



*Kindness and Care for Animals®*

**Angell Animal Medical Center  
Volunteer Handbook**

## **MSPCA Angell Animal Medical Center Volunteer Handbook**

Welcome! Thank you for joining the MSPCA Angell Animal Medical Center volunteer team. We are thrilled that you will be joining us to volunteer, and we're grateful for the role that volunteers play in helping us continue to deliver world class care. This handbook is designed to orient you to our program and serve as a guide in your volunteer journey.

In these pages, you will learn more about our volunteer roles and responsibilities, as well as a range of topics relating to our program. Please read it carefully before beginning your volunteer job, and continue to use it as a reference throughout your service.

Thank you for choosing to volunteer at Angell!

Katy Flint, Volunteer Coordinator

Email: [kflint@mspca.org](mailto:kflint@mspca.org)

Phone: (617) 917-5459

### **Angell Volunteer Program**

#### **Volunteer Program Mission Statement**

The mission of the Angell Volunteer Program is to assist veterinary staff by performing non-technical tasks that allow our team to spend more time using their technical skills to care for patients. And, to provide support to all employees in order to enhance all hospital services.

#### **Volunteer Program Overview**

Volunteering at Angell Animal Medical Center will offer the opportunity to see how an animal hospital runs behind the scenes. Our volunteers manage many assignments throughout the hospital. These assignments span multiple departments including our front desk, inpatient ward, and specialty departments (surgery, clinic, etc.). Tasks vary from department to department, but all are essential to keeping the hospital running smoothly! Tasks may include, but are not limited to, tackling our mountain of laundry, cleaning patient cages, restocking food, washing dishes, and assisting with clerical tasks like uploading patient information to our electronic medical records.

While we know that part of the allure of volunteering at a facility like Angell is the chance to work closely with our world class veterinary staff, it's important to note that our volunteer program does not include any set opportunities where shadowing or observing the veterinary staff is a primary focus. Similarly, given the need to make sure that our patients are always being cared for by professionals who understand each patient's specific needs, there will not be any opportunity for volunteers to assist with medical care or procedures for patients. This also includes the handling and transportation of patients.

#### **Volunteer Benefits**

As a volunteer you will:

- Have the opportunity to develop new skills and meet new people
- Learn more about how an animal hospital runs and the behind the scenes work that is done
- Receive recognition for your commitment and dedication to the volunteer program
- Have access to ongoing educational and social events with other volunteers

## What to Expect

A volunteer can expect from our volunteer program:

- To be provided with orientation, training, support, supervision, and regular evaluation
- Appropriate and adequate training for their assignment
- Ongoing guidance and direction
- To have a clear understanding of their role, responsibilities, and expectations
- To be treated as a valuable member of our team
- Prompt responses to questions or concerns
- Regular volunteer updates, including any information regarding changes to policies and procedures that affect volunteers

## Volunteer Responsibilities

Our Angell Volunteer Program expects from volunteers:

- Reporting on time for their volunteer assignments
- To call in advance if they are sick or otherwise unable to report for their assignment
- To abide by the dress code and wear their volunteer badge at all times
- Be willing to learn and participate in orientation, training, and ongoing learning opportunities

## Volunteer Commitment

We ask volunteers to commit to:

- A minimum of two shifts per month (most shifts are two hours long)
- A minimum commitment of six months
- Clocking in and out for each shift through our Volgistics volunteer management system

## Volunteer Assignments

Volunteers can be trained in one or more of the following assignments:

- Clerical: scanning medical records
- Inpatient: doing laundry and restocking linens
- Surgery Task Force (day): laundering scrubs and restocking supply carts
- Surgery Task Force (evening): disinfecting operating rooms, *requires an additional orientation*
- Clinic: cleaning and restocking supplies
- Client Service Support: restocking and cleaning our lobby/front desk area

*Additional Volunteer Assignments may be available on a limited basis.*

## Approved Volunteer Tasks

Volunteers are approved to do a variety of tasks throughout the hospital. You will receive training for specific tasks based on your assignment.

