

# Factsheet

## ABC Activist: Let's Get Started

### READY TO PRACTICE YOUR ABCS? LET'S GET STARTED!

Thank you for volunteering to prevent suffering and save lives. These are your step-by-step instructions for getting your program off the ground and off to a good start.

#### 1. IDENTIFY YOUR LOCAL RESOURCES

You'll need to equip yourself with some vital information before you start your work. The following are some basics that you need to know:

■ **The name, location, and hours of your local animal shelters.** Become very familiar with the shelter's admission, adoption, and euthanasia policies and procedures.

■ **Any low-cost spay/neuter and veterinary services available in your city or county.** Get the lowdown on prices and services available, any qualification requirements, and the program schedule. Your local animal shelter (call there first) and **1-800-248-SPAY** should be able to refer you to existing programs and participating veterinarians.

■ **The names, location, and hours of your local veterinary offices (both daytime and after-hours emergency clinics).** Animals need help around the clock, so keep these numbers in your wallet at all times.

■ **Information about volunteer groups that might already be working to improve the lives of animals and/or provide spay/neuter services for low-income area residents.** If such groups exist in your area, would you be more productive joining them, or is there a valuable service that they are not providing (e.g., transportation to and from surgery) that you could offer?

■ **Information about local news outlets.** Keep your newspapers' and TV stations' telephone numbers handy; you never know when a little help from the media could help you help an animal! Keep an eye out for animal-

friendly stories, and be sure to jot down the reporter's name, telephone number, and e-mail address. When you're ready, invite him or her to join you on a field trip!

**Tip:** Try punching your zip code into <http://pets911.com> for a jump-start on programs and services that are available in your own back yard.

#### 2. IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET AREAS

Chances are that you already know where your time could best be spent. Are there neighborhoods you've driven through before, thinking, "I wish I could do something for animals around here"? Well, you can! If you need help getting started, check out the following suggestions:

■ Your local animal shelter might help, especially if it tracks (as many do) zip codes with the highest incidence of stray animals and/or surrendered animals.

■ If a low-cost spay/neuter program exists in your community, ask which areas it has found to be in the most dire need. Chances are that they have a list!

■ Distribute and post brightly colored fliers offering assistance (see our sample) at churches, dollar stores, social services offices, grocery stores, mobile home parks, and public housing complexes.

#### 3. IT'S TOOL TIME!

Helping animals is vital. It takes compassion, dedication, determination, and skill ... and a few tools of the trade (but nothing too fancy!). To be ready, you will need the following:

■ **Dog and cat food and treats:** Dogs love Mr. Barky's and Mr. Pugsley's, which are available at [PETACatalog.org](http://PETACatalog.org).

■ **Water:** Keep clean drinking water in gallon bottles, or consider filling a brand-new 5-gallon gas can so that you can provide fresh water to "outdoor" dogs, especially during weather extremes. Use a permanent marker to write "WATER ONLY" on the side of the can.

■ **Leashes for dogs of different sizes:** It's a good idea to have at least one 6-foot leash that you can slip—looped—around a dog's neck.

■ **Carriers:** One or two small, one medium-size, and—if it can fit in your car—one large enough to fit a Labrador-size dog: You will need these items to transport animals safely.

■ **Towels and blankets:** Always line carriers with clean, cozy bedding. Many of the animals you will help will never have had the luxury of lying on something soft. You don't have to spend any money! Try calling around to hotel chains to take advantage of used bedding that they plan to discard, organize a towel and blanket drive at work, network with your local gym, or pop into a thrift shop.

■ **A humane box trap for capturing feral cats:** You may be able to lease one from your local animal shelter, but it's best to have your own. The traps are humane, easy to use, and inexpensive, and they can be ordered via Animal Care Equipment & Services at <http://www.animal-care.com/info.cfm>.

■ **Camera:** A picture is worth 1,000 words, and you will want photos once you get started. Document your progress with "before" and "after" photos, which will be important when you talk with the media about your efforts and when you ask individuals and businesses for donations to support your work. And if you should discover a neglectful situation, photos will be an absolute must!

■ **Animal care supplies:** Flea prevention and flystrike ointment, such as Flys-Off®, go a long way toward alleviating intense itching caused by fleas and flies, who

incessantly torment dogs trapped at the end of a chain or in a pen during warm weather. In the winter, straw bedding is a backyard dog's best friend; it helps keep warm and dry. (Don't use blankets; they stay wet.) Keep grooming supplies on hand as well to cut off matted fur, trim overgrown nails, wipe goopy eyes, and clean dirty ears.

■ **Toys:** The dogs you'll meet spend much of their days and nights watching the grass grow! Nothing brightens their lives like a toy. Dollar stores usually have pooch toys to choose from, but remember that your canine clients won't be picky; ask friends, family members, and coworkers to donate used—or new!—dog toys, and then take photos of the dogs with the toys and ask for more! Make sure that used toys are always safe—they should not be too frayed or chewed up.

■ **Information about first aid for companion animals:** Check out <http://www.thepetcenter.com/gen/faid.html>.

■ **Basic cleaning, office, and household implements:** You'll want to keep a can opener, plasticware, paper plates, paper towels, disinfectant spray, hand sanitizer, a basic first-aid kit, a flashlight with extra batteries, safety gloves, and disposable gloves on hand and don't forget pens and paper—you'll be lost without them!

■ **Forms and educational materials:** Last but not least—pack the paperwork! You will need surgery consent forms (if you can't get them from your local veterinary and spay/neuter clinics, we can help), surrender forms (take a look at our "Animal Surrender Form"), adoption applications and contracts, colorful paper pre-printed with details of your services (we can help you with a sample), and literature about the benefits of spaying and neutering, the dangers of keeping dogs on chains, basic animal care, and more. See [PETALiterature.com](http://PETALiterature.com) for companion animal literature.

**Does this sound like a challenge?** We promise you that the rewards will be far greater than you can imagine. Once you start making a difference, you won't be able to stop—and the animals will be safer and happier for it! **Your next step? Get out there!**