



# Volunteer Handbook

Grand Prairie Animal Services  
Prairie Paws Adoption Center  
2222 W. Warrior Trail  
Grand Prairie, TX 75052  
P: (972) 237-8575  
[prairiepawsvolunteers@gptx.org](mailto:prairiepawsvolunteers@gptx.org)

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**We hope this program will introduce you to our organization while gaining a rewarding and educational opportunity to have fun. You can have a significant impact on the lives of homeless animals and their families by giving them the love and attention needed until they find their forever homes. You are also an ambassador for our mission and are here to build a brighter future for our community.**

**Thank you for giving us your time and commitment to participate in our volunteer program!**

### **Our Mission Statement**

We provide a safe, healthy, and humane community for the pets of Grand Prairie. We accomplish this through protecting the public and its interests, providing education on responsible pet ownership, housing homeless animals, and placing companion animals through our Prairie Paws Adoption Center.

We strive to provide world-class service and create Raving Fans in every aspect of our work.

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# *Grand Prairie Animal Services*

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Grand Prairie Animal Services and Prairie Paws Adoption Center encourage responsible pet ownership and maintain a safe city by offering field enforcement services, educational programs and pet adoptions for Grand Prairie residents.

## *Community Groups & Events*

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### **Shelter/Waggin' Wagon Events**

GPAS schedules and plans activities and events (on-site and off-site) for pet adoptions. All activities and events, either on GPAS premises or as represented as GPAS in the public must be coordinated and approved by GPAS management or the Event Coordinator in advance. Unscheduled or impromptu activities or events will not be supported or endorsed by GPAS.

### **Volunteer Groups or Organizations**

Any groups or organizations wishing to hold an event or group volunteer project must contact the Program Supervisor in advance to make such arrangements. Groups will not be allowed to assemble at events or on-site to promote their business, cause, or messaging without prior approval from GPAS management. Please contact the Program Supervisor directly for information about how your group can get involved.

# Contact Info and Hours of Operation

## Address

Prairie Paws Adoption Center  
2222 W. Warrior Trail  
Grand Prairie, TX 75052  
[www.gptx.org](http://www.gptx.org)

## Phone/Fax Numbers

Main: 972-237-8575

Fax: 972-237-8579

## Shelter Public Hours

MONDAY: CLOSED

TUESDAY: 10am – 6pm

WEDNESDAY: 10am – 6pm

THURSDAY: 10am – 6pm

FRIDAY: 10am – 6pm

SATURDAY: 12pm – 6pm

SUNDAY: CLOSED

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# *Requirements and Expectations*

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We want this program to benefit you, the staff and the animals. Please review the following requirements and expectations to see if this volunteer program is right for you.

- 1. Must be at least 14 years old.**
- Any volunteer 14-17 years old **must** have a guardian sign a **Volunteer Interest and Acknowledgement Form**.
- All volunteers need to be approved via the Better Impact website before volunteering can begin.**
- GPAS to provide aprons to wear during volunteer hours.
- Be comfortable around animals and loud noises.
- Be comfortable around offensive odors and bodily functions of animals.
- Adhere to schedules, policies, and safety procedures.
- Pass required training, evaluations, and/or background checks if applicable.
- Stay out of restricted areas.
- Be able to understand signs and directions.
- Conduct yourself in a manner that reinforces the goals and values of the Grand Prairie Animal Services.
- Be able to work independently.
- Be enthusiastic and excited about the job!
- Have fun!

Thank you for choosing to share your time with Grand Prairie Animal Services.

Volunteers are expected to meet all responsibilities of their specific role(s), as outlined in the training programs and the job description(s). This allows us to present a common standard of professionalism in any environment in which we work.

Volunteers must abide by all security and safety rules as outlined in all applicable training programs, job descriptions, and in this handbook. The safety of our volunteers, staff, the shelter animals, and the public are of paramount importance. Infractions of the rules can result in severe consequences to the organization, the volunteer, and the life of the animal.

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# *Volunteer Policies and Procedures*

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## **Your Role as a Volunteer**

Since your support as a volunteer is extremely important, your decision to participate must be made with the full understanding of the commitment and responsibility it demands. This handbook has been prepared for you as a reference guide. It contains information and tools to better equip you to answer questions knowledgeably and provide quality care to the animals at our shelter.

