



Essential Capabilities of Animal Welfare League of Arlington Volunteers

There are several animal care needs within the Animal Welfare League of Arlington that are typically fulfilled by volunteers who work with cats, dogs, and small animals. To safely and effectively serve as a volunteer at the League, volunteers need to possess the following physical, mental, and emotional capacities:

General Capabilities

- Average vision to move safely around the building, to be able to observe animal body language, and to be able to read notes on animals' paperwork, computer or memos as needed.
- Ability to speak and effectively communicate verbally as well as in written form.
- A fairly high level of experience and familiarity with cats, dogs and small companion animals and their anatomy, behavior and care is desirable.
- Must not have strong allergies to dogs, cats or other small animals (as it pertains to individual volunteer assignments) that can't be managed by medication, or to chemicals used in grooming or cleaning.

Essential Physical Capabilities for animal support volunteers

- Quick reflexes and ability to use both hands simultaneously (example: open cage door while handling animal).
- High level of manual dexterity to leash/harness animals, handle small tools and to properly groom animals.
- Ability to travel unaided on unpaved, uneven, rugged and sometimes muddy and slippery exercise yard and lawn areas (when walking dogs outdoors).
- Ability to bend and squat in order to leash/harness, scrub kennels and/or pick up an animal as needed.
- Ability to stand/walk for significant periods of time as required by the volunteer assignment.
- Average sense of smell and touch in order to assess body condition of animals, and to note signs of illness or injury.
- Ability to hear if animal is growling or making sounds indicating fear or pain.
- Ability to maneuver well in tight spaces and move quickly in order to prevent animals from escaping as required by the volunteer assignment. This requires average vision, hearing, steadiness of hands and body, quick reflexes, physical strength, and mental alertness.
 - Cats/Small Animals up to 30 lbs.
 - Dog volunteers must be able to control very large/powerful dogs (up to 110 lbs.) that often jump/pull and are often untrained.
- Ability to tolerate strong and unpleasant odors, fleas, feces and possible wounds or injuries to animals in our care.
- Ability to tolerate a very loud environment due to animal noises.
- Ability to judge an animal's behavior and use the appropriate voice (soft, strong or authoritative tone) in order to calm an animal's response and/or to give commands.
- Must have good physical endurance along with the willingness and ability to do hard, physical and sometimes dirty work as it pertains to my volunteer assignment.
- Must possess an immune system strong enough to tolerate exposure to zoonotic diseases such as ringworm and mange, among others.

Essential Mental Capabilities

- Ability to understand, remember and follow exact instructions and procedures.
- Ability to work independently as required by the volunteer assignment.
- Possess reading, writing and communication skills (example: understand words such as quarantine, euthanize and other common industry-related terms), and a mastery of the English language.
- Possess problem-solving skills.
- Recognize potentially dangerous situations when working with the animals and ability to:
 - remain calm with animals who show signs of stress
 - show good judgment by reacting sensitively, confidently and appropriately
- Ability to effectively communicate with the public including providing customer service and education on topics as it pertains to the volunteer assignment.
- Ability to understand and accept the boundaries between the role of a volunteer and the role of a staff member.
- Possess a professional and positive attitude with a solution-oriented approach when facing challenges.

Essential Emotional Capabilities

- Ability to cope with unexpected animal behavior without assistance.
- Ability to cope with a highly emotionally charged environment with some animals that are homeless, abandoned and/or abused, as well as the reality that some of the animals in our care may be euthanized.
- Ability to understand AWLA's policies and positions regarding all animals, animal control and other key animal welfare issues.
- Ability and willingness to appropriately/accurately represent all League policies and positions when interacting with the public or otherwise representing the AWLA.

Level of Supervision

- Once trained, must have the ability to work with minimal supervision; yet must recognize limitations in knowledge and abilities, and ask for help when needed.
- Once trained, must have the ability to work independently as well as with other volunteers and/or staff.