## States with Rescue Certification/Licensing

**New York:** Shelter and Rescue Registration | Agriculture and Markets (ny.gov)

**Massachusetts:** Licensing and Operating a Shelter/ Rescue Organization | Mass.gov

**Massachusetts**: In addition to an application for registration, nonprofit rescues must also submit an operation plan. Create - Shelter & Rescue (massnrc.org)

## Examples of Codes of Ethics for Shelters and Rescues

**Code of Ethics for Animal Shelters and Rescues – Chat GPT**

1. **Humane Treatment of Animals**
    - Provide compassionate, respectful, and humane care for all animals at all times.
    - Ensure animals have access to adequate food, water, shelter, medical care, and social interaction to promote their well-being.
    - Utilize humane methods for handling and restraint, ensuring the least amount of stress for the animal.
2. **Commitment to Animal Welfare**
    - Prioritize the physical and emotional well-being of animals.
    - Actively work to reduce animal suffering, including minimizing time spent in a shelter or kennel environment by promoting responsible adoption and foster care.
    - Support and adhere to the practice of spaying and neutering to prevent overpopulation.
3. **Transparency and Honesty**
    - Be transparent with the public, adopters, and donors regarding shelter operations, financials, and the health and temperament of animals in care.
    - Disclose any known behavioral or medical issues of an animal before adoption to ensure potential adopters are fully informed.
    - Avoid misrepresentation or misleading information in any communications.
4. **Ethical Decision-Making**
    - Ensure all decisions, including euthanasia, are made with the animal's welfare in mind and follow best practices and protocols.
    - Euthanasia should only be considered when it is in the best interest of the animal, and it should be performed in the most humane and compassionate manner possible.

- Work to explore every viable option for rehoming or transferring an animal before making a decision regarding euthanasia.

5. **Respect for the Community**
    - Treat all community members, including staff, volunteers, adopters, donors, and the public, with respect, integrity, and courtesy.
    - Promote responsible pet ownership within the community through education, outreach, and support.
6. **Professional Conduct**
    - Maintain professional behavior in all interactions with colleagues, volunteers, and the public.
    - Train and support staff and volunteers to ensure the highest standards of care for animals.
    - Avoid conflicts of interest, unethical behavior, and situations that may compromise the organization's mission.
7. **Adoption and Placement Practices**
    - Ensure that animals are placed in appropriate, safe, and loving homes, taking care to match pets with adopters that can meet their needs.
    - Require that potential adopters complete an application and meet pre-set criteria to assess their suitability for adoption.
    - Provide adopters with guidance on how to properly care for and integrate their new pet into the household.
8. **Confidentiality and Privacy**
    - Respect the privacy and confidentiality of adopters, donors, staff, and volunteers.
    - Protect personal information and use it only for intended purposes, following applicable data protection laws.
9. **Collaboration with Other Organizations**
    - Foster a spirit of cooperation with other shelters, rescues, and animal welfare organizations to promote the shared goal of animal well-being.
    - Share resources, knowledge, and expertise when appropriate to help animals in need and reduce animal suffering.
10. **Stewardship and Accountability**
    - Use donations and resources responsibly, ensuring that funds are directed toward the care and welfare of animals.

- Be accountable to donors, volunteers, and the community by maintaining transparent financial practices.
- Maintain records of all animals in the shelter or rescue's care, including intake, medical treatment, and adoption outcomes.

Code of Ethics: The Association for Animal Welfare Advancement, Code of Ethics - The Association for Animal Welfare Advancement (theaawa.org)

Values

- We believe in the intrinsic dignity and sanctity of human life.
- We believe in the intrinsic dignity and sanctity of animal life.
- We believe all animals are entitled to be free from suffering, abuse and exploitation.
- We believe that companion animals are a product of human intervention and that we have a special obligation to them in regard to humane treatment and responsible stewardship
- We believe we have an obligation to alleviate suffering.
- We believe we have an obligation to prevent cruelty.
- We believe that people should treat each animal as kindly as possible.
- We believe we have a duty to protect and care for the suffering and homeless.
- We believe that our values, decisions, conduct and behavior should set the tone and be a model for others in their care and treatment of animals.
- The commitment, care and attention we afford to both human beings and animals is only differentiated by degree and not by kind.

