Volunteer Handbook

madacc
MILWAUKEE AREA DOMESTIC ANIMAL CONTROL COMMISSION

Open Doors
Open Hearts

Monday through Friday
10:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday
10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

3839 W. Burnham Street
West Milwaukee, WI 53215

(414) 649-8640
(414) 763-6234 (fax)

www.madacc.org

A Welcome from Our Volunteer & Community Outreach Coordinator

Welcome to the Milwaukee Area Domestic Animal Control Commission (MADACC) volunteer program. We know you have many options as a volunteer, so we appreciate that MADACC is the organization you want to serve.

You will be joining a team of caring and enthusiastic individuals dedicated to the welfare of animals in our community. Whether it is doing laundry and dishes, dog walking, fostering, special events, etc., the work you will do for MADACC has an immediate and tangible impact on the lives of the animals in our care.

– Kathy Shillinglaw

A Welcome from Executive Director

Milwaukee Area Domestic Animal Control Commission (MADACC) is one of the most challenging and rewarding organizations to be a part of in our local animal welfare community.

Each day we are asked to confront animal neglect and abuse, to care for stray and abandoned animals and to do all we can to ensure our animals are given the opportunity to get a second chance at finding a forever family. We cannot do this without the help of our community volunteers. Our staff is so grateful for all that the volunteers do for us and look forward to working with you to provide a better life for the animals at MADACC.

– Karen Sparapani

History

MADACC opened August 1, 1999 to provide animal care and control services for the 19 municipalities (cities and villages) of Milwaukee County, after the Wisconsin Humane Society terminated its contract with the county to provide animal control services.

MADACC is an intergovernmental entity that consists of a Board of Directors with representation from each municipality as well as a seven-member Operations Committee. Under the direction of the Board of Directors, MADACC's Executive Director is responsible for managing the comprehensive animal care and control program for the 19 municipalities in Milwaukee County, with an annual budget of approximately $2.9 million and 35 employees.

Mission

To provide animal regulation and care services which protect the health, public safety and welfare of the people and animals in Milwaukee County.

About Us

MADACC is an open-admission animal shelter that currently rescues and assures safe, temporary shelter and veterinary and humane care for more than 11,000 stray, unwanted, abandoned, mistreated and injured animals each year - more than any other animal care and control shelter in Wisconsin.

MADACC provides a central location for owners to find and recover their lost pets, rescues strays and removes dangerous animals from public areas, providing effective animal control services by active enforcement of Wisconsin State Statues pertaining to animal welfare.

What Does MADACC Do?

MADACC rescues and holds stray (lost pets), injured, sick, mistreated or dangerous domestic animals. We operate a dispatch office to receive complaints of stray animals in the community.

The Wisconsin Humane Society takes injured wildlife and owner surrenders.

What Happens to the Animals?

- Upon admittance, stray animals are scanned for a microchip, given a health exam, dewormed and vaccinated, given food, water and clean bedding.
- Its photograph is posted onto MADACC's website, www.madacc.org, which is updated hourly from 8 a.m. to midnight daily.
- By law, animals are sheltered for a minimum of 4 days.
- If unclaimed after the four-day stray hold, adoptable animals are evaluated for health and temperament and offered to local shelters, breed placement groups, or placed into foster care.

- MADACC has a limited in-house/foster-based adoption program which focuses on the placement of our largest population of animals, which are cats, Pit Bulls and Pit Bull mixes. MADACC holds periodic dog and cat adoption events both on-site and off-site. Adoption applications can be accessed via MADACC's website or filled out at MADACC.

Other Services Offered

- Dog & Cat licensing
- Milwaukee County dog park tags
- Live trap rentals
- Low-cost Spay & Neuter services
- Vaccines
- Microchip identification
- Rabies quarantine (10-day observation period)
- Euthanasia (owner request)
- Safe Keep (ex. owner is arrested, hospitalized, house fire, illegal exotic pets, etc.)

MADACC Fees

Low-cost spay and neuter program: for Milwaukee County residents.

