



# Dog Handling for Volunteers

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Madison . North Branch . Mt. Olive . Noah's Ark



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# INTRODUCTION TO DOG HANDLING

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Volunteers come to St. Hubert's with a love for animals. Many feel comfortable with their handling skills after having pets of their own. It is important to remember animals in a shelter will not act like the pets in your home. Shelter animals come in to a brand new environment with no familiar smells, bedding, people, or noises. It takes time for dogs to adjust to new faces, sharing communal space, and the smells and sounds of a shelter.

**It's important to know the signs of stress and fearful behavior to insure volunteers remain safe, while the animals are kept as comfortable as possible.**

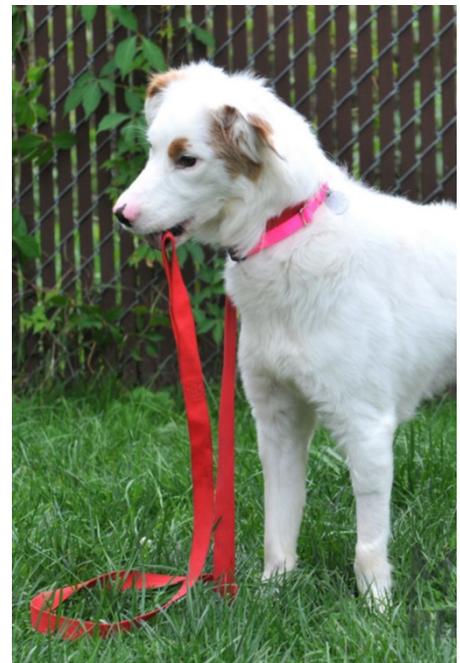


## WHY WE WALK

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### **Walking shelter dogs has multiple benefits**

- Good for the mental health of the dog
- Exercises the dog for health and weight control
- Socializing with continuous positive experiences with new people
- Time to work on basic dog skills like loose leash walking helps pet retention after adoption
- Walking a dog lets out pent up energy from being kenneled at night. This allows for better meet and greets during adoption hours.



# VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS

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- Must be 18 year of age or older
- A proven understanding of basic dog body language
- A proven understanding of what your body language tells the dog
- Knowledge of positive reinforcement training
- Ability to walk shelter dogs who often pull and are medium to large sized animals.
- Know your limits. Volunteers will never be asked to walk a dog they are not comfortable walking.
- Wear appropriate attire. Dress for the cold weather; if volunteer shirt is covered the dog must be wearing an “Adopt Me” vest.
- Wear long pants and closed toe shoes even in the summer months.
- Communicate all valuable findings with staff, including dog likes, behavior or medical concerns.



# DOG WALKING LEVELS

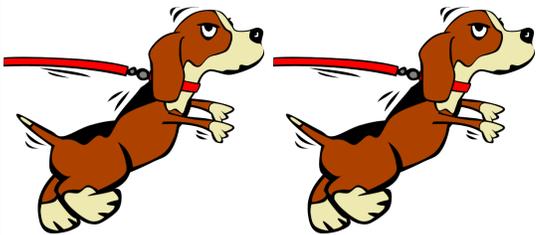
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All dogs will go through a behavior evaluation. This is when staff will test for different traits and assess the temperament. Based on the evaluation, the dog will receive a dog walking level.

**Staff Only (SO)** – No volunteers will handle dogs who are not yet evaluated or have yet to go through their medical evaluation. All animals labeled Animal Control Officer (ACO) or Isolation (ISO) are also walked by staff only.



**Level I** – Little to no concerning behaviors. Walks well on a leash.



**Level II** – May be a larger dog with the ability to pull on the leash.



**Level III** – Evaluation shows there are behaviors that need an expert handler with a behavior modification plan in place to help this animal be successful.

# GET FAMILIAR WITH THE EQUIPMENT

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It's important to make sure that each individual dog is fitted correctly before going out. This prevents accidental escapes and injury.

