



**VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK**

***THIS HANDBOOK*** provides basic information regarding the policies, practices, responsibilities and benefits of working or volunteering for Dogs For Life, Inc. (referred to as “DFL” throughout this document). To keep the handbook small and readable, some details and exceptions are omitted. As a result, this handbook is not the full statement of DFL’s policy. In addition, this handbook is not a contract for employment or for providing any benefit, but rather an advisory statement of DFL’s intentions and exceptions.

*Individuals who have entered into separate written contracts with the organization or other specifically excluded individuals are not covered by the terms and conditions of this handbook. Only the Executive Director of DFL has the authority to enter into an employment contract. All such contracts must be in writing and signed by both the Executive Director and the individual. Otherwise, volunteer staff (referred to as “volunteer” throughout this document) services are considered to be at will and may be terminated at any time by either the individual or DFL, with or without cause and with or without notice.*

*Changes in nonprofit organizations occur constantly. Consequently, these policies will change from time to time, as DFL deems necessary. DFL reserves the right to modify, revoke, suspend, terminate, or change any or all such policies at any time. No verbal statements can alter the provisions of this handbook; any change will be posted or distributed to you. Such changes will be in writing and must be signed by the Executive Director of DFL.*

**You are expected to become familiar with all the provisions described in this handbook. Please keep it handy and use it as a reference.**

## Definitions

Volunteer: Volunteer Staff  
Staff: Employee  
Applicant: Person applying for a service dog  
DFL: Dogs For Life, Inc.

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**ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RECEIPT**

Welcome to Dogs For Life, Inc. (DFL). This handbook has been prepared to help you understand our policies and procedures.

DFL operates on the principle of teamwork with staff members and volunteers helping to make DFL the best it can be. We hope you will find your work pleasant, rewarding and challenging. If you have questions not answered in this handbook, please feel free to discuss them with a senior staff member or the Executive Director.

Dogs For Life, Inc. was founded by Shelly Ferger in 2002 and was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) Florida non-profit corporation in February of 2002.

Mission Statement:

“A non-profit organization devoted to improving the quality of life for people and veterans, through training service & hearing dogs, and owning an off-leash dog park.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER**

**2.1**

It is the policy of DFL that all employees and volunteers receive equal consideration and treatment. Recruitment and advancement will be based on qualifications, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, marital status, sexual preference, age, national origin, disability, medical condition, or ancestry. This commitment applies to all persons involved in the operations of the organization and prohibits unlawful discrimination by any employee or volunteer of DFL.

Any employee or volunteer who requires an accommodation to perform the essential functions of the job, due to a known physical or mental disability, should contact the Executive Director and specify what accommodation he/she needs to perform the job. If the accommodation is reasonable and will not impose an undue hardship to DFL's operations, DFL will make the accommodation.

If you believe you have been subjected to any form of discrimination, provide a written complaint to the Executive Director. Your complaint should be specific and include the date of the incident, names of the individuals involved and the names of any witnesses. DFL will immediately investigate and attempt to resolve the situation. If DFL determines that unlawful discrimination has occurred, remedial action will be taken commensurate with the severity of the offense. Appropriate action also will be taken to deter any future discrimination. Whatever action is taken will be made known to you. DFL will not retaliate against you for filing a complaint and will not knowingly permit retaliation by any other employee or volunteer.

### **SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY**

**2.2**

To provide a productive and pleasant work environment and maintain an atmosphere of mutual respect, sexual harassment of any individual is strictly prohibited.

This policy protects staff and volunteers – both male and female – against unsolicited and unwanted sexual overtures or conduct, either physical or verbal. It prohibits misconduct that may upset morale and interfere with work and efficiency.

Sexual harassment does not refer to occasional compliments of an acceptable nature or desired social relationships.

This policy prohibits subtle pressure or any demand for sexual favors, including implying or threatening that cooperation of a sexual nature, or refusal thereof, will have any effect on the job assignment.

It also prohibits behavior that is not welcomed by the employee or volunteer or is personally offensive, such as:

- Repeated sexual flirtations, advances or propositions

- Continued or repeated verbal abuse of a sexual nature, sexually related comments and joking, graphic or degrading comments about a person's appearance, or the display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures
- Uninvited physical contact or touching, such as patting, pinching or constant brushing against another person's body; blocking normal movement or interfering with work because of sex, race or any other protected basis

## **OPEN DOOR POLICY**

**2.3**

It is DFL's policy to maintain an open door so our employees and volunteers can discuss any business-related issues. Suggestions for improving DFL are always welcome. If you have a suggestion or question about your job, your working conditions, or the treatment you are receiving, feel free to discuss your ideas and concerns with a senior staff member or the Executive Director.

