

2025 Volunteer Handbook

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Humane Society of El Paso



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Hello and welcome!

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with the Humane Society of El Paso. We're beyond excited to have you join our community, and we can't wait for you to experience the joy and impact of being part of our mission.

As a volunteer, you're stepping into a truly rewarding journey. Along the way, you'll meet compassionate people and connect with countless dogs and cats each with their own story. Some will make you laugh, others might steal your heart, and many will leave a lasting mark on your life. While you're helping them find hope and healing, you'll find that they give just as much back in return.

Here at HSEP, we deeply value every single hour you choose to spend with us. Your time, energy, and dedication directly contribute to brighter futures for the animals in our care. Simply put, we couldn't do it without you!

Volunteers are the heart of our organization. We hope you feel not only needed but truly appreciated every step of the way. On behalf of our entire team and all the furry friends you'll meet, thank you for being here!

We're lucky to have you.

Warmly,
Cynthia Cruz
Volunteer Coordinator

About the Humane Society of El Paso:

The Humane Society of El Paso was originally founded in 1947 to tackle the rabies crisis in El Paso. Once the cases decreased, HSEP changed its mission. In the 1960s, the shelter became focused on pet overpopulation and homelessness.

In 2009, HSEP became the first no-kill shelter in our community. This means the shelter does not euthanize healthy or treatable animals, does not euthanize for space, and has a live release rate of at least 90 percent. Only after careful consideration, pets with untreatable health conditions, poor quality of life, and dangerous behavior issues may be euthanized. Throughout the many years of operation, one thing has remained the same. HSEP is dedicated to bettering the lives of homeless pets.

Mission Statement:

“To prevent suffering, neglect, abuse and cruelty to animals by providing information, raising public awareness of animal issues and promote responsible guardianship and kindness toward all living things.”

Funding:

The Humane Society of El Paso is a private 501(c) (3), non-profit organization. We rely solely on our service fees, donations, fundraisers, and grants for funding. We have no affiliation with the Humane Society of the United States, ASPCA, or any local animal rescue. We do not receive any funding from the city, state, or federal government.

Contact Information

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Volunteer Coordinator

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Key Staff Members

Robert Shamy

Executive Director

Edgar Armendariz

Director of Operations

Courtney Roszak-Moore

Director of Marketing & Community Relations

Sandra Penrod

Director of Administration

Samantha Gambill

Medical Manager

Vanessa Steele

Shelter Manager

Stephanie Jimenez

Foster Care Manager

Tania Dasilveira

Customer Service and Administration Manager

Mike Metzger

Facilities / Health & Safety Supervisor

Getting Started as a Volunteer

Role of a Volunteer:

The Humane Society of El Paso cares for nearly 2,000 homeless dogs and cats each year. With a dedicated team of just over forty staff members, additional support is essential, especially during busy times at the shelter. That's where our volunteers make a vital difference.

A volunteer plays a crucial role at HSEP. You ensure the animals receive socialization, walks, a clean kennel, enrichment, and more!

As a volunteer, you are dedicating your time to HSEP. In return, HSEP tries to create a fun and welcoming environment for everyone, so we ask that volunteers remember to always be professional, polite and carry these core values with you at all times: caring, compassionate, consistent, and dependable.

The most important role of a volunteer is, and always will be, to help the shelter animals feel safe and cared for during their time here.

How to Become a Volunteer:

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with HSEP! Now, let's get you started:

- Submit a Volunteer Application
- Attend an orientation.
- Complete Core Training I with a staff member to become a Whisker Warrior

If the volunteer is between the ages of 13 and 15, a parent or guardian must complete the minor consent form within the volunteer application, submit a separate volunteer application for themselves, and be present whenever the child is volunteering.

If you are between the ages of 16-17, a parent or guardian does NOT have to accompany you, however, HSEP must have signed parental consent on file.

HSEP DOES NOT accept volunteers under the age of 13-years-old.

NO child under the age of 13 is allowed on HSEP grounds while you are volunteering.

General Guidelines

To ensure a safe and positive environment for both volunteers and animals, please follow these essential rules:

Eligibility & Requirements

- Must have a Signed Application on file
- Volunteers must be 13 years or older
- Orientation must be completed before beginning service
- Sign in and out using Volunteer Matters and on Sign-in sheet for each shift
- Be able to work independently and as part of a team

Dress Code

- Wear an HSEP colored vest (according to department) at all times while volunteering
- No shorts, torn jeans, leggings, tank/crop tops or open-toed shoes are permitted

Conduct & Safety

- Treat all staff, volunteers, guests, and animals with respect and professionalism
- No physical contact (horseplay, etc.), maintain appropriate boundaries
- Report all incidents (e.g., bites, scratches, injuries) immediately to **Volunteer Coordinator**
- Do not enter Staff-Only areas without permission (e.g., Clinic, locker rooms, Intake)
- Due to the risk of chemical exposure, ensure that proper PPE equipment is worn at all times while handling chemicals
- Only handle chemicals if you are 18 or older and you've attended HAZCOM training
- Please ensure ALL faucets are turned off after every use