**FLAT COLLARS** - All dogs have a flat collar on while in the shelter. This holds the dog tag.



**MARTINGALE COLLARS** - Used correctly martingales are a great tool while walking; all leashes are to be attached to martingales.



Notice the difference in the two collars above.

**SLIP LEAD** - A rope leash is used to form a loop above the dog's head. This allows handlers to take dogs out of the kennel without placing their hands near an excited dog's mouth and is especially helpful if you don't have a prior relationship with the dog.



**CLIP LEASH** - These traditional leashes are used while walking. The Leash attaches to a harness or martingale.

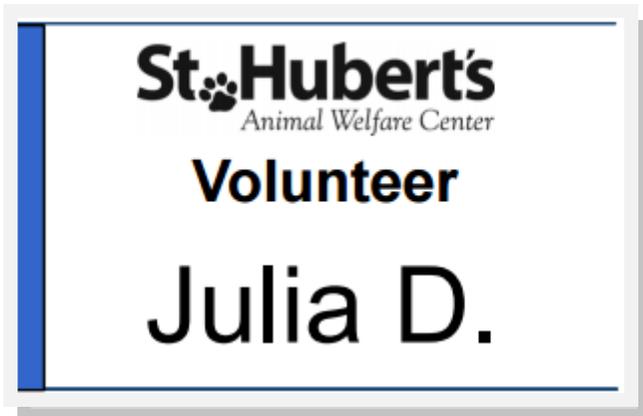
**HARNESS** - Is a strap that crosses the chest and encircles the body behind the front legs. A harness is used to walk dogs that pull which includes level II dogs.



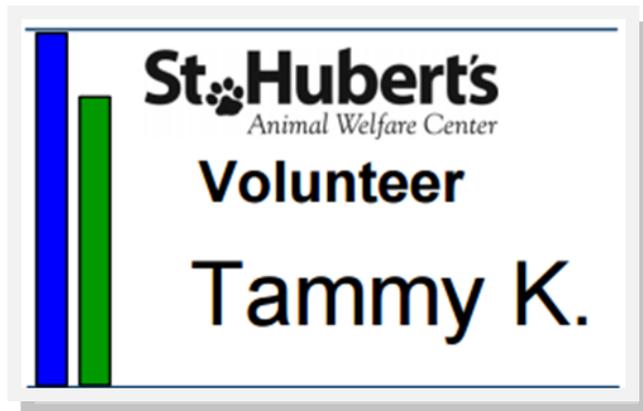
**"ADOPT ME" VEST OR BANDANA** - Adopt me vests are to be worn to separate the general public's animals from our shelter animals. This helps advertise the adoptable dog while also acting as an ID for volunteers wearing winter coats over their volunteer shirt.

# DOG WALKER VOLUNTEER IDENTIFICATION

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Volunteers with a blue strip have been trained to work with the Level I dogs. Volunteers remain on the property using the walking trails and play yards.



Volunteers with multiple color strips have been trained in multiple areas. Green is for feline friend training.

Additional training and a personal recommendation by a staff member are required to work with Level II or III dogs. This is reserved for those who display excellent handling skills and the weekly availability to socialize dogs that need additional attention.

If you feel you are ready to be testing for level II or level III dog walking, Email the volunteer manager to express your interest. A one on one with the behavior lead will be set up to test out your skills.

# GREETING A NEW DOG

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## Make a Great First Impression!

- Approach from an angle. Turn sideways.
- Bend at the knees to get at the dog's level. Do not sit on the ground.
- Never lean over the dog. Looming may be intimidating to a fearful dog
- Stay relaxed as dogs can read your body language.
- Offer the back of your hand for sniffing.
- Allow the dog to make the approach.
- Do not stare the dog in the face; keep a soft gentle gaze.
- Do not take a dog's food or other high value items (toys, raw hides, treats).



