

GASTON COUNTY POLICE
DEPARTMENT
Animal Care and Enforcement

Foster Parent Manual



GASTON COUNTY POLICE

ANIMAL CARE
ENFORCEMENT

1491 Business Park Court, Gastonia NC 28052

704-922-8677

GCACE@gcps.org

www.Facebook.com/yourshelter

Welcome!

Thank you very much for your interest in becoming a Volunteer Foster Parent at Gaston County Animal Care and Enforcement. Volunteer Foster Parents are an essential part of the operation of the shelter and one of the most important parts of the continued wellbeing of the at risk animals in our care.

Volunteer Foster Parenting at an animal shelter is not an easy task, but is extremely rewarding. Your love of animals led you to become a Volunteer Foster Parent. Becoming a Volunteer Foster Parent is one way you can give back to the unwanted animals that need your love and compassion. Volunteer Foster Parenting at an animal shelter can be heartbreaking and frustrating, but helping the pets in the shelter often overshadows the negative. Through all this, keep in mind it is through your skills and commitment that we can make a difference in the lives of these animals and in our community. In addition, Volunteer Foster Parenting is a privilege. We reserve the right to refuse any applicant that may not be a suitable fit.

We look forward to working with you and please let us know if we can help you during your journey as a Volunteer Foster Parent.

Sincerely,

The Staff at Gaston County Animal Care and Enforcement.

Purpose

The mission of Animal Care and Enforcement is not only to enhance the safety of citizens, but also to ensure the proper care and treatment of animals. This is accomplished through animal-related services which reflect our professionalism and a concern for responsible pet ownership. Animal Care and Enforcement became a Division of the County Police Department on September 18, 1995.

Animal Care and Enforcement has gone through many changes in the past 5.5 years!

Animal Care and Enforcement was restructured in 2015 to include a DVM as the shelter administrator and added a sworn Captain and two sworn Sergeants to oversee the Enforcement portion of ACE. In the past 5 years a lot has changed in the day to day operations and the community involvement. The shelter portion of the unit focuses on the health and wellbeing of the animals in our care and to find a positive outcome for the animals suitable for adoption or rescue.

The shelter operations of ACE include the intake of stray and owner surrender animals, day to day care of the animals to include twice daily cleaning, proper nutrition, enrichment, medical care, daily evaluation and euthanasia when needed. Once the pet has reached its release date (stray hold up), the pet is medically and behaviorally evaluated and assigned a pathway (rescue only, adoptable, euthanasia due to behavior or severe health conditions). The pets are then placed on social media to encourage adoption and rescue. ACE works tirelessly to properly and ethically care for the animals in our care. ACE does euthanize pets that are unsuitable for adoption or rescue due to severe illness and behaviors that may cause injury to the community.

ACE Enforcement is responsible for ensuring the safety of the community from animals and safety of the animals themselves through ordinance enforcement and community education. Enforcement enforces the county ordinance and the state laws in regards to animal care, and rabies mandates.

Purpose of This Manual

This Manual is designed to acquaint you with the shelter and provide you with general information about Foster Parent conditions and policies affecting your involvement as a Volunteer Foster Parent.

The general policies contained in this Manual apply to all Volunteer Foster Parents of Animal Care and Enforcement. Following the policies described in this Manual is considered a condition of continuous Volunteer Foster Parent work. The Manual is a summary of our policies, which are presented here only as a matter of information and should not be considered as a contract of Volunteer Foster Parenting.

You are responsible for reading, understanding, and complying with the provisions of this Manual. Our objective is to provide you with an environment that is constructive to both personal and professional growth.

WHAT WILL WE BE ASKING OF YOU AS A VOLUNTEER FOSTER PARENT?

1. Volunteer Foster Parenting is a serious commitment. Please have the availability to commit for at least 6 consecutive months.
2. Attend required orientation for Volunteer Foster Parenting
3. Support Gaston County Animal Care and Enforcement when in the community.
4. Be honest with yourself and us concerning your needs, wishes, and availability.
5. Be at least 18 years of age
6. Maintain an active email account through which we may communicate with you. We also utilize a Facebook private group for communication.

WHAT DO YOU GET IN RETURN?

1. Plenty of gratification from the pets and staff at ACE
2. Opportunity to work in a recognized and well-respected animal shelter that protects the community as well as the animals.
3. Learn about animals through direct Volunteer Foster Parent work
4. Explore new career opportunities.
5. Educate the general public on animal welfare issues
6. Be an ambassador for the animals and shelter
7. A chance to develop new skills or polish old ones.
8. Receive support and feedback from a professional staff.
9. A chance to meet others who share your interests.

Volunteer Foster Parent Application process

Gaston County Animal Care and Enforcement is a unit of the Gaston County Police Department. As a result, ACE has some processes that many may find "intrusive". None of the information that is obtained about an applicant is ever released and not discussed. All information remains confidential.

Steps to becoming a Volunteer Foster Parent

1. All Volunteer Foster Parents must be 18 years of age or older.
2. Complete the Volunteer Foster Parent Application on line at <https://www.cognitofrms.com/GastonCounty1/questionnaireforvolunteercaretakerprogram>
3. Animal Care and Enforcement will complete the following:
 - a. Background check
 - b. Ensure Volunteer Foster Parent applicants pets are properly registered with Gaston County (Gaston County residents only), and have no animal related complaints or open cases with the local animal control facility
 - c. Perform reference checks
 - d. Perform an at home inspection
4. Approved applicants will receive an email stating they have been approved and information on the next scheduled orientation.
5. Not approved applicants will receive an email stating they have not been approved. Due to Department policy, the reason for not being approved will not be disclosed.

Mandatory Orientation

All applicants must complete the mandatory orientation prior to participating in any Volunteer Foster Parent activities. Approved applicants that fail to complete the orientation will be removed from the list of approved Volunteer Foster Parents.

The orientations are generally held on Saturday mornings at the animal shelter located at 1491 Business Park Court, Gastonia, NC.