## **VISITORS**

**2.4**

Visitors frequently participate in functions or events held at DFL's facility. Please treat visitors courteously to reflect a positive image for DFL. Visitors must not be allowed access to confidential information or hazardous materials.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

**2.5**

It is the policy of DFL to maintain a safe and healthy environment for all volunteers, employees, students and graduates. DFL will take all practical steps to maintain and support a Safety Program that provides everyone with safe working conditions and safeguards the lives and properties of the general public. In turn, you are expected to conduct yourself in a safe manner and to follow safe working habits. Our policy includes the following:

1. Advising all personnel of DFL's emphasis on health and safety.
2. Ensuring periodic and documented inspection of workspaces.
3. Promptly correcting any identified hazards.
4. Providing appropriate safety training and personal protective equipment.
5. Specific procedures to correct hazards include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Tagging unsafe equipment.
  - b. Stopping unsafe practices and providing retraining on procedures.
6. All employees and key volunteers will be trained on fire prevention techniques and fire extinguisher use.
7. Individuals are prohibited from handling chemicals, fire ignition devices (lighters) or assisting in the use of such things, unless properly trained.

8. No heavy equipment or tools will be used on site; therefore, no training or equipment operation instruction will be necessary.
9. Volunteers and employees will not handle dogs unless they have received training or do so under the guidance of a DFL trainer.
10. Volunteers and employees will follow the COVID-19 prevention guidelines and social distancing protocols set forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Dogs For Life.

### **THE FOLLOWING ITEMS ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY:**

1. Comply with all safety rules and regulations.
2. Read and understand any safety manuals or other applicable safety memos, policies and procedures.
3. Advise a senior staff member or the Executive Director of unsafe working conditions or practices.
4. Suggest additions or changes to safety rules and regulations.
5. Assist and encourage fellow staff members and volunteers to work safely.
6. Report all injuries and complete an accident or incident report as soon as is practical.

### **GENERAL SAFETY RULES:**

1. Always walk, never run.
2. Do not touch dangling wires; ground all electrical equipment; discard worn cords; don't attempt repairs; report any electrical problems immediately.
3. Keep doors/walkways clear of all obstacles.
4. Place temporary obstructions away from doors and walkways or post warnings.
5. Keep desk drawers and file drawers closed when not in use.
6. Use reusable containers.
7. Report any accident or near miss to the Executive Director as soon as possible.
8. Smoking is prohibited at all times on DFL property.
9. Know where the first aid supplies and manuals are located.

10. Know where the fire extinguishers are and how to use them.
11. If you must lift something as part of your job, lift it right! Lift with your legs, not with your back.
12. When you are using the computer, remember the importance of the right chair, proper lighting, the absence of reflection on the monitor screen and breaks to exercise your arms and back.
13. Follow proper safety precautions in the operation of any office or training equipment. Turn off all office appliances if there is a power failure. Report malfunctioning equipment to the Executive Director.

These are just a few of the common-sense rules of general safety conduct which should be followed and are listed only to give you an idea of the general standards of safety and good judgment expected by DFL.

### **FIRE/DISASTER ACTION PLAN:**

1. Report the fire/situation. Determine the location of the fire/situation and call the fire department or 911.
2. Evacuate people and animals.
  - a. Plan evacuation by priority.
  - b. People that need no assistance should be instructed to leave the building calmly.
  - c. If the structure is relatively safe and you believe that people can assist in removing people and dogs from the building, instruct them in what they should do.
  - d. Once outside, do not let people re-enter to assist the removal of others.
  - e. Check to make sure all occupants of the building are safe and accounted for.
3. Assist the injured.
  - a. Be sure to address any life-threatening injuries first.
  - b. Remove the injured from the building and tag them with name and type of injury.
  - c. Have the uninjured assist in treating the injured and keeping everyone calm.
  - d. Be sure to have blankets and first aid materials ready and do not attempt to do anything you are not trained to do.
4. Meeting place: Everyone will meet in the parking lot opposite the training center. The ranking, uninjured DFL staff member or volunteer is responsible for accounting for all injured and uninjured personnel and visitors, as well as delegating duties related to care of the injured and supervision of the uninjured.
5. DFL volunteers and employees should be familiar with exit points and evacuation procedures and familiarize guests, applicants and students as needed.
6. Emergency contact information for staff, volunteers and clients will be maintained at the training center in personnel/client files. A copy will also be stored in a secure offsite records retention area.



