



Code of Conduct - Universal

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to establish clear expectations for behavior, communication, professionalism, and integrity for all individuals representing Fresh Start Rescue (“the Rescue”). This policy ensures a safe, respectful, and drama-free environment for animals, volunteers, fosters, adopters, board members, officers, contractors, and the community. All individuals acting on behalf of the Rescue are expected to uphold the Rescue’s mission, Core Values, and standards of conduct.

2. Applicability

This Code of Conduct applies to all individuals acting in any capacity on behalf of the Rescue, including:

- Volunteers
- Fosters
- Board members
- Officers
- Committee members
- Contractors
- Advisors or consultants
- Any individual representing the Rescue in an official or unofficial capacity

This policy applies to all interactions, including in-person, phone, text, email, written communication, and social media.

3. Core Expectations

a. Professionalism and Respect

All representatives of the Rescue shall:

- Treat all individuals with kindness, respect, and courtesy
- Communicate in a constructive, drama-free manner
- Responding to organization communication in a timely manner
- Reviewing materials as applicable, prior to meetings
- Participating constructively in discussions
- Avoiding side conversations during meetings or trainings
- Using respectful tone even during disagreements
- Avoid gossip, negativity, or divisive behavior
- Support a collaborative and inclusive environment
- Follow instructions from Rescue leadership and designated coordinators
- Adhere to the Anti-Harassment & Anti-Bullying Policy



b. Compassionate Animal Care

Individuals involved in animal handling or care shall:

- Handle animals safely and humanely
- Follow all Rescue protocols for animal care, transport, and safety
- Report concerns about an animal's health or behavior promptly
- Never use force, intimidation, or punishment with animals

c. Integrity and Honesty

All representatives shall:

- Represent the Rescue truthfully and accurately
- Provide honest information when communicating with the public
- Report mistakes, incidents, or concerns promptly
- Avoid misrepresenting their role or authority

4. Communication Standards

All individuals representing the Rescue shall:

- Communicate respectfully with fosters, adopters, volunteers, board members, and the public
- Avoid inflammatory, hostile, divisive, or disrespectful language
- Use appropriate channels for questions or concerns
- Refrain from posting confidential or sensitive information online
- Avoid speaking on behalf of the Rescue unless authorized

Communication breaches may include:

- Passive-aggressive comments
- Vague posting or generalizations
- Indirect criticism
- Speaking negatively about people, or when people are not in the room
- Using private group chats to undermine leadership or create division
- Triangulation (bringing third parties into a conflict instead of addressing it directly)

Social media posts must reflect the Rescue's values and may not:

- Criticize or disparage the Rescue
- Share internal issues publicly
- Post confidential information about animals, fosters, adopters, or volunteers

5. Confidentiality

Representatives may have access to sensitive information, including:

- Foster or adopter information
- Animal medical or behavioral details
- Internal communications
- Rescue operations or financial information

All individuals shall:

- Keep all confidential information private
- Share information only with authorized individuals
- Never use information for personal purposes

Confidentiality breaches may include:

- Sharing adopter or foster information with friends
- Posting internal screenshots
- Forwarding internal emails
- Discussing board matters with non-board members
- Sharing medical or behavioral details publicly

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

6. Conflict of Interest

All representatives shall:

- Avoid situations where personal interests conflict with the Rescue's interests
- Disclose potential conflicts to leadership or the Board
- Not use their role for personal gain

Conflict of Interest breaches may include:

- Adopting or fostering an animal being voted on (Board Specific)
- Recommending a family member for a paid service
- Using rescue contacts for personal business
- Accepting gifts from adopters or vendors
- Promoting personal rescue philosophies that conflict with organizational policy

Board members and individuals involved in decision-making may be required to complete a Conflict-of-Interest Disclosure Form.

7. Safety and Conduct During Activities

All individuals shall:



- Follow all safety protocols
- Use appropriate equipment and handling techniques
- Report injuries, incidents, or unsafe conditions immediately
- Avoid alcohol or drugs during Rescue activities
- Refrain from carrying weapons during Rescue activities unless legally required and disclosed

Safety breaches may include:

- Transporting animals without proper crates
- Bringing unapproved animals to events
- Allowing children to interact with animals unsupervised
- Ignoring medical instructions
- Using unsafe equipment

8. Harassment, Bullying, and Discrimination

The Rescue maintains a zero-tolerance policy for:

- Harassment
- Bullying
- Discrimination
- Intimidation
- Retaliation

Concerns may be reported under the Anti-Harassment & Anti-Bullying Policy or Whistleblower Policy.

9. Representation of the Rescue

All individuals shall:

- Present themselves professionally when representing the Rescue
- Follow Rescue guidelines when interacting with the public
- Avoid making unauthorized commitments or statements
- Direct media inquiries to designated leadership

10. Compliance With Policies and Procedures

All representatives shall comply with:

- This Code of Conduct
- The Rescue's Core Values
- The Anti-Harassment & Anti-Bullying Policy
- The Whistleblower Policy
- Animal care and safety protocols
- Any additional guidelines relevant to their role

11. Corrective Action

Failure to follow this Code of Conduct may result in:

- Coaching or retraining
- Reassignment of duties
- Suspension from activities
- Removal from volunteer, foster, or leadership roles
- Termination of affiliation with the Rescue

Serious violations may result in immediate removal.

Approved by the Board of Directors

Date: 06-06-2026