# PUPPY PROTOCOL

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Different precautions are used with puppies to insure they remain healthy while in our care. As much as we enjoy our time with puppies and socializing them is important, remember that our puppies have a 2-5 day length of stay. Socialization for adult dogs is a high priority!

- Volunteers do not enter kennels with a mom and her litter
- Puppies do not go outside into play pens or for walks.
- Puppy runs are the only runs a volunteer are allowed to go into.
- Two volunteers are required when working with 2 or more puppies to socialize or clean up waste.



# ENRICHMENT

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Daily enrichment is important mental stimulation for a dog's mind.

**ENRICHMENT WITHIN THE KENNELS:** Anything that puts a barrier between the dog and its food will make the dog have to work for its reward. The game keeps their minds stimulated making their time in the kennel more enjoyable.

**TREAT CUPS:** Treat cups are a great way to get dogs to start to come to the front of the kennel when potential adopters approach. This helps the potential adopters viewing the dog feel like the dog has selected or chosen them, often leading to a request for a meet and greet.

**PLAY GROUPS: (STAFF ONLY)** Organized play groups are great for dog enrichment. Play groups are always led by a staff person. Select volunteers with additional training may contribute to play groups in the future. Volunteers should not conduct play groups at any time without staff present.



# INTRODUCTION TO BODY LANGUAGE

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A dog with a wagging tail is not necessarily friendly, nor is a growling dog necessarily vicious. It's important to understand what a shelter dog is telling us to insure our interactions are not only safe, but enjoyable for the dogs.

Take the time to observe first. This will make the time spent more enjoyable and safe, and you will become stronger in your handling skills.

Observe the whole picture. Study the ears, mouth, and tension in the face. Look at the body position and tail together. This will give the most accurate reading.

If at any time you are unsure of the dog's behavior, return the dog to the kennel or call a staff person for assistance.

**BITE PROTOCOL:** Animal bites are always a risk while volunteering in a shelter. With caution and proper training most bites are preventable. If a bite does occur follow the guidelines below.

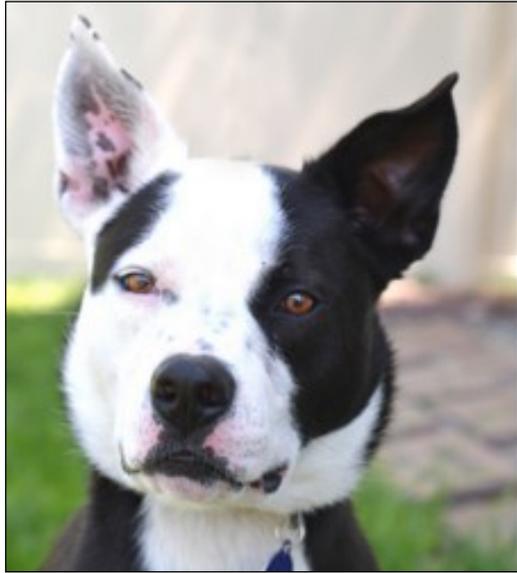
- 1) Report the bite immediately to a manager.
- 2) Clean out the wound; seek additional medical care if necessary.
- 3) Fill out an incident report with staff, at the adoption front desk. Include details leading up to the bite.



*The animal must be placed on a 10 day bite hold as required by New Jersey State law.*

# A DOG'S EARS

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**EARS UP, FORWARD**

Alert



**EARS BACK**

Submissive or Cautious



**FLAT BACK**

Fearful or defensive



**AIRPLANE EARS**

Mixed emotion

# A DOG'S MOUTH

**AIR SNAP:** Is a warning. If a dog bites the air near you this is a sign that they mean business. They did not bite you because they do not want to, but you have been warned they will bite if needed.



