



BARC

ANIMAL SHELTER
& ADOPTIONS

BARC Volunteer Handbook

2022 Edition

Welcome!

Welcome to the BARC Animal Shelter & Adoptions Volunteer Program. We are excited to have you here! We appreciate everyone's help and support. We faced a variety of challenges and obstacles being a municipal shelter and we thank you for standing by us as we help Houston's animals. As we continue to face the challenges of being an open admission shelter, we ask for your patience as we evaluate processes, programs, events, and protocols constantly. In this handbook you will find our protocols and other updated processes including our disciplinary protocols. We ask that all volunteers abide by the updated handbook in order to keep everyone safe during these difficult times. Please read through it carefully as there have been changes to processes, procedures, and rules. Not adhering to these can result in dismissal from BARC's volunteer program.

Thank You!

Thank you for giving us your time and for giving the animals your attention! We appreciate your commitment to helping us help them and we know that your time is valuable. Each of you may have different reasons for wanting to be a volunteer, but all of you choose to volunteer at BARC because:

- You desire to care for those cats and dogs desperately needing positive human interaction
- You wish to help find homes for animals that deserve a second chance
- You want to be a part of making our community more responsible for our pets
- You want to help save lives

As a volunteer, you are an asset to our organization and to the many animals which need loving homes. Our goal is to continually expand our community outreach program, placing more animals into good homes. The time and energy you contribute by volunteering helps us achieve these goals.

Since your support as a volunteer is extremely important, your decision to participate must be made with the full understanding of the commitment and responsibility it demands. This handbook has been prepared for you as a reference guide. It contains information regarding our policies & procedures, tools for working with the public and how to safely handle shelter animals. Please read it carefully so you will be well equipped to answer questions knowledgeably and to provide quality care to the animals at the shelter.

Thank you for giving your time and energy to the animals at BARC. We hope that the time you spend here will be as rewarding to you as it is beneficial to the animals you help.

About BARC

BARC is the City of Houston's Animal Shelter and Adoption Facility. BARC is the only open admission city shelter in Houston required by law to accept every animal that comes through our doors regardless of breed, temperament, health conditions, and circumstance (from owner surrender, stray pickup, rescued or confiscated animals). We have built a best-in-class team that stewards our mission of professionalism, responsibility, compassion, commitment, integrity, and accountability

BARC is dedicated to a live release initiative. In addition to sheltering and providing veterinary care to all animals brought to the shelter, we work diligently to place these animals in new homes. We collaborate and coordinate with our Houston Pet Rescue groups and through social media networks to cast the widest possible adoption net. We also provide intensive neo-natal and adult pet fostering programs, along with hands-on volunteer training classes and continuous workshops.



We are committed to promoting responsible pet ownership through spaying/neutering, microchipping, and vaccinations. Campaigns and programs to educate and raise community awareness about these services are ongoing.

Houston has the largest urban land area in the U.S. Its size and unique characteristics create challenging circumstances in regard to animal population and control. In addition to a year-long breeding season that steadily increases the area's animal population, our semi-tropical climate serves as an incubator for fleas, ticks and other parasites harmful to animals. Houston is an urban metropolis, but it is also home to various species of wild animals and reptiles including coyotes, bobcats, bats, raccoons, opossums, skunks, foxes, snakes and even alligators. Because of this, rabies outbreaks are a special concern. A rabies vaccination is required to license your pet, and a pet license is mandatory in Houston. BARC serves as the licensing facility. We work hard to educate the public about rabies prevention and about co-existing with our extensive wildlife population.

Our goal is to provide animal control and care services that minimize fear, pain, stress and suffering to animals in and out of the shelter and we work to ensure safe and healthy human-animal interactions. We work closely with the City of Houston Police Department and Houston Animal Control to respond to animal cruelty and abuse reports, behavioral complaints, dog bite cases, and animal/gang related issues.

What does BARC do?

Placement of Pets through Adoptions, Rescue Groups, Foster Care

- We have dogs and cats available for adoption at our shelter, in our foster program, and at various off-site adoption events throughout the city. Animals are transferred to registered rescue groups at no charge.
- Standard Adoption Fees

Please visit http://www.houstontx.gov/barc/adopt_a_pet.html to view adoption promotions, fees, and all pets currently available for adoption!

