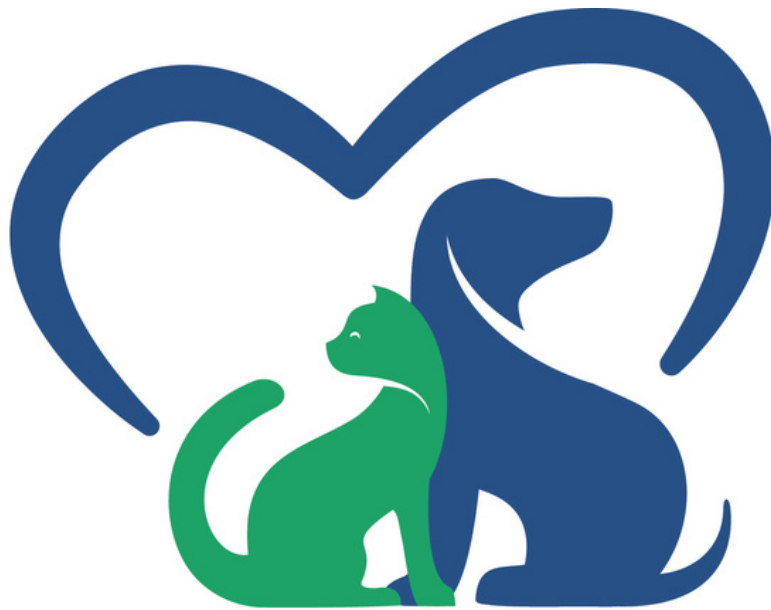


HUMANE SOCIETY OF GREATER NIAGARA

Cat Socialization Initiative (CSI)

Volunteer Manual



Humane
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Our goal, as volunteers...

To improve the quality of life and stay for each homeless cat or kitten within the shelter.

Our cats at the Humane Society of Greater Niagara are in need of human attention. Cats in cages easily become socially introverted. Those that were strays need to learn how to love and trust so they can later be adopted out to a home, while previous home cats need to know that they are still loved. Cats are so in need of their playtime, they become dependent upon it, and without it they can lose their spirit over time. We aim to give each cat the opportunity to be loved at least once, but preferably twice per day.

A minimum commitment of 2 hours per week, for a min of 3 months is all we ask of our volunteers. Scheduled times must be adhered to so that all volunteers are given a chance to enjoy the cats.

Our committed volunteers are greatly appreciated! It would be impossible to operate this program for the cats of HSGN without them!



Volunteer Coordinator:

The Volunteer Coordinator for the Cat Socialization Initiative (CSI) can be reached at cats@hsgn.ca



Volunteer Shifts

You along with our Volunteer Coordinator can discuss and decide on a shift that best suits you and the needs of the cats.

We understand that there may be times that you will be unable to attend your scheduled shift; we just ask that you please notify the coordinator in advance of your absence as soon as possible.

If you find that the original schedule that you committed to no longer works, please inform the Volunteer Coordinator and alternate arrangements can be discussed.

Should you wish to leave the program, please advise the coordinator. As you can appreciate, not showing up leaves the cats with no one to love them during your shift.

Unfortunately, three unexplained absences will result in removal from the program.



Remember, in the event that you ever need any assistance, please do not hesitate to call on any HSGN staff member!





Documentation

- **Do not forget to sign-in and out of the volunteer computer.**
- Bring a pen with you each shift as they are in short supply at the shelter and you will need them to write comments on each cat you socialize.
- It is important to document positive remarks about every cat you take out on their socialization sheet located in the adoption center binders.
- Please indicate the cat's name on the sheet and any notes you wish potential adopters to know about the cat. *Example: personality, what it likes such as petting, brushing, and playing with toys, etc.* This gives the next volunteer, and a potential adopter, the information on who needs to go out and what to generally expect from specific cats.
- If the cat has no log sheet on their clipboard, you can find blank ones on in the volunteer binder. If a full socialization sheet is completed, it can be placed in the sleeve with their cage paperwork for adopters to take home with them. Please create a new one.

Carriers & Transport Trolley

All cats must be taken to and from the socialization rooms in a carrier - *no exceptions*. There are safety reasons for this protocol. If a cat is too large for a carrier, please ask staff permission before taking the cat without a carrier. No matter how docile the cat seems, there is always a risk, especially when animals are entering the lobby at any given time. If you cannot find a carrier, or the carrier is broken, please ask staff for assistance.