- female dog $80
- male dog $65
- female cat $60
- male cat $50
- Fix-a-pit $50

Sign-up for surgeries and services is done on a first come, first serve basis, and must be done in person at MADACC (3839 W. Burnham St., West Milwaukee) before the surgery date. All fees must be paid up-front, at which time a surgery date will be scheduled. No refunds.

Vaccinations: $15 – must be current with Milwaukee County license

Rabies (dogs and cats) – appointment only
Dogs: DA2PPV (distemper/parvovirus) – appointment only
Cats: FVRCP (feline distemper) – appointment only

Testing: $25 - at time of surgery only

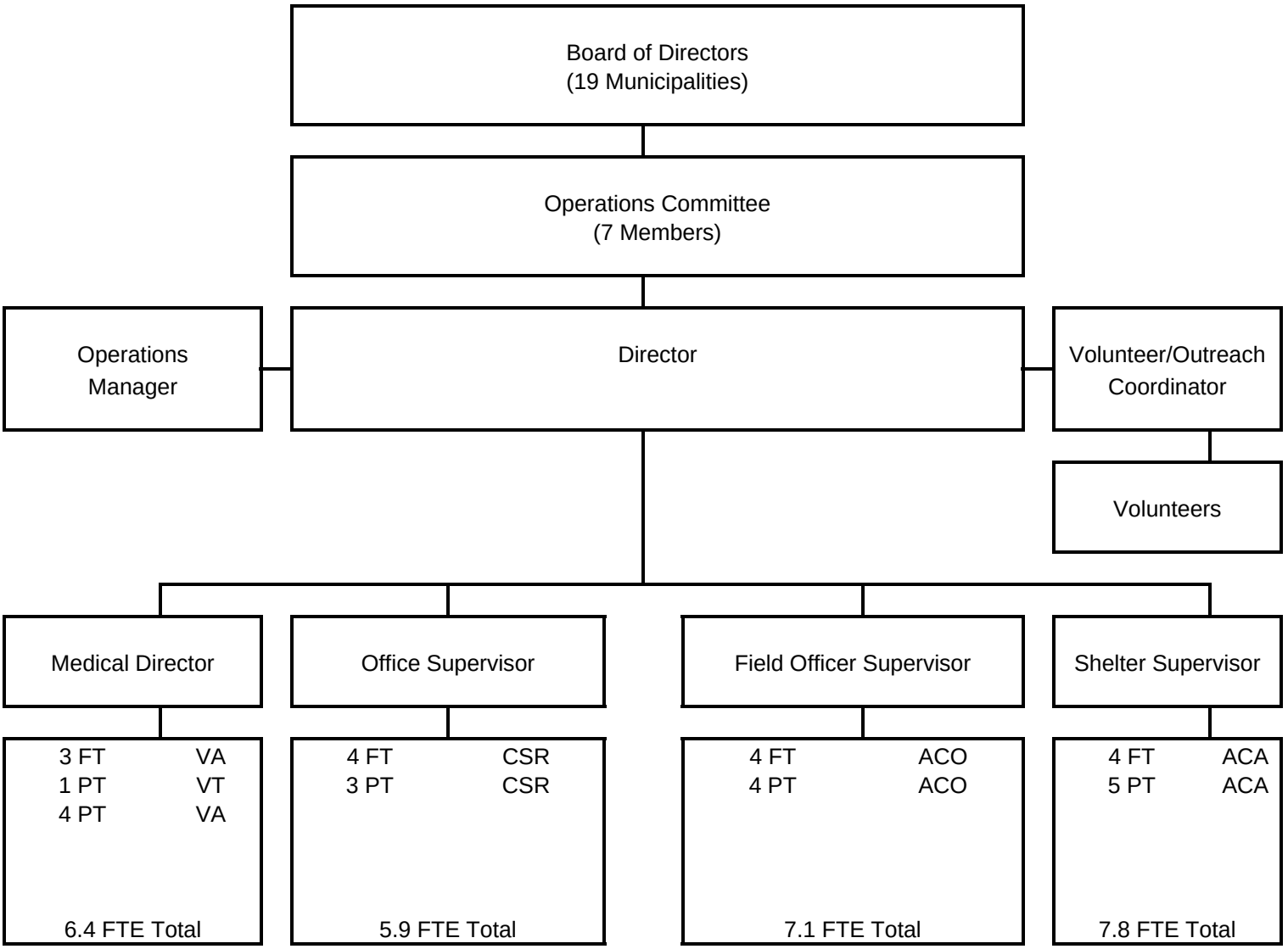
Dogs: Heartworm
Cats: FIV/FeLV (Feline leukemia)

