

**Create date:** 3/20/20

**Update date:**<sup>1</sup>

# Behavior Dog Support Protocol

## Definitions

- **Home Setup:** A summary of the different characteristics that make up a home. Example characteristics may include: type of home (house, apartment etc), who resides in the home (adults, children, and/or other pets) and the traffic level of the home.
- **Ongoing Assessment:** Utilizing multiple sources of information to learn about the dogs in care. This can include but not limited to: owner surrender, return forms, foster feedback, sleepover feedback, daily care, playgroup, previous shelter, and volunteers notes. Assessing dogs each day and understanding that behavior is fluid and there's not one test or tool that can provide all the information.
- See [Behavior Terminology](#) document for an extensive list of definitions.

## Purpose

In order to prepare for the potential impact that COVID-19 could have on shelters due to an increase of intake, maintaining a consistent outflow of dogs with behavior challenges will be crucial to maximizing lifesaving. This protocol will address the need for both the fast placement of dogs while maintaining safety in the community.

## Procedure & Metrics

### Immediately

- Compile a list of volunteers and fosters that are knowledgeable about behavior that can assist with pre-counseling support for adopters and fosters taking home dogs with behavior challenges.
- Compile a list of volunteers and fosters that have successfully worked with dogs with behavior challenges in homes and are willing to mentor new fosters and adopters.
- Assemble a resource "library" of online behavior resources that is easily accessible to fosters, adopters, and staff. These resources should be easy to understand videos or step by step guides on the most common behavior challenges. To save time, utilize resources that have already been published. (Example: [APA Dog Foster Behavior Resources](#) or [Maddie's Fund Flash Classes](#))

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*Due to COVID-19 Shelter in Place government mandates and to accomplish a 90% reduction in social interaction, while maintaining the practice that every pet who enters a shelter should receive urgent, individualized treatment and care, with the goal of a live outcome.*

- Create a quick training tutorial (online video if in-person training is not possible) for the foster/volunteer mentors, on what is needed of them and provide tools such as the resource library to empower them to assist others.
- Utilize playgroup to get a better idea of each dog's level of sociability and to help with making foster and adoption matches.
- Eliminate the use of standardized behavior assessments (SAFER, food bowl test etc) as an intake requirement. Instead, utilize ongoing assessment to get to know the dogs. (See definition above)
- Eliminate the requirement that *all* dogs must have a meet and greet with resident dogs. Instead rely more on multiple sources of information such as playgroup, previous home notes etc to make placement matches. Utilize meet and greets only for highly selective dogs or if the adopter/foster requests it in order to take a dog home.
- Create a spreadsheet to organize the dogs in your care based on how specific their home setup needs to be to keep all parties safe. Consider using a [Dog Scoring](#) system to easily match up homes that do not have children, other pets, and are low traffic homes for the dogs with increased behavior challenges. ***This spreadsheet is not to be used for euthanasia decisions but merely a tool to help learn more about the dogs in care and identify homes that can take dogs needing more active management.***
- Counsel staff and volunteers not to hold dogs back in hopes to find the “perfect” home. Instead, they will be accepting of homes that can provide the minimum amount necessary to keep everyone safe.
- Experienced or “behavior savvy” fosters or adopters should not be a requirement to take a dog with behavior challenges home. If the person has a good home setup and is willing and receptive to put in the required safety measures, then a “green” foster/adopter is completely acceptable.
- Adopters/Fosters with unique home setups such as no children, no other pets, low traffic should always be asked if they are willing to take a dog needing more active management.
- Volunteer/staff will take time to pre-counsel all fosters/adopters over the phone prior to taking home dogs with behavior challenges and will send home the necessary documents and resources to set them up for success (ie: training guides, crate, kongs, drag leash, Baskerville muzzle, etc)
- Create a follow up spreadsheet tracking dogs with behavior challenges that go home to foster/adopters and train volunteers on how to do proactive check-ins after the dog goes home. (ie: 24 hours follow up, 1 week, 2 weeks, etc).

## Resources & Links

- *Behavior Terminology*  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pVV3fZkxskTTKbzHnZ0\\_xFEbcGe5xaZn82Ogklb8BZw/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pVV3fZkxskTTKbzHnZ0_xFEbcGe5xaZn82Ogklb8BZw/edit)
- *Maddie's Fund Flash Classes:* <https://www.maddiesfund.org/flash-classes.htm>
- *APA Dog Foster/Adopter Behavior Resources:*  
<https://www.austinpetsalive.org/resources/dog-resources#Behavior%20Support>
- *APA Dog Behavior Team Videos:*  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GwVRWX\\_j8UQ&index=2&list=PLsvTsWr-Z8lvafx3jQtidkCjrpjVzus1v](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GwVRWX_j8UQ&index=2&list=PLsvTsWr-Z8lvafx3jQtidkCjrpjVzus1v)

*AmPA! has virtual support services available for each of these protocols in the AmPA! COVID-19 Animal Shelter Preparedness Guide. For custom support or guidance on any of these protocols, or how to implement for your organization, contact us [here](#) and include "COVID-19 Support" in the message.*