Animal Interaction

- Only handle animals you feel confident and trained to manage
- Never interact with puppies under 20 weeks without staff approval
- Do not create playgroups or break up dog fights unless trained in Advanced Animal Handling
- Always read the enrichment/kennel board before engaging with an animal. If you are unsure, please ask a staff member
- If you see a loose dog, alert staff. If walking a dog, secure yourself and the dog safely

Health & Hygiene

- Clean up after yourself and return supplies to their designated areas
- Report ill or injured animals or safety hazards promptly

Communication & Concerns

- Direct concerns to the **Volunteer Coordinator**. There are multiple QR codes around the facility that may be utilized to provide feedback, suggestions, and concerns. All information provided will remain anonymous.
- No cell phone use while volunteering. Lockers are provided for personal items

Additional Reminders

- Volunteers must follow standard intake and adoption procedures, just like the general public
- Be aware of your surroundings and never enter the O.R. room (near the Big Laundry room)

Advancement beyond Core Training depends on your preferred interest area.

Core Training I: Kennel Care

Whisker Warriors

Vest Color: Green

Requirements: Must complete Volunteer Orientation prior to beginning Core Training I

- 20 hours required: First 10 hours must be staff-supervised by Kennel Care Team or Lead Volunteer
- After staff training, you may continue independent training. If you are unsure how to proceed, please ask a staff member

Core Duties:

- Basic kennel care (Sm, M, L, Meow House)
- Spray out kennels, vehicles & crates
- Clean play rooms and boxes
- Laundry & dishes
- Scoop poop, change cat litter, & mop
- Grounds keeping, trash, painting
- Organize donations
- Sanitize common areas
- Prep food, toys & enrichment (Kong's, bubbles, reading, etc.)
- Scent spray for animals
- Supervised critter sitting
- Add blankets to kennels

Rules and Expectations:

- Do not handle animals unless trained and instructed by staff
- Always secure dogs on the opposite side of the kennel using dividers before entering
- Refer all customer inquiries to staff
- Use approved cleaning chemicals only
- Check for dietary restrictions before offering treats or food

Core Training II: Animal Care

Tail Waggers

Vest Color: Yellow

Requirements: Must complete Core Training I prior to beginning Core Training II

- 20 hours required: First 10 hours supervised by Animal Care Team or Lead Volunteer
- After staff training, you may continue independent training. If you are unsure how to proceed, please ask a staff member

Core Duties:

- Bathe & brush pre-approved dogs (green/yellow dots)
- Walk green/yellow dot dogs
- Kennel reactivity work
- Maintain poop/food charts
- Prep & serve meals (30 min. max before feeding)
- Lead enrichment activities
- Stock kennel supplies
- Supervised green/yellow dot playgroups

Rules and Expectations:

General Handling & Safety

- Complete all required training before handling animals independently
- Work only with pre-approved animals
- Only enter playrooms, runs, or fields with approved animals
- Always read the enrichment board before handling any animal
- Log the time when removing an animal from its kennel
- Do **NOT** handle animals under the following conditions:
 - Staff-only/ACA-only signage
 - Medical restrictions (e.g., “Red Card”, “Rest & Relaxation”)
 - Quarantine or missing kennel card
 - If you’re unsure of your ability to handle the animal

Animal Interaction & Environment

- Provide fresh water before placing an animal in a play area
- If you take a dog out of its kennel, you are responsible for returning the dog to its kennel
- Ensure play areas are clean before/after use
- Keep dogs separated and avoid close contact during walks. Dogs should not be interacting while walking
- Never create dog playgroups unless trained in Advanced Handling
- Exit dogs safely using outside compartment of kennel
- Be cautious of nearby dog movement before removing a dog from a kennel

Grooming Guidelines

- Monitor animal behavior and comfort during grooming
- Avoid loud noises; discontinue if the animal becomes distressed
- Return all grooming tools to their place and clean up thoroughly

End-of-Day Protocol

- Ensure all dogs are back in kennels 15 minutes before closing
 - Weekdays: by 5:45 P.M.
 - Weekends: by 4:45 P.M.

Paw-fessional Volunteer Opportunities

Once you've completed all core training and gained hands-on experience, you can explore specialized volunteer roles based on your interests and strengths. These are opportunities for you to grow, contribute, and choose your own path at HSEP.

Rules and Expectation for all Advanced Volunteers

General Expectations

- Completion of all required training is mandatory before engaging with adopters
- You may introduce customers to shelter animals
- Staff has the final say on all adoption approvals

Conduct & Communication

- Always communicate truthfully with adopters about the animals
- Present yourself as a professional representative of HSEP speak kindly, act maturely
- If you have concerns, share them calmly, respectfully, and promptly with Volunteer Coordinator

Paw-tastic Partners

Vest Color: Blue

- 15 supervised training hours required
- Training is scheduled based on the Animal Care Supervisor's availability

Training Includes:

- Leash & clicker training
- Walking **yellow/red dot** dogs
- Kennel reactivity work
- Grooming (bath, brush, nail trims)
- Organizing playgroups
- Animal photograph