- Dogs - \$50
- Cats - \$20
- Puppies (4 months and under) - \$75
- Kittens (4 months and under) - \$20

Lost and Found

- People who have lost pets should be encouraged to come to BARC Animal Shelter & Adoptions to walk through our kennels to search for their pet in person as well as advertising their lost pet online on sites such as PetHarbor.com
- If BARC picks up an animal with an ID tag or microchip, BARC staff will call the owner or contact the agency that issued the rabies tag or microchip in order to get the pet back to its home. Every animal is scanned for a microchip upon arrival.

Registering your pet is the law

- The City of Houston Municipal Code requires that anyone who owns, keeps, possesses, or has control of a dog or cat four months of age or older must have his or her pet registered, vaccinated against rabies every year, and a registered microchip.
- A City of Houston pet registration identifies and protects your pet in case it becomes lost. Even indoor pets can get out and become lost. You are required to renew your registration yearly and update when you move and/or your pet is given away, lost, stolen, or is deceased.

Rabies Prevention

- Call 311 to report possible exposure including bites and scratches from unvaccinated animals.
- Animals that have bitten or scratched are required to be quarantined for public safety.

Animal Cruelty

- Citizens must report acts of cruelty and neglect. Cruelty to an innocent animal is often a precursor for child abuse or domestic cruelty and they can occur hand in hand.
- The basic needs of an animal require that they have access to food, water, shelter and exercise. If the dog or cat is deprived of these, 311 will create a formal report and an Animal Control Officer will investigate.
- Suspected cases of animal cruelty or neglect in Harris County should be reported to 927PAWS.org.

Owner Surrender

- Some owners cannot fulfill the commitment they made when they brought an animal into their home. We try to inform owners of all the alternatives to surrendering their pet so they can make a decision that's best for the animal.
- Owner surrenders are accepted at the shelter by appointments every day except for Mondays & Thursdays. All owner surrenders must be brought to our facility located at 2700 Evella Street, Houston, TX 77026. Please note hours are subject to change.
- Intake appointments may be made at http://www.houstontx.gov/barc/turning_in_a_pet.html

Volunteering at BARC

Who can volunteer at BARC?

Volunteers must be 13 years of age or older. Volunteers 13-15 years old must always volunteer with a parent or guardian. Volunteers 16 -17 can volunteer on their own after attending orientation with a parent or guardian.

What can you do for BARC?

On the following pages, you'll see a variety of job descriptions. Look through them, and then talk to the Volunteer Coordinator who will help you to decide where you are needed most based on your background and your interests.

We are looking for committed volunteers who can participate in BARC activities at least once a month if possible. While not required, regular participation helps the animals at BARC, and keeps you connected with the rest of the BARC team.

If you can't come in at regularly scheduled times, there are other ways you can volunteer. We always need help with special events and donation drives. Be sure to check your email for upcoming events and opportunities to get involved at BARC.

Process to Volunteer at BARC

- 1. Register Online** at <https://app.volunteer2.com/Public/SignUp?organizationGUID=0af131a9-a682-4f05-b006-d11538ee08bd&signupFormId=1>. The link listed here directs you to the BARC setup portal on the www.MyVolunteerPage.com website. Fill out the profile information to complete the initial registration as a volunteer. After creating your account, you can quickly log into your account via www.MyVolunteerPage.com.
- 2. Sign Up for Volunteer Activities.** Assignments for a variety of volunteer duties are posted on the volunteer web page (www.MyVolunteerPage.com) and you are able to schedule yourself for various activities and shifts that fit your lifestyle and schedule. Log in to the volunteer server and self-schedule yourself for all activities, orientations, or tasks you are interested in participating in for BARC.
- 3. Report to your Assigned Area.** After you sign up on Better Impact for a specific date and time you will receive a confirmation email stating the job details including time, date and direct report. Please report to your scheduled location and time 5 minutes before your shift begins.

Volunteer Tiers

BARC Volunteers are organized into four distinct tiers based upon length of service, animal handling experience, and training courses completed. If you are joining the BARC Volunteer family with outside animal or shelter experience, then you may qualify for entry under a higher tier.