However, there are some tasks that volunteers are never permitted to do. These include:

- Feeding or providing water to any patients
- Sticking hands in cages
- Touching or petting patients without staff permission
- Restraining or holding patients
- Transporting patients
- Documenting anything on patient records
- Administering medications
- Cleaning litter boxes or picking up dog waste in cages
- Monitoring of any medical issues

## **Angell Volunteer Rules and Policies**

### Angell Facility

#### Parking

- Free on-site parking is available for volunteers. Please do not park in the staff parking lot, which is marked with signage and is located to the right of our building when you drive in.
- To leave the most convenient parking areas for our clients, volunteers should park in the back of the main parking lot, facing the main entrance to the hospital (on the side of the building that's furthest from South Huntington Avenue).
- There are bicycle racks also available when you first enter our site, located near the staff entrance on the left (directly across from the staff parking lot). Please make sure after you store your bike that you walk around to the main entrance and come through those doors. You will not have access to the staff entrance.

#### Personal Belongings

- Angell is not responsible for loss of personal property, so please do not bring any valuables with you. Personal belongings can be kept in the Volunteer Coordinator's office but it's important to note that they will not be secured.

## Safety

The safety and well-being of all MSPCA-Angell volunteers is of the utmost importance. No one can protect you as well as you can protect yourself. All volunteers are encouraged to notify the Volunteer Coordinator if they see something unsafe or have an idea on how to improve safety. The following safety guidelines are integral to ensuring a safe workplace for volunteers, employees, and our animal patients. Failure to follow these guidelines will result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from the program.

### Animal Interactions

- Volunteers are not permitted to put their hands in cages to pet an animal without staff permission. This can be dangerous for the patient, who does not know that you will not be poking or prodding them. Putting your hands in an animal's cage could also put yourself at risk. Many patients will have caution signs on their cage due to the high anxiety of being in this stressful environment.
- This rule also applies to animals being walked or escorted in the hallway or lobby. Volunteers should not stop to introduce themselves or go to pet any animal without staff permission. This is for the safety of our patients, who may not be comfortable in this environment and may react negatively to strangers. As cute as the animals may be, please remember that stopping to introduce yourself or engage with the animal holds up our staff.
- Do not open any cages or kennels, and refrain from touching any animal through the bars.
- Any environment where humans and animals mix creates a risk for **zoonotic disease** (a disease that can spread from animals to humans) **transmission**. Although this risk is low, volunteers are strongly encouraged to wash hands before eating, before leaving to go home, and periodically throughout their shift.

### Badges and Nametags

- All volunteers are required to visibly wear a volunteer badge while in the building. Please make sure you sign the volunteer badge out (when you take it out for your shift) and sign the badge back in (when you return the badge back to the badge box). Both steps are necessary to make sure we accurately track our badge access. Badges must not be loaned out or given to other individuals.
- Volunteers will also be provided with a nametag. Please make sure to wear your nametag every time you are working in the hospital. Nametags are incredibly helpful to our staff members that may not see you regularly. Nametags are located in the Volunteer Coordinator's office.

### Confidentiality

- All volunteers are required to maintain confidentiality regarding client and patient information. This includes contact information, financial details, and patient health and visit details.
- You may not use or share this information outside of Angell business for any reason. This includes sharing identifying information regarding the client, their pet, or their account in a social capacity; such as photography and online platforms.

## Use of Emergency Desk

- Volunteers are not permitted to use the Emergency Desk as a means to contact the Volunteer Coordinator. If you are in the lobby and need to contact me, please reach out via my email or my phone number. Do not ask the person at the Emergency check in to contact me. Though it may look like they are available, they need to be ready to take an emergency at any time.
- Volunteers are permitted to wait in line at the front desk if you would like a staff member to page me, but please remember to keep the Emergency check in available for emergencies.

## Chemical Safety

- Volunteers that have been trained to use chemicals, including cleaning products and detergents, must follow all proper procedures. If Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), such as gloves or masks, is used as part of the procedure, it must always be worn. If PPE is not available, please notify the Volunteer Coordinator and/or the department supervisor.
- Volunteers will ensure that all containers are recapped/closed when not in use.
- Spills (including water) must be cleaned up as soon as possible. Notify the Volunteer Coordinator or department staff person if you need assistance.