## **HURRICANE ACTION PLAN:**

Once a tropical storm has been graded and named by NOAA, the storm track will be monitored by office staff every 2 to 4 hours based on Hurricane Center/Weather Channel/County Emergency Management update frequency. If a storm is projected to reach land in the Treasure Coast area, the DFL Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Plan will be implemented. (The full plan can be found in the ADI re-accreditation manual, section 1.7)

## **OFFICE SAFETY PROCEDURES:**

1. Keep your work area as neat and organized as possible. Do not pile items on top of file cabinets.
2. Always put large books or files on the bottom shelves of bookcases, not on top.
3. Do not overload power outlets.
4. Do not leave power cords in walkways.
5. Do not open more than one file drawer at a time; this can cause the file cabinet to tip over.
6. Do not leave briefcases, files, etc. on floor.
7. Be sure you have a comfortable chair and good lighting.
8. Do not lean back in chairs.
9. Do not leave liquids near computers.
10. Clean up all spills on floor to prevent slipping.
11. Learn to recognize stress in the workplace and then take steps to alleviate the situation. This may include taking a break to stretch, relaxing your muscles or just taking a few deep breaths before continuing with your work.

## **COVID-19 Procedures:**

1. All individuals who are entering the training center, including volunteers, clients, guests, and employees will have their temperature screened upon entering the kitchenette.
2. All individuals must wash their hands for a minimum of 20 seconds prior to entering the training room, reception area, or the Director's office.
3. All individuals must wear a mask when at a distance of less than six (6) feet from any other individual.
4. When possible, all individual must maintain the proper social distancing protocols, which state that a distance of no less than six (6) feet between two or more individuals.

5. All volunteers and employees must wipe down their workspace including the telephone, keyboard, mouse, and desk with a disinfecting wipe prior to using their station and again before leaving for the day.
6. All surfaces that volunteers, clients, and employees come into contact with during the course of the day should be sanitized prior to closing at the end of the business day. This includes wiping down tables with a disinfecting wipe, spraying the chairs with Lysol, wiping down door handles with a Clorox wipe or other disinfectant.

### **HAZARDS SPECIFIC TO USE OF CANINES:**

1. Dogs on leash: All DFL dogs (working dogs and dogs in-training) must be on leash except in areas which are secure.
2. Biting Incidents: Any incident in which a DFL dog is bitten or has bitten another dog must be reported immediately to the Executive Director. An incident report will be prepared and placed in the dog's file, as well as the DFL incident report file. All incidents will be handled in a timely and appropriate manner.
3. Health Emergencies: All emergencies related to DFL dogs will be reported as soon as possible to the Executive Director and documented for the files. Decisions regarding the care of the dog will be made by the Executive Director, in consultation with other trainers and the Board of Directors as necessary.
4. Insecticides: All DFL dogs will be managed closely when allowed on grass areas in public settings as many businesses use potent insecticides that can poison dogs. Dogs should not be allowed to graze on any grass area if the maintenance plan is not known.
5. All personnel are expected to follow DFL safety procedures related to their canine charges. These include, but are not limited to:
  - a. protecting dogs' paws on hot pavement
  - b. keeping dogs well hydrated
  - c. not leaving dogs in vehicles unattended
  - d. not allowing dogs to scavenge food from the floor
  - e. protecting dogs from door hazards through careful entry and exit
  - f. entering and exiting elevators in a safe manner
  - g. not allowing dogs to stick their heads out of open windows in moving vehicles
  - h. avoiding dangers inherent to hazardous household poisons (i.e. antifreeze, disinfectants)

**TRAINING CENTER/DOG PARK SAFETY:**

1. The exterior facility maintenance and park landscaping is done by contract labor. DFL staff will ensure the gates have been locked after landscape company visits.
2. All dogs will be toileted before entering the training center. Any accidents within the facility will be cleaned up and disposed of immediately. Concrete areas with urine stains will be washed down immediately.
3. The training center will be inspected regularly to ensure safe conditions for canine training or other functions. The dog park will be checked for hazards (holes, loose fencing, etc.) and any repairs will be made immediately and/or reported to the Executive Director.
4. No glass containers are permitted in the training center or in the dog park.
5. All dogs must be on leash when entering or exiting the training center and outer dog park gates. This includes access through the rear training center doors and the gate to/from the transition area.

# **POLICIES**

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

**3.1**

You are expected to keep confidential any DFL information to which you have access. Examples of confidential information include client personal or disability history, donor information, evaluations, etc. Staff members and volunteers are expected to limit dissemination or exposure of confidential information to unauthorized individuals by policing workstations and refraining from discussing confidential matters in an open forum.