Organizational Policy and Values

I. HONESTY

Communicate consistently, truthfully and with integrity inside and outside of the organization.
Accept responsibility for our actions.
Provide honest and accurate information regarding agency policies, procedures and

programs like fund raising and the disposition of animals.

II. RESPECT

Treat all living creatures with respect and dignity.
Create an open environment which encourages and solicits input from all stakeholders.
Recognize the value of each individual or group.
Acknowledge socio-economic, cultural, ethnic and philosophical differences.
Advocate and model respectful behavior through individual and organizational example.

III. RESPONSIBILITY

Apply all applicable laws impartially with organizational guidelines.
Provide humane treatment and care for animals.
Seek ways to improve the operation and delivery of services. Pursue excellence.
Share information and seek input from, educate, and cooperate with others.

IV. BE FAIR and JUST

Use good judgment instead of being judgmental.
Listen to and consider opposing viewpoints.
Make informed decisions without personal bias.
Apply consistent principles in decision-making while allowing for flexibility.

V. CARING and COMPASSION

Strive to provide for the physical and psychological needs of people and animals.
Encourage and support board and staff development.
Provide a humane and dignified death for animals using recommended and approved methods.
Extend the principles of caring and compassion to the public.
Provide a supportive environment in which to deal with issues of euthanasia and grief.

VI. CITIZENSHIP

Represent the organization in a professional manner.
Strive to promote positive and collaborative relationships with other agencies, organizations, and individuals.

Good Dog: Good Shelter & Rescue Code of Ethics | Good Dog

Shelters and Rescues in Our Community

Shelter and rescue organizations in our community are held accountable to a set of standards created in collaboration with our shelter, rescue, veterinary, and academic advisors. Members of our community not only provide support for their animals but also meet a high standard for transparency and financial discipline.

Shelter and Care

All participating shelters and rescues agree to:

1. Maintain status as an approved 501(c)(3) public charity or municipal shelter.
2. Provide the proper care and a clean, safe environment for all dogs on the premises, which includes at a minimum:
    - Veterinary care for dogs when sick or injured
    - Indoor spaces with protection from extreme temperatures
    - Outdoor access in a play yard and with walks
    - Appropriate daily food and water (in accordance with breed, age, and size)
    - Regular interaction, exercise, socialization, and other enrichment (e.g. toys)
    - Appropriate living space with no wire flooring
    - Cleaned at least daily with comfortable, padded spaces for sleeping
    - Access to toys and other enrichment items
3. Ensure all dogs are seen by a licensed veterinarian as a part of a full veterinary exam with a clean bill of health (unless an exemption is applicable), are given appropriate shots and are dewormed or have a negative fecal exam before going to a new home. Appropriate shots should include age specific as well as region specific shots to prevent the spread of diseases upon transport.
4. Spay or neuter all dogs if not already spayed or neutered upon arrival.
5. Maintain detailed records on dogs surrendered, their time in the shelter or rescue's care and adoption (and report this data publicly as much as possible).
6. Comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.
7. When possible given availability of time and resources:
    - Encourage foster to adopt programming to help dogs transition into a family setting
    - Commit to training and rehabilitating dogs surrendered such that they are able to thrive in their new homes
    - Microchip all dogs
    - Work in their communities to educate on the importance of good dog ownership and surrender prevention

- Encourage and participate in spay and neuter campaigns

Placing Dogs with New Owners

All participating shelters and rescues agree to:

1. Screen all prospective owners to determine their suitability and motives for acquiring a dog using an application process.
2. Disclose any known health or behavioral issues of a dog before it goes to a new home.
3. Never misrepresent the characteristics or history of a dog (including the surrender history, breed, location of rescue, past health issues).
4. Make sure that each dog, upon release to its new owners, is accompanied by the following:
    - Health certificate including vaccination and deworming dates
    - All prior available health records (unless an exemption is applicable)
5. Maintain detailed records of each dog adopted.
6. Provide resources and guidance for new dogs owners to ensure a good transition.
7. Encourage new owners to abide by our Responsible Dog Ownership Code of Ethics.

