



THE ANTI-CRUELTY SOCIETY

A Commitment to Caring *Since 1899*

Volunteer Department

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CAT REHAB SOCIALIZATION MANUAL

Introduction

Welcome to the Cat Rehab Socialization Program!

As a member of the Cat Rehab team you will have the opportunity to help cats who are sick with Upper Respiratory Infection (URI) to retain their best qualities while providing them with much needed socialization.

Cat Rehab volunteers engage with felines to help ensure their ongoing social, emotional, mental, behavioral, and physical well-being.

Cat Rehab Volunteer Responsibilities:

- 1) Tend to each cat's physical needs.
- 2) Provide cats with one-on-one enrichment
- 3) Document activities and notes when needed.

Training Requirements

- 1) Volunteer Orientation
- 2) Animal [Body Language Videos](#)
- 3) Review of Volunteer Handbook & Program Manuals
- 4) Formal training and experience in a Level 1 cat program
- 5) Demonstrated aptitude with cat handling and enrichment

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 and 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 sick cat population. In addition, you may want to change clothes before coming into contact with your own cats after a session in Cat Rehab.

For the safety of other cats in the building, cats in the Rehab center cannot be taken out of the Rehab rooms, and **Cat Rehab Socialization volunteers may not go into other cat rooms after volunteering in the Rehab rooms**, as doing so will spread the virus to healthy cats.

Cat Bites

If at any time you are bitten 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 Rehab staff or Volunteer Services Department.

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

Emotional Considerations

Working with animals can become emotionally exhausting at times. Whether seeing a pet sit in their cage for an prolonged 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 Rehab volunteers should also note that not all of the cats who are housed in the Rehab 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 pets 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 program 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 must respect decisions as they are made. Failure to do so may result in a volunteer's removal from the program, or a discontinuation of the Cat Rehab socialization effort.

Getting Started

Once you have completed the required training for the Cat Rehab effort, your volunteer profile will be updated with your new qualifications and you will be ready to begin!

When You Can Volunteer

Cat Rehab volunteers may be in the shelter 7 days a week between 9 am and 7:30 pm. The ideal and recommended times for Cat Rehab Socialization are when there is little to no traffic in the rooms, such as in the evening from 5 until 7:30 pm.

Where You Can Volunteer

Cat Rehab volunteers will spend their time working with cats who are currently housed in the Bruckner Cat Rehab rooms.

Working with Anti-Cruelty Society Staff and Other Volunteers

When you enter Cat Rehab, introduce yourself as a Cat Rehab volunteer to the personnel in the room. 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.

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

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) Put on your ID Badge

4) Pick up a lab coat

- Coats are stored on wall hooks in the laundry room.

5) Go to Bruckner Cat Rehab rooms and introduce yourself to staff who are assigned to the space.

Before Leaving

1) Replace supplies

- Place grooming supplies and reusable toys in the Cat Rehab kitchen sink, and put away any special foods you may have used. Do not disinfect toys or supplies – staff will disinfect toys.

2) Log work in Cat Rehab

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- Sign your name and enter the date on the volunteer log page for each room you worked in. The logs are kept in a folder in Bruckner.
- 3) Check all kennel doors.**
- Double check to ensure that the doors of all kennels are securely closed and latched. If any kennel doors or latches are faulty or difficult to use, please inform staff or leave a note if no staff are present.
- 4) Turn things off.**
- If staff have left for the day, turn off the fan and all lights.
- 5) Put lab coat in a bin in the laundry room.**
- 6) Log your hours**
- Using a volunteer computer, open a browser window and go to the following website:
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 Rehab Socialization Responsibilities

Procedural Notes

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

Hygiene

The Rehabilitation rooms should be your LAST STOP OF THE DAY.

Hygiene is a vital aspect of your responsibilities as a Cat Rehab volunteer in order to prevent cross-contamination.

- Volunteers should only work in the Rehab area *after* interacting with healthy cats, and not vice versa. Under no circumstance should a volunteer work with a sick cat and then interact with a healthy cat afterwards.
- 95% of your interaction with the cats will be in-kennel. However there may be cases where you need to physically hold a cat, such as when you take it out of its kennel for brushing, to clean its cage or for comforting cuddling. **You must always wear a lab coat when you hold a cat.**
- Always wear gloves when working with the cats and **change gloves** before moving on to a different cat.
- Thorough 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 with these substances.

Communicating Observations

- If there is a cat who needs immediate **attention** or help, please let staff know directly.
- Otherwise, volunteers should communicate their observations about specific cats using the **volunteer whiteboard** in the room. Never write on the staff or veterinarian's boards.
- The volunteer whiteboard is for volunteers to communicate with each other and to make notes indicating which cats need special attention because they are not eating (NE), social eaters (SE), very old or very young, in need of extra socialization, etc.
- If staff are not present and you want to leave a note, leave it on the computer keyboard or tape it to the shelf of the staff's whiteboard.