DFL written materials, including any and all manuals, lectures, policies, procedures, promotions, etc., cannot be reproduced or disseminated without the express consent of the Executive Director

Any deliberate attempt to reveal confidential information, or repeated accidental revelations, will be grounds for termination.

## **SMOKING**

**3.2**

A policy of no smoking is enforced in all DFL buildings and on the grounds. Please be considerate of others and refrain from smoking at all DFL facilities and events.

## **DRUG –FREE WORKPLACE**

**3.3**

DFL maintains a strong commitment to provide a safe, efficient and productive work environment. DFL policy recognizes that involvement with controlled substances can be extremely disruptive and harmful in the workplace. It adversely affects the quality of work performance and poses serious safety and health risks to the user and others.

The use of illegal or unauthorized drugs or alcohol in the workplace, including the improper use of a prescription drug, is prohibited. Accordingly, DFL has established the following policy with regard to the use of alcohol or drugs while at work, on DFL property, in DFL vehicles or on DFL business (off-site facilities).

Unlawfully manufacturing, possessing, distributing, dispensing, transferring, purchasing, selling, using or being under the influence of alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs, abuse of prescription drugs or alcohol, or illegal use, purchase, sale or attempted sale of prescription drugs while on the DFL property, performing daily duties or in DFL vehicles, may lead to disciplinary action, including termination of services.

The definition of an “illegal drug” is any drug that the State of Florida defines as being illegal to possess; and includes but is not limited to marijuana, opiates, or amphetamines (unless prescribed), cocaine and PCP. The abuse of prescription drugs occurs when the individual does not have a legal prescription or medical need, or takes the drug in a manner not prescribed by the prescribing physician, or a prescription drug is taken in conjunction with other drugs or alcohol. As a condition of volunteer service or employment at DFL, all individual must abide by DFL’s

substance abuse prevention policy. Any individual who is convicted of a drug violation occurring in the workplace must fill out a notification form and submit to the DFL Executive Director no later than five (5) days after the conviction. Failure to comply with the terms of this policy is grounds for termination of services.

## **SOLICITATION** **3.4**

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Solicitation or distribution of special interest literature on DFL premises is prohibited. No special interest literature may be posted on DFL premises without prior written permission from the Executive Director.

## **STANDARDS OF CONDUCT** **3.5**

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To assure orderly operations and provide the best possible work environment, DFL expects all employees and volunteers to follow rules of conduct that will protect the interests of DFL and safety of all individuals.

The following are examples of infractions that may result in disciplinary action, including termination of service:

1. Theft or inappropriate removal or possession of DFL property.
2. Falsification of time-keeping records.
3. Possession, distribution, sale, transfer, or use of alcohol or any controlled substance while at work, at DFL events or while operating DFL vehicles or equipment.
4. Insubordination or any other disrespectful conduct.
5. Any incident of animal abuse on DFL property, during in-home training or any other location while representing DFL.
6. Any incident of child abuse or harassment at any DFL sponsored activity.
7. Any incident of abuse or harassment of co-workers, volunteers, guests or associates of DFL while representing DFL.

DFL trainers, employees, volunteers and graduates are expected to represent DFL in a professional manner in public situations. This shall include responding to questions by the public in a courteous manner.

All DFL dogs must wear clean vests in good condition in all public settings where pet dogs are not allowed. Trainers and graduates agree to abide by the “Etiquette in Public” document included in the Assistance Dog training manual.

Any reports regarding mistreatment or abuse of any canine will be reviewed by the Executive Director and Board of Directors, documented and addressed within a timely manner.

## **DRESS CODE**

**3.6**

Dogs For Life has instituted a dress code that reflects an efficient, orderly and professionally operated organization. This policy will define appropriate business attire for DFL personnel, whether staff or volunteer.

Individuals whose main duties include working outdoors and/or training dogs should wear DFL issued shirts, conservative/comfortable athletic shoes and long pants or shorts (min. 6" in-seam). Clothing should be clean and free of tears, rips and stains at the beginning of the work day.

Individuals assigned to the office, front desk and other duties with little to no interaction with dogs are expected to wear casual clothing such as Dockers type pants, slacks, skirts, dresses, golf shirts and blouses. DFL t-shirts and most jeans are acceptable. Appropriate footwear includes conservative athletic shoes, clogs, boots, flats/heels, boat shoes and dress sandals. Slippers and flip flops are not allowed.