## **Conduct**

As a volunteer, you are a representative of GPAS and are expected to conduct yourself in a professional manner. You must be respectful and courteous in your interactions with the staff, public, and the animals. Disrespectful or unprofessional behavior, sexual harassment, threats, disparaging remarks, discrimination or vulgar language will not be tolerated. These actions may result in termination as a GPAS volunteer. This code of conduct applies to online and/or written material as well as personal interactions with staff, other volunteers, any GPAS or city representative, and members of the public. Volunteers should present themselves in such a way to reflect favorably on the shelter, consistent with the goals and objectives, policies and procedures.

## **Non-PPAC Guests/Pets**

It is not appropriate to bring children who are not a GPAS volunteer or your own pet to the facility while you are performing volunteer activities. Volunteers with unapproved guests or pets will be asked to leave.

## **Privacy Policy & Conveying Correct Information**

Any information pertaining to GPAS records or specific cases are strictly confidential and may not be discussed with others. Please refrain from offering the public information on fees or policies unless you are sure you have current and accurate information. When in doubt, ALWAYS refer the person to GPAS staff. Volunteers are not to disclose any confidential information (contact, personal information, financial, etc.) of the public or staff members. Volunteers are specifically prohibited from discussing any aspect of GPAS records and cases with any representative of the media.

Your information (name, address, phone number) may not be disclosed and will not be provided to anyone unless specifically authorized by you.

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## Getting Started

### Age Requirement:

Volunteers are 14 years and older. Volunteers between the ages of 14 and 15 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian at orientations, trainings, and while volunteering.

The City of Grand Prairie uses a volunteer software program (Better Impact) that requires volunteers to pass a background check before volunteering can begin. This software will also require volunteers to sign up and log in while volunteering at GPAS.

### Volunteer Orientation:

Orientations are now part of the online software program. Once you have completed your application, you will be directed to the orientation video.

### Media Relations

Volunteers are strictly prohibited from speaking on behalf of GPAS to any representative of the media. All media questions can be directed to [prairiepawsvolunteers@gptx.org](mailto:prairiepawsvolunteers@gptx.org).

### Dress Code

Appropriate clothes are required for all volunteers. For safety reasons, we ask that open-toed shoes or shorts not be worn while working directly with the animals. Wear clothing that you do not mind getting dirty. Aprons will be provided and must be worn at all times when working.

### Smoking

The City of Grand Prairie does not allow smoking on City property and is prohibited in all buildings and facility grounds. If you wish to smoke, you must do so off City property. While working at Waggin' Wagon events, you may not smoke except when on breaks and out of public view.

### Drugs and Alcohol

Under no circumstances shall a volunteer work at our facility or off-site event under the influence of drugs or alcohol. If suspected of being under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, you will be asked to leave and will be subjected to termination from the GPAS Volunteer Program.

### Cell Phones

While you are at GPAS, we want you to keep your focus on the animals in your care and the members of the public in need of assistance. GPAS strictly prohibits the use of cell phones and mobile devices that create unsafe situations. Cell phone use while handling animals is strictly prohibited, and volunteers may not use their cell phone while interacting with the public. If it is necessary for you to have your cell phone with you while volunteering, set the ringer to vibrate or silent, and use your cell phone in non-working areas only. Ear buds, headsets, and headphones shall not be used at any time while volunteering with GPAS. Use of cell phone while working with animals or with the public may result in corrective action. This policy also applies to all electronic devices such as tablets, laptops, etc.

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## Animal Care

It is expected that PPAC volunteers will treat all animals in the shelter's care with compassion, gentleness, and positive reinforcement only! Ask for assistance from GPAS staff when needed, and use caution at all times. Do not hand write messages on kennel cards – notify GPAS staff of any observations or information you feel may need to be noted for an animal. Volunteers are not to diagnose medical cases, remove sick animals from the shelter without permission from the shelter supervisor, or take any animals from the shelter without proper documentation or approval from a GPAS staff member. Any volunteer doing so will be subject to dismissal.