Carriers are placed on the CSI red trolley (if required) for ease of transport and also to allow the cats increased feeling of safety at heights during transport.



Due to the number of cats in need of your attention and our goal of providing all cats time out of their cages, please limit the playtime of a single cat to 10-15 minutes, and a pair of cats 20-25 minutes.





Picking & Handling Cats

Please ensure to socialize the most timid residents or the ones that have been housed at the shelter the longest.

- *If a cat is growling, hissing, or swatting, please do not take the cat out for socialization,*
- If you find that a cat is resistant to leaving their cage, or if you are not comfortable with a particular cat, please socialize them in their cage. If you cannot put a cat back in its cage, please ask staff for assistance.
- Always speak quietly and soothingly to the cat prior to initiating any physical contact. Also, make sure you approach them slowly.
- Use a footstool or stepladder when reaching into the top cages. This will give you better leverage, allowing you to see what you are doing.
- To prevent the spread of disease and episodes of personality conflicts, please remove only one cat at a time from their cage. If there are two cats in the same cage, they may come out together.

Medical Considerations

If you have any concerns over a cat's health that does not currently have an "On Medication" sign, please notify a staff member immediately.

- *Please do not socialize any cats that are currently on medication in order to prevent the spread of disease/upper respiratory infection,* with the exception of choosing to socialize one ill cat at the end of your shift, in its cage, and thoroughly disinfecting your clothing and hands afterward.
- Please only give a cat 1-2 treats as an overabundance of treats can cause diarrhea.



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Volunteers are a huge help when it comes to improve our cat's shelter stay, however, they can also be a big part of their contraction of illnesses if protocols aren't followed correctly. Following these mandatory protocols saves lives!

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Preventing & Reporting Bites & Scratches

Try your best to avoid scratches and bites, as this means the cat will have to be moved out of adoption and into quarantine for a minimum of 10 days, even if it was unintentional.

- **In the case that you are ever bitten or scratched to break the skin you must notify a staff member immediately.** They will assist in providing you any required first aid. The cat will be quarantined but this does not necessarily mean you won't see the cat again. However, precautions must be taken to protect your health and safety.
- Staff will require you to complete a rabies control quarantine form for the Public Health Unit. You will be contacted by the Public Health Unit for any follow-up requirements.

Feline Health

Limiting the transmission of diseases is of paramount importance for our cats. Upper Respiratory Virus (URI) is highly contagious for cats (not to humans) and is easily transmitted from one cat to another through handling.

Using Prevail disinfectant, which can be used directly on your hands, is our best method of controlling or containing the spread of this virus.

All cat volunteers must use *Prevail* disinfectant spray on their hands & smock prior to touching each cat (unless housed together). **There are no exceptions to this rule.** Each cat socialization room should be stocked with an *Prevail* spray bottle. Parent volunteers are responsible to ensure that their children comply with this policy.

If you want to be extra cautious, we recommend that you wash your hands in between each cat IN ADDITION to the *Prevail* disinfectant.



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Cleaning & Disinfecting the Rooms & Toys

Please use the “two-carrier method” for disease prevention.

Here are the steps:

1. Set aside two carriers for your socialization shift. They will be used interchangeably to ensure that each can be disinfected prior to putting a different cat in the carrier.
2. Once you have returned a cat back to its cage after socialization, spray down all inside walls of the cat carrier including the cage door. Let it sit 5 to 10 minutes while you socialize another cat.
3. Take the other clean carrier and use it for your next cat.
4. When you return, wipe down the inside of the previously disinfected carrier to ensure it is not wet.
5. Continue to rotate through the carriers and disinfect the one not currently in use

Reminders:

- ♥ Only use toys that can be disinfected.
- ♥ Spray your smock with Prevail in between cats.
- ♥ Spray the cat carrier with Prevail and let sit for 5 min in between use.
- ♥ Observe food restriction signs on cat cages.
- ♥ Disinfect/wash your hands or gloves in between cats.
- ♥ **Do not socialize cats that are on medication.**
- ♥ Use the Prevail spray and cloth to wipe down chairs and any other soiled surface before you leave at the end of your shift.

If our inventory of carriers/toys/pens/cleaning supplies/smocks is getting low, please see a staff member or e-mail Cortnie (cwelychka@hsgn.ca)



Remember, in the event that you ever need any assistance, please do not hesitate to call on any HSGN staff member!