Microchips: Provides permanent identification (includes registration) $25
If complete rabies and micro-chip together - $5 off

Euthanasia: Provided for owned sick or injured animals - $75
Ashes returned to owner - $25
If a pet dies at home, and is brought to MADACC (no pick-ups) - cremation is $25, and ashes can be returned to owner for an additional $25.

Milwaukee Area Domestic Animal Control Commission

Organizational Chart



ACA	Animal Care Attendant
ACO	Animal Control Officer
CSR	Client Service Representative
VA	Veterinary Assistant
VT	Veterinary Technician
FT	Full Time
PT	Part Time
FTE	Full Time Earnings

Friends of MADACC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting community awareness and improving the welfare of Milwaukee County's homeless animals.

The vision of Friends of MADACC is to:

- Reunite a greater percentage of lost pets with owners.
- Help more homeless animals find new forever homes.
- Improve quality of life for animals.
- Promote community awareness.
- Control pet overpopulation.

Battle Against Dogfighting (BAD) is a comprehensive, city-wide program to educate the community and protect animals from the horrors of dogfighting. They use a proven multi-agency approach to unite the community against dogfighting and to prevent dog owners from participating in this blood "sport." Through education, early intervention, and community involvement, BAD promotes programs that stop the violence associated with dogfighting and animal abuse; educates the public about humane treatment of animals and responsible pet ownership; trains youth and community leaders who can take the message of compassion throughout their own communities; and connects pet owners to low-cost and free resources.

BAD collaborates with the City of Milwaukee programs, the Milwaukee Police Department, community partners, businesses, schools, and churches to spread the message that compassion towards animals makes for safer and more humane communities.

If you are interested in volunteering for Friends of MADACC or BAD, please email them at friends@madacc.org.

The Cats' Voice, a MADACC volunteer group**,** was established on March 9, 2011. The Cats' Voice is dedicated to providing and promoting the health and stabilization of area cats. They provide education to the community on key topics related to cat health and welfare through seminars, materials and an email help line. They also organize on-site adoption events in the MADACC conference room. If you are interested in volunteering for The Cats' Voice you can email them at catsvoice@madacc.org.

Volunteering at MADACC

The MADACC volunteer program operates on a system with three levels. We do this so that volunteers become familiar with shelter protocols, and responsibilities increase as you progress.

We ask that volunteers commit to a specific position and shift for a minimum of 6 months. This is because of the training required, and more importantly, the animals depend on you!

Tier A: (minimum of 8 hours required service before progressing to other positions)

Animal Care Assistant

Purpose: Assist shelter staff in maintaining a clean and sanitary environment for the health and comfort of the animals in the shelter.

Responsibilities: Animal Care Assistants assist the Animal Care Attendants with cleaning and sanitizing all food bowls, water bowls, litter pans, white boxes, and laundry. Other tasks may include sweeping, mopping, cleaning windows and emptying garbage.

Qualifications: Ability to follow specific cleaning protocols; ability to bend, lift, reach, and stand for long periods of time; must adhere to all rules and standards set forth by MADACC.

Training: Volunteer Orientation; Position-specific training

Scheduling: 2 hours shifts

***NOTE – every 6 months, volunteers will be asked to complete 4 hours service in laundry, dishes, etc.**

Tier B: (select from the following after 8 hours of Animal Care Assistant service complete)

Community Outreach Volunteer

Purpose: Big heart for animals but short on time? MADACC needs friendly, outgoing, animal-loving people to represent MADACC at fairs, festivals and farmer markets throughout the year around Milwaukee County.

Responsibilities: Community Outreach Volunteers answer questions about the work we do at MADACC, hand out educational materials, and tell people about our programs and upcoming events. This position is a great alternative (or addition) to a weekly volunteer commitment. If you are a student, you'll get great public speaking experience while supporting animals! You will set up or tear down at the end of the shift and are responsible for bringing the COV materials.