ORIENTATION AGENDA

1. Introduction to Animal Care and Enforcement
2. Review Volunteer Foster Parent Policy and Procedures Manual
3. Review safety protocols
4. Reviewing and signing release waivers
5. Introduction to kitten fostering
6. Introduction to puppy/dog fostering

CONTACT NUMBERS

During business hours

- (Monday through Friday 8 to 5)
- 704-922-8677. If you have general questions, please email GCACE@gcps.org

After hours/emergencies: All other non-listed hours, holidays, etc.

- Call the Foster coordinator to discuss the emergency.
- *It is up to the Foster Coordinator to determine a necessary course of action. Please keep in mind that at times the foster Coordinator may elect euthanasia do to medical findings.

Please note, if you decide to take your foster animal directly to an emergency veterinary facility you will be held responsible for any of the costs incurred.

REASONS TO FOSTER A SHELTER PET

Fostering is a great opportunity to help the unwanted animals of Gaston County find new, loving homes. It is rewarding for everyone involved in the foster process. Fostering will help the Gaston County Animal Shelter make space for incoming pets and decrease our need for euthanasia for space reasons. Fostering also provides needed socialization for the animals that they may not receive in the shelter setting.

CHOOSING FOSTER CANDIDATES

Not every animal is eligible for the foster program. Animals available for foster care are those who are expected to be deemed adoptable upon completion of a term of foster care. Reasons animals are placed into fosters include but not limited to:

- Weight gain
- Socialization
- too young for adoption at the time of entry at the shelter
- minor injuries
- respiratory infections
- Kennel related stress

Animals will **not** be considered for foster care if any of the following apply:

- Represent a threat to public health or safety
- Have a medical or behavioral problem that will prevent them from becoming an adoption candidate after the determined amount of time needed for a foster home
- Have a prognosis of poor quality of life

The following guidelines will also be followed:

- An animal fostered for socialization will be at the shelter's discretion
- No animals under 4 weeks of age will be fostered without the mother, unless the foster home has had specific training in such care.
- Animals in foster care will be returned upon completion of their foster requirement and placed immediately for adoption. If a foster home wants to adopt a foster, they will need to follow all adoption guidelines and pay all fees associated at end of foster need.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Who is the legal owner of my foster pet?

GCACE remains the legal owner until the pet is adopted or rescued by an approved Placement Partner. Since the pets come from GCACE and have not been adopted or rescued, they remain Gaston County property. This is important that fosters follow the same state mandates that the animal shelter is obligated to meet.

2. How long are pets in foster homes?

It completely depends on the pet and the situation. The length of stay will depend on the foster family's availability, the healing process of the foster pet, and the ability to find a suitable adopter. With great photos, videos and marketing, many animals will have a short stay at their foster homes.

3. Can I adopt my Foster Pet?

YES! As long as foster parents meet the shelter requirements necessary for adoption, foster parents have first choice to adopt their Foster Pet.

4. How are Foster Pets promoted?

Photos and stories of all adoptable dogs in foster homes are posted on the Gaston County website, Petango.com, and Adopt-a-Pet.com as well as social media and adoption events. Foster Pets are also promoted at special events throughout the year. Foster parents may participate in various shelter programs and events to increase the visibility of their Foster Pet to potential adopters. Foster parents can also help promote their Foster Pet to their family, friends, interested adopters, colleagues and the general public through a variety of means including flyers, emails, social media, like Facebook and blogs, and even just by walking your Foster Pet in local neighborhoods while he wears his "I'm available" blue vest.

5. What is the process for adopting a Foster Pet?

The process is very similar to adopting a dog from the shelter. The steps are briefly outlined below:

- Potential adopters are required to submit an adoption questionnaire for staff review before they can physically meet a Foster Pet.
- Suitable applicants may be contacted by staff for additional screening.
- Once approved, meet and greets with the Foster Pet and foster parents will be scheduled with qualified applicants.
- After the meet and greet (and if the applicant is still interested in the dog), foster parents will make a recommendation to the shelter staff regarding the adoption. The Foster Pet stays with the foster parent until they hear from the shelter staff.
- Adoption is approved or rejected by shelter staff. Final approval of all adoptions is at the sole discretion of the GCACE staff.
- Once approved, the adopter pays adoption fees to the shelter and makes a
- Spay/neuter appointment, if necessary. Foster Pets cannot go to a potential adopter's home until the dog is spayed/neutered and the adoption is finalized by the vet. Foster Pet then goes to its new loving home.

Foster parents should stay in contact with the foster coordinator for assistance with the adoption process. Be sure to review the section on "The Adoption Process" in this manual.

6. If I have my own animals, can I Foster Pets?

- a. Family dogs must have a meet-and-greet with the potential Foster Pet to see if it's a suitable match.
- b. Keep in mind that it's always a health risk to expose your animal to other animals whether it's walking at parks, vet waiting rooms or other common animal areas. The

health risk is minimal if your animals are current on their vaccinations, maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle, and are not elderly or very young.

- c. If you or someone in your household is immune-compromised, consult your doctor before fostering since working or living with animals exposes humans to a group of diseases called zoonoses. A zoonotic disease (there are about 200) is defined as a disease transmitted from animals to humans and also from humans to animals. To find out more about zoonoses, talk to your doctor and/or veterinarian. Proper hygiene, preventative measures and an understanding of these illnesses can reduce the risk of disease.

7. Can I foster for more than one organization at a time?

No. Since shelter pets are susceptible to many infectious diseases, some being fatal, we do not want pets in foster to be exposed to pets from other organizations to include shelters, rescue groups, boarding facilities. Shelter pets are often very young and stressed which make them more likely to be infected with common diseases such as panleukopenia, parvo virus, etc.

8. Can I foster if I had an infectious disease in my house from another foster pet?

Not immediately. You will need to follow proper disinfecting protocols for the infectious disease and cannot foster for a minimum of 30 days to ensure the disease organism has been removed from your home.

9. What supplies are needed to foster?

Foster parents provide space, food, basic training, exercise, socialization, and love for the dog/cat. The shelter will provide you with all the other supplies and equipment needed throughout your foster experience.

