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Shelter Dog Flow Management Self-Assessment

At the point of entry

- ☐ Do volunteers assist with pet support and lost pet reunification support?
- ☐ Do you provide a 'finder-to-foster' alternative to surrender for lost and stray dog finders?
- ☐ Do you ask pet owners to utilize Rehome or other self-rehoming platforms as an alternative to shelter surrender?
- ☐ Do you microchip, rabies vaccinate, and schedule dogs for spay/neuter surgery at the time of intake?
- ☐ Does your website ask people to pursue alternatives to shelter intake for both stray and owner surrender intake types?

After shelter intake

PRO TIP: Make dogs accessible and viewable to the public as soon as they enter and move quickly to get them ready for adoption.

- ☐ Are dogs made available online and for public viewing as soon as they enter the shelter?
- ☐ Do you have a process for medically isolating sick dogs and a place to isolate them away from other dogs?
- ☐ Are dogs able to leave the shelter immediately once they're selected by an adopter, foster, or rescue?
- ☐ Are you marketing all medium and large dogs for foster to the **public** and your existing foster caregiver list?
- ☐ Are you holding adoption events at least one time each month for a minimum of 16 hours per month?
- ☐ Are you doing off site adoptions at least four days per week, including Saturdays and Sundays?
- ☐ Does every dog have an adopter-focused kennel card?
- ☐ Is someone assigned every day to managing the flow of dogs through the system?
- ☐ Are you open for adoptions for a minimum of 40 hours per week, including both weekend days and after 5 pm on weekdays?
- ☐ Do you permit staff and volunteers to provide exercise and enrichment to dogs as soon as they enter the facility and while on their stray hold?
- ☐ Do you evaluate dogs in an off-leash, playgroup setting?
- ☐ Does your adoption/foster process take less than one hour?
- ☐ Are you open to the public for walk-in adoptions and foster placements?

☐ Do you have a handling level color dot system to indicate the dogs that are easiest and most challenging to handle in the shelter setting?

☐ Do you utilize a 'walk board' or related technology to ensure every dog has a break from their kennel?

☐ Do you do at least one thing each week to get people excited about adopting and fostering from the shelter?

Dogs with a Length-of-stay over 14 days

☐ Do you have a staff member assigned daily to proactively plan an outcome pathway for each dog in care longer than 14 days?

☐ Do you have an 'urgent dogs communication board' to list dogs that are exhibiting signs of behavioral decline?

☐ Do you have a closed communication group for staff and volunteers to discuss and plan outcome pathways for dogs experiencing behavioral decline?

☐ Do you make public social media pleas for dogs with lengths of stay above 30 days?

☐ Do you have specialty volunteer groups assigned to specific groups of dogs, including senior dogs, dogs that are more challenging to handle, and long-stay dogs?

☐ Do you have a daily rounds process to ensure no dog is lost in the system or does not have their daily needs addressed?

Dogs at risk of euthanasia due to space and/or behavioral decline

This list is NOT intended to pathway dogs at risk due to a known history of moderate or severe harm to a person or animal. That topic will be addressed in another section.

☐ Do you have a standard tracking and activities process like this one to ensure dogs at risk are given a chance at a live outcome?

☐ Do you post at least three public pleas for every at-risk dog on multiple public platforms?

☐ Do you contact previous owners and/or finders before euthanizing and give them the opportunity to adopt, foster, or reclaim?

☐ Do you have a team of staff members and volunteers who review cases and meet weekly to pursue alternatives to euthanasia for at-risk dogs?

☐ Can members of the public claim or save an at-risk dog up to the time it is euthanized?

☐ Does the director and at least three other staff members review and sign off on all euthanasias?

☐ Do you make at-risk dogs accessible to the public up until the time they are euthanized?

☐ Do you have a defined process and timeline for euthanasia so volunteers and staff are never surprised or confused by a euthanasia?

☐ Do you empower volunteers, staff members, and the public to foster or adopt dogs that are at risk?

☐ Do you plea at-risk dogs to rescue groups and the public and give them at least one week to claim them?

Dogs at risk of euthanasia due to known behavioral reasons.

☐ Is there a consistent process for flagging dogs on intake that have a known history of causing harm to people or animals?

☐ Is there a staff member dedicated to reviewing known history cases within 48 hours of intake and making pathway recommendations (including dogs quarantined for a bite)?

☐ Is there a standard process for ensuring dogs have had a fair chance at a live outcome before being euthanized?

☐ Do you contact the finder or previous owner(s) to get more information about the incident putting the dog at risk of euthanasia and document the conversation?

☐ Do you have a process to ensure transparency with staff and volunteers?

☐ Do you have a deadline extension process to give people time to pursue possible alternatives to euthanasia?

Notes on using this checklist (IMPORTANT TO READ!)

1. This is just a list of general guidelines and a way to know if you really are doing "everything we can" to reduce length of stay, maintain safety standards, and give every dog a fair chance at a live outcome.
2. This is most effective when everyone in the organization is involved in going through the questions and identifying areas for improvement and implementation.
3. Staff roles are key. Medium and large shelters should have dedicated roles for dog flow management (managing the entire group of dogs in the shelter) and dog case management (managing the movement of individual dogs through the system). There should also be at least one dedicated foster coordinator to focus on medium and large adult dog foster placement and every staff member should be trained and empowered to process foster placements.
4. Volunteers should be organized according to particular populations of dogs (senior, long-stay, etc.) and by process (adoption and foster volunteers, enrichment and exercise volunteers, pet support and lost pet reunification volunteers)

5. Self-imposed barriers will drastically reduce your ability to successfully and safely manage dog flow. There are many barriers in place, but some significant ones include:

    a. Dogs not being handled through duration of stray hold

    b. Dogs not being made accessible, handleable, or available for days to weeks or longer because they're waiting on 'behavior assessment' and/or 'behavior modification'

    c. Dogs not being made available for foster placement

    d. Dogs being listed as 'rescue only' status due to age, a medical issue, or minor behavioral condition

    e. Negative marketing on kennel card, on social media, in online profile

    f. Rules against co-housing dogs, even bonded pairs of dogs

    g. Adoption and foster barriers of all kinds

6. Every dog is an individual and no process should be used to deny the individual needs and circumstances of a particular dog. Case management should trump herd management when it comes to individual dogs but herd management is what reduces the population enough for that to be viable.

Setting Goals

1. We want to reduce our dog kennel capacity to _____.

2. We want to reduce our dog length of stay from_____ to _____.

3. We want to reduce dog euthanasia from _____ to _____.

4. We want to have _____ of dog volunteers who volunteer at least 6 hours per month.

5. We want to send _____% of our dogs to foster homes. This means sending at least _____dogs to foster homes each month.

6. We want to start dog volunteer specialty groups to focus on the following groups of dogs:_____. This may include senior dogs, medical-needs dogs, behavioral-needs dogs, small dogs, long-stay dogs, etc.

7. We want to remove or reduce the following barriers (list at least 5).

8. We want to hold_____adoption events each month.

9. We want to do off-site adoptions_____days each week.

10. We need to create the following staff positions in order to get this done and here is how we can do that: (think about how you could re-allocate or change existing positions to accomplish this and how you can utilize volunteers as part of your plan).