## OPEN MOUTH

relaxed or play



## CLOSED MOUTH

Tension which will also be seen in the face

## EXCEPTIONS:

- Tongue lick to the sides can mean hungry
- An open mouth with excessive panting can also mean tension
- A closed mouth with a tight jaw and face can mean fearfulness



## TONGUE FLICK, LIP LICK

A sign of stress

# A DOG'S TAIL

The height of the tail as well as the speed of its wag has meaning. Remember some breeds (Alaskan malamutes, Pugs) have a high carriage of their tail. For these breeds the tail will not be your strongest indicator of the dog's mood.

Note: This section is best explained by demonstration, not still images.



**HIGH TAIL, QUICK TIGHT WAG**

Aroused



**NEUTRAL TAIL, RELAXED WAG**

Neutral height held straight at attention  
is alert and attentive



**LOW, TUCKED TAIL**

Stress, fearfulness



**NEUTRAL TAIL, STILL**

Relaxed

# READING THE FULL BODY

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## **PLAY BOW:**

This can be seen dog-to-dog or human-to-dog. This is an invite to play. The stance allows for quick movements in multiple directions.



## **WHAT IS THIS DOGS MOOD?**

- Ears are back
- Lip Licking
- The dog's body is pulling away from the photographer, leg raised
- The dog is looking away from the photographer, not oriented towards him/her.



## **PUPPY PROBLEMS?**

- Body position is slumped
- The brow bones in the face are raised
- Mouth closed tight
- Body orientated away from the photographer



# BEHAVIOR OF A FEARFUL DOG

A different combination of the following behaviors will appear for different dogs.

**HEAD:** Avert their gaze, lower or turn their head.

**BODY:** Lower their body, slump, roll over, urinate.

**TAIL:** Tail tucked between their legs, low tail wag.

**EARS:** Ears flattened back; for flopped ears look at the base near the head.

**MOUTH:** Pant, bark, sniff the floor, excessively salivate, yawn, lip licking.



Remember that dogs do not want to be comforted the way a friend would. Hugs, overcrowding or cornering will only make the dog more uncomfortable. Give a fearful dog its space.



The dog above is doing a “Tap Out” Is this dog soliciting for a belly rub?

# BEHAVIOR OF AN AGGRESSIVE DOG

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An aggressive dog is often easy to spot. Once you're interacting with a dog it is important to continue reading the body language to ensure the dog isn't becoming aggressive. Remember, ignoring signs of fear often leaves the dog feeling they have no choice but to act out in aggression for fear of their own safety.

**DEFENSIVE AGGRESSION:** A dog showing aggressive behaviors who is not acting on its threats is letting you know it has the ability to become aggressive if the need presents itself. Respect the signs being given and allow the dog its space. If you are already outside of the shelter, call for a staff person to assist.

**HEAD:** An aggressive dog is facing you. A defensive aggressive dog may have its head turned

**EYES:** Stare, whale eye

**EARS:** Erect or flattened back

**BODY:** Tense, stiff, lunging, biting, air-snap

**HEAD:** Teeth bared, growl, body aligned towards you



# BEHAVIOR OF HAPPY DOGS

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One behavior spotted on this list does not mean the dog is happy. Be sure to see several of these behaviors working together to read a happy dog.