- 1. Beginner Tier (0-10 Hours):** All new BARC volunteers will start as Beginner Volunteers and be assigned a green BARC volunteer T-shirt. They will be able to participate in simple shelter tasks such as dog walking, cat handling, enrichment building, kennel cleaning, introductory playgroup tasks, or other shelter tasks as needed.
- 2. Intermediate Tier (11-99 Hours):** Once a volunteer has attained at least ten hours of volunteering at the shelter, and they have completed the basic training courses, then they will graduate to the Intermediate Tier. Intermediate volunteers will be issued a purple BARC volunteer T-shirt. Intermediate volunteers may participate in all the activities that beginner volunteers can, as well as some more demanding tasks such as volunteer mentor, playgroup assistant, adoption counselor, medical volunteerism, or neonatal nursery attendant.
- 3. Advanced Tier (100+ Hours):** Once a volunteer has attained at least one hundred hours of service, and has completed all BARC training courses, they will qualify to graduate to the Advanced Tier. Advanced volunteers will be issued a grey BARC Volunteer T-shirt. Advanced tier volunteers may participate in all activities available to lower tiers, as well as Orientation Mentor, Playgroup Leader, Classroom Mentor, and Web-Chameleon tasks.
- 4. BARC Buddy:** BARC Buddies are a unique tier of volunteers that include minors, seniors, and those who either cannot or choose not to participate in the more arduous volunteer activities. BARC Buddies will be issued a white BARC Volunteer T-shirt. BARC Buddies may participate in activities such as enrichment building, kennel cleaning, animal photography, shelter organization, or other tasks as needed.

Scheduling Your Service

Arrival Time

Please arrive 5 minutes before your scheduled shift and plan on staying for the entire shift. If you must leave because of an emergency, please contact your direct supervisor to notify them of our departure. Please make sure you exit the property after your shift has ended in order to avoid shift overlap.

Log Your Volunteer Service Hours

Please sign in and out of your shift at the purple computer by the volunteer office. Logging time is important for the shelter for grant purposes, community support, and program development as well as volunteer appreciation. The hour log can also be used to submit to schools, businesses and organizations for proof of completion of required volunteer service hours.

Missing Shifts

Your support matters – the animals and the BARC team are counting on you. Therefore, missing volunteer shifts is unacceptable. Missing volunteer assigned shifts leaves spots available that could have otherwise been staffed by other volunteers. You can change your volunteer assignment on-line 12 hours prior to the assignment date and time, if you find that you are unable to fulfill a previously scheduled activity. If you are unable to remove/change your assignment online, you must contact the Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible. **Please stay home and get well if you are sick.**

Contact Information

It is important to keep your contact information up to date at all times. Therefore, volunteers should notify the Volunteer Coordinator of changes in address, phone number, emergency contact or email address in a timely manner.

Code of Conduct

Respectful Behavior

As a member of the BARC team, you are a representative of BARC's brand and image and are expected to conduct yourself in a professional manner. **You must be respectful and courteous in your interactions with the public and with staff. Disrespectful or unprofessional behavior, sexual harassment, threats, disparaging remarks, discrimination or vulgar language will not be tolerated, and you may be asked to cease your volunteer work as a result of such conduct. This code of conduct applies to online and/or written material as well as personal interactions with staff, other volunteers, and members of the public.** Bottom line - commit to providing excellent customer service to our visitors, staff, and fellow volunteers.

Non-BARC Guests/Pets

It is not appropriate to bring children under 13 years old, individuals who are not registered as a BARC volunteer, or your own pets to the facility while you are performing volunteer activities. All BARC volunteers must first register online, complete the initial volunteer orientation, sign the volunteer agreement, and have approval from the Volunteer Coordinator to proceed with further activities.

Privacy Policy & Conveying Correct Information

Information pertaining to BARC records or specific cases is strictly confidential and may not be discussed with others. Please refrain from offering the public information on fees or policies unless you are sure you have current, accurate information. When in doubt, always refer the person to BARC staff. Volunteers are not to disclose any confidential information (contact, personal information, financial, etc.) of shelter customers or staff members. Only BARC approved signage and messaging are allowed on premise, at BARC events, or online. Do not write notes or messages on kennel cards, on paper signs, affix any other signs, or messages without prior approval from BARC management.