**Basic Rules of Ethical Rescue: National Animal Interest Alliance, Basic Rules of Ethical Rescue | National Animal Interest Alliance (naiaonline.org)**

**Do nothing illegal, dishonest or unethical**

It is important to remain in good standing with your community and maintain a good working relationship with your area shelters and your fellow welfare volunteers. A history of negativity, deceit, jumping to conclusions, or inability to work well with others can make it difficult when cooperation is needed in the future. Make sure any reports of neglect or abuse are valid and can be substantiated before making allegations or repeating them to others. Try to deal in fact, not gossip, and do not advise others to break the law or encourage "vigilantism."

**Spay and neuter all dogs in rescue**

The only exceptions should be at the request of a veterinarian and should include proper documentation. In such a case, adopters should sign a strict spay/neuter contract and be carefully monitored.

**Keep accurate records and history of dogs in rescue**

Each dog should have on file a

1. A relinquishment agreement with a history of the dog regarding temperament, health issues, and a statement of true ownership and legal right to place the dog. There should

also be a disclaimer to inform the surrendering owner of the possibility of euthanasia if deemed necessary.

2. An adoption agreement with a statement of new ownership, conditions of relinquishment, and transfer of responsibility and liability.
3. A spay/neuter contract to be used with great discretion and only under the advice of a veterinarian.

**Register and operate as a nonprofit organization**

Just fulfilling the legal obligations is not enough. Funds solicited for rescue should be used for the designated purposes only and not for personally owned dogs or private activities. Efforts at economy should be made; some foster dogs can be very costly to treat, others may cost very little. Adoption fees should not exceed the treatment of the average dog in foster care. Donations are meant for the continuation of the rescue program, not a reflection of the dog's "worth," and should not fluctuate with each dog's appearance, age, behavior or ability to attract a higher amount.

**Carefully screen adoptive homes**

Do as much screening as possible to assure the most appropriate situation for the adopters and the lifetime of the dog. Nobody should be pressured into taking a dog they do not want nor should they feel responsible for the future of the dog if they are unwilling or unable to adopt it Always be willing to take a dog back if the adoption fails; a dog is not successfully adopted until it is in its lifetime home.

**Know local  animal control laws**

Stay informed about local ordinances and legal issues. Copies of local county, city and state animal laws can be great resources and problem solvers. Being able to recommend an appropriate resource for health, behavior, housing, and neighborhood mediation can head off a placement in rescue or the nearby shelter. Ignorance of the law is not a valid defense.

**Accept the fact that not all dogs are adoptable**

Euthanasia is an eventuality for anyone involved in rescue long term. As a kindness to the veterinary technicians who must perform the task, please make an effort to control emotions and not over-dramatize the event. A calm and painless death is not the worst thing that can happen in a dog's lifetime. Accepting it as an inevitable part of life and making it as peaceful as possible can be the ultimate act of kindness.

**Educate the public**

Just as we educate the public on how to choose an ethical, responsible breeder, we need to warn them of those exploiting rescue for their own monetary gain and political agendas. Be aware, however, that making accusations about others can create legal difficulties. Try to limit complaints and lecturing. More can be accomplished by positively promoting these guidelines, and taking every opportunity to enlighten the public. Remember that irresponsible, even ignorant people can be educated. Be patient. Be tolerant. Try to be nice.