Tank tops, shirts with offensive words/logos/pictures, faded blue jeans and clothing with holes, fringe, sequins or stains are not permitted.

Jewelry, makeup, perfume and cologne should be worn/used in moderation, keeping in mind potential interaction with dogs and/or people allergic to certain chemicals.

Hats and visors must be clean, in good condition and not contain foul or suggestive language.

Individuals arriving at work with inappropriate clothing will be reminded of the dress code and told to correct the problem prior to returning to work. A second offense will result in a verbal warning with the individual being sent home to change clothes. Further violations will result in disciplinary action, including suspension and/or termination. The Executive Director has final authority in approving/disapproving proper attire for all DFL personnel.

Booths/Events: Anyone representing DFL at a booth or during an event is required to wear a DFL shirt and other attire appropriate for the event.

Personal appearance: neatly trimmed facial hair is allowed. Body art, piercings or tattoos must be tasteful, covered or approved by the Executive Director.

## **COMPLAINT RESOLUTION**

**3.7**

Staff and volunteers have an opportunity to present their complaints and to appeal decisions through a complaint/dispute resolution procedure. Dogs For Life will attempt to promptly resolve all disputes that cannot be settled by the individuals closest to the issue and that are appropriate for handling under this policy.

Although this procedure has steps to follow, a dispute may be resolved at any step in the process. Complaints/disputes will be processed until the complainant is satisfied or does not appeal the

decision made during any of the steps of the resolution process. A decision becomes binding when a complainant does not appeal the decision or when a decision is made in the final step and the right of appeal no longer exists.

Individuals who feel they have an appropriate complaint should proceed as follows:

1. Promptly bring the complaint to the attention of the Executive Director. However, if the dispute involves the Executive Director, then the complainant may proceed directly to step two. The Executive Director shall investigate the complaint, attempt to resolve it, and give a decision to the complainant within a reasonable time. The Executive Director should prepare a written and dated summary of the dispute and proposed resolution for the individual's file. If the complainant and Executive Director are not able to resolve the issue, or if the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision, the complainant may proceed to Step Two.
2. If the complaint concerns the Executive Director or is not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction after completing step one, the complainant may submit a request for review in writing to the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors of Dogs For Life. The Committee will hear the matter and make a final decision.

If the complaint specifically concerns an assistance dog, owner or team and the Executive Director is not able to resolve the issue or if the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision, the complainant may proceed to the Dogs For Life Assistance Dog Program Sub-Committee prior to submitting the matter to the Board of Directors via step two.

Information concerning a complainant dispute is considered confidential. Individuals investigating a complaint may discuss it only with persons with a "need to know" or who are needed to supply necessary background information or advice.

## **DISCIPLINARY ACTION**

## **3.8**

Any policy violations will be reported to and acted on by the Executive Director using the following guidelines:

First or minor infractions: verbal reprimand

Second infraction: written reprimand

Third infraction: termination of services\*

\*The Executive Director has sole discretion on the degree of the infraction and is not mandated to issue a verbal or written reprimand before moving to termination if the infraction is deemed to be severe.





**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT**

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of Dogs For Life, Inc. (DFL) Volunteer Handbook.

I understand that this handbook provides basic information regarding the policies, intentions, expectations, and benefits of working for DFL and that it is my responsibility to familiarize myself with the provisions of this handbook.

I understand that this handbook and all other written and oral material provided to me is intended for informational purposes only and that these communications do not constitute an employment contract.

I understand that the information in this handbook and communicated to me in any manner are subject to review and change by DFL at any time.

I understand that it is my responsibility to keep confidential any and all information pertaining to clients, donors and other materials as described in section 3.1 of this manual.

I understand that my services can be terminated at any time, with or without notice or reason, either by myself or by DFL.

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*Volunteer name (please type or print)*

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*Volunteer signature*

*Date*

*Revision Date: June 2020*

**Emergency Contact Information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_





## DEPARTING VOLUNTEER SURVEY

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Role: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please answer the following questions honestly regarding your experience as a volunteer at Dogs for Life, Inc.**

1. How long were you a volunteer at DFL?

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2. What would you say are the major factors that influenced your decision to discontinue your volunteering service at DFL?

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3. What did you enjoy most about volunteering at DFL?

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DOGS FOR LIFE: VOLUNTEER PROGRAM CASE STUDY

4. Were you satisfied with your experience as a volunteer? If not, how can we have done better?

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5. Would you be interested in resuming volunteering service at DFL in the future?

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6. Any suggestions for management?

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