## Clutter

- Cluttered areas pose a safety risk. Items must be put back where they belong once a task is completed. When moving items, always make sure that emergency exits and equipment are not blocked. This includes fire extinguishers, emergency eye wash stations, phones, doorways, and stairwells.

## Lifting Objects Safely

- All volunteers must follow safe handling guidelines any time they are lifting. To lift safely, bend at the knees and lift with your back straight. If an object is unable to be safely lifted due to its size or weight, you should stop and request help.
- Heavy objects should be stored on low shelves.

## Fire and Emergency

- In the event of a fire, notify the nearest staff member immediately.
- In the event of a medical emergency where human life is threatened, notify the nearest staff member immediately. If no staff are around, call 911 from the nearest phone to request EMS.
- In the event of severe weather or other natural disaster take direction from the Volunteer Coordinator or other staff members.
- All volunteers must know the location of emergency exits and routes out of the building. In the event of a building evacuation volunteers will promptly exit the building and proceed to the staff parking lot.

## Ladders

- Falls from any height can cause serious injury. Prior to performing any task that utilizes a ladder or step stool, make sure the ladder is in good working order and is set up on a level surface.
- While climbing the ladder, keep both hands free. A second person should be present to stabilize the ladder and hand items up and down.
- Do not use a ladder or step stool if you are working alone.

## Machinery, Tools, and Equipment

- Volunteers are only allowed to use machinery, tools, or equipment that they have been trained on. It does not matter if you have personal experience with these tools or use them at another job. You must be trained and approved to do so at MSPCA-Angell.
- Volunteers must not use damaged, broken, or modified equipment. Any such items should be reported to the Volunteer Coordinator.

## Food

- Volunteers may only eat or drink in approved areas. This is to avoid contamination within the hospital environment.
- Practice good hand hygiene by washing your hands prior to eating.

## Pregnancy

- Volunteers who are or may become pregnant should discuss their assigned tasks and duties with the Volunteer Coordinator in order to reduce exposure to any potential hazards to their pregnancy.

## Signage

- Please observe all signage in the hospital to ensure the safety of our staff, patients, clients, and volunteers.
- Do not enter any areas marked "Staff only."

## Accidents and Injuries

If there is a situation where a volunteer gets hurt or injured during their shift, they must report the accident to the Volunteer Coordinator immediately. The coordinator will follow up with Volunteer Accident Form to properly document the accident for our records.

- If there is a situation where a volunteer needs immediate help and the Volunteer Coordinator is not available, please ask to speak to a supervisor or manager for assistance.
- All injuries that occur while you are working at the hospital must be documented. This includes minor injuries like small scrapes and cuts.
- MSPCA-Angell provides limited medical coverage for volunteers through Zurich Insurance Company in the event a volunteer is injured while volunteering. Contact the Volunteer Coordinator if you have questions about this policy.

## Additional Safety

- Follow all supplemental safety training and protocols specific to the volunteer task or role.
- Follow any additional MSPCA-Angell safety policies in effect such as:
  - COVID-19 policies
- Volunteers should not prop open hallway or exterior doors.
- For additional safety information, please connect with the Volunteer Coordinator.

## Volunteers under the Age of 18

- Additional safety guidelines are in place for volunteers who are minors (under the age of 18). This includes, but is not limited to, the following:
  - May not work near radioactive substances (including patients undergoing chemotherapy).

## Volunteer Policies

### Dress Code

- Appropriate dress: Volunteers should wear the approved MSPCA Angell volunteer t-shirt when possible. Volunteer T-Shirts are available for purchase through the MSPCA website. Casual wear such as jeans, sneakers, yoga pants, and sweatshirts are acceptable. Closed-toed shoes that cover the whole foot are required to work in the hospital.
- Inappropriate dress: Jeans with holes, tank tops, cropped shirts, hats, sheer clothing, or open toe shoes such as flip flops and sandals.
- Fragrance Free Policy: Many people and animals have an adverse reaction to fragrances and scents. To ensure the comfort and health of our staff, clients, and patients, please refrain from wearing fragrances including perfume, scented lotions, after shave, hairspray, or similar items while in the hospital.
- Although casual clothing is permitted, volunteers are expected to dress in a neat and tidy manner. As representatives of the MSPCA it is important to appear clean and well-dressed, particularly for volunteers with client-facing roles.
- Long hair must be tied back or worn in a manner so as not to pose a safety hazard.
- Excessive jewelry is prohibited.
- Headphones are not permitted without the express permission of the Volunteer Coordinator or department supervisor that you work with.
- The final decision regarding appropriate dress code will be made by the Volunteer Coordinator.