Routine Procedure:

Here's a snapshot of a proper and typical cat socialization routine

1. Enter the building via the front door (If the door is locked just push the intercom, identify yourself and the staff will open the door). Sign in to the volunteer computer under the CSI program. This computer is located right beside the desk, straight when you walk in.
2. Pick one of the available socialization rooms to use and inspect for cleanliness (sweep up any animal hair or disinfect any areas that look like they have been soiled). The CSI volunteers are the only ones who wear white smocks while they are in the building. These are worn to protect your clothing from the cat hair, as well as to readily identify you are a cat socializer. They are located in the back hallway outside the socialization rooms. If there are no smocks in this area, please ask staff for one. There are hooks on the inside of the doors to the playrooms; you may hang your coat there. If you have any valuables please keep them with you, in your car, or at home.
3. Prepare two of the designated carriers and spray them all over with the disinfecting spray provided in your room. Let sit for 5 minutes to dry.
4. While waiting for the room or cages to dry, enter the cat adoption room of your choice and pick your line-up of cats. Please remember: only socialize with cats that are not on medication and that look healthy. We also appreciate if you pick the most shy cats to socialize, because it improves their chances of being adopted
5. Return to your dry cat carrier and bring it to pick-up your first cat.
6. Pick-up the cat based on the cat handling policy. If you have trouble retrieving a cat from their cage, please seek the assistance of a staff member. If the cat is extremely afraid, please socialize them in their cage.

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When socializing, remember to speak gently, move slowly, and close the cage door gently. Do not leave the cage door open.

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Routine Procedure continued:

Here's a snapshot of a proper and typical cat socialization routine

7. Put a SIGN on the cat's kennel that it is out socializing so that staff and customers know where they are (there are laminated "I'm out playing" signs in the personality log binders or sign-in binders for this). In the carrier, carry the cat to the prepared room and let it out. Allow the cat to wander around the room, stretch, and encourage play (many cats just want to sniff and stretch).
8. Feel free to play with it if he or she is feeling playful, or brush them if they like it. Some cats may even want to sit on your lap and be petted. *Feel free to give them a treat, but be observant of any dietary restrictions on their cage.*
9. Once you are done socializing the cat, put them gently back in the carrier (from the top), and lightly spray down the room.
10. Walk back to their cage and tidy it up if food is knocked over or their blanket is messy. Gently put them back in their cage, and take off the "I'm out playing" sign.
11. There are cat socialization sheets in the personality binder. Please make a new sheet if the cat does not have one. Write out a short positive comment on the socialization paper -be sure to do this every time since it is very helpful to people looking to adopt!
12. Spray down the carrier you just used and pick up your other disinfected one for use on your next cat. Spray down your smock with disinfectant and then disinfect your hands with the spray.
13. Repeat steps 5 through 12 until your shift is complete.
14. At the end of your shift, sweep the room, put away all toys and items into the cupboard/drawers appropriately, and close the Socialization/viewing room doors. Inform staff if supplies of anything are getting low, spray down the room and wipe down the chairs with disinfectant. Place your soiled smock in the laundry room.

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Once you're done, sign out & enjoy the rest of your day! We truly appreciate your time and dedication to the cats. Their lives are enriched because of your efforts! Thank you so much for your kind contribution.

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THE RIGHT WAY TO PICK UP A CAT

FIRST PUT ONE HAND ON THE CAT'S CHEST JUST BEHIND HIS FRONT LEGS

ALWAYS APPROACH A CAT CALMLY AND HANDLE HIM GENTLY

RIGHT



THEN WITH YOUR OTHER HAND SUPPORT THE BACK LEGS AND FEET CRADLING THE REAR OF THE CAT'S BODY SO THAT THIS MAKES A SORT OF SEAT AND HE IS FULLY SUPPORTED

THE WRONG WAYS TO PICK UP A CAT

WRONG

UNLESS IN AN EMERGENCY TO SAVE HIS LIFE



NEVER PICK UP A CAT BY HIS FRONT LEGS



NEVER PICK UP A CAT BY THE SCRUFF OF HIS NECK



NEVER PICK UP A CAT BY HIS MIDDLE

HANDLING A CAT THE WRONG WAY CAN CAUSE HIM DISCOMFORT AND EVEN SERIOUS INJURY