Dress Code

Come prepared with the mindset that anything that you wear will get dirty. When working with animals you're advised to cover as much skin as possible to avoid scratches, exposure to zoonotic communicable illness, ringworm, mange (scabies), fleas, and/or ticks. As a BARC volunteer, you are required to wear the following during each volunteer activity for BARC:

- **BARC Volunteer ID badge** – this will be assigned to you once you have completed the Volunteer orientation and arrive for your first shift. One-time volunteers will not receive BARC shirts or badges, but should wear appropriate clothing – long pants, comfortable, closed-toe shoes (preferably tennis shoes) and a comfortable shirt.
- **BARC volunteer shirt** - it is imperative that all volunteers be dressed in BARC apparel so that they are consistently recognizable to the public. BARC volunteers will be issued a color-coded shirt that will indicate their current Tier. Beginner volunteers = green shirts, intermediate volunteers = purple shirts, advanced volunteers = grey shirt, BARC Buddies = white shirt. Volunteer shirts should not be damaged or torn. *Only BARC shirts are to be worn by volunteers while on scheduled activities.*
- **Long pants** are required – jeans, khakis or other long pants, no shorts, skirts, skorts, or other garments that expose portions of the leg to potential scratches or scrapes.
- **Comfortable close-toed shoes** – no sandals or flip flops.



Parking

The front entrances at 3200 and 3300 Carr Street is for public guests only. All volunteers will use the 2700 Evella Street entrance and park behind the South Dog Adoption Building. When entering the 2700 Evella entrance, be prepared to show your BARC volunteer badge or valid identification (if you have not yet received a badge). Do not block fire lanes or park in unmarked areas – park in designated areas only. When parking behind South building by the warehouses please do not park in numbered spots as those are reserved for large ACO vehicles. Please make sure you do not park in any numbered parking spots or under the gas station area. Cars parked in fire lanes or unmarked areas may be towed at the owner's expense.

Smoking

Smoking is prohibited in all buildings and facility grounds. Volunteers who wish to smoke must do so off City property (outside the gates). While working at off-site events as a BARC Volunteer, you may not smoke except when on breaks and out of public view.

Drugs and Alcohol

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

Cell Phones

While you are here, we want you to keep your focus on the animals in your care and the customers in need of assistance. BARC discourages the use of cell phones and mobile devices that create unsafe situations and we don't want your phones damaged by water when bathing animals or from being dropped. Volunteers are prohibited from using their cell phones while interacting with BARC customers. If it is necessary for you to have your cell phone with you while volunteering, set the ringer to vibrate or silent, and use your cell phone in non-working areas only. Ear buds, headsets, and headphones shall not be used at any time while volunteering with BARC. Use of cell phones while working with the public may result in corrective action.

Animal Care

It is expected that BARC Volunteers will treat all animals in the shelter's care with compassion and gentleness. Ask for assistance from BARC staff when needed, and use caution at all times. When handling an animal, volunteers must always have the appropriate kennel card with them for that animal. Do not hand write messages on kennel cards – notify BARC staff of any observations or information you feel may need to be noted for an animal. Volunteers are not to diagnose medical cases, remove sick animals from the shelter without permission from the director, or take any animals from the shelter without proper documentation and approval from the front counter or foster/rescue office. Any volunteer doing so will be subject to dismissal.

Injury

You are responsible for your own health and welfare, so be sure to mind all signs and safety precautions. If you are injured while at BARC, you must notify the Volunteer Coordinator or Manager on Duty immediately.

Complaints

Your point of contact regarding volunteering or shelter activities is the Volunteer Coordinator. Bring your concerns and questions to them first. If you have a complaint regarding a staff member or an issue with BARC policy, immediately bring it to the attention of the Volunteer Coordinator so it can be resolved. If you are not satisfied with the resolution, you may take your complaint to the Manager on Duty for BARC Animal Shelter & Adoptions.

