***Adopters Welcome: Adoption Procedures Review Worksheet***

To be *Adopters Welcome*, your adopters need to feel welcomed and embraced from the very first moment they interact with someone representing your organization to the time they get their new family member, and at every step along the way.

This checklist can help you see your agency from your customers’ point of view, so you can ensure every experience they have reflects your *Adopters Welcome* philosophy. Use these suggestions to make a customized checklist that best matches your organization. Get a fresh perspective by asking a trusted outsider—someone other than an employee or volunteer—to answer the questions, too. Then address what needs attention and revisit the list periodically to continue to fine tune your messaging and practices.

**For Organizations with a Central Facility**

*About your physical location:*

* Is your facility identified with clear signage? Are hours and entrances easily spotted?
* Is your facility itself easy to locate?
* Is parking easy?
* How does your facility appear from the outside?
  + Are there visual barriers (weeds, trash, poor lighting, snow piles or large puddles, etc.)?
* Do visitors get greeted when they enter?
* How does your facility look from the inside?
  + Is the entrance area cold and sterile, cluttered, or are there so many signs around that they begin to feel like “noise”? Or is the entrance clean, uncluttered and inviting?
* Is it clear where to go and what to do next?
* How do the animal areas look, smell and sound?
* Do the animals themselves look clean, healthy and comfortable?
  + Does each animal have soft bedding and toys?
  + Does each have a cage card that speaks clearly and directly to the adopter, rather than one that is full of codes and phrases meaningful only to our staff/volunteers?
* Is it easy to meet with and learn about animals?
* Are visiting spaces comfortable for all types of visitors?
  + Consider your adopters’ ages, abilities and what’s needed for a meaningful conversation.

**For Organizations without a Central Facility**

*For events and in-store adoption partner locations:*

* Do pets look clean, healthy and comfortable? Do pets “in-residence” have soft bedding and toys?
* Is the location easy to find?
  + Have location and hours been well-publicized?
  + Is parking easy?
  + Overall, how does the area look, sound, smell?
* Are potential visitors warmly greeted?
* Is it easy to meet with and learn about animals?
* Are instructions available to inform adopters how to take the next step?
* Are representatives friendly and helpful?
* Are visiting spaces (including at foster homes) comfortable for all types of visitors?

*(continued on reverse)*

**For Organizations with a Central Facility**

*About your communication channels:*

* Is messaging upbeat? (Social media, ads, TV appearances, etc.?) Keep in mind that messaging that tells sad stories tends to draw donations, but it might also reinforce negative stereotypes about your shelter and the animals, doing you a disservice in the long run.
* What’s a visit to your website like?
  + Is your website easy to navigate?
  + Does your website reflect your *Adopters Welcome* status?
    - Does it include updated policies and documents? (e.g. questionnaire, not application)
    - Does it explain the process as it actually happens? The policies and procedures people read on your website should be exactly the same as what they experience.
  + Are animals posted online with informative, positive descriptions? Are new animals added promptly? Adopted ones immediately removed?
* Is communication customer-friendly? (In person, by phone, over email?)
  + What’s it like to call your organizations?
    - Can you hear a smile, genuine concern or other appropriate interactions on calls?
    - Are questions fully answered?
    - How long is the average hold time?
    - Do people get lost in the phone system?
    - Is your voicemail message clear and friendly?
    - Are missed calls returned the same day?
  + Is email customer-focused?
    - Are auto-replies clear and friendly, and tell the person exactly when they should expect a reply?
    - Are e-mails replied to the same day, or at least within the timeframe that your auto-reply indicated a response would be received?

**For Organizations without a Central Facility**

*About your communication channels:*

* Is email customer-focused?
  + Are auto-replies clear and friendly and tell the person exactly when they should expect a reply?
  + Are e-mails replied to the same day, or at least within the timeframe that your auto-reply indicated a response would be received?
* Is it easy to learn about animals online?
  + Do animals have informative, positive descriptions with good photos?
  + Are new animals promptly added and adopted ones immediately removed?
* Once a person has selected a pet, is it clear what they should do next?
* Is it possible to meet available pets in promptly?
* Is all communication customer-friendly?
  + Is your voicemail message clear and friendly?
    - Are calls returned promptly?
  + Do you stay in communication with potential adopters regularly throughout the process?
  + Do you let them know promptly if there has been a problem with their adoption (e.g., a pet they expressed interest in was already adopted by another family), and walk them through options for moving forward?
* Are other communication channels upbeat? Is messaging for social media pages, newspaper, radio, TV ads, TV appearances, etc. positive, happy, funny? Keep in mind that messaging that tells sad stories tends to draw donations, but it might also reinforce negative stereotypes about your shelter and the animals.
* Is your website easy to navigate?
  + Does it include updated policies and documents? (e.g. questionnaire, not application)
  + Does it explain the process as it actually happens? (too many agencies have websites with overly-stringent language, but say “that’s what we say, it’s not what we actually do.” A potential adopter can’t know that.)