

Job Title**Animal Pathways & Assessment Specialist****Department**

Animal Medical and Care

Reports To

Executive Director and Medical Director

Classification

Full-Time, Exempt

General Description

Under general supervision, the Animal Pathways & Behavioral Assessment Specialist evaluates dogs and cats housed at the shelter to determine appropriate outcome pathways based on behavior, medical condition, public-safety risk, and available resources. This position exercises professional judgment in making placement and outcome recommendations, including adoption, foster care, transfer, rescue placement, hospice care, or humane euthanasia.

The position requires advanced experience working with dogs, demonstrated knowledge of canine body language and behavior, working knowledge of feline behavior, and the ability to prioritize public safety while supporting humane animal welfare outcomes.

Essential Duties and Responsibilities**Animal Evaluation & Pathway Determination**

- Conduct behavioral and observational assessments of dogs and cats at intake and throughout their shelter stay.
- Assign and document appropriate outcome pathways, including:
 - Adoption Candidate
 - Transfer to Shelter
 - Transfer to Rescue

- Foster Care – Behavior
 - Foster Care – Medical
 - Hospice Foster
 - Potential Euthanasia Candidate
 - Other
- Reassess animals as new behavioral, medical, or historical information becomes available.

Public Safety & Risk Assessment

- Evaluate potential public-safety risks associated with animal behavior, history, and observed indicators.
- Apply professional judgment to identify animals requiring special handling, placement restrictions, mitigation plans, or humane euthanasia.
- Ensure all pathway decisions are consistent with public-safety standards, shelter policy, and applicable regulations.

Collaboration & Information Gathering

- Consult with veterinary staff, animal care staff, volunteers, and fosters to obtain behavioral observations and relevant history.
- Communicate assessment findings clearly to internal staff and partner organizations to support safe and appropriate placement decisions.

Enrichment Program Design

- Create individualized, species-specific enrichment, including food puzzles, sensory, social, and environmental enrichment for dogs and cats that can transfer into adoptive/foster homes.
- Educate staff and volunteers on safe handling, animal behavior, and the implementation of daily enrichment activities.
- Prioritize time out of the shelter for dogs.
- Communicate the needs of individual animals to staff and volunteers to help match them with appropriate adopters.

Documentation & Records

- Accurately document behavioral observations, assessments, pathway determinations, and reassessments in the shelter management system.
- Prepare clear, objective, and defensible written records to support internal review and external accountability.

Professional Practice

- Follow established shelter policies, assessment protocols, and safety procedures.
 - Participate in case reviews, outcome discussions, and continuous improvement efforts related to animal assessment and placement.
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Minimum Qualifications

- Graduation from high school or equivalent.
 - **Minimum of 5 years of direct experience working with dogs** in an animal shelter, animal control agency, rescue organization, or professional animal care setting.
 - Demonstrated knowledge of **canine body language, stress signals, fear, reactivity, and aggression**.
 - Working knowledge of feline behavior and handling.
 - Ability to make independent, high-stakes decisions involving animal welfare and public safety.
 - Ability to prepare clear, objective written documentation.
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Preferred Qualifications

- Formal education or certification in animal behavior, shelter behavior, or canine training.
 - Experience working with dogs with bite history or documented behavioral concerns.
 - Experience in a municipal or high-volume shelter environment.
 - Familiarity with animal shelter software systems.
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Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

- Knowledge of canine and feline behavior and handling techniques.
 - Skill in assessing behavior and risk in a shelter environment.
 - Ability to exercise sound judgment under pressure.
 - Ability to communicate effectively with staff, volunteers, and partner organizations.
 - Ability to work collaboratively in a team environment.
 - Emotional resilience and professionalism when handling difficult outcomes.
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Physical & Work Environment Requirements

- Ability to safely handle animals of various sizes, breeds, and temperaments.
- Ability to work in a shelter environment with exposure to animals, noise, and emotionally challenging situations.
- Ability to stand, walk, bend, and lift as required for animal handling duties.