10. Do I have to crate-train my Foster Pet?

No, but it is one of the most efficient and effective ways to house train a puppy or re-train an adult dog. Some dogs do not like crates, and most dogs need to be transitioned or "trained" to use a crate, so it's up to the foster parent to decide whether to crate or not. Putting the dog in a crate while you are gone will give you peace of mind knowing that they are in a safe place, away from harm, and not doing any damage to your belongings or themselves. For many dogs, a crate can also represent a safe and comfortable place to call their own and provides them with a sense of security. Dogs actually like having a "den" to cuddle up in. Crating should never be used as punishment.

11. Do I need to have prior medical knowledge or expertise?

No, but you may be asked to administer medicine to your Foster Pet so you will have to be comfortable following veterinarian's instructions if fostering a sick or injured pet.

12. What if my Foster Pet becomes sick?

- a. All animals that are selected for foster care will be examined by the shelter staff and have a treatment plan in place before leaving for the foster home. Even though the animal has been examined, some diseases will not be apparent at time of exam. **It is extremely important that you follow the 10 day rule of segregating your foster animal from your own.** It is also very important that you have your companion animal(s) vaccinated for their own protection. You may want to speak with your veterinarian before fostering as they may suggest vaccines that are not routinely given.
- b. If your foster pet becomes ill while in your care, contact the dispatch number at 704.866.3300. The on call officer will determine the appropriate steps to take. If you decide to take the foster pet to a licensed veterinary practice without prior approval from GCACE, the fees associated with the visit will be your responsibility.

13. How much time each day is needed to foster?

- a. Commitment and responsibilities depend on the individual pet and situation. It's essential that foster parents understand that shelter dogs/cats may be stressed and moving the dog/cat from the shelter to the foster home is also very stressful and emotional.
- b. Foster parents must be willing to be patient and commit to the dog/cat because our goal is to keep them in a stable and consistent environment.
- c. Many of the dogs at the shelter are "adolescent" dogs between the age of 6 months and 2 years. They typically have a lot of energy and require vigorous daily exercise. This means at least a 30-45-minute brisk walk/run in the morning and again in the afternoon, with plenty of playtime in between. Older dogs may only need a morning and evening stroll.

How much time each day is needed to foster? Continued

Frequency	Dog Type	Daily Hours
Most Common	Dogs with a cold	2-3 hours
	Anxiety in a kennel	2-3 hours
	Weaned puppies/kittens	3-6 hours
	Injured dogs	2-3 hours
	Orphaned puppies/kittens	8 hours
	Behavior cases	Minimum 2-4 hours; varies
Least common	Mom with puppies	3 hours
	Cruelty victim	3 hours
If additional health problems develop, daily hour commitments may be extended. For example, foster parents may have to transport their foster animals to the vet during regular business hours.		

14. Can I take my Foster Pet to an off-leash dog park for exercise and socialization?

No. You are not allowed to take any Foster Pet from the GCACE to an off-leash dog park. Diseases are easily transmitted and the temperaments of visiting dogs are unknown, thus creating a huge liability to the GCACE. Also, taking a leashed dog to a dog park can create barrier frustration and aggression in dogs.

15. How can I help my Foster Pet become more adoptable?

There are several things that help increase the adoptability of a foster pet. Socialization is one of the most important areas that will increase the chance a pet is adopted. Socialization with other animals and people is very important. Basic training for dogs is helpful and allow the foster pet to put his best paw forward when meeting a prospective family. A dog that has already been

exercised for the day will be less likely to jump on people and will show their true personality. Marketing is a vital aspect of finding suitable adopters. People like to see cute pictures of foster pets in the home setting and out and about. They are able to visualize that pet in their family.

16. Am I responsible for finding my Foster Pet its foreverhome?

- a. No. foster families are not responsible for finding the new loving home for your foster pet. We do need your input, however. Foster families have a wealth of information on the “do’s” and “don’ts” of their foster pet and this is valuable to potential adopters.
- b. Foster families can assist with the social media marketing of the pet and provide important information to GCACE that will help us place the pet.

17. Can I return my Foster Pet to the shelter if I am unable to foster anylonger?

- a. Absolutely, though we prefer that foster parents continue to foster until we find a permanent home for their Foster Pet or they are suitable for adoption/rescue we understand that foster parents have lives also. It's extremely stressful for a dog to be returned to the shelter environment. However, we understand that situations change and it may become necessary to transfer a Foster Pet. We request that a foster parent provides as much notice as possible (preferably 3-4 weeks) so that we can find an alternative foster home for the pet. Of course, in an emergency a foster parent may always bring their foster pet back to the shelter.
- b. Include the following in your request-for-transfer email to GCACE@gcps.org:
A brief paragraph describing the pet; whether he is crate-trained, housetrained, has upcoming scheduled vet appointments; gets along with other dogs/cats; whether he is child-friendly and any other pertinent information. We have provided a form at the end of the manual.

18. What if I go on vacation or have a business trip?

- a. If given enough notice, we can usually find volunteers that can foster sit for short durations. We ask that foster parents always keep their Foster coordinator aware of any temporary foster sitting situations.
- b. Please include the requested information as outlined in Question 14.

19. Are Foster Pets ever euthanized?

Much energy, love, time and vet care is devoted to our Foster Pets, and the shelter is committed to finding homes for ALL the adoptable pets within its care. Some pets are in foster care because they’re seriously ill or injured. If, after medical attention, these pets are too injured or too weak to heal and are suffering without a means for relief or are irreparably aggressive, then the shelter staff will humanely euthanize these animals. Fortunately, most pets in foster care heal beautifully. On rare occasions, a dog in foster care may start to exhibit potentially dangerous behavior that was unknown or suppressed when the dog was at the shelter. The shelter may determine that this dog is too dangerous and will humanely euthanize the animal or seek an alternative facility for its care. Your safety is our #1 priority. You must always inform the shelter staff if your Foster Pet exhibits any aggressive behavior.