Training: Volunteer Orientation, COV training, one to shadowing sessions.

Scheduling: Two to five-hour shifts (you choose events to attend based on a current event schedule) usually on Saturday or Sunday with some weekday opportunities. Time commitment is flexible.

Dog Walker

Purpose: Provide resident dogs with at least 15 minutes of exercise a day.

Responsibilities: Dog Walkers will teach basic skills to their assigned dogs, to include: not jumping at the kennel door, sit, waiting at doors, proper greetings when meeting new people, etc. Dog Walkers will also note both positive behaviors and behaviors needing modification on each dog's profile, as well as notify the Veterinary staff of any health concerns.

Qualifications: Experience working with dogs preferred; ability to maintain confidentiality; ability to follow specific dog walking and training protocols; ability to track observable phenomenon via note-taking; patience and understanding of dogs and their behavior; must adhere to all rules and standards set forth by MADACC.
Training: Volunteer Orientation, Basic Animal Handling/Behavior, Position-specific training

Scheduling: TBA – scheduled shifts in the a.m., mid-day, and p.m.

Kitty Koncierge
Purpose: Assist Animal Care Attendants with providing morning water and meals to resident cats and kittens. Monitor the appetite and overall health of the cats and kittens in order to assist the Veterinary staff.

Responsibilities: Kitty Koncierge team members will work in the morning before Animal Care Attendants begin cleaning the cat kennels. They are responsible for making sure all cats/kittens have fresh water. They will then prepare meals for all cats/kittens. While the cats/kittens are eating, Kitty Koncierge team members will make notations for the Veterinary staff on areas of concern to include: not eating, nasal or eye discharge, scratching or hair loss, etc.

Qualifications: Experience working with cats/kittens preferred; ability to maintain confidentiality; ability to follow specific feeding protocols; ability to track observable phenomenon via note-taking; patience and understanding of cats and their behavior; must adhere to all rules and standards set forth by MADACC.

Training: Volunteer Orientation, Basic Animal Handling/Behavior, Position-specific training

Scheduling: every day 8:00-10:00 a.m.

Cat Socializer – Condos
Purpose: Provide resident cats in the front lobby condos with at least 15 minutes of interaction a day.

Responsibilities: Condo Cat Socializers interact with the cats residing in the front lobby condos. They will work with each cat to make him/her comfortable with petting and handling, grooming, etc. Cat Socializers will also note both positive behaviors and behaviors needing modification on each cat's profile, as well as notify the Veterinary staff of any health concerns.

Qualifications: Experience working with cats preferred; ability to maintain confidentiality; ability to follow specific cat handling protocols; ability to track observable phenomenon via note-taking; patience and understanding of cats and their behavior; must adhere to all rules and standards set forth by MADACC.

Training: Volunteer Orientation, Basic Animal Handling/Behavior, Position-specific training

Scheduling: weekdays 10 a.m.-noon & 5:00-7:00 p.m, weekends 11:00 a.m.- 1:00p.m.

Outdoor Kennel Assistant –Adoption Events

Purpose: Assist Animal Care Attendants by providing supervision of dogs placed in outdoor kennels as well as assist with cleaning in between dogs.

Responsibilities: Outdoor Kennel Assistants will monitor dogs placed in the outdoor dog runs by Animal Care Attendants to ensure that dogs are safe and secure at all times. They will notify Animal Care Attendants of any dogs exhibiting unsafe or distressed behaviors. When Animal Care Attendants return dogs to the kennels, they will assist with cleaning individual dog runs before the next dog is brought out.

Qualifications: Experience working with dogs preferred; ability to maintain confidentiality; patience and understanding of dogs and their behavior; ability to adhere to specific cleaning and sanitation protocols; must adhere to all rules and standards set forth by MADACC.

Training: Volunteer Orientation, Basic Animal Handling/Behavior, Dog walking Training, Position-specific training

Scheduling: Saturdays in Summer 11-2pm

Cat Attendant (AM) – Oak Creek/ St. Francis Petco and Oak Creek Petsmart

Purpose: Provide for the daily care and needs of resident cats at off-site locations.