## Absence/Tardiness

- We rely on volunteers for coverage and have communicated to staff that they can expect you. If we are not aware that you are going to be late, or can't come in, this puts the burden on Angell staff to accommodate without adequate time to plan. There are also staff and current volunteers who help train new volunteers and need to be made aware of schedule changes with as much notice as possible in order to be prepared.
- We have a policy aimed at underscoring the importance of contacting the Volunteer Coordinator if you are going to be late or can't come in for a scheduled shift. This policy states that *volunteers will be given a warning for any tardiness or absence that is not communicated to the Volunteer Coordinator ahead of time.* Notice can be given in person, over the phone, or via email. A volunteer will receive a maximum of two warnings. If a volunteer has received two warnings and continues to be tardy or absent without prior communication, they will be dismissed from the volunteer program.
- A full write-up of our Attendance Policy is available online or can be requested from the Volunteer Coordinator.

## Appropriate Volunteer Behaviors

### Client Interactions

- To an outside observer, a volunteer is no different than any member of Angell's professional staff. A volunteer's representation of this organization can affect public view and can directly impact client perception. A clientele that is confident in our abilities to conduct our work professionally and respectfully is essential to successful veterinary care. With this in mind, please remember that we expect you to uphold the reputation of the organization while working at Angell and in your personal life and online presence.
- Volunteers are not permitted to contact clients under any circumstance. The staff are responsible for all communications with clients. Failure to abide by this policy will result in dismissal from the program.
- It is also important to remember that when you volunteer too much 'inside' information, or place blame on another department for something that did not go as it should, you risk inadvertently reducing the reputation of MSPCA/Angell as an organization.
  - For Example, if the lobby area was busy, and folks were waiting a while to check in- it would not be appropriate to say *"Sorry you're waiting so long. We don't have enough staff for our front desk."* It would be appropriate to say, *"Thank you for your patience. We're a bit busy today, and we appreciate you waiting to check-in."*
- Always err on the side of caution when you are speaking with clients. Please refer all client questions to a staff member.

## Providing Clinical Information/ Advice to Clients

- Volunteers are prohibited from providing any clinical information, opinions, or advice to clients. Failure to abide by this policy will result in immediate dismissal from the program.
  - We deeply value the knowledge and experience that volunteers bring to our program. However, because each client/patient case is unique, it is best to leave all advice giving to the professionals.
- You need to get comfortable with the phrase, *“I’m sorry ma’am/sir, but I don’t have the clinical training to answer questions specific to your pet’s situation.”* or *“I’m not the best person to answer that for you...”*
- Even a quick interaction offers many opportunities for wires to be crossed. You cannot be sure that the client is giving you full and accurate information that would allow you to make an informed suggestion. Nor can you be sure that the client, especially when under stress, will hear and understand you completely. This can lead to patients and or/ clients being put into harmful situations.
- By ensuring that our clients are only receiving clinical advice and information from our veterinary staff, we are supporting the MSPCA’s mission of advancing animal health and welfare.

## Care Aware

- Care Aware is a hospital-wide initiative with the goal of minimizing stress to patients and/or their caregivers by pin-pointing areas that could benefit from a quiet atmosphere and allow care-givers to focus 100% on the patient or task at hand. When we are not paying attention to the environment we are in and what is taking place around us, our behaviors can negatively impact patient care, and/or the patient’s experience.
- Because volunteers work with many different departments, it is important that all volunteers conduct themselves in a way that is not distracting or disruptive. In almost every department, sensitive patient care is taking place that requires focus and attentive care from the staff. You should be mindful that your presence is brief, just long enough to accomplish your task, and quiet.
- You will see Care Aware “stop-signs” and posters in various areas throughout the hospital. This means that an area has adopted a Care Aware policy. Please be conscientious of the staff in this area’s need for a quiet environment.