If you have difficulties working with other volunteers or staff members, bring the situation to the attention of the Volunteer Coordinator or Manager on Duty as soon as possible. We want to resolve issues so that we can all work effectively as a team. Immediately report anything you interpret as harassment from staff, volunteers, or the public to the Volunteer Coordinator or Manager on Duty to ensure your safety and the safety of everyone on the premises.

Discipline

Overview

The purpose of the disciplinary policy and procedure is to set and maintain standards of conduct within BARC, and in doing so, ensure that all volunteers are treated fairly and consistently. It is designed to help and encourage all volunteers to achieve and maintain satisfactory standards of conduct. Where deemed appropriate, disciplinary measures may be taken when volunteers behave in a way that detracts from our ability to deliver a quality service to our customers, contradicts our code of conduct, or in any other way perceived to adversely affect the City of Houston, objectives or reputation.

This policy establishes an equitable and consistent approach to violations of BARC's code of conduct by:

- Ensuring the counselling takes place to reinforce the expected performance or conduct standards
- Establishing a process under which warnings may be issued and discussed providing for disciplinary action where performance or conduct does not improve

Three Strike/ At Will Policy

All volunteers covered by this Handbook serve at the pleasure of BARC and are considered "at will." In such an "at will" volunteer relationship, either the volunteer or volunteer coordinator may terminate the volunteer relationship at any time without notice. Each party will attempt to give the other notice, but it is not required. Depending on the severity of the infraction, BARC can choose to take the necessary steps in its "three strike" policy. BARC can choose to bypass any of these steps at any time in the disciplinary procedure if BARC deems it necessary. Please see below for each step in BARC's "three-strike" policy:

1. First or formal warning

If conduct or performance is unsatisfactory, the volunteer will be given a written or verbal warning/performance note. Such warnings will be recorded but disregarded after six months of satisfactory service, providing there have been no subsequent disciplinary issues.

2. Written warning

If the conduct is regarded as more serious or the volunteers work or conduct is considered unsatisfactory after they have received a formal first warning, a disciplinary meeting may be called.

After a period of 6 months, if no further disciplinary action has been found necessary and the breach has been resolved, the warning will expire.

3. Termination

If the volunteer's work or conduct fails to improve, or where the allegation is particularly serious, the volunteer coordinator will give you a verbal and written notice of dismissal from your volunteer duties.

Working with BARC

Media Relations

Volunteers are specifically prohibited from speaking on behalf of BARC Animal Shelter & Adoptions to any representative of the media. All media questions are handled by the Outreach Manager.

Authorized Areas

Volunteers, Fosters, and Rescue Partners are permitted to access the public areas of BARC. Admittance is prohibited to restricted areas such as the back half of the domed Hold/Evaluation building, including but not limited to the wards, bay dock, quarantine, and intake; the restricted areas of the Dog Adoption building, including but not limited to the storage rooms, and Animal Care Technician or other staff work rooms; the Cat Building including but not limited to designated employee only areas. Some volunteer activities may include access to restricted areas, but only for the described volunteer activity during the assigned time period only. At no time are any volunteers, fosters or rescues to walk through or spend time in unauthorized areas, unless they are escorted at all times by a BARC staff member.

Time Onsite:

Volunteer hours are by scheduled job postings only. All volunteers must be offsite by the end of their scheduled shift.

- Volunteers can arrive at assigned job 5 minutes before the beginning of their assigned shift. Volunteers arriving without a scheduled job will not be allowed on the premises.
 - Volunteers are not allowed on the property during city holidays as a safety precaution. BARC observes the following holidays throughout the year:
 - New Year's Day
 - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
 - Labor Day
 - Veterans Day
 - Thanksgiving Day
 - Memorial Day
 - Independence Day
 - Day After Thanksgiving
 - Christmas Eve
 - Christmas Day

Volunteers will not be able to enter BARC unless you are registered on Better Impact for your shift. Please make sure you are signing up ahead of time. The guard will have a list of volunteers who are allowed onsite and any one not on the list will be turned away.