## Stray/Sick Animals

Volunteers are only able to interact with animals that are eligible for adoption. A substantial portion of our animal population are on their stray hold and do not belong to the City of Grand Prairie. Under no circumstance may you interact with an animal that is on stray hold or belonging to a behavior tier that you have not reached. Any animal with a medical condition cannot be taken out or touched by volunteers. This helps reduce the spread of disease throughout the shelter. We also would like to reduce the stress on the animal so they can recover quicker. If you notice there is something wrong one of these animals, please bring it to the Program Supervisor's or supervisor on duty's attention. If you take out or touch a stray or sick animal, you will be asked to leave, and it may result in your termination as a volunteer.

## Injuries

You are responsible for your own health and welfare, so be sure to mind all signs and safety precautions. If you are injured while at PPAC, you must notify the Program Supervisor or supervisor on duty immediately.

## Disease Control

GPAS is responsible for ensuring public safety including rabies control and other zoonotic disease containment. As a GPAS volunteer, you must be sure to wash your hands frequently as well as clean all animal handling equipment thoroughly to prevent the spread of disease in the shelter.

If you are bitten or scratched, you must report the incident to the Program Supervisor or the supervisor on duty. The animal must be quarantined for observation. You are responsible for your own personal health and are advised to seek medical treatment from your doctor.

If a shelter animal shows any of the following symptoms, immediately notify the Program Supervisor, supervisor on duty or veterinary technician:

- Diarrhea
  - Vomiting
  - Ocular (eye) discharge
  - Nasal discharge
  - Sneezing/Coughing
  - Loss of appetite
  - Lethargy (lack of energy)
  - Dehydration
  - Abnormal gait or muscle control
  - Excessive salivation
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## Euthanasia

Euthanasia is an unfortunate occurrence at GPAS. We hope that through spay/neuter effort and a welcoming and inclusive adoption program, there will ultimately be less homeless animals. We want to provide excellent service to the public in order to increase adoption and reduce euthanasia.

As a GPAS volunteer, you may be exposed to animals facing euthanasia, even though you will never witness it. GPAS uses a humane method of euthanasia by injection of sodium pentobarbital solution intravenously. Whether or not you personally agree with this practice, this is a day-to-day reality at the shelter. Our staff has to deal with its administration and its after-effects on a regular basis.

If you are not comfortable in this atmosphere, supporting GPAS as it strives to make Grand Prairie a more humane community, this may not be a positive volunteer experience for you. You may be better suited to volunteering at another animal shelter or agency in the area.

## Off-Limit Areas

Certain areas of the shelter are off-limits to volunteers, unless specifically authorized to enter. These include quarantine room, isolation, spay/neuter clinic, shelter clinic, stray holding, personal offices and dry storage.

## Program Feedback

Your point of contact regarding volunteering or shelter activities is the Program Supervisor. Any program feedback should be sent to [prairiepawsvolunteers@gptx.org](mailto:prairiepawsvolunteers@gptx.org). Staff is directed to refer all communication received from volunteers to the Programs Supervisor for response and follow up. For items more sensitive in nature, please call (972) 237-8568 or set an appointment to discuss with the Programs Supervisor. If you feel an item has not been appropriately addressed by the Programs Supervisor, it may be elevated to the Shelter Manager by calling (972) 237-8578.

## Performance Support

We feel strongly that the relationship between the volunteer and the City of Grand Prairie should be mutually beneficial, helping both the volunteer and the City fulfill their goals. Performance feedback sessions give GPAS staff a chance to meet with volunteers one-on-one to review the position description, discuss what's going well, and identify goals and areas for improvement. If, as a volunteer, you have not acted in GPAS' interests, it may be necessary to end the volunteer relationship. Volunteer management staff may end your volunteer relationship at will. Causes for release from volunteer service include:

- Breaking of confidentiality
  - Failure to report volunteer hours/inactivity
  - Inappropriate drug or alcohol use
  - Excessive "no-show" for volunteer shifts
  - Misrepresentation of GPAS
  - Failure to adhere to policies or follow procedures
  - Inappropriate or unprofessional conduct
  - Not fulfilling the duties of the volunteer position
  - Theft
  - Violence or implication of violence
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