Responsibilities: Cat Attendants - AM are responsible for the daily cleaning of cat cages, feeding and watering cats, providing clean litter boxes, providing clean bedding and toys, and basic socialization and grooming as needed.

Qualifications: Experience working with cats preferred; ability to maintain confidentiality; ability to follow specific cat handling protocols; ability to track observable phenomenon via note-taking; patience and understanding of cats and their behavior; must adhere to all rules and standards set forth by MADACC.

Training: Volunteer Orientation, Basic Animal Handling/Behavior, Position-specific training

Scheduling: every day in the mornings (between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m.)

Cat Attendant (PM) – Oak Creek/ St. Francis Petco and Oak Creek Petsmart
Purpose: Provide for the daily care and needs of resident cats at off-site locations.

Responsibilities: Cat Attendants - PM are responsible for the final cleaning each day of cat cages, re-feeding and watering cats, scooping litter boxes, and tidying up bedding and toys. Basic socialization and grooming as needed.

Qualifications: Experience working with cats preferred; ability to maintain confidentiality; ability to follow specific cat handling protocols; ability to track observable phenomenon via note-taking; patience and understanding of cats and their behavior; must adhere to all rules and standards set forth by MADACC.

Training: Volunteer Orientation, Basic Animal Handling/Behavior, Position-specific training

Scheduling: every day in the evenings (between 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.)

Tier C: by invitation

Photographers

Purpose: Provide photos of adoptable animals and photos to replace original intake photos as necessary.

Responsibilities: In teams of two, photographers will produce quality photos of assigned dogs and cats. Dogs will be photographed in areas designated by staff, and cats will be photographed on cat towers in each of the cat wards. Areas and equipment must be cleaned and sanitized between animals.

Qualifications: Experience working with animals preferred; ability to maintain confidentiality; ability to follow specific animal handling protocols; ability to follow specific cleaning and sanitation protocols; must adhere to all rules and standards set forth by MADACC.

Training: Volunteer Orientation, Basic and Advanced Animal Handling/Behavior, Position-specific training

Scheduling: TBA

Spay/Neuter Assistant – interview required

Purpose: Assist Veterinary staff with spay/neuter surgeries for the low-cost spay/neuter program and adoption program.

Responsibilities: Spay/Neuter assistants assist with the check-in of surgery animals, pre-surgery tasks, and monitor the recovery of animals.

Qualifications: Experience working with animals preferred; ability to maintain confidentiality; ability to follow specific animal handling protocols; ability to lift at least 50lbs; ability to work individually and as a team; comfortable with taking direction; patience and understanding of animals and their behavior; ability to follow specific cleaning and sanitation protocols; must adhere to all rules and standards set forth by MADACC.

Training: Volunteer Orientation, Basic and Advanced Animal Handling/Behavior, Position-specific training

Scheduling: Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays with surgery 8:00-10:00 a.m., 10:00a.m.-noon

Veterinary Assistant – interview required

Purpose: Assist Veterinary staff with various tasks to include medical exams for foster animals and adoptions

Responsibilities: Veterinary Assistant volunteers will assist the MADACC veterinary staff with medical exams. Veterinary Assistant volunteers may be asked to bring animals from the kennels to the treatment area, hold animals during exams, tests, or vaccinations, etc.

Qualifications: Experience working with animals preferred; ability to maintain confidentiality; ability to follow specific animal handling protocols; ability to lift at least 50 lbs; comfortable taking direction; patience and understand of animals and their behavior; ability to follow specific cleaning and sanitation protocols; must adhere to all rules and standards set forth by MADACC.

Training: Volunteer Orientation, Basic and Advanced Animal Handling/Behavior, Position-specific training

Scheduling: Tuesdays noon-3:00p.m., Wednesdays 10:00a.m.-noon, Sundays noon-3:00p.m.

Volunteer Policies

Before You Arrive

Volunteers may assist in the facility any time between 10:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. The shelter is closed to volunteers on holidays.

Wear comfortable clothes that you don't mind getting dirty, stained, wet or snagged. You should wear long pants and sturdy, non-skid, closed-toe shoes for your own safety and protection.