PICKING UP A NEW FOSTER ANIMAL

The Foster Coordinator or GCACE employee will contact a list of foster parents by email or phone. The first foster home that responds to the request will the foster animal(s). You have the option to decline a foster request for any reason.

Once you agree to foster an animal, you are responsible for arranging a pick-up time at the Gaston County Animal Shelter within **48 hours** from the time you commit to fostering.

You will receive any supplies needed for fostering (i.e. food, litter, medications) at the time of pick-up. You will get a foster animal fact sheet which will indicate the reason for fostering, any medications, and the estimated time of return.

You will receive a foster animal questionnaire that can be filled out during the animal(s) stay in your home. This form will give GCACE valuable information that can be passed on to a potential adopter. GCACE requires all animals are in a crate from transporting your foster animal to your home. GCACE will attempt to have crates available but we recommend that you obtain one for this purpose.

DOG AND CAT PROOFING YOUR HOME

It is important to ensure that your home and foster room are safe for your new foster pet.

- All cleaning supplies and medications should be placed out of reach from your foster. We suggest placing them in a locked cabinet.
- Block hiding places or small areas until you have learned your foster's behavior
- Locking trash cans are suggested, or removing them from the foster's reach
- Place all things chewable out of reach
- Safe toys for your foster: Small items or toys with squeakers can be dangerous if swallowed. Toys such as Kongs® and nylabones are suitable for dogs.
- Plan where your foster pet will stay in your home. Prepare for elimination accidents as many fosters are not house broken. Pee pads and an enzymatic cleaner are a necessity.
- Food bowls and a soft bed to lay on are a must.

BRINGING YOUR NEW FOSTER ANIMAL HOME

- Attempt to set up the area where your foster will be before bringing them home
- New foster animals should be kept separate from your existing companion animals of the same species for 7 to 10 days
- Introduce your foster to one room of the house first. Try to have homecoming be a quiet experience for the animal.
- Show each cat and kitten where the litter box is located
- Dogs and puppies should have a crate or safe place to rest and sleep
- Allow your foster quiet time to adjust to the new environment

HEALTH AND MEDICAL ISSUES

All animals that are selected for foster care will be examined by the shelter staff and have a treatment plan in place before leaving for the foster home. Even though the animal has been examined, some diseases will not be apparent at time of exam. **It is extremely important that you follow the 10 day rule of segregating your foster animal from your own.** It is also very important that you have your companion animal(s) vaccinated for their own protection. You may want to speak with your veterinarian before fostering as they may suggest vaccines that are not routinely given. It is important that you observe your foster for any signs of illness. Please document these findings on your foster animal fact sheet.

Things to look for are as follows:

- Sneezing/coughing that has a pattern
- Green/yellow mucus from nose or eyes
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Straining to urinate or defecate
- Bleeding from any part of the body
- Loss or decrease of appetite
- Change in attitude or behavior
- Lethargy or depressed

If your foster animal develops severe or bloody diarrhea, severe vomiting or is very lethargic, please contact the Foster Coordinator immediately as this constitutes as emergency.

SANITIZING YOUR HOUSE BETWEEN FOSTER ANIMALS

In order to prevent disease and parasite transfer to your companion animal or a new foster, cleaning between fosters is required. The following steps will aide in the decrease of disease

- Wash bedding in hot water, detergent and bleach
- Discard anything that cannot be washed
- Disinfect all washable surfaces with a mild bleach and water solution. The contact time with the hard surface must be 10 minutes
- Vacuum all carpeted areas and shampoo
- Regularly clean waste from the yard during and after the time the foster is in the home

VOLUNTEER FOSTER PARENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

VOLUNTEER FOSTER PARENT LEVELS

Volunteer Foster Parents will be categorized in levels of experience. New Volunteer Foster Parents will always begin at level 1. The timeline of progression through the levels is individual dependent and will not be the same for each Volunteer Foster Parent.

Foster Level 1: new Volunteer Foster Parent with minimal to no experience in fostering pets and is able to foster healthy adult cats or single well behaved dogs

Foster Level 2: novice Volunteer Foster Parent that has gained the basic care of animals in the foster setting, has basic animal behavior knowledge to be able to identify when animals are stressed, not feeling well, and basic knowledge of proper care of a foster pet. May foster healthy weaned litters of kittens, healthy weaned puppies, older healthy dogs, well behaved dogs.

Foster Level 3: Advanced Volunteer Foster Parent that has become proficient with proper unweaned/weaned kitten care, dogs in need of behavior training, puppies, dogs with minor health concerns.

Level 4: Master Volunteer Foster Parent that has developed proficient skills for the care of pets at risk and behavior concerns.

STAFF ONLY AREAS:

The shelter is a secure facility and does not allow volunteer foster parents in the treatment area. The reasoning is simply time management. When fosters return for boosters or rechecks, the staff is more efficient at treating the pet and getting the volunteer foster parent on their way.

No volunteers will be allowed in the staff work room, the stray wards for cats and dogs, the bite wards of cats and dogs, the sick wards for dogs and cats, or the in-processing room (treatment room). The reason behind this is to ensure the safety of the volunteers and to prevent unnecessary spread of disease in the shelter or access to supplies and equipment

Professional Attitude

Volunteer Foster Parents must:

- Take their commitment seriously.
- Agree to conduct themselves in a professional manner with the animals, co-Volunteer Foster Parents, staff, and the public.
- Maintain a professional and **positive** attitude. Negative and unprofessional comments regarding the organization or staff will not be tolerated. This includes comments on social media.