Enrichment

- 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.
- Supplies and enrichment materials can be found in the Rehab room. If there is something you need but cannot find, please connect with a Rehab or Volunteer Services staff member.
- Suggestions for socialization may include: in-kennel clicker training, gentle massage, brushing, reading the cat a book or a simple petting session.
- You're not alone in your efforts! AB&T and Rehab 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.

1) Tend to each cat's physical needs.

Helping cats eat: Some of the cats in the Rehab Rooms may be so stressed that they are not eating – which can lead to devastating health consequences. One of the main goals for Cat Rehab volunteers is to ensure that each cat is taking in some kind of food. Alternative foods can be obtained by asking rehab staff or from the drawer in Rehab.

These techniques have proved useful in enticing reluctant cats to eat:

- Warm food in the microwave for 4-5 seconds. This helps when the URI makes it hard for the cat to smell its food.
- Moisten dry food with a little water.
- Offer different foods.
- Flatten the food tray in case the cat has whisker sensitivity (whisker fatigue).

If you find a cat with a specific food preference, please note it on the white board and tell a Rehab Staff member.

Grooming: Brushes and combs are kept in a drawer in Bruckner. If a cat is fractious, do not attempt to groom it. Ideally, all grooming should be contained to the cat's kennel and volunteers should remain aware of their subject's body language at all times. If it is necessary to take a cat out of its kennel for brushing, always wear a lab coat and place the cat on the Rehab room cart. When you are done, clean up all hair and put clean paper on the cart. Change to a clean lab coat if the coat is soiled with hair, excretions, etc.

Use a clean brush for each cat.

Used grooming tools should be placed in the Cat Rehab sink for staff to disinfect.

Bedding and Water: Check that each kennel is stocked well with blankets or towels and that each water dish is almost full. Clean bedding and towels are located in the cat rooms. Soiled towels should be placed in the hamper in the Cat Rehab area.

2) 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 Rehab Room, when appropriate.

Quiet Contact and Conversation:

- Interact with the cat, speaking in a gentle, encouraging voice and using the cat's name.
- Try using the slow blink if the cat seems receptive to direct eye contact. However, some cats are so frightened that a sideways stance or downward-looking position may be necessary.
- To reduce stress, try to keep noise at a minimum by closing kennel doors quietly. When using a step ladder, try to keep it as quiet as possible.

Toys: Check that every cat has a toy in its kennel and distribute as necessary. Even very retiring cats that hide under their shelves often respond to a straw dangled before them. Toys that are worn for wear should be discarded. Toys can be found in a drawer in Bruckner. Dirty toys should be placed in the Cat Rehab sink for staff to disinfect. Some cats find comfort with a larger stuffed animal they can cuddle with. These can be found in the laundry room.

Read a Book: Help cats who are stressed in their kennels relax by sitting outside their cage and reading to them. Here's a quick breakdown of how this is done:

- Pick a good book. (Children's books are wonderful. So are romance novels.)
- Grab a stool/milk crate and place it near the cat's kennel (best to be at one side or the other of the kennel).
- Sit, offering a sideways presentation.
- Don't directly face the cat or their kennel.
- Introduce yourself to the cat.
- Read for about 5 – 10 minutes only.
- Take your leave.
- Move on to the next cat.

Treat Training: Grab a treat pouch and kibble or treats broken into small bits. Wait for a positive behavior, such as eye contact, quiet, sitting, front of the cage behavior and other attentiveness. Identify, or mark with a soft 'yes', and reward desirable behavior with a piece of food. Ignore undesirable behavior. Do not make a verbal request for a specific position, call the cat, or lure them into position. Just wait until they offer a better behavior. Be sure to treat after every 'yes.'

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 can make a note of the type on the whiteboard. This will help the next volunteer know exactly when and what type of treats the cat was given.

Socialization Supplies

Remember to utilize a variety of supplies such as toys, brushes, and straws located in Bruckner for your socialization time with the cat.

- Toys and straws can be found in the drawers against the back wall. Brushes are in a drawer facing the SAFE dog room.
- 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. Leave used toys in the Cat Rehab sink for staff to disinfect.

3) Document activities and notes.

Document any important notes about your socialization session on the volunteer whiteboard within the main rehab area. This way the next group of volunteers knows which cats need more attention, react best to certain foods, may be having a rough day, etc. Staff will also reference your notes so make sure they're legible and mark your initials after them as well as the date.

Note that the clinic team may be adding your notes into the cat's official Pet Point profile. For this reason, it is important to be descriptive rather than diagnostic when describing certain behaviors. 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.

Kennel & Board Signage

In addition to the kennel card, you should remain aware of the cat's physical condition and attitude, as well as additional notes that may be present on either the cat's cage or on the staff's white board outside of the animal housing rooms.

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.

Conclusion

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

Your efforts will help sick cats recover from their illness at a much faster rate! The Cat Rehab environment is incredibly 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 open up and become well again.

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.