If you are pregnant or if you have any condition that might compromise your immune system, you must notify your physician of your intent to volunteer at the shelter. Your doctor may want you to limit or stop your volunteering, or s/he may have medical advice/precautions for you.

We are not responsible for the loss or theft of your personal belongings. Please keep any items of value on your person or locked in your vehicle.

In The Facility

When you arrive, please sign-in on the clip board at the front desk.

You will then log-in using your pin number (emailed to you after orientation) on the volunteer computer.

Please wear your volunteer name tag at all times while in the facility.

Volunteers must be polite, courteous and helpful when dealing with staff and the public. Please refer all questions regarding policies and procedures with which you are not familiar to a supervisor or to the Volunteer Coordinator. It is extremely important that the public not be misinformed and that you report any potential conflict to a supervisor.

Please follow all staff directives and do not represent yourself as a MADACC employee.

Any discussion regarding MADACC policies, procedures, and/or activities should be held in private with staff and/or supervisor(s).

Volunteers should not get involved in conflicts between staff and citizens.

Camera phones and other recording devices are not allowed to be used unless permission is obtained from the Executive Director.

MADACC volunteers are ONLY allowed to interact with approved animals after the proper training (dog walking or cat socializing) has been completed. Interacting includes sticking fingers in cages, opening cage doors, petting animals, etc. Any deviation from this policy will result in termination of volunteering at MADACC.

Absolutely NO volunteers in quarantine rooms, treatment area, euthanasia room or the unloading area unless escorted by a MADACC employee.

On Your Way Out

- Return any leashes, signs or other materials to the appropriate areas
- Sign out on the volunteer computer and the front desk clip board

General Guidelines

If a bite or scratch breaks your skin, or any injury occurs, notify a supervisor immediately. If a supervisor is not available, please go to the front desk and ask to speak to a vet tech.

If you suspect an animal is sick or injured, please notify a vet tech or a supervisor immediately.

Always wash/sanitize your hands between handling animals in order to reduce the spread of disease.

Sanitation and Disease Prevention

The health of the animals in our facility is a priority. Everyone must follow sanitation guidelines in an effort to minimize disease transmission. The opportunity for animals to be transferred into an adoption program increases when they are healthy. Therefore, it is in their best interest to keep them as healthy as possible. The following are some guidelines to follow regarding sanitation.

- Always wash and sanitize hands between animals. There are hand washing sinks in the break room and bathrooms. There are liquid hand sanitizer dispensers in each kennel room.

- Walk dogs in and out of building following procedures.

- Do not reach into cages to pet animals. This can spread disease.

- Dispose of dog feces in appropriate trash containers. Do not leave any feces on the ground.

- Only occupy volunteer designated areas of the building. Stay out of off limit areas. This is to minimize the spread of disease transmission. The off limit areas are the quarantine rooms, treatment area, euthanasia room, and the unloading area.

- If you observe any illness in an animal please notify the vet tech staff.

MADACC reserves the right to terminate a volunteer's service at any time, with or without warning. The following will result in termination:

- Theft
- Substance abuse
- Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs while on premises
- Having any illegal contraband in your possession while on premises
- Discourtesy/rudeness to another volunteer, staff member or citizen
- Any act of cruelty to an animal
- Careless, negligent performance of volunteer duties
- Altering a kennel card in any way
- Interfering verbally or physically with an employee or member of the public
- Sexual harassment
- Deviating from sanitation/disease prevention guidelines
- Unauthorized photography or audio/video recording in non-public areas of the MADACC building
- Interacting with animals not approved for socialization without explicit authorization from a supervisor
- Disclosure or removal from the premises of confidential MADACC information. Confidential information includes information, in any form, related to MADACC's operations and finances, management, employees, animal owners, animal claimants, animal attack victims, animal euthanasia, animal bite records, animal medical records, animal behavioral records, and similar information, which is not generally known by or readily available to the public. Confidential information also includes any codes, passwords, usernames, or other identification or information necessary to access any of the MADACC's computer files, e-mail accounts, voicemail systems, and other systems and accounts belonging to MADACC.

If you have a problem or question, please talk to the Volunteer coordinator or a supervisor. If neither is available, please go to the front desk and ask to speak with a vet tech.

