



ARLGP Shelter Helper FAQ

Getting Started

I don't have a computer or email. Will this be an issue?

Due to the high volume of applications we receive, and the costs associated with processing paper, we have moved our application process online. The most cost-effective way for us to communicate with applicants and current volunteers is with volunteer management software and email.

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.

Can you text me the application, and/or future communications, instead of emailing?

With 400 volunteers, we do not have the ability to communicate via individual text messaging. Our Volunteer Portal VicNet does have a mobile app available for download for volunteers who use their phone as a primary device.

How often do you accept volunteer applications?

We open recruitment on an as-needed basis. Available opportunities will be listed on the volunteer page on our website. If recruiting for the team you're interested in is paused, consider starting with a different opportunity first!

Essential Capabilities

I cannot 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, 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 ask our all volunteers to meet our [Essential Capabilities](#) to safely interact with shelter 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.

Many of your volunteer job descriptions require individuals to be able to stand, bend, reach, twist or lift. I am unable to (lift, bend, squat, pull), what roles do you have for me?

The majority of our in-shelter volunteer roles require the ability to bend, lift and carry supplies to successfully carry out assigned tasks. Whether volunteering in a direct animal care or operations support capacity, the work we do within the shelter setting requires a lot of cleaning, gathering and distributing supplies, and often being on our feet for the duration of the shift (2 hours).

If you do not meet the essential physical capabilities to volunteer within the shelter, [Fostering](#) may be a better fit for supporting animals in your community!

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, without exception. If you are not able to get involved as a Shelter Helper because of your age, there are still many meaningful ways for kids to contribute and make a positive impact for the animals at the ARLGP. More information can be found on our [Youth and Student Opportunities page](#).

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

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

Can I bring my (infant, toddler, child) to my volunteer shift on days when school or daycare is closed?

We ask that for health, safety and liability reasons, volunteers do not bring guests (including children) with them to their volunteer shifts.

Volunteers may escort guests through the shelter for a tour, at a time when they are not scheduled to work. The volunteer program staff would be happy to talk with anyone considering volunteering.

Time Commitment & Scheduling

What is the time commitment?

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.

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.

Do you have volunteer shifts in the evenings?

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 supporting the shelter in another way, such as [Fostering](#).

I am only available on certain days. Can I still volunteer?

Probably! Volunteer shifts vary by role. Our earliest shifts start at 7:30 a.m., and our last shift ends at 6 p.m. Shifts are available 7 days a week, but we cannot guarantee a particular shift will be available when you start volunteering. If you have a flexible schedule during the week, our highest need is on weekdays.

Can I volunteer for more than one position?

Yes! Many volunteers have more than one role, but as a new volunteer, you may find more success if you pick one position to start out.

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 or even previously at another shelter.

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 to reduce stress and provide positive behavior reinforcement so that our animals are ready for their new home.

Other common Questions

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

We are currently not accepting short-term volunteer requests.

Students who can commit to a regular, weekly shift for 6 months or more are invited to apply to our [Shelter Helper](#) program. Volunteer hours earned as a Shelter Helper can count toward community service, and we are happy to verify those hours for school records.

Thinking of applying? Don't wait until the last minute! Application processing and onboarding can take anywhere from 4-6 weeks depending on shift availability. Students interested in volunteering over the summer should begin the application process no later than March/April.

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

All traditional ARLGP volunteers are matched with a volunteer role that we feel best fits our needs as an organization. They must then attend a Volunteer Planning Session & Training to learn more about our organization and our expectations, including how to handle animals. This training is required for your safety

and for the best interest of the animals in our care. Part of a volunteer's responsibilities includes playing with animals, of course. But, cleaning, teaching basic behavior, and interacting with the public is also part of their responsibilities. All of these require training to ensure the safety of our animals, employees, and volunteers. All of our volunteers are on a schedule so that we know that the animals are receiving care each day and at scheduled times. We require approved volunteers to sign up so that we are not over or under-booked in various areas of our organization.

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.

I will be a co-volunteer for (a student, a client, a family member). Can more than 2 people volunteer together?

Due to space limitations, we are only able to accommodate a two-person team of co-volunteers. Many of our volunteer positions work as part of a larger team, and only so many people can be working together at one time!

I have allergies, can I still volunteer?

The ARLGP accepts cats, dogs and small mammals (rabbits, guinea pigs, rats, mice, hamsters and gerbils). Although all supplies are cleaned and sanitized, we cannot guarantee an allergen-free space.

We have several important volunteer roles that are not in animal housing spaces, like volunteering in our Pet Food Pantry, that are excellent alternatives to animal handling roles. These spaces are not guaranteed to be completely allergen free but may be more comfortable for those with allergies.

Peanut butter and products containing peanut butter are often used in the shelter. We cannot guarantee a nut-free space for those with allergies.