



Shelter Helper FAQ

Getting Started

How do I become a volunteer at the ARLGP?

Your first step is to complete our online Volunteer Application. There is a one-time, non-refundable application fee of \$10 per person. This fee, collected at the time of application, helps offset the costs associated with onboarding new volunteers, and allows us to direct more funds towards the care of our animals. If the fee is a financial strain, please do not worry; we still want you to join our team! Simply email scote@arlgp.org to discuss having the fee waived.

Next you will select a date to attend a New Volunteer Orientation. Orientations are held monthly, and last about 45 minutes. Here you will learn about our organization, the volunteer program and policies, types of volunteer jobs, and current shelter needs. You will be added to our new volunteer email list and will receive a monthly email with current volunteer opportunities.

I don't have a computer or email—will this be an issue?

Due to the high volume of applicants we receive each year and the costs associated with paper applications, we prefer all volunteer applications to be submitted electronically. The most cost-effective way for us to communicate with volunteer applicants and our current volunteers is with volunteer management software and email. For this reason, we have moved our application process online.

Using email and online scheduling saves money on postage and printing costs and helps to keep our program viable and efficient. Plus, the majority of communications between ARLGP and our volunteers is done via email. For this reason, we require that all volunteers have online access and a current email address.

I am not able to volunteer independently. May I bring a helper with me when I volunteer?

The ARLGP often receives requests from persons wishing to volunteer as a team of two, such as a parent-child partnership, an aide-client partnership, or a teacher-student duo. We will always work our hardest to accommodate volunteer teams; however, due to the physical nature of animal sheltering, safety is our first priority and we do ask all volunteers to meet our [Essential Capabilities](#) in order to safely interact with our animals. There are other opportunities to volunteer with the ARLGP which do not include animal interaction but are highly beneficial to our organization and have a direct impact on the animals in our care.

Age Requirements

I am under 16 but am very mature for my age. Do I really need to co-volunteer with a parent or guardian?

For the safety of our volunteers and animals, we require that all volunteers be at least 13 years old, and from the ages of 13-15, volunteer with a supervising adult. There are no exceptions to this requirement. If you are not able to get involved as a Shelter Helper because of your age, we also have [a Junior Volunteer Program for youth](#) who love animals and wish to learn more about how to help the world become a more humane place. 16 is the minimum age to volunteer independently.

Young people can also consider having a parent apply to be a [foster volunteer](#). Although the primary volunteer must be 18 years of age, the entire family can participate in the fostering experience.

My kids love dogs, can they be a dog walker?

Unfortunately, due to liability issues, dog walkers must be at least 16 years old.

Time Commitment & Scheduling

What is the time commitment?

In order to provide our animals with the best care and support, we are looking for volunteers who can commit to a standing 2-hour shift each week for at least 6 months. This requirement helps us ensure quality training and consistent volunteer coverage. We do allow for vacations and needed days off.

What if my schedule does not let me commit to a weekly shift? Can I still get involved?

If you are unable to commit to a set schedule each week, we do have "substitute" opportunities, which would be available when regularly scheduled volunteers are unable to perform their assigned shifts.

In addition, we do have some areas that operate on an on-call basis, such as our Events Team, driving animals or supplies to other sites, and fostering. [You can learn more about our foster program here.](#)

Do you have volunteer shifts in the evenings?

Unfortunately, no. Our volunteer shifts are scheduled seven days a week between the hours of 8:00am and 6:00pm. If you are only available in the evenings, you may want to consider one of our on-call opportunities or [fostering a pet](#).

Training

I already know how to handle dogs/cats/rabbits. Why do I need to wait for training to begin?

As an ARLGP volunteer, you'll need to learn the way we do things. This is different from the way you interact with animals in a home environment. Volunteers must first attend an orientation to learn more about the volunteer program and current needs. You will then receive training for your chosen volunteer role(s).

In order to ensure the animals consistently receive a high-quality level of care and stay as healthy as possible, we educate our volunteers about procedures and protocols that are in place to limit the transfer of diseases. We also want to provide training on how to correctly interact with our shelter animals in order to reduce stress and provide positive behavior reinforcement so that our animals are ready for their new home.

All ARLGP volunteers are on a schedule so that we know that the animals will be receiving care each day, and at scheduled times. Our goal is to have all volunteer roles filled daily, so that we can best care for our animals. Volunteers must sign up, so we are not over or under-booked.

What if I just want to volunteer to play with the puppies and kittens?

Taking care of our furry guests is a lot of work and socializing them is one small part of a much bigger job! First we need to provide for their physical well-being, and that means emptying litter boxes, picking up after a dog you walked in the rain or snow, cleaning kennels, scrubbing food bowls, and washing loads (and loads) of bedding before we have time to play with any of the pets. We hope that volunteers will be able to spend some of their time socializing during each shift, but due to the large number of animals we are often responsible for, it is not just puppy kisses and kitten cuddles.

Other common Questions

I need community service hours this weekend! Can I drop-in to volunteer?

All volunteers must go through our onboarding process, which may take a few weeks for Community Service. We are unable to accommodate volunteers on a drop-in basis. If you have been assigned hours for school or court, you can learn more about our [Community Service Program](#) here.

Can I catch anything from the shelter pets? Should I worry about taking an illness home to my pet?

The risk of spreading or catching an illness from a shelter animal is rare. During an animal's stay at the ARLGP they are given parasite prevention and required vaccines. If an animal shows signs of illness or disease, they are treated accordingly by our veterinary team, however just like in humans, most illnesses and infections are most contagious before symptoms show. To keep yourself, your pet and the shelter pets safe, always be sure to wash your hands, especially after every interaction with an animal. The easiest way to keep your pet safe is to keep them current on their vaccines, particularly the Rabies, Distemper, and Bordetella (kennel cough) vaccines,

and to keep them on parasite prevention. Bring any concerns to your veterinarian or ask our shelter staff. Volunteers generally do not care for unvaccinated or sick animals.

Questions or concerns about your eligibility to volunteer? Please feel free to connect with our volunteer coordinator at scoate@arlgp.org or (207) 517-3934 to discuss any questions or concerns about our volunteer requirements.