- Social Media postings in regard to Gaston County, GCPD, Animal care and Enforcement should be professional and ensure that anyone viewing the posting knows you are not an employee or express the philosophies or opinions of Gaston County or any of their departments.
- No unauthorized photos or videos may be taken at ACE or their events. Even though the intent is to help the animals of the shelter, photos/videos taken at the incorrect time or angle may relay the wrong impression.
- All communications within the Volunteer Foster Parent group and staff must be respectful and professional. All communications beside basic "how to" should be directed to the Foster coordinator at ACE. Communications regarding ACE policies, procedures, and programs should be only directed to the Foster coordinator at ACE. Any communication with parties other than the Foster coordinator could jeopardize your participation in the Volunteer Foster Parent program.
- Keep all client data confidential. No names of clients are to be discussed outside our organization.
- Be friendly, warm, and courteous to the public, and put them at ease.
- Be neat and accurate.
- Ask the staff for assistance with any questions to which you are not sure of the absolute correct answer.
- Follow all policies and procedures. Failure to follow policies, procedures and direction from the staff may jeopardize your participation in the Volunteer Foster Parent program.
- Do not provide medical advice, behavior advice, or advice regarding county policy or ACE policy and procedures. These should be referred to the appropriate staff member of ACE.

PARTICIPATION:

- We ask that Volunteer Foster Parents commit to a minimum of 1 foster experience per year. This will keep the foster parent active in the program and provide a suitable number of foster parents for the busy times of the year such as the spring and summer months.
- Be reliable. As we all need time away from the bustle of work life, ACE wants to ensure the staff has time away from the shelter to meet personal obligations.
- We ask that all volunteer foster parents notify Ace of any concerns regarding their foster pets in a timely manner before it becomes an emergency. ACE has a limited over time budget and as you, need time with their families. We always want to ensure foster parents and foster pets receive the care they need before it becomes an emergency.

VOLUNTEER FOSTER PARENT PERSONAL PROPERTY:

- As part of fostering a shelter pet, personal property may become damaged by a young puppy or adult dog. Animal Care and Enforcement is not responsible for damage of personal items.

MEDIA PROCEDURES:

- In order to maintain accuracy in information dissemination and branding, it is essential that all media requests are first approved by the Public Relations department. All

requests should first be brought to the attention of the Volunteer Foster Manager who will forward it on to the next level.

- Media is anything that will be printed, broadcast, or televised about the Animal Care and Enforcement. We welcome any contacts or story ideas you may have.
- Volunteer Foster Parents are not to talk to the press directly as a representative of Gaston County, GCPD, ACE or employees.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Make suggestions! We welcome your ideas as a means of improving our operations. Suggestions can be made to the Volunteer Foster Parent Manager.

RESIGNATION:

- Please notify the Volunteer Foster Manager. You can do this in person, by email (GCACE@gcps.org) or by phone (704.922.8677). We may ask for you to fill out an exit survey. This provides valuable feedback to improve our program.

GENERAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The work rules and standards of conduct for animal care and enforcement are important, and the organization regards them seriously. All volunteers are urged to become familiar with these rules and standards. In addition, volunteers are expected to follow the rules and standards faithfully in conducting shelter business. Please note that any volunteer who deviates from these rules and standards will be subject to corrective action, up to and including immediate removal from the volunteer program.

Standards of Conduct:

While not intended to list all the forms of behavior that are considered unacceptable as a Volunteer Foster Parent of ACE, the following are examples of rule infractions or misconduct that may result in verbal counseling, up to and including immediate removal from the Volunteer Foster Parent program at ACE:

- Any inhumane treatment or harm caused to ACE animals
- Theft or inappropriate removal or possession of property
- Fighting or threatening violence in the shelter or towards shelter staff or citizens
- Boisterous or disruptive activity in the shelter
- Negligence or improper conduct leading to damage of organization-owned or customer- owned property
- Disrespectful conduct
- Smoking on county property
- Sexual or other unlawful or unwelcome harassment

- Unauthorized disclosure of confidential information
 - Violation of personnel policies
 - Unprofessional, negative, disrespectful comments towards citizens, staff, Volunteer Foster Parents, Gaston County employees will not be tolerated
 - Inappropriate or negative comments regarding ACE, GCPD, Gaston county or its employees.
 - Gossiping or bullying
 - Misuse or misrepresentation of information, photos, videos, or logos.
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Gaston County policies below: Though these policies are directed toward paid employees of Gaston County, it is expected that any volunteers follow the same guidelines. The disciplinary portions of the policies below do NOT apply to volunteers of Gaston County Animal Care and Enforcement. However, if a volunteer foster parent is in violation of one of the policies below they will be removed from the volunteer foster parent program at Animal Care and Enforcement. All complaints or concerns should be directed to the ACE Foster Coordinator at GCACE@gcps.org

GASTON COUNTY DRUG POLICY

It is the County's intent and obligation to provide a healthful, safe, and secure work environment. Gaston County is concerned about the effects of certain substances upon the health and safety of its employees, and the potential of these substances to impair employee work performance. Employees are expected and required to report to work on time and in appropriate mental and physical condition for work.

Scope and Application

Examples of substances that fall under this policy include illegal drugs, prescription drugs, non-prescription drugs, alcohol, and any other items having the ability to cause impairment. Gaston County recognizes that substance use and abuse, on or off duty, leads to increased accidents, injuries, illnesses, and medical claims and can lead to the deterioration of employees' health and adversely affect their family lives.

The County has a program of drug and alcohol testing, voluntary referral for counseling and rehabilitation, and appropriate discipline, including termination for violations of this Policy.

It is to be stressed that this policy covers much more than illegal drugs; impairment as defined herein can result from the use, abuse, or misuse of both illegal drugs, prescription drugs, non-prescription drugs, and alcohol.

Definitions

Applicant: Any person whose offer of employment is contingent upon the production of a negative drug test. It shall also refer to any employee who applies for and is extended an offer of a promotion or transfer to another position while in Gaston County government.

Impaired: Detrimentially impacted by any intoxicant, illegal drug, prescription drug, over the counter drug, or any physical or mind-altering substance that may cause an individual to lose control of his bodily or mental faculties to such an extent that there is an appreciable and noticeable change in such individual's bodily or mental faculties.

Positive Drug Test (not performed on Volunteer Foster Parents) Positive result from an initial drug test which may be confirmed by a second confirmation test utilizing a gas chromatography/mass spectrometry testing method.