Evaluation/Dome Building:

- Beginner and Intermediate Volunteers are not allowed in any of the eval/dome wards without being escorted by an ACT. This includes (DD, DC, DB, DA, M, Q, PARVO Rooms and Cat Eval). Please check in with a supervisor first. The supervisor will then let an ACT know to escort you if approved to enter evaluation.
- Requests can be denied if the animal has not yet gone through the snaking process or is not safe to be pulled out of the kennel because of its behavior.
- Pets from evaluation should not be left in the outside runs for long periods of time or unattended. Once you have interacted with the pet, ensure that it is safely returned back in to its kennel.
 - If you need a pet from Eval, please contact one of the supervisors

Baydock:

- Volunteers are **NOT ALLOWED** in baydock at any time for the safety of the staff and volunteers.
- If volunteers have a request to see or pull a pet from baydock, **volunteers must contact a supervisor**. An ACT will then be assigned to assist by a supervisor. Requests can be denied if the animal is not safe to be pulled out of the kennel.

Temp Test:

- If arriving to conduct a temp test, please report to **Amelia Nusbaum, or Erika Demetrio** so they can provide guidance.
- Only dogs in south will qualify to be temp tested by volunteers.

Euthanasia

Euthanasia is an unfortunate occurrence at BARC Animal Shelter & Adoptions. It is always our last option, and we always strive to place an animal into a good home if available. We hope that more Houstonians will visit BARC and adopt than those who come to BARC to turn-in animals. We also hope that through spay/neuter efforts and education; there will be far fewer cats and dogs needing homes.

As a volunteer for BARC, you may be exposed to animals facing euthanasia, even though you will never have to witness it. BARC uses a humane sodium pentobarbital solution injected intravenously. Whether or not you personally agree with the practice, this is a day-to-day reality at the shelter. Our staff has to deal with its administration and its after-effects on a daily basis. Volunteers are asked not to make this more difficult for them by arguing/debating/discussing it. Compassion fatigue is rampant in animal welfare.

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

Disease Control

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

If you are bitten or scratched, you must report the incident to Bite Case and the Volunteer Coordinator immediately. Be sure to have the identity (record number or animal ID) of the animal ready. The animal may be quarantined for observation. You are responsible for your own personal health and are advised to seek medical treatment from your doctor.

Community Groups & Events

Activities & Events

BARC schedules and plans activities and events (on-site as well as off-site) for adoptions, awareness, and other outreach initiatives several months in advance. As such, BARC has established protocols, procedures, branding standards, and assigned resources. Any and all activities and events, either on the BARC premises or as represented as BARC in the public must be coordinated and approved by BARC management at least 45 days in advance. Unscheduled or impromptu activities or events will not be supported or endorsed by BARC.

Volunteer Groups or Organizations

Any groups or organizations wishing to hold an event or group volunteer project must contact the Volunteer Coordinator in advance to make such arrangements. Groups will not be allowed to assemble at an event or on-site and promote their business, cause, or messaging without prior approval from BARC Management.

Rescue Groups

While we hope we can find homes for all the animals that come into the shelter we receive many more than we have people who want to adopt. That's where rescue groups come in. Rescue groups are organized 501 (c)3 groups that transfer animals from the shelter into their program to care for and place the animal into a permanent home. BARC currently partners with over 130 rescue groups in the Houston area.

All rescue groups that wish to transfer an animal from BARC must complete a Rescue Group Application and be approved by the Rescue Coordinator via BARC.Aid@houstontx.gov. There is no charge to registered rescue groups to transfer animals from our facility into their care. All transfer requests are handled through BARC.Aid@houstontx.gov, which is monitored 7 days a week from 9am-5pm.

Community Support

Donations

We are not a private, non-profit organization and have a very limited budget as part of the city government that is supported by our citizens' tax dollars. We have a responsibility to all the citizens to use our funds as wisely as we can.

Donations may be brought to the security shack at 2700 Evella St, anytime from 9-5:30 pm every day. Large donations (too heavy, bulky, or numerous) should be scheduled through the volunteer coordinator. Email barcvolunteers@houstontx.gov to make arrangements to offload them using the rear gate. You may also bring donations with you when you are scheduled to volunteer.

All supplies donated must be unexpired and unopened to be usable. BARC is always in need of various items. A list of items can be found by visiting our wish lists at http://www.houstontx.gov/barc/donate_landingpage.html