations on each cat's orange slip before concluding their volunteer session. These slips are checked daily by staff and provide important insights into the well-being of each cat.

Note that the AB&T team may be adding your Log entries into the cat's official Pet Point profile. For this reason, it is important to be descriptive rather than diagnostic. I.e. instead of writing "Squeekers was scared today," write "Squeekers was at the back of his kennel and pulled away when I tried to pet him."

If you should note any behaviors that may jeopardize the safety of any personnel, please bring them to the attention of a staff member immediately.

## **CAT PROFILES & HANDLING**

The following procedures are the standards for all staff and volunteers working with cats and should be followed at all times. Consistency is key.

### **Kennel Cards**

The kennel card is the most important document for each cat, as it contains all health, temperament, and behavior information for an animal. If at any point you do not understand, cannot read, or have forgotten what a notation or symbol means – ask a shelter staff member. Volunteers should not write on the kennel cards.

### **Kennel Signage**

In addition to the kennel card, you should remain aware of the cat's physical condition and attitude, as well as additional notes in the kennel card holder.

### **Addressing Problem Behaviors:**

Interrupt and redirect any undesired behaviors. For example, offer a toy to cat who is play biting. Feel free to ask questions of the room staff or Animal Behavior & Training team if you are unsure of how to interact with an animal or if you have concerns about an animal's behavior.

### **Working with Shy Cats**

There is bound to be a time when a cat is not yet comfortable leaving the cage. In this case, there are several things that you can do to make the cat more comfortable.

First, turn sideways and stand or crouch by the cage. Being sideways ensures you will not end up leaning into the cage which could overwhelm the cat. You may extend your hand toward the cat, but should stop two or three inches away. This is an invitation to the cat and will let you know if the cat is interested in meeting you.

- If the cat leans forward to sniff and doesn't move away, it is likely fine for you to gently pet the top of its head, scratch its chin or softly rub its cheek. If the cat enjoys this, pull your hand back a few inches to attempt to lure the cat forward for more attention. If the cat comes forward or becomes more active in the cage, you should spend another minute petting and talking to the cat. You may then attempt to remove the cat for a visit on a bench. If the cat isn't prepared for this, you may continue to pet the cat while he is in the cage.
- If the cat retreats, you shouldn't reach farther back to pet the cat, but wiggle your fingers and encourage the cat to return to the front of the cage for more attention. Also, watch for signs that indicate the cat is becoming over-stimulated, and stop petting if need be.
- If the cat does not accept the invitation for attention, entice the cat to play using a straw, pipe cleaner or pencil (move it slowly back and forth on or under the paper or blanket a few inches away from the cat; if the cat watches it but doesn't paw at it, move the item up the wall of the cage or across the top of the cat's hiding box if it is under one). You may use a wand toy, but begin with the stick end and not the toy end. Again, if the cat seems to be interested but isn't playing, offer the toy end (a Cat Charmer is often the most successful toy) but move it above and do not flick or throw the toy at the cat.
- Treats may also be used to encourage the cat to come forward for attention. If possible, break the treat into two or three pieces. Offer a piece to the cat. If he eats it, offer another piece and then create a trail of treats from the cat toward the front of the cage. After the cat eats a few treats, you may again extend an invitation for petting.

### Hygiene

Hygiene is a vital aspect of your responsibilities as a shelter volunteer.

- Volunteers are required to wash their hands before and after each cat encounter.
- At times, there may also be hand sanitizer available – use as often as possible.
- In addition, hand-washing is required if a volunteer comes in contact with a fomite (i.e..any object that may potentially be carrying a germ), feces, blood, body fluids, secretions, excretions, exudates or articles contaminated by these substances.
- Wash hands before eating, drinking or smoking; after using the restroom; after cleaning animal cages or animal-care areas; and whenever hands are visibly soiled.
- Disinfect any surface or tool that has come into contact with a cat after each use. For assistance disinfecting, ask a staff member for a quick demonstration of the current method being utilized.

## CONCLUSION

On behalf of the animals and staff - thank you in advance for the time and energy you will be giving to our Holding Room cats!

Your efforts will help those animals having difficulty adjusting to shelter life get adopted at a faster rate. The shelter environment is stressful for the cats, and every little thing we can do to help them adjust will relieve some of this stress. No doubt, human interaction is the best medicine for some of these cats, and even just hearing a calm, soothing, kind voice will help a cat ease its stress and open up to allow its true personality to shine through.

As a group of elite volunteers, we appreciate your efforts to work with these cats on a regular basis and hope you understand that the progress you make with the cats—no matter how small—goes a long way for both the cat and its eventual adopter.

# THANK YOU



**KEY CONTACTS**



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