HSUS Guidelines for Animal Shelter Policies, HSUS Guidelines for Animal Shelter Policies (hsi.org)

HSUS Guidelines for Animal Shelter Policies An animal shelter has two main jobs—to be a safe haven for all animals in need and to be the nucleus of a community's animal care and control program. Its staff should provide quality care for all stray and relinquished animals temporarily in its care, making every effort to provide a safe, comfortable, and stress-free environment. The shelter should also be accessible and welcoming to the community.

**Purpose**

An animal shelter's tasks should include the following: teaching humane principles in the community, preventing animal cruelty and suffering, and enforcing animal protection laws. Although an animal shelter may not undertake all of these tasks itself, it has an ethical, and often legal, responsibility to ensure that some person or organization in the community undertakes them.

**General Policies**

If your shelter is a municipal animal care and control facility, the commissioners in charge must fully acquaint themselves with the community's animal problems and should consistently allocate adequate funding and resources for a humane and effective animal care and control program. A comprehensive animal control ordinance should be in place and adequately enforced.

If your shelter is a private facility (or a private facility with a government contract to perform animal care and control functions), all members of the board of directors must have a basic understanding of animal care and control issues. Board members should commit time and effort to help develop policies and plans that will help the animals, support the staff, and serve the community. Board members should remember that they are responsible to the dues-paying membership and should report the shelter's activities to the membership at regular intervals.

The policies below are minimum standards for any animal shelter. While a shelter is limited to its available resources, it should follow these policies closely if it is to be an asset to the animals and the community it serves:

- Accept every animal.
- Accept surrendered animals without charging a fee.
- Maintain a clean, comfortable, safe, and healthy environment for each animal.
- Hold stray animals for a minimum of five operating days, including Saturdays.
- Screen prospective adopters using established adoption standards.
- Use sodium pentobarbital administered by well-trained, compassionate individuals when euthanasia is necessary.
- Spay or neuter all animals at the time of adoption or require adopters to get their animals sterilized soon after placement.

The public should consider the shelter a public service for both the animal and human members of the community. Shelter staff should strive to maintain a positive attitude and an inviting atmosphere to encourage the public to bring in stray and unwanted animals. If there are too many

obstacles to surrendering animals, people are more likely to abandon them. Signs directing the public to your shelter's location should be clearly posted, and a map should be extensively publicized.

**Daily Operations**

Your shelter should have written operational policies and standards to ensure that daily operations run as smoothly as possible.

**Hours of Operation**

Your shelter should be open a minimum of five days per week for claiming or adopting animals, including at least one weekend day. It should be open until at least 7 p.m. at least one evening a week so it is accessible to people working typical business hours. The hours of operation should be clearly posted outside the shelter and made known throughout the community. In addition, your shelter should make arrangements to receive and assist sick or injured animals twenty-four hours a day, and it should offer an emergency pick-up service, if possible.

**Animal Care and Housing**

Your shelter should provide the most comfortable, stress-free environment possible for the animals in your care. Animals should have access to clean, fresh water at all times and be fed according to HSUS recommendations or those of a consulting veterinarian. Food and water bowls should be properly disinfected every day.

Cages and kennels should be commercially manufactured, in good condition, cleaned and disinfected daily, and free of sharp or broken edges. Dogs and cats must be housed separately, and the housing should reflect their different needs. For more information on shelter operations, please see HSUS Guidelines for the Operation of an Animal Shelter in the HSI Electronic Library at www.hsihsus.org .

**Adoptions**

Your shelter should strive to place animals in loving, responsible, and permanent homes. Adoption fees for purebred or obedience-trained animals or for animals with distinguishing characteristics should be the same as those charged for other animals. In addition, adoption fees for cats and dogs should be identical.

For a complete discussion of companion animal adoptions, please see HSUS Guidelines for Responsible Adoption Programs in the HSI Electronic Library at www.hsihsus.org .

