***Adopters Welcome*: Adoption Policy Review Worksheet**

Use this worksheet to compare your current adoption policies against those of *Adopters Welcome* facilities. Review each *Adopters Welcome* policy below, and put a check in the appropriate column:

* “Yes” means your organization is doing it this way all the time. No exceptions.
* “Yes, but…” means you’re doing it this way most of the time. There may be exceptions or variations.
* “No” means your current policy is different.

Consider that your current adoption policies may include informal rules (policies that aren’t officially written down) that reflect the real-life practices of your adoption team. For example, if your written SOPs specify that no one will be denied adoption based on their age, but you know your staff is highly likely to deny the adoption of a puppy to a senior citizen, you would check “Yes, but….”

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Agencies with *Adopters Welcome* programs:** | **Is this our policy?** | | |
| **Yes** | **Yes, but…** | **No** |
|  |  |  |  |
| Do not require home checks. |  |  |  |
| Do not require references, including vet references, and don’t perform reference checks. |  |  |  |
| Do not require meet-and-greets with pets already in the home. |  |  |  |
| Do not require landlord checks or proof that renters are allowed pets. |  |  |  |
| Do not require every member of the family to meet the animal before adoption. |  |  |  |
| Do not automatically deny adopters considering declawing their cat, or who have had other cats declawed. |  |  |  |
| Do not automatically deny adopters considering allowing their cat to go outdoors, or who have allowed other cats to go outdoors. |  |  |  |
| Do not automatically deny people whose pets have had spotty or no vet history. |  |  |  |
| Do not use different adoption criteria for different breed/types of dog. |  |  |  |
| Do not automatically deny adopters because they have relinquished or rehomed past pets. |  |  |  |
| Do not deny adopters because a prior pet was hit by a car, lost or stolen. |  |  |  |
| Do not automatically deny adopters considering an “outdoor” dog or who have kept other dogs outdoors. |  |  |  |
| Do not deny adopters because they have allowed past pets to breed or because a current pet is not spayed/neutered. |  |  |  |
| Do not mandate that adopters have fenced-in yards. |  |  |  |
| Do not deny adopters because they are “too old” or “too young” (unless they are legally prohibited from signing a contract under state law), have disabilities, etc. |  |  |  |
| Do not deny adopters because they are unemployed, underemployed, work too many hours, etc. |  |  |  |
| Do not deny adoptions based on the adopter’s living situation or status (e.g., student, military, assisted living, renter, etc.). |  |  |  |

*(continued on reverse)*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Agencies with *Adopters Welcome* programs:** | **Is this our policy?** | | |
| **Yes** | **Yes, but…** | **No** |
|  |  |  |  |
| Do not discriminate (consciously or unconsciously) against any adopter based on race, color, class, occupation, gender, orientation, etc. |  |  |  |
| Do ensure that animals can go home the same day they are adopted whenever possible. |  |  |  |
| Do allow pets to be adopted as gifts. |  |  |  |
| Do provide a no-fault return policy which allows adopters who return pets to adopt another pet or receive a refund of their adoption fee. |  |  |  |
| Do allow adopters the option to rehome pets on their own if they can’t keep the pets. |  |  |  |
| Do ensure their adoption contract reflects the *Adopters Welcome* philosophy and contains no unnecessary language like “pets must be returned to us” clauses. |  |  |  |

Now review your responses:

* If you answered “**Yes**” to all of the above, congratulations! You’re well on your way to functioning as a fully *Adopters Welcome* facility! Return to pick up the *DIY* at the To-Do steps for the second action step.
* If you answered “**Yes, but**” or “**No**” to any of the above, don’t worry! Section 2 of the DIY has the link to our *Adopters Welcome* Adoption Policies document so you can easily re-write your policies to support an *Adopters Welcome* approach.

Practicing an Adopters Welcome approach doesn’t mean you have to approve every adoption. It simply means looking for how each adoption could work, rather than why each might not. The policies on this checklist include policies that traditionally have ruled out homes without discussion with potential adopters to get to the root of concerns. We refer to these as “automatic no’s.”

For example, if your policy automatically denies folks who mention they might allow their cats outdoors, that eliminates any possibility for discussion about the dangers to cats outdoors, potential enrichment opportunities for keeping cats happy indoors and options for building “catios” that create safe outdoor spaces for cats.

Automatic no’s assume the world is black and white, right or wrong. Reality is not so clear-cut. Eliminating automatic no’s from your policies opens opportunities for dialogue that can help adopters see for themselves why something they are considering may not be the best choice, and explore other options that will be beneficial for every other pet they care for in the future.

If decisions do end with “no,” this dialogue will have gone a long way toward helping to ease the sting of the message. It may even potentially forge a relationship between those potential adopters and your organization that will allow them to view your organization as a resource in the future.