

ARLGP Shelter Helper FAQ

Getting Started

How do I become a volunteer at the ARLGP?

1. **Step 1:** Watch our **Virtual Volunteer Orientation Video** to learn more about becoming an ARLGP volunteer. The video is approximately 15 minutes long and will introduce you to our shelter's life-saving work and how volunteers support our mission. It will help to ensure that our programs are the best fit for your volunteering goals. This is a requirement before you apply. At the end of the video, you will be prompted to complete a short quiz on the information presented. Successful completion will unlock our volunteer application.
2. **Step 2: Submit your application!** We ask for a one-time \$15 application fee to help cover the administrative costs of running our robust volunteer program. Once the fee is paid, you will receive an automated email containing a link to complete your application. Be sure to check your junk/spam folder!
3. **Step 3:** Sign up for a **Volunteer Service Planning Session**. Available dates will be listed at the end of the application. These small group sessions will include:
 - Learn more about becoming an Animal Refuge League of Greater Portland Volunteer
 - Review the Volunteer Manual
 - A walking tour of the facility
 - Basic needs training: basic needs covers those essential tasks that help our shelter run smoothly such as laundry and dishes
 - A review of open volunteer positions and the opportunity to select a volunteer shift
4. **Step 4: Training!** Following the planning session, the Volunteer Coordinator will review your paperwork and place you in the volunteer program if our assignment matches your skills, interests, and availability. Once you have received your volunteer offer, you will start your training!

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

Due to the high volume of applications 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 vast 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 our all volunteers to meet our [Essential Capabilities](#) in order to safely interact with the adoption 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 13-16 volunteer with a supervising adult, without exception. If you are not able to get involved as a Shelter Helper because of your age, we also have [special programs for young people](#) who love animals and wish to learn more about how to help the world become a more humane place.

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](#).

Training

I already know how to handle (*insert animal type here*). 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 might be 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 better assist the 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 soiled 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, that is not always the case.

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 cannot have people drop in to volunteer. 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 so they stay bug-free and healthy. If an animal shows signs of illness or disease, they are treated accordingly, 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.