Self-medication Taking a prescription medication without a prescription (e.g. "borrowing" medication), taking a prescribed medication for a purpose other than for which it was prescribed, or taking a medication under a prescription that has expired.

Any Volunteer Foster Parent violating these prohibitions will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

GRIEVANCES AND COMPLAINTS

At Gaston County, there are five distinct types of grievances, each of which follows a different procedure for investigation and resolution. They consist of: a) Sexual/ Workplace Harassment; b) Discrimination; c) Adverse Action; d) conditions of employment regarding employee health and safety, privacy of employee records and the Americans with Disabilities Act; e) generalized complaints about work conditions.

Definitions

Adverse Action The suspension, involuntary demotion, or discharge of an employee.

Discrimination Prejudicial conduct by an individual against another person because of sex, age, race, color, creed, religion, national origin, disability, military leave or political affiliation.

Hostile Work Environment Conduct resulting from Workplace Harassment or Discrimination that both a reasonable person would find hostile or abusive and one that the particular person who is the object of the harassment perceives to be hostile or abusive. Absent Workplace Harassment or Discrimination, mere disputes between two coworkers or a superior and subordinate does not constitute a Hostile Work Environment.

Quid Pro Quo Harassment Quid Pro Quo harassment means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct when: 1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment; or 2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual.

Retaliation A negative action taken against an employee because the employee filed a harassment or discrimination complaint.

Sexual Harassment based on sex including, but not limited to the following: unwelcome verbal conduct such as comments, suggestions, jokes or derogatory remarks based upon sex; physical conduct such as inappropriate or offensive touching; visual harassment such as posting suggestive or

derogatory pictures, cartoons, or drawings, including those posted at one's own workstation; unwanted sexual advances, pressure for sexual favors; basing employment decisions (such as an employee's performance evaluations, work assignments, or advancement) upon the employee's acquiescence to sexually harassing conduct in the workplace.

Workplace Harassment Unsolicited and unwelcome speech or conduct based upon race, sex, creed, religion, national origin, military leave, age, color, or disabling condition as defined by G.S. 168A-3 that creates a Hostile Work Environment or circumstances involving Quid Pro Quo harassment.

Sexual/Workplace Harassment

It is the policy of Gaston County that County employees may not engage in conduct that falls under the definition of Sexual or Workplace Harassment. No personnel decisions shall be made on the basis of sex, age, race, color, religion, national origin, military leave, or disabling condition as defined in G.S.168A-3.

All employees are guaranteed the right to work in an environment free from Sexual or Workplace Harassment and Retaliation, and this section constitutes the Gaston County sexual and workplace harassment prevention plan.

It is expected that employees of Gaston County will act responsibly to maintain a professional working environment, free of Discrimination, allowing each employee to perform to his or her maximum potential. Gaston County encourages any employee to bring questions he or she may have regarding any type of harassment to the Human Resources Director. Disciplinary actions for conduct determined to constitute Harassment will be implemented on a case by case basis on the facts of each complaint. Internal interference, coercion, restraint or reprisal against any person complaining of alleged Sexual or Workplace Harassment is strictly prohibited.

Employee Procedures Any employee who is aware of instances of Harassment should report the alleged act immediately to a member of his or her management team in writing on HR Form 522. If the employee is uncomfortable discussing the matter with his or her management team, the employee should report the alleged act immediately to the Human Resources Director, or if the Human Resources Director is named in the complaint, to the County Manager.

Discrimination

It is the policy of Gaston County that County employees may not engage in conduct that falls under the definition of Discrimination. No personnel decisions shall be made on the basis of sex, age, race, color, creed, religion, national origin, military leave, political affiliation or disabling condition as defined in G.S. 168A-3.

All employees are guaranteed the right to work in an environment free from Discrimination.

It is expected that employees of Gaston County will act responsibly to maintain a professional working environment, free of discrimination, allowing each employee to perform to his or her maximum potential. Gaston County encourages any employee to bring questions he or she may have regarding any type of harassment to the Human Relations Director. Disciplinary actions for conduct determined to constitute harassment will be implemented on a case by case basis on the facts of each complaint. Internal

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Gaston County is committed to providing a workplace that is safe, secure and free of harassment, threats, intimidation and violence for all employees. To ensure a safe workplace and to reduce the risk of violence, all employees should review and understand the provisions of this Workplace Violence Policy. Consistent with this Policy, threats or acts of physical violence, including intimidation, harassment, and/or coercion which involve or affects employees on county property or during work will not be tolerated.

Definitions

Threat or Threatening The expression of intent to cause physical or mental harm that is sufficiently severe, offensive, or intimidating to alter the conditions of employment, or to create a hostile, abusive, or intimidating work environment for anyone within the workplace. Intent to carry out the threat or the ability to carry out such threat is irrelevant.

Workplace Any location where an employee performs any work-related duty. This includes, but is not limited to, the buildings and surrounding perimeters, including parking lots, field locations, alternative work locations, and travel to and from work assignments

Workplace Violence Includes, but is not limited to, intimidation, bullying, stalking, threats, physical attack or property damage and includes acts of violence committed by any individual against any other individual or group within the workplace.

Prohibited Conduct

The following list of behaviors, while not all inclusive, is intended to provide examples of prohibited conduct:

- aggressive or hostile behavior that creates an objective reasonable fear of injury to another person or subjects another individual to emotional distress;
- intentionally damaging County property or property of another employee;
- threatening to harm an individual or his or her family, friends, associates or their property (assault);
- hitting or shoving an individual (battery);
- making harassing or threatening telephone calls or electronic communications;
- intimidating or attempting to coerce an employee to engage in wrongful or illegal acts;
- stalking another individual

TOBACCO USE

Description Gaston County recognizes the health risks associated with tobacco use and secondhand smoke and aerosol for non-users. Gaston County is committed to providing a safe work environment for employees, Volunteer Foster Parents, contractors, and the public and seeks to promote healthy environments in all of its buildings, parks, and vehicles. The Gaston County Board of Commissioners has passed an ordinance prohibiting the use of tobacco products in local government buildings, grounds, vehicles, parks and indoor public places.