**HEAD:** Relaxed muscles in the face. Looks to you when called.

**BODY:** Approach the kennel, looking forward, play bow, a looseness or wiggle in the walk.

**TAIL:** neutral, wide range slow wag.

**EARS:** Loose relaxed ears. Not noteworthy forward or back.

**MOUTH:** Loose, open mouth or closed without tension.

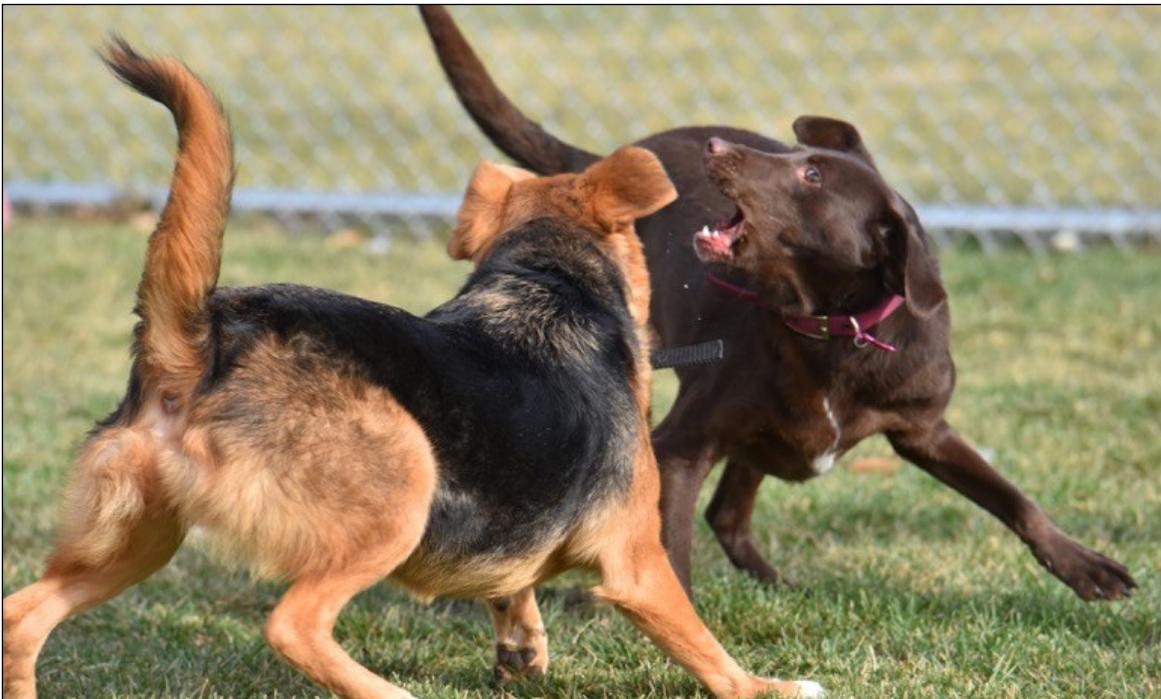


# DOG ON DOG AGGRESSION

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## DOG ON DOG FIGHTS:

- If a dog-to-dog fight is to occur, DO NOT try to separate the dogs.
- DO NOT grab for collars.
- Never put yourself between the dogs.
- If you have control of the leash, hold it and call for staff.
- You may try to stop the fight by
  - Loud noises, yelling, banging bowls
  - Throw a blanket over the dog's head to disorient
- Staff may pull the dogs apart by the rear legs (the wheelbarrow hold) once they arrive.



# DOG ON HUMAN AGGRESSION

## DOG-ON-HUMAN AGGRESSION: OFF- LEASH DOG

- DO NOT run; remain calm and move slowly.
- Avert your eyes and turn your body.
- Cross your arms slowly and stand with legs together. “Be A Tree”
- Take a fistful of treats and slowly toss them away from you
- “Feed” your leash, coat or article of clothing to the dog
- Call for a staff person

**Remember: Aggression + Aggression = More Aggression!**

## DOG-ON-HUMAN AGGRESSION: LEASHED DOG

- Run the leash through something to get the dog away from you - a door or wrap a tree
- Keep arms rigid and hold the dog away from you—short enough they cannot reach your legs, or hands
- Call for a staff person



# THE DO'S AND DON'TS IN HANDLING

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**OBSERVE:** Always start with observing the dog within the cage. If there is any concerning behaviors that you are not trained or comfortable to work with, do not take that dog out.

**GET ACQUAINTED:** Let the dog get used to your presence, smell, voice, and give the dog a treat. Once the dog appears more calm than aroused, you may begin the process of taking the dog out.

**NO PUNISHMENT:** St. Hubert's staff and volunteers use positive reinforcement only. At no time are you to strike an animal. Never correct a dog by jerking the leash. Always apply gradual pressure to redirect a dog while on a walk.