Smoking Policy

For health and safety considerations, MADACC prohibits smoking in MADACC facilities. If you wish to smoke you may do so outside of the building.

Contact with the media

The Executive Director or designated supervisors shall be responsible for all official contacts with the news media, including answering of questions from the media. If you are approached by a member of the media you may politely refer them to the Executive Director.

Grievances

Any and all complaints regarding MADACC, its employees or its policies will only be accepted if written, signed and given to the Volunteer Coordinator.

Why Does MADACC Euthanize Animals?

Euthanasia is the term used for humanely putting an animal to death. Euthanasia is an unfortunate reality in many shelters around the country, and particularly for open-admission animal shelters and animal control facilities.

MADACC is an open-admission animal control facility. As such, MADACC never turns an animal away regardless of its age, medical condition, breed, physical condition, temperament or the current kennel space available.

MADACC works with over 150 shelters and rescues across the state, with the goal of transferring as many adoptable animals as possible into their adoption programs. In addition, MADACC has a limited adoption program that focus on Pit Bull type dogs and cats. MADACC staff is proud of the fact that every animal is treated as an individual, and they provide the best humane care for every animal that enters the shelter.

Animals may be euthanized at MADACC because they are sick or injured. While their medical condition may be treatable, it may not be financially realistic for us to do so, or the animal's prognosis may be poor. What is treatable for an animal living at home with its owner may not be treatable when the animal is living in a stressful shelter environment. Placing these animals with responsible shelters and rescues with the resources to treat these animals is an option utilized whenever appropriate.

Animals may be euthanized because they possess behaviors that make them poor candidates for adoption. MADACC has a responsibility not only to the animals of Milwaukee County, but also to the people who will be adopting these animals, and the people who share a community with them. We cannot in good conscience adopt out animals that are potentially dangerous, or who have severe problems adapting to change. Our staff is well-versed in animal behavior – while a volunteer may feel that an animal is "fine", our staff that works with these animals throughout the duration of their stay, may see something that a non-professional could miss.

Sadly, animals are sometimes euthanized because space is tight. The reason MADACC and shelters in general exist is that there are too many animals and not enough homes. This is particularly true for the two most vulnerable pet populations in our communities – Pit Bull type dogs and cats. We do not have a time limit for our animals, but there may be times when we are housing an abundance of a particular type of animal, and we don't have any other options. At that time the animal in the shelter that is deemed the least likely to be adopted (due to age, temperament, illness and other factors) is the animal that will be chosen for euthanasia.

It is very difficult emotionally for our staff to have to make a decision to euthanize any animal, and then to have to perform the procedure. Euthanasia is not taken lightly and it can raise the stress level of the employees a great deal. Volunteers are asked to respect our employees and the difficult decisions they make on a daily basis. We recognize that you may not always understand the reasons as to why an animal was euthanized, but it is highly inappropriate to confront the MADACC staff and make their jobs even more difficult by questioning them or challenging them on a euthanasia decision. You are to consult with the Volunteer Coordinator, Shelter Manager or Executive Director only. Likewise, if you are unsure what has happened to an animal you've gotten to know here, you are not to ask the staff. The reason is simple - if there was an unhappy

ending to that animal's story, we don't expect the employees to relive the event for each curious volunteer. It is far too stressful for staff in an already stressful job. Please see the Volunteer Coordinator and you will be given an honest answer and will have the opportunity to discuss your feelings and any concerns you might have.

We also ask that you be very careful and use discretion when discussing your feelings about a particular sad ending with other volunteers. Dwelling on the negative isn't good for anyone's morale and often leads to the spread of inaccurate information as the story gets retold down the line. You will hear of sad endings, but never lose sight of the happy endings. They far outnumber the sad ones. Employees and volunteers should focus on their successes and be proud that what they're doing is ensuring more pets are finding their forever homes.

