

Conflict of Interest Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Conflict of Interest Policy is to protect the integrity, transparency, and accountability of Fresh Start Rescue (“the Rescue”) by ensuring that all decisions are made in the best interest of the animals and the organization. This policy provides guidance for identifying, disclosing, and managing actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest among individuals in positions of responsibility or influence.

The Rescue relies on the trust of the public, donors, volunteers, fosters, adopters, and partner organizations. All representatives must avoid situations where personal interests could interfere with their duties or compromise the Rescue’s mission.

2. Applicability

This policy applies to all individuals who hold positions of authority, influence, or decision-making responsibility within the Rescue, including:

- Board members
- Officers
- Committee chairs
- Committee members
- Key volunteers involved in decision-making
- Individuals with access to sensitive, financial, or operational information

Other volunteers or participants may be asked to disclose conflicts if their role involves decision-making or access to confidential information.

3. Definition of a Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest exists when an individual’s personal, professional, financial, or relational interests could:

- Influence their judgment or actions on behalf of the Rescue
- Create the appearance of bias or impropriety
- Result in personal benefit or gain
- Compromise the Rescue’s integrity or reputation

Conflicts may be actual, potential, or perceived, and all must be disclosed.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Financial relationships with vendors, service providers, or partner organizations
- Personal or family relationships that could influence decisions
- Employment or volunteer roles with other rescues, shelters, or nonprofits
- Receiving gifts, favors, discounts, or benefits from individuals or entities doing business with the Rescue
- Any situation where personal interests could reasonably be seen as conflicting with Rescue duties

4. Duty to Disclose

Individuals covered by this policy must:

- Disclose all actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest
- Complete the Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form annually
- Update their disclosure promptly if circumstances change
- Inform the Board or appropriate leadership when a new conflict arises

Disclosure does not imply wrongdoing; it ensures transparency and proper oversight.

5. Procedures for Handling Conflicts

When a conflict is disclosed:

1. The individual must provide all relevant details to the Board or designated committee.
2. The Board (or committee) will review the information and determine whether a conflict exists.
3. If a conflict is confirmed, the Board will determine appropriate management steps, which may include:
 - Recusal from discussion or voting
 - Restriction from accessing certain information
 - Reassignment of responsibilities
 - Declining or terminating a relationship with a vendor or partner
4. The individual with the conflict must abstain from voting or influencing decisions related to the matter.
5. All decisions and actions taken will be documented in meeting minutes.

6. Gifts, Favors, and Benefits

Individuals may not accept gifts, favors, discounts, or personal benefits from any person or entity that:

- Does business with the Rescue
- Seeks to do business with the Rescue
- Could benefit from a decision made by the Rescue

Nominal items (e.g., small tokens under \$25) may be acceptable but must still be disclosed if they could create the appearance of influence.

7. Outside Roles and Affiliations

Individuals must disclose any outside employment, volunteer roles, board service, or advisory positions with:

- Other rescues or shelters
- Animal-related organizations
- Nonprofits or businesses that may interact with the Rescue

These affiliations are not prohibited but must be disclosed to ensure transparency and prevent conflicts.

8. Confidentiality

Information obtained through Rescue involvement may not be used for:

- Personal gain
- The benefit of another organization
- Any purpose outside the scope of Rescue responsibilities

Confidentiality obligations continue indefinitely, even after an individual's relationship with the Rescue ends.

9. Violations of the Policy

If an individual fails to disclose a conflict or violates this policy, the Board may take corrective action, including:

- Counseling or retraining
- Removal from decision-making roles
- Suspension or termination of affiliation
- Other actions deemed appropriate by the Board

Serious violations may result in immediate removal.

10. Annual Disclosure

All individuals covered by this policy must complete the Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form annually and update it as circumstances change. The Board Secretary or designated officer will maintain all disclosure records.

11. Certification

By signing the annual disclosure form, individuals affirm that they:

- Have read and understand this policy
- Agree to comply with it
- Have disclosed all actual, potential, or perceived conflicts
- Will update their disclosure if circumstances change

Approved by the Board of Directors

Date: 06-06-2026