



**WAKE COUNTY
ANIMAL CENTER**
www.wakegov.com/pets
820 Beacon Lake Drive, Raleigh

Wake County Animal Center Volunteer Program – Frequently Asked Questions:

Getting Started:

How do I become a volunteer with the WCAC?

The first step is to complete our online Volunteer Application. Once submitted, and if we are currently onboarding new volunteers, the Volunteer Coordinator will email a “Welcome” packet with orientation videos, a virtual tour, volunteer role survey, role training calendar, and more! Once you have watched, read, and filled out these additional materials, you’re ready to schedule training for your desired role with us.

I don’t have a computer or email – will this be an issue?

Due to the high volume of applicants we receive each year, the number of active volunteers we have at a time, and the costs associated with paper applications, newsletters, and mailers, we prefer all volunteer applications and communicates to take place electronically. This is the most cost-effective and time-efficient way for us to communicate as email and volunteer management software allow us to see the volunteer schedule, volunteers to sign up for shifts, and safety updates to be sent – all in real time. For this reason, we moved our application and assignment calendar online and require all volunteers to have online access and a valid email address. We do have a computer set up in the Volunteer Lounge that can be used to schedule assignments, log volunteer hours, and check updates about the Volunteer Program.

I may not be able to volunteer independently. May I bring a helper with me when I volunteer?

Yes, the WCAC often receives requests from persons wishing to volunteer as a team of two, such as a parent-child or aide-client partnership. We will always do our best to accommodate teams; however, due to the physical nature of animal sheltering, safety is our number one priority and we do ask all our volunteers to meet our Essential Capabilities in order to safely interact with our animals. We do have assignments and opportunities to volunteer within the Volunteer Program without direct interactions with animals that are still highly beneficial to our organization and have an immediate impact on the animals in our care.

I’m allergic to animals. Can I still volunteer at the WCAC?

Yes, at the WCAC, we have a handful of volunteer roles/assignments that do not involve direct contact with the animals – such as people greeting, admin support, data entry, marketing, fundraising, and more!

Age Requirements:

What is the minimum age for volunteering with the WCAC?

All volunteers must be at least sixteen years of age and any volunteer under eighteen must have a parent or guardian over eighteen co-volunteering with them.

I am sixteen but am very mature for my age. Do I still need to volunteer with a parent or guardian?

For the safety of both our volunteers and animals, we require that all volunteers under eighteen years of age volunteer with a supervising adult. There are no exceptions to this requirement. If you are over sixteen and not able to get your parent or guardian involved as a volunteer, please have them consider applying to be a foster. Although the primary foster must be eighteen years of age or older, the entire family can participate in the fostering experience.

My kids LOVE animals. Can they still volunteer?

Unfortunately, due to liability reasons, all volunteers must be at least sixteen years old.

Time Commitment & Scheduling:

What is the time commitment for volunteering?

We are always looking for volunteers who can commit to at least six hours a month for at least six months. In order to provide our animals with the best care and support, we cannot accommodate volunteers who intend to only volunteer for one to two weeks while they are on a break from school or visiting family in the area. This requirement helps us ensure quality training and consistent volunteer coverage for our animals.

What times am I able to volunteer?

Depending on the assignment, volunteers can start as early as 8:30am and end around 6pm. Typically, volunteer assignments last roughly two hours but volunteers are encouraged to volunteer longer if they'd like (and if there is an open spot within that assignment).

I work until 6pm, do you have any volunteer opportunities in the evening?

Unfortunately, no. Most of our volunteer assignments end when the shelter closes (at 6pm). We are, however, open every day – including weekends – for volunteer assignments. We also have a “Crafting & Mending Team” where we create enrichment items for the animals in our care. This assignment typically starts at 6pm, when scheduled on a weekday, and runs for 1.5-2 hours.

Training:

I already know how to walk dogs, handle cats, etc. I have had animals my whole life / I have volunteered with other animal organizations in the past. Why do I need to wait for training to start volunteering with the WCAC?

As a WCAC volunteer, you'll need to learn the way *we* do things. This can be very different from the way you typically interact with animals in a home environment. In order to ensure the animals consistently receive a high-quality of care and stay as healthy as possible, we educate our volunteers about protocols and procedures that are in place to limit the transfer of disease, provide training on how to correctly interact with the animals in our care in order to reduce stress, and provide positive reinforcement for behavior that will prepare them for adoption and a new home. To start, volunteers must first view our orientation videos to learn more about the Volunteer Program, our roles/assignments, and our current needs. You can then sign up to receive training to learn the ins and outs of a specific role.

I am a dog trainer/groomer. Can I volunteer teaching dog training classes/grooming dogs to promote my business?

At the WCAC, we are always looking for experienced animal professionals to join our Volunteer Program. We do allow business cards, postcards, flyers, etc. to be presented in our Center lobby. We don't, however, endorse any specific business within the Volunteer Program or from the Center. If you would like to use your volunteerism to promote your business, we encourage business owners to post about their experience on social media. Posts about your volunteerism such as, "It's Wednesday and you all know what that means – VOLUNTEERING AT THE WCAC!" with a picture or video of an adoptable animal can be mutually beneficial for both the WCAC and your business.

I'm scared of bigger dogs. Can I just volunteer to play with puppies or kittens?

Yes, you are more than welcome to volunteer only with the types of animals you feel the most comfortable with or volunteer without direct interaction with animals at all. It is, however, very infrequent that we have puppies or kittens linger in the shelter – they are either placed in foster or get adopted quickly and head to their new homes. If you are interested, and experienced, in socialization for puppies or kittens, please consider signing up for be a foster home.

Other Common Questions:

I need community service hours. Can I volunteer with the WCAC?

Unfortunately, no, we do not accept volunteers for community service hours. There are no exceptions and community service paperwork will not be signed by our Volunteer Coordinator.

Can I catch anything from volunteering with homeless pets? Should I worry about taking an illness home to my pets?

The risk of catching or spreading an illness from a shelter pet is rare, but the small chance is still there. During an animal's stay at the WCAC, they are given required vaccines and parasite prevention. If an animal shows sign if disease, illness, or injury, they are treated accordingly by our veterinary team. However, just like in humans, some illnesses can be contagious without symptoms or before symptoms show. To keep yourself, your pets, and the shelter safe, be sure to wash your hands or use hand sanitizer, especially after interactions with animals, but remember that volunteers rarely help care for unvaccinated or sick animals at the WCAC.

What should I wear while volunteering?

Closed-toed, non-clog-type shoes are required for volunteering within the Center. Hiking shoes may be preferred if you're going to be walking dogs. Long pants are also required while volunteering directly with the animals. Dog walkers are advised to dress in layers during spring, autumn, and winter months as mornings can be chilly but warm in the afternoon.

Questions or concerns about the Volunteer Program?

Please don't hesitate to reach out to Meagan Thomas, the Volunteer Coordinator for the Wake County Animal Center, at Meagan.Thomas@wakegov.com or 919-250-3180 regarding any volunteer questions.