Homeward Hounds (Adoption Counselors)

Vest Color: Orange

- 20 additional hours of independent advanced animal handling
- 20 hours of supervised adoption counseling training

Training Includes:

- Conducting on-site Meet & Greets with potential adopters
- Assisting with adoption appointments at the shelter
- Supporting Animal Care Attendants during Meet & Greets
- Handling Meet & Greets with red-dot animals
- Homeward Hounds may assist with dog-to-dog introductions but cannot conduct them alone unless trained and approved

Rescue Rangers (Volunteer Leads)

Vest Color: Red

Requirements:

- 15 hours of training with the Volunteer Coordinator or lead volunteer
- 20 supervised hours in adoption counseling
- Lead a mock orientation with the Volunteer Coordinator

Training Includes:

- Mentoring & training new volunteers
- Leading volunteer orientations
- Building relationships with trainees
- Maintaining communication with your group

Leadership Responsibilities

- Be patient and welcoming when training new volunteers
- Maintain a professional demeanor during orientations and peer interactions

Purr-suit of Happiness Opportunities

Vest Color: Pink

HSEP Clinic

- Must be 16 or older to volunteer in this department
- Must complete 40 hours of supervised specialized training
- Follow all safety protocols and instructions from Medical staff
- **Volunteers assisting in HSEP Clinic may only assist in Mary Speers and HSEP Clinic to prevent cross-contamination**

Mary Speer Program

- Must be 16 or older to volunteer in this department
- Must have a signed Mary Speer waiver on file
- Must complete 35 hours of supervised specialized training
- Follow all safety protocols and instructions from Mary Speer staff
- Do not open traps unless trained and authorized
- Ensure pee pads are clean and traps are securely closed before handling
- Transporting traps between designated rooms
- Check paperwork to verify cat identities during pickup
- **Volunteers assisting in Mary Speer may only assist in Mary Speers and HSEP Clinic to prevent cross-contamination**

Foster

- Must be 16 or older to volunteer in this department
- Must complete 20 hours of supervised specialized training
- Do not pet or handle animals unless explicitly instructed by staff
- Community Cat Care (Must have a signed Community Cats waiver on file to participate)

- **Volunteers must assist in the Foster Department first before working in other areas of the shelter to prevent cross-contamination**

Customer Service Associate

- Must be 17 or older to volunteer in this department
- Must complete 35 hours of supervised specialized training
- Volunteers may not use shelter computers, phones, or radios unless properly trained and authorized by staff

Off-site and Retail

Retail Cat Program

Requirements: Must complete retail-specific orientation

- Must be 16 or older to volunteer in this department
- Notify the **Off-site Coordinator** and the **Volunteer Coordinator** in advance if you're unable to attend your shift
- Missing more than two shifts without prior notice may result in removal from the volunteer program
- Immediately report any signs of illness or injury in retail cats to **Off-site Coordinator**
- Do not conduct meet-and-greets. Direct adoption inquiries to a store associate
- Always sign in and out when volunteering at retail locations
- Locations: PetSmart (3), Petco (2)

Off-Site Adoptions

Requirements: Must complete off-site orientation

- Must be 16 or older to volunteer in this department
- Maintain a professional appearance (in dress code) and respectful demeanor you represent HSEP to the public
- Interact with the public in a courteous and informative manner
- Sanitize hands between handling each dog
- The public is not permitted to handle puppies under 20 weeks. Direct any requests to off-site staff or leads
- Ensure puppies never touch the ground. Use blankets or towels to line kennels at all times
- Provide constant access to fresh water for all dogs at all times
- Be honest and transparent about each animal's behavior and personality never misrepresent an animal

Off-Site Lead

Requirements: Must be trained in Homeward Hounds and Rescue Rangers

- Must be 16 or older to volunteer in this department
- Must have a valid Driver's License and Vehicle Insurance
- Requires 10 hours of additional lead training

Note: Once trained, volunteers may be asked to help with any tasks

Volunteer Testimonials

“I have volunteered at the Humane Society of El Paso for the past six years and have found that every job I do is important in the success of HSEP’s mission. Whether it is ensuring that the dogs/cats have a clean place to live, spending time sitting with the dogs to build trust, walking the dogs to help relieve stress, fostering underage puppies and kittens, or assisting people with the adoption process, I know I am making a difference in the lives of the animals at HSEP. “

-Susan Barron, Volunteer since 2017

“Volunteering at the Humane Society of El Paso has been a rewarding experience for me. It's a great way to socialize with new friends, improve mental and physical health, and provide enrichment to shelter dogs.”

- Melody Marez, Volunteer since 2018

“I have been volunteering for HSEP for about five years. The Humane Society of El Paso provides me with an outlet to enhance my mental, physical, and emotional well-being. Spending time with the animals offers a much-needed break from the hectic world around me. When I’m at the shelter all that matters is the relationship between me and the animal. Walking the dogs creates an exercise routine that I wouldn’t have without volunteering at the shelter. Giving back to the animals fills me with joy and warms my heart to know that these animals are getting the care and love they have always deserved.”

-Tina Ramirez, Volunteer since 2018