Definitions

Electronic Cigarette or E-cigarette An electronic oral device that employs a mechanical heating element, battery, or electronic circuit regardless of shape or size and that can be used to heat a liquid nicotine solution or any other substance, and the use or inhalation of which simulates smoking. The term shall include any such device, whether manufactured, distributed, marketed, or sold as an e-cigarette, e-cigar, e-pipe, or under any other product name or descriptor.

Smoking The use of a lighted cigarette, lighted cigar, lighted pipe, or any other lighted tobacco product including Electronic Cigarettes.

Tobacco or Tobacco Product Any product containing or derived from tobacco that is intended for human consumption, whether chewed, smoked, absorbed, dissolved, inhaled, or ingested by any other means, including but not limited to cigarettes; e-cigarettes; cigars; little cigars; snuff; and chewing tobacco. A tobacco product excludes any product that has been approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration for sale as a tobacco cessation product, as a tobacco dependence product, or for other medical purposes, and is being marketed and sold solely for such an approved purpose. Electronic Cigarettes are also considered to be a Tobacco Product.

Tobacco Use Prohibited The use of all tobacco or tobacco products, is prohibited in local government buildings, grounds, vehicles, parks and indoor public places.

Tobacco use is prohibited along any path-way or walk-way leading to entrances of County buildings.

In instances where County buildings are not on County owned property, tobacco use is prohibited within a 50-foot radius of the building.

Smoking Areas Gaston County no longer provides smoking areas for employees or members of the public.

Tobacco Cessation Gaston County will provide programs and assistance to the extent of its ability to help employees quit tobacco use.

Policy Violations Violation of the tobacco use policy will be considered misconduct as defined in this policy manual and subject to disciplinary action.

Social Media Policy

For the purpose of this section, the phrase "Social Media" or "Social Networking" or "Social Networking Site" shall mean blogs, networking sites (such as linkedin and facebook), photo sharing, dating websites, online internet fora, chat rooms, video sharing, microblogging, podcasts, twitter, and other similar websites, webpages, programs, apps, computer applications, computer programs that are intended for one person to communicate with others. The absence of, or lack of specific or explicit reference to a particular site does not limit the extent of the application of this policy.

For the purpose of this section, the phrase "Posting" or "Post" shall mean disseminating information or data through Social Media regardless of the method of dissemination.

Guidelines and Restrictions

- Employees who participate in Social Networking shall not represent their opinions or comments as that of Gaston County. If an employee posts something work related that is not prohibited as cited herein, the employee shall issue a disclaimer such as the following: "The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent the County's positions or opinions."
- Employees are prohibited from Posting photographs, reports, incidents, video, audio, or other similar information concerning an accident, information on assignments, service calls, case files, training, projects, activities, and investigations. Information classified as confidential as a matter of law (such as, but not limited to, HIPAA, social security numbers, case files on minors) shall never be Posted.

- Employees are prohibited from posting badges, patches, marked patrol or service vehicles, or other similar information absent written approval from the Department Director.
 - Employees shall not cite vendors, suppliers, clients, citizens, co-workers, or other third parties without their approval.
 - Employees shall not Post any material that brings discredit to or which could impair the effective delivery of public service or seriously disturb or disrupt the normal operation of any branch of County government.
 - Employees are prohibited from using Social Media to harass, or belittle any person in any manner, or to criticize employees of Gaston County or any agency or entity with which the County regularly conducts business or engages in the performance of its work.
-

Confidentiality

CONFIDENTIALITY OF ANIMAL CARE AND ENFORCEMENT BUSINESS

ACE expects and requires all Volunteer Foster Parents, staff and contractors to keep confidential any sensitive or proprietary business-related information belonging to Animal Care and Enforcement which has not been released to the **public domain** or generally made known to all stakeholders. The confidentiality policy includes the sharing of private information between staff and Volunteer Foster Parents.

SUCH INFORMATION INCLUDES BUT SHALL NOT BE LIMITED TO:

1. Donor information such as donation amount, addresses, telephone numbers or other personal information
2. Disclosure of information which could **defame, damage or reasonably damage** the reputation of ACE, GCPD, Gaston County or its relationship with customers
3. Confidential information of customers, Volunteer Foster Parents or employees including but not limited to addresses, phone numbers, donations or personal information
4. **Confidentiality and Disparagement:** It is acceptable to talk about your work and have a dialog with the community, but it is not acceptable to publish confidential information. We require that information or opinions related to the internal operations of Animal Care and Enforcement is treated as confidential and that no disparaging or misinformed statements are made online that would damage or reasonably damage ACE's brand and reputation.
5. **Relevant Media Outlets:** It is unacceptable, without prior approval to post any comments or pictures of unavailable animals, wildlife, or any animals subject to confiscation, judicial order, and other restricted or confidential situations. Pictures and comments in relation to the above should not be posted on to online forums including but are not limited to: personal blogs, LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Myspace, personal websites, Instagram, and other electronic medium.

Volunteer Foster Parent Corrective Action and Dismissal Policy

Corrective Action

Corrective action is within the discretion of the Volunteer Foster Parent Coordinator and/or Administrative Officer and may include:

1. Additional training
2. Reassignment Retraining
3. Dismissal from the Volunteer Foster Parent program

VOLUNTEER FOSTER PARENT DISMISSAL

Volunteer Foster Parents who do not adhere to the policies and procedures of ACE are subject to dismissal. Dismissal is within the discretion of the Volunteer Foster Parent Coordinator and/or Administrator.