Zoonotic Diseases

Worker Safety in the Animal Shelter*

Zoonosis

Zoonosis is the term used to describe diseases that can be passed from animals to humans and vice versa. This is an issue of special importance to staff who work in animal shelters because of the unknown background and high incidence of disease in shelter animals. Veterinary staff who work in animal hospitals, zoos and laboratories, for example, know more about the medial history of their patients than shelter workers dealing with large numbers of stray animals on a daily basis. There are at least 200 known zoonotic diseases, and more are being continually added to the list. Fortunately for most shelter workers dealing mainly with dogs and cats, the list of zoonotic diseases to be concerned about is much shorter than 200. The good news is also that most of these diseases can be avoided or their impact minimized by following a few straightforward rules.

The single most effective thing you can do to avoid contracting a disease from an animal or from the shelter environment is to

ALWAYS WASH YOUR HANDS AFTER HANDLING ANYTHING.

In addition, make certain to wash before handling any food or putting your hands in your mouth or up to your face and eyes.

Most diseases are spread through the oral route or by penetration through breaks in the skin or mucus membranes. This one simple step of hand washing will prevent the spread of most diseases by avoiding the route of infection. This is not fool proof, however, as some disease organisms can penetrate intact skin or are inhaled.

<u>Other precautions:</u>

- Wear gloves when cleaning and disinfecting cages, food and water bowls, litter pans, etc. This is especially important if you have any open wounds on your hands and arms. Wash your hands after removing the gloves. There may have been a break in the gloves.
- Seek prompt medical attention for any scratches, bites or wounds received on the job.
- Use gloves and the proper equipment when handling dangerous animals to avoid injury.
- Wash and disinfect any wounds received immediately and seek professional attention.
- Avoid self-treatment.
- Wash hands using iodine based disinfectant soaps.
- According to the CDC, in order to wash ones' hands properly, hands should be lathered and rubbed together vigorously for at least 10-15 seconds, and then rinsed thoroughly under a forceful stream of warm water.
- Avoid eating food in areas where animals are housed or treated.
- Avoid letting animals lick your face or wounds.

- Pregnant women should avoid cleaning litter boxes because of the risk of contracting Toxoplasmosis. The risk is actually minimal and most cases of Toxoplasmosis are not transmitted to humans from cat feces, but from ingestion of contaminated or undercooked meat. Prompt daily cleaning of the litter box disposes of fecal material before it becomes infective. However, to be on the safe side, this duty should be assigned to others.
- If you do become ill, let your physician know that you work with animals.
- If you don't know if a disease or condition is zoonotic or not, assume that it is and treat it accordingly. Wear gloves and masks, isolate the animal, wash hands, and DISINFECT, DISINFECT, DISINFECT!
- It should always be remembered that most people who work with or own animals do not contract any of these diseases. The people most at risk are the elderly, young children and people who are immune-compromised, such as HIV patients or people taking immunosuppressive drugs. The rewards obtained from the human animal bond far outweigh the risks of becoming ill from contact with animals.
- It is important to recognize the signs that an animal is sick. Some signs are more obvious than others. Important symptoms of disease may include: Depression, pale gums, loss of appetite, dehydration, fever, vomiting, diarrhea, ocular and nasal discharges, reddened eyes, hair loss or reddened skin, shaking the head, coughing, sneezing, lethargy, straining to urinate or defecate, blood in the stool or urine, lumps or swellings, penile or vaginal discharges, neurological problems like star gazing, head tilt, head pressing, seizuring, etc.
- Diseases are transmitted by a number of mechanisms. Most diseases are either caused by bacteria, parasites, viruses, or fungi (the causative agent of ringworm) and are transmitted by the fecal-oral route or through breaks in the mucus membranes or skin. Staff should understand the modes of disease transmission in order to keep themselves healthy and safe.
- The most commonly encountered diseases are caused by direct contact with infected tissues, aerosolized particles, contaminated feces, urine or saliva, or through contact with grooming utensils, etc. Fomites are one of the most common ways diseases are transmitted and one of the most overlooked mechanisms. They are particularly dangerous when dealing with viruses or fungi that can survive in the environment for long periods of time and are resistant to routine disinfecting techniques.

*Dr. Lila Miller, DVM, Sr. Director. Animal Services & Vet Advisor, ASPCA. Worker Safety in the Animal Shelter, April 20, 1990. (http://www.petfinder.com/for-shelters/worker-safety-animal-shelter.html)