**Euthanasia**

Shelters must demonstrate a respect for quality of life and provide the most humane death possible for sick, injured, or unwanted animals. In order to be humane, a euthanasia method must result in painless, rapid unconsciousness followed by cardiac or respiratory arrest and, ultimately, death. The HSUS recommends the injection of sodium pentobarbital, prepared specifically for the euthanasia of companion animals. This method, when properly performed, has been found to be the most humane, safest, least stressful, and most professional choice. Only staff who have been properly trained in euthanasia should perform it. Shelters also must follow federal and state

guidelines regarding euthanasia methods and administration. For more information on euthanasia, please see HSUS General Statement Regarding Euthanasia Methods in the HSI Electronic Library at www.hsihsus.org .

**Record Keeping**

Complete and accurate records are essential for the responsible, efficient, and legal operation of your animal shelter. A record should be prepared for every animal entering your shelter, giving a full description of the animal and any information about the animal's background that is available. These records should be numbered and filed so that all staff can easily retrieve them. An animal should have the same record or tag number throughout his or her stay at the shelter, and each animal must be clearly identified with a temporary collar and tag.

Accurate record keeping is also necessary for an effective lost-and-found program as well as for tracking animal control calls, cruelty complaints, and the disposition of the animals in the shelter's care. Several computer software programs for shelter management are available. Contact The HSUS's Animal Sheltering Issues staff for more information.

**Programs**

Shelter activities should be based on the best interests of the animals and the community. The role of staff members is to provide humane care of the animals and to carry out the shelter's programs effectively. Staff members should provide commissioners or board members with information or assistance that will promote the development of responsible animal care and control programs.

**Spay/Neuter**

Efforts It is imperative that shelters have a mandatory spay/neuter program for all adopted animals, preferably one that incorporates both sterilization at adoption and early-age spay/neuter. Shelters should make it a top priority to ensure that the animals they place for adoption do not contribute to companion animal overpopulation.

**Cruelty Investigation**

Every community should have trained personnel to investigate animal cruelty issues and enforce animal protection laws. All calls and complaints must be handled in a professional, courteous, and timely manner. Personnel should be able to respond twenty-four hours a day in cases of emergency. If a shelter doesn't have an investigator, it should refer callers to the appropriate law enforcement agency in the area.

**Humane Education**

Your shelter should make every effort to provide humane education for local residents, especially children. From sponsoring community-wide awareness campaigns to sending shelter staff into classrooms for presentations, your shelter can embrace a variety of strategies to teach responsible pet ownership and instill a humane ethic in all members of the community.

**Volunteers**

Volunteers can be an invaluable asset to your shelter's programs and its animals. However, don't expect volunteers to fill most staffing needs. All volunteers must be properly trained for the duties they are assigned and should be supervised at all times.

**Management**

It is a binding obligation of shelter administrators to evaluate current procedures frequently; ensure that animals are properly cared for; and verify that employees are competent, compassionate, and properly trained.

**Personnel**

Shelter employees should be regarded as the skilled professionals that they are and should be paid on that basis. All job positions and descriptions should include salaries and benefits that will attract competent people with good judgment who care about treating animals humanely. Written policies and procedures for employees are essential, not only for the orientation and training of new employees, but also to ensure continuity and efficiency within the shelter.

A comprehensive policies and procedures manual, explaining shelter policies and general job duties, should be made available to every staff member. The following is a suggested outline:

1. History, mission, purposes, and general policies (including euthanasia policies and other policies related to animals)
2. Organizational structure, job descriptions for all positions, policies for benefits and leave
3. Role of the board or other governing body
4. Procedures for office, kennel, and field services; security and safety procedures
5. Resources, including state and local animal laws and a list of other animal care and control agencies in the community

**Training**

Shelter staff must be trained so they can effectively perform the following functions:

- Provide humane care and disposition of shelter animals.
- Protect the animals from disease and injury.
- Solve or refer all types of community animal problems to the proper person or agency.
- Deal with the public courteously, professionally, and effectively.

Shelter employees should be encouraged to attend out-of-house training sessions and be given opportunities to do so. An effort should be made to address problems associated with employee stress, including adoption- and euthanasia-related anxiety.