**NEVER CORNER A DOG:** At any time for any reason. If a dog will not approach the front of the kennel for its walk, it does not want to go with you. The dog will be walked by staff.

**KEEP YOUR BALANCE:** Always keep your balance while with the dog. With feral cats and wildlife in the area, you never know when a dog with prey drive may spot an animal to chase.

**SPECIAL SIGNAGE:** Never walk dogs with special signage indicating they are staff only, ACO Only, Quarantined, in the medical area, or Just had surgery.

**KENNELS:** Never enter into an adult dog's kennel. The only exception to entering a kennel is for litters of puppies under 6 months of age. This is the dog's space, respect its space.



# REMOVING DOGS FROM KENNELS

**SIGN OUT:** Sign the dog out on the walk board so staff is aware that the dog is on a walk. Place the “I’m on a walk” card on the front of the kennels to let staff know where the dog is.

**OBSERVE:** Always start with observing the dog within the cage. If there are any concerning behaviors that you are not trained or comfortable to work with, do not take that dog out. Let the dog get used to your presence, smell, voice, and give the dog a treat.

**WAIT:** Once the dog appears more calm than aroused, you may begin the process of taking the dog out. Do a quick last minute check of yourself for treats, poop bag, and secure collar or kennel lead.

**LOOP:** To remove the dog from the kennel you will open the door wide enough that the hand may enter into the kennel above the dog’s head. The loop will lay at the dog’s height. If a kennel door swings outward keep a foot by the door to block in case a dog tries to push out.

**DROP:** Let the loop drop around the neck of the dog; the loop will tighten. Then quickly remove the dog from the kennel, keeping a short leash. Be mindful of the dogs in nearby cages. Keep the dog moving to get them out of the high arousal area as quickly as possible.

**MOVE:** Bring the dog into the dressing room. Give the dog a moment to become familiar with you and the space.



# ONCE IN THE DRESSING ROOM

**CLOSE THE DOOR:** Be sure that the door is closed securely.

**CHECK FOR GEAR:** Check the pockets on the back of the door to see if your dog has equipment that has already been fitted. If so, use that, and return it to this spot at the end of your walk.

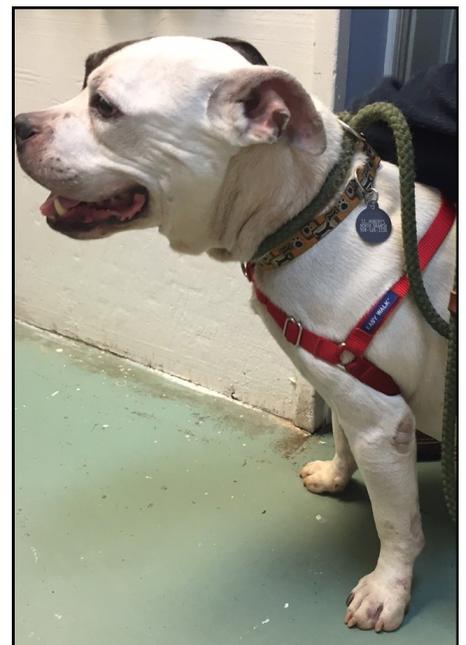
**FIT THE MARTINGALE:** All dogs wear a martingale on their walks. Martingale collars should never have metal touching when the leash is tight. There should be about an inch of fabric between the metal rings.



**FIT THE HARNESS:** Dogs with a fitted harness will be attached with the clip on the appropriate places.

**VEST:** once fitted correctly with a martingale and a harness (if one is assigned) drape the “Adopt Me” vest over the dog and secure.

**HEAD OUT:** Do one quick look and make sure the dog is secure in its dressings. Head outside to enjoy your walk!



# WHILE ON A WALK

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**VOLUNTEER TIME:** Dog walking volunteers sign up for an hour at a time. You are more than welcome to sign up for multiple times and take out all eligible dogs within your level of training.

