THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES

# Essential Capabilities of Volunteers

## Pets for Life

There are several volunteer opportunities within Pets for Life that are typically fulfilled by volunteers who work with companion animals and program participants. To safely and effectively serve as a volunteer with Pets for Life, volunteers need to possess the following physical, mental, and emotional capacities. Your signature on this form indicates you believe you possess these basic capabilities, with your written acknowledgement of any limitations. Please note: some accommodations can be made and will be taken into consideration relative to role placement.

### Essential Physical Capabilities

- Quick reflexes and ability to use both hands simultaneously (example: open a door while handling animal).
- High level of manual dexterity to leash/harness animals.
- Ability to walk unaided on unpaved, uneven, rugged and sometimes muddy and slippery terrain.
- Ability to bend and squat in order to leash/harness and pick up an animal.
- Ability to stand for significant periods of time.
- Average vision (with or without correction) to move safely in a variety of environments, to be able to observe animal body language without difficulty, and to be able to read paperwork and instructions.
- 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 speak and effectively communicate in English verbally as well as in written form.
- Ability to maneuver well in tight spaces and react and move quickly in order to prevent dogs from escaping (example: ability to quickly pursue and retrieve any dogs who have escaped from your control).
- Ability to handle and restrain animals of small to large size (up to 110 pounds) with extreme caution and care. This requires average vision, hearing, steadiness of hands and body, quick reflexes, physical strength, and mental alertness.
- Ability to capture loose and escaped animals with quick and quiet movements, and ability to use hands simultaneously with a blanket or leash for capture.
- Must not have strong allergies to animals and chemicals used in cleaning that can't be managed by medication.
- Ability to deal with strong and unpleasant odors, fleas, feces and possible wounds or injuries to animals with whom we come into contact.
- Ability to cope with a loud environment due to animal noises.
- Ability to judge an animal's reaction and to change voice to a soft or strong, authoritative tone in order to calm a dog's response or to give commands.
- No known concerns about tolerating exposure to zoonotic diseases such as ringworm and mange.

### Essential Mental Capabilities

- Ability to understand, remember and follow instructions and procedures.
- High level reading, writing, spelling and communication skills, and a mastery of the English language or the language spoken by clients in our area of focus.
- Possess problem-solving capability.
- Ability to be aware of potentially dangerous situations when working with the animals; ability to remain calm with animals who are upset, behave sensitively and confidently, show good judgment and act appropriately in these situations.

- Once trained, must be able to work with minimal supervision, yet must recognize limitations in knowledge and abilities, and ask for help when needed.
- Ability to work independently for periods of time, as well as work within a team atmosphere with other volunteers or staff.

**Essential Emotional Capabilities**

- Ability to cope with unexpected animal behavior without assistance.
- Ability to cope with a highly emotionally-charged environment with some animals who appear to be cared for differently than we might care for them ourselves, as well as the reality that some people may not follow our suggestions.
- Ability to understand The Humane Society of the United States' (HSUS) policies and positions and the Pets for Life approach, and an ability and willingness to appropriately and accurately represent those policies when interacting with the public or otherwise representing The HSUS or Pets for Life.
- Ability to communicate with a variety of people effectively and without judgment or making negative remarks.
- Must be flexible and willing/able to change plans and directions in the moment.
- Must be capable of seeing less-than-ideal situations for people and animals and not get emotional in the moment.

Please indicate any reasonable accommodation(s) you may need in order to meet the essential capabilities of your volunteer position at The HSUS:

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Printed Name of Applicant

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Signature of Applicant Date

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Printed Name of □ Parent or □ Guardian (if under 18)

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Signature of Parent or Guardian (if under 18) Date