Grounds for dismissal may include, but are not limited to:

1. Any abuse or maltreatment of an animal while Volunteer Foster Parenting
2. Violation of program policies and procedures or NC state animal laws
3. Gross misconduct or insubordination
4. Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs while performing Volunteer Foster Parent duties
5. Theft of property or misuse of program equipment or materials
6. Mistreatment or inappropriate conduct toward customers, other Volunteer Foster Parents or agency personnel
7. Failure to complete required initial or ongoing training
8. Failure to Volunteer Foster Parent over a period of twelve months
9. Breach of confidentiality, including defamatory language or postings related to ACE
10. Criminal activities

Shelter Intake Procedures

INCOMING ANIMALS

Animals come to us through many sources, such as the Animal Care Specialist, citizen found strays, owner surrenders, police seizures. As part of our Open Door Policy, we take in any animal that is brought to us from the public and county organizations. Owner surrenders are scheduled to assist in managing the population in the shelter and minimize unnecessary euthanasia. If an owner is unable to wait for an appointment of the ACE staff feels it is time sensitive and are concerned about the welfare of the animal, the surrender is taken immediately. Incoming animals are classified as stray animals or owned surrendered animals.

STRAY AND LOST ANIMALS

Impounded animals shall be held for three (3) working days before becoming available for disposition.

In appropriate cases the superintendent may, in his discretion, extend the three-day holding period or reduce this period if the animal is feral, badly wounded, sick, or diseased.

Impounded animals surrendered by their owner or harbinger shall be immediately available for disposition.

Abandoned Owner contact are generally given a release date of 10 days per GC Ordinance 3-5-k4. We will do all we can to minimize the length of stay of all animals.

Any animal that is awaiting reclaim by the owner and that we have made a reasonable effort to contact the owner (email, door knocker, phone call, etc) will only be held for 72 hours. After the 72 hours has passed without the owner reclaiming the animal, the animal becomes ACE property and the animal will be released for adoption, rescue claim or euthanasia.

OWNED SURRENDERED ANIMALS

These are animals that are given up by their owners for various reasons. The owner is asked to fill out some information about the animal's history, to help us in placing the animal. Owned surrenders are assessed and set on one of three pathways.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

After the pet has met its release date, it is medically evaluated and behaviorally evaluated. Based on the health status and behavior viewed, they will be deemed available for public adoption, rescue only for approved rescue groups or euthanasia if has behaviors that may be a risk to the community.

Thank you for your interest in becoming an Animal Care and Enforcement Volunteer Foster Parent!

FORMS

Biography Sheet

Foster Home: _____

Animal's name: _____

Cat Dog Other

Animal's description (coloring, short or long coat, etc): _____

Completed by the foster home:

Please answer these questions with as much information as possible (lots of detail). We will then send your answers to the person doing the website write-ups who will use your answers to make the write-up fit your foster animal. Let us know as much as possible – as much detail as you can give

Once completed, please send back to the Foster Home Coordinator at GCACE@gcps.org . Thank you!!!!

1. What makes your foster delightful/special?

2. Cute things your foster does that could be endearing or a personality point that would make people want to meet him/her?

3. What kinds of routines and activities does your foster like most?

4. What help or special needs does your foster require?

5. Your foster is OK with:
 - a. Dogs: How do they behave around dogs?
 - b. Cats: How do they behave around cats?
 - c. Children: Ages:
 - d. Comments –

 - e. Your foster is Not OK with
 - a. dogs
 - b. cats
 - c. children: ages:
 - d. (please describe) –

6. How social is your foster with new people? (describe your foster dog's behaviors when he meets new people)
 - a. With known people?

7. Describe the ideal home for your foster?

8. If you were writing the bio on your foster, what would it be (you can view the Website of available dogs for an example):

Foster Home Coordinator and/or Foster Training Coordinator comments:

(To be added after the bio is received back from foster home,)

Animal's age is: _____

Animal's Best friend is: _____

1. Short synopsis of the animal's background
2. Issues to be mentioned
3. Special needs and/or considerations
4. Ideal environment for the animal
5. Other specifics

Intake Coordinator comments:

1. Provide background on the animal's circumstances and/or history before coming into GCACE.
2. Other specifics



GASTON COUNTY ANIMAL CARE AND ENFORCEMENT
VOLUNTEER WAIVER OF LIABILITY

All volunteers working with Gaston County's Animal Care and Enforcement must sign this Waiver of Liability before participating in any volunteer duties. If the volunteer is under the age of 18, the volunteer's parent or guardian must sign the waiver on his or her behalf.

I, _____ (print full name), as an individual (or whose son or daughter is) volunteering with Gaston County Animal Control and Enforcement, hereby acknowledge, understand, and agree that I will not hold Gaston County or any of its subsidiary departments liable for any illness, injury, or disease I might contract or sustain while volunteering in this capacity.

I further acknowledge, understand, and agree to the following terms and conditions throughout my time volunteering with Gaston County Animal Care and Enforcement:

1. I understand and acknowledge that any and all animal(s) with which I come into contact at Animal Care and Enforcement are the sole property of Gaston County.

2. Any animal(s) I am allowed to care for and handle during my volunteer work shall be returned or otherwise relinquished to my supervising authority within Gaston County Animal Control and Enforcement immediately upon his or her request.

3. I agree to follow all policies, rules, and regulations of Gaston County Animal Care and Enforcement throughout my time volunteering with this division of County government.

4. I understand that many viruses have an incubation period of 7 to 14 days, and I understand that I, my child(ren), other family member(s), and my own pet(s) may be at risk of contracting a contagious virus as a result of my proximity to the animals under the care and control of Gaston County Animal Care and Enforcement. Accordingly, I accept that risk of and responsibility for treatment if necessary at my own expense, myself, my child(ren), other family member(s), and for my own animal(s).

5. I agree to hold Gaston County and all of its subsidiary departments harmless even in the event that I sustain direct or consequential damages onsite at the animal facility, in transit to and from my volunteer duties, or in any other capacity while volunteering with Gaston County Animal Care and Enforcement.

6. I understand and acknowledge that Gaston County has the legal right, through its Animal Care and Enforcement office, to terminate my volunteer work experience for any or no reason at all.

7. I acknowledge that all information provided on the Volunteer Application Form is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

8. I understand that there are certain risks inherent in handling animals, regardless of whether they are deemed dangerous at law, and I accept and assume those risks.

Signature

Date