**DOG TIME:** Dogs who are going out with volunteers are going out for quality time beyond good toiletry habits. Watch the dog for signs of fatigue, over heating or becoming too cold. A walk could be between 20 minutes to an hour.

**DOG TIME EXCEPTIONS:** During the peak adoption times from 12-6PM on a Saturday and 12-4PM on Sundays, please limit the dog's walk to 15 minutes. This way more potential adopters will be able to view the dog.



**AVOID DISTRACTIONS:** While on the walk, do not use your cellphone or headphones. Do bring your cellphone in case of an emergency and program the phone number of the front desk of your shelter location into the phone.

**OTHER DOGS:** While on the walk, do not allow your dog to interact with any other dog. Whether it is another shelter dog or the general public with a pet, the dog will not meet other dogs on the walk.

**PEOPLE ON YOUR WALK:** Do not allow your dog to interact with the general public while on their walk. Politely thank the person for their interest and instruct them to ask for the dog at the front desk to begin a meet and greet with a staff person.

**PLAY YARDS:** Dogs can enjoy free time off leash in the play yards. If you choose to play with toys in the yard, it's important to bring several. Do not take a toy from a dog; the dog may lash out if they are guarding it. Throw a new toy or a treat rather than picking up a toy from a dog near you.

# BRINGING THE DOG BACK IN

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**RETURN TO THE SHELTER:** Enter through an appropriate kennel door.

- If you are struggling to return a dog to its kennel and have exhausted the techniques below, call for a staff person.
- Never pull a dog or force them to do something they don't want to do. Use treats and praise. If they don't want to walk, you may want to find a quiet place and simply stroke them or brush them.
- If a dog is very shy, you may have to crouch down and lure the dog in with a treat. Crouch and have the dog approach, walk farther and crouch again; allow for second approach.

**DRESSING ROOM:** Once you're back inside the building, head to the dressing room to take the items off the dog.

**REMOVE:** The martingale, harness and "Adopt Me" vest are placed back in their appropriate places. Place the slip lead back over the dog's head. Unclip the leash and hang back onto the wall.

**WALK BACK:** Walk the dog back only with a slip leash to the kennel, keeping the leash length short.

**INTO THEIR KENNEL:** Open the door, allow the dog to walk into the kennel, loosen the lead and close the door.

**SIGN THE TIME IN/OUT:** Record the amount of time you spent with the dog into the enrichment book.



# STAFF - ONLY TASKS

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You may see some staff- only tasks being performed by a select few volunteers. These are volunteers who have been trained to perform these roles.

- When owned dogs come in for an intake or surrender do not approach and attempt to pet these animals. This is a difficult time and space must be given.
- Dog play groups between shelter dogs.
- Pack walks with shelter dogs.
- Meet and greets with potential adopters.
- Walking animals that are post-surgery or with any special sign on their kennel card.



# CONCLUSION OF THE HANDLING CLASS

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**Congratulations! You have completed the classroom portion of the dog handling program at St. Hubert's! This is only the first step in growing to understand more about dogs. Here are your next steps**

**1) ATTEND DOG HANDLING PART I:** You're done!

**2) ATTEND DOG HANDLING PART II:** This small group walkthrough will allow each volunteer to try getting the dog in/out of the kennel while still having a staff person available to ask questions and make corrections. Sign up online.

**3) RECEIVE YOUR DOG NAMETAG:** Receive your Level I dog walking nametag. Once the Staff person determines that the walkthrough went well, you will be able to walk Level I dogs.

**4) SIGN UP ONLINE FOR DOG WALKING SPOTS:** Reserve your walk times online. This way volunteers are contributing at a time they know the help is needed.

*A Special thanks to the staff and volunteers in the photos or taking the photos for this handbook. A big thank you to volunteer photographer Mark Lovretin.*

