



## Volunteer Supervision for Roanoke Valley SPCA Staff

Everyone has limited free time, and our volunteers choose to spend theirs here. That's pretty amazing! Our volunteers choose to spend time helping the Roanoke Valley SPCA because they believe in our mission, they want to help, and they want to be part of the work we do! It's our job to channel their enthusiasm and energy into helping in the ways that benefit our staff and the pets in our care.

Many volunteers do not have animal welfare experience, and they don't do this work every day – so they may forget things or they may not know it in the first place. It's important for us to remember this, and be patient and kind when working with our volunteers. Volunteers deserve the same respect we show our co-workers and customers.

### Observing and assessing volunteer needs

'Informal observation' is what you do when you walk through the shelter and notice volunteers working, or interact with them casually. There are many styles of observations and giving feedback, but this seems to be the most practical for our setting. Therefore, 'informal observation' is the most common type of volunteer observation at the Roanoke Valley SPCA and it's important that all staff make a point of using it.

The volunteer's supervisor cannot watch them all the time, just as your supervisor doesn't follow you around all day, so it's important that the rest of the staff lend a hand with volunteers. This is the only way we can teach volunteers the appropriate way to perform a task.

**If a volunteer is doing something incorrectly, please kindly correct them! If you are not comfortable teaching the volunteer, please seek out the Program Coordinator immediately if available. PLEASE NOTE: this only works if the Program Coordinator is immediately available to speak to the volunteer. This type of correction is not effective if it happens two days, a week, or more later.**

### It is every staff member's responsibility to help supervise volunteers!

As a volunteer supervisor:

- You have authority.
- Your purpose is to increase volunteer skills and knowledge, and improve performance.
- Your focus is on the expectations for the people representing our organization.

## Communication with volunteers

1. Commit to step in and make suggestions and requests of volunteers (appropriate to the role they are working in).
2. If you take issue with a volunteer's performance or something they have done, address it immediately if you are comfortable doing so and then notify the Program Coordinator (or your supervisor) immediately. Documentation may be needed.
3. Communication isn't just about correction! Remember to praise a volunteer's good job too and thank them for coming in that day. Volunteers are team members and we want them to feel included and appreciated as well, so don't be afraid to say 'hi' and include them!

If a volunteer...	Then you should...
Doesn't know or understand the correct way to do a task	Explain the expectations and the reason for that Roanoke Valley SPCA policy. If you don't know the reasons/task, reach out to the specific individual who oversees that shelter area for clarification.
Doesn't know how to do something (has a skills gap)	Train them or let them shadow you for the task. You can also reach out to the Program Coordinator about scheduling training for them.
Has fear or anxiety about a task, or working with an animal	Offer support or give them a smaller task in the meantime. For anxiety working with animals, direct them away from that animal for now and reach out to the Program Coordinator about scheduling training for them.
Is being rude or unkind towards you, another staff member, another volunteer, or a Roanoke Valley SPCA visitor	Remove them from the situation. If you are comfortable doing so, respectfully correct their behavior. <b><i>Whether or not you correct them, reach out to the Program Coordinator or their supervisor immediately.</i></b>

## Other important information for Roanoke Valley SPCA staff

### *Learning names makes a difference*

It may be difficult to remember everyone's names – but if you have the opportunity to learn and remember a volunteer's name, use it! It feels good to be remembered and acknowledged. Volunteers should also be wearing name tags, so feel free to check their name tag in order to address the volunteer by name.

Front Desk and Office staff should have access to the volunteer schedule on the Volunteer Information Center. You can log-in to see the names of who is working on a given day and use this to better connect with the volunteers in your area.

### *Volunteer shift sign-in*

Volunteers are expected to sign-in for their shifts at the computer by the play yard entrance. If you think a volunteer may not have signed in, kindly ask and remind them to do so!

If they need help, please help them unlock the computer and sign in. Their volunteer pin is based on the phone number they provided on their volunteer application and should be easy to remember.

If they cannot log-in, please have them use the paper tracking form hanging on the volunteer lockers for now. Then notify the Program Coordinator.

### *Volunteer personal items*

Volunteers are expected to leave coats, purses, etc. in the volunteer lockers by the play yard entrance. If their personal items are laying out in a room (example: on the benches in the cat rooms), kindly remind them that they should use the lockers.

Locks and keys for the volunteer lockers are located at the Front Desk. Please offer one to the volunteer and remind them to return it when their shift is done.

### *Volunteer t-shirts and badges*

Volunteers are expected to wear their volunteer t-shirts. However, some volunteers may not be able to afford one or are stopping by right before/after work, etc. These volunteers should be wearing a volunteer lanyard/tag. If they are not wearing a t-shirt or badge, kindly remind them to grab a badge from the basket by the play yard computer.

### *Volunteer Dress Code*

Volunteers should be wearing long pants and closed toe shoes. They should have a neat and clean appearance, with no profane or otherwise inappropriate clothing. Notify the Program Coordinator if a volunteer is dressed inappropriately as volunteer may need to be asked to leave.

### *Feedback*

It's important that we tell volunteers the correct way to accomplish a task and to let them know if things aren't being done the way we'd like. We also need to give them feedback when they're doing things correctly. Be specific! For example: "Thanks for the

way you handled that customer. I know she had a million questions!” or “That stack of litter boxes was huge; thanks for cleaning them all!”

When you are telling a volunteer to do a task differently, please remember to politely redirect them and explain WHY you’re asking them to make a change. We always should have reasons for making a change and it’s important to let volunteers know there’s a method to our madness, and that there are reasons behind our requests.

## Staff/Volunteer Expectations and Guidelines:

### *Our expectations for you*

Volunteers are our partners. We need to greet them, make requests of them, give them guidance, give feedback, show them how to accomplish tasks, thank them for their help, and say goodbye if we see them leaving... Basically, just interact with them! They should not be ignored or treated like they are invisible.

The following guidelines and expectations for staff/volunteer relations apply to and should be practiced by all Roanoke Valley SPCA employees.

*(Adapted from PAWS Supervision for Shelter Staff 2014)*

- Staff are expected to greet and welcome volunteers if you see them arrive/login.
- Staff are expected to inform and guide volunteers on Roanoke Valley SPCA policies and procedures in a respectful manner.
  - If a question regarding a policy or procedure is uncertain – staff should seek the correct information on the volunteer’s behalf from their supervisor or the Program Coordinator.
  - Do not make up an answer if you aren’t sure of the answer! Let the volunteer know that you don’t know, and that you will find out the answer.
- Staff must set a good example for volunteers by following Roanoke Valley SPCA policies.

This includes but is not limited to:

- Dress code and appearance
  - Hand-washing
  - Waste disposal
  - Cleaning and interacting with animals
  - Interacting with customers and other staff/volunteers
  - Attitude
- Staff should carry themselves in a polite and professional manner to ensure they are approachable to volunteers.
  - Staff should be available to assist volunteers with questions, concerns, or issues.

- Staff may be asked to supervise or train a new volunteer.
- Staff should notify the Program Coordinator or their supervisor about consistent problems with a volunteer's performance.
- Staff are expected to say goodbye/thank you if you see them logging out or leaving.

**Please reach out to the Program Coordinator or your supervisor with any additional questions, concerns, or ideas related to working with volunteers.**

**Thank you for your help to make our volunteers engaged and efficient Roanoke Valley SPCA team members!**