



Risk Management Checklist for Humane Societies

PURPOSE: This checklist serves as a guideline for humane societies to minimize the risk of liability related to dog bites after adoption.

1. Adoption Contracts

- Draft Adoption Contracts:** Ensure all contracts include clear clauses that release the shelter from liability once the dog is adopted.
- Legal Review:** Have the contract reviewed by legal counsel to ensure enforceability and compliance with local laws.
- Adopter Acknowledgment:** Require adopters to acknowledge and sign the contract prior to adoption.

2. Behavioral Assessments

- Standardized Assessment Protocol:** Develop and implement a thorough behavioral assessment process for all dogs prior to adoption.
- Documentation:** Keep detailed records of each dog's assessment results.

- Assessment Training:** Ensure staff members are trained in conducting assessments accurately and consistently.

3. Disclosure

- Known Behavior Disclosure:** Create a policy for full disclosure of any known history of aggression or biting incidents to potential adopters.
- Assessment Review:** Evaluate if dogs with known aggression histories should be placed in a program for additional training before adoption.
- Informed Consent:** Ensure adopters acknowledge and understand the behavior history during the adoption process.

4. Training and Education

- Provide Resources:** Compile a list of training resources, including books, videos, and online courses for new dog owners.
- Conduct Workshops:** Offer regular workshops on dog handling, training techniques, and understanding canine behavior for adopters.



- Written Guidelines:** Provide written guidelines on how to introduce the dog to new environments and situations safely.

5. Follow-Up Support

- Establish Follow-Up Procedures:** Create a follow-up plan to check in with adopters at regular intervals post-adoption.
- Resource Network:** Develop partnerships with trainers, behaviorists, and veterinary care providers to support adopters.
- Support Communication:** Provide multiple channels (phone, email, social media) for adopters to reach out for help or advice.

6. Signage and Warnings

- Informative Signage:** Install clear signage in the shelter regarding the potential behaviors of dogs available for adoption.
- Website Notices:** Include disclaimers and warnings about specific dog behaviors on the shelter's website and adoption listings.
- Individual Animal Notes:** When possible, post specific notes about a dog's behavioral history or needs on their kennel or display area.

Implementation

- Assign Responsibilities:** Designate staff members to oversee the implementation of each section of this checklist.
- Training Sessions:** Conduct training sessions for staff and volunteers on risk management practices.
- Regular Review:** Schedule regular reviews of this checklist and update procedures as needed to stay current with best practices.

Documentation

- Maintain Records:** Keep detailed documentation of all adoption contracts, behavioral assessments, and follow-up communications.
- Incident Reporting:** Establish a clear procedure for reporting and documenting any incidents or concerns post-adoption.

NOTE: Regularly review and update this risk management checklist to adapt to new regulations, emerging best practices, and feedback from staff and adopters.



Contact Us

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