



HUMANE SOCIETY

of Sonoma County

SANTA ROSA & HEALDSBURG

committed to kindness

Shelter Behavior Specialist

Humane Society of Sonoma County Job Description

Title	Shelter Behavior Specialist	Location	Santa Rosa
Department	Behavior and Training	Hours	Full Time 40 hours Sun-Thursday 9-5:30
Classification	FT Non-exempt	Salary	\$25-30 hourly
Approved By	Sr Director Ops and Programs	Reports To	Shelter Behavior Manager and Director of Operations

Mission Statement:

Committed to kindness in service to the community since 1931, the Humane Society of Sonoma County is a donor-supported safe haven for animals. Our mission is to save lives and benefit the wellbeing of pets and their people with kindness, innovation, and leadership.

SUMMARY:

The Shelter Behavior Specialist is responsible for providing hands-on behavioral support to the shelter population. This role focuses on conducting behavior assessments, reassessments, and creating and implementing behavioral interventions to ensure the well-being and adoptability of shelter animals. While the primary focus is on animal behavior, the specialist also provides training and guidance to staff and volunteers as needed to support safe and humane animal handling. Additionally, this position plays a key role in supporting adoption and foster efforts by providing consultations and writing behavior recommendations.

This role reflects a values-driven professional who leads with humility, collaboration, and care for animals and humans alike. You thrive in a team environment, are skilled in both canine and

feline behavior, and believe in the power of behavioral health and shelter medicine to improve animals lives.

Key Responsibilities:

Shelter Animal Behavior & Assessment

- Conducts initial behavior assessments and regular reassessments for shelter animals.
- Writes detailed adoption recommendations for animals to support appropriate placement.
- Implements behavior modification plans for animals with behavioral challenges.
- Works directly with animals to provide enrichment, training, and socialization.
- Monitors and documents animal behavior to track progress and identify trends; maintains and updates records in Shelter Buddy, our shelter software program.
- Assists in making recommendations for adoption, foster, and transfer placements.
- Fits animals for appropriate equipment to ensure comfort and safety.

Behavioral Intervention & Support

- Implements behavior modification techniques to address fear, anxiety, aggression, and other behavioral concerns.
- Provides hands-on training sessions for animals in need of additional behavioral support.
- Works closely with the Adoptions team to ensure appropriate placement matches based on behavioral needs.
- Conducts dog introductions to ensure appropriate placement with potential adopters' resident dogs.
- Provides behavior consultations for potential adopters to set them up for success.
- Offers post-adoption behavior consultations and ongoing support to adopters.
- Promptly responds to behavior-related animal return information to inform pathway decisions.
- Participates in animal outcome decisions, including potential humane euthanasia outcomes when necessary.
- May be required to offer public behavior consultations or teach group training classes as needed to support departmental revenue goals.

Foster & Staff/Volunteer Support

- Trains staff and volunteers on proper handling and behavior management techniques.
- Assists supervisor in administrative tasks pertaining to tracking and managing volunteers in animal handling roles.

- Supports staff in executing handling plans and behavior protocols for shelter animals.
- Promptly responds to animal-related incidents – e.g. bites, fights, loose animals, etc.
- Provides behavioral support and guidance to foster volunteers to help animals transition successfully.
- Writes foster requests outlining specific behavioral needs and support strategies for animals in foster care.
-

Supervision:

This position reports to the Shelter Behavior Manager

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:

- Strong knowledge of animal behavior, training techniques, and humane handling methods.
- Strong animal handling skills and ability to read animal body language.
- Comfortable/competent handling animals with a wide range of behaviors, including fractious or fearful animals.
- Experience conducting behavior assessments and implementing modification plans.
- Ability to work independently and collaboratively in a fast-paced environment.
- Strong observational and documentation skills.
- Valid CA driver's license and reliable transportation.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES:

- Minimum one year of experience working with shelter animals, preferably in a behavior and training capacity.
- Professional certification required (e.g., CPDT-KA, KPA-CTP, CDBC, or equivalent.)
 - Comfort navigating change and working in fast-paced environments.
 - Excellent communication skills; clear, kind, and culturally aware.

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS:

While performing the duties of this job the employee is required to stand, walk, bend, reach, stoop, kneel, squat, and crawl; use finger, handle, or feel objects; reach with hands; talk and hear; climb or balance. The employee must be able to lift, move and carry objects up to 50 pounds. Use of arms above the shoulder is sometimes required. Specific vision abilities required by the job include close vision, distance vision, color vision, peripheral vision, depth perception, and the ability to adjust focus.

Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform essential functions.

WORK ENVIRONMENT:

The employee is generally working in a shelter environment and will be exposed to animals. Duties involve the use of cleaning agents and are performed in the animal adoption, hospital, and administrative office areas at the Sonoma Humane Society. Allergic condition which would be aggravated from exposure to animals or cleansing agents is a disqualification.

EEO STATEMENT:

HSSC is an Equal Opportunity Employer. We are committed to building a diverse, inclusive, and equitable team. We encourage applications from individuals of all backgrounds and identities, especially those historically underrepresented in animal welfare and veterinary medicine.