



A Private Charity Since 1881

Dog Walker Training Packet

Updated: Dec. 2022



Welcome:

Thank you for volunteering your time to help the dogs during their stay at the Connecticut Humane Society. This packet covers the information and policies you will need to know to work with the dogs. Our policies are in place to keep everyone safe and to prevent the spread of disease.

Objective:

Daily walks provide the dogs with necessary exercise and mental stimulation. All dogs are walked at least twice a day for a minimum of 20 minutes per walk. Ideally, each dog should also receive some play time in the fenced-in pen every day.

Volunteer Supplies:**Slip leads/Harnesses**

Dogs are walked using their assigned slip lead or harness. Slip leads are special leashes that tighten to prevent the dog from becoming loose. Once the leash is around their neck, slide the leather stopper in place to prevent the lead from loosening.

Some dogs have been assigned a harness and may not be walked on a slip lead. Always check harnesses for proper fit as buckles can loosen over time. If the harness becomes loose, the dog may be able to wiggle out of it and get loose.

Never use a regular leash clipped to a collar to walk the dogs. If the collar is not snug, the dog may be able to slip out and get loose. Always use either a slip lead or appropriate harness.

All leashes should have a carabiner clip attached to the handle. In an emergency, this will allow you to secure the dog to a stationary object and walk away if necessary.

Poop bags

Carry poop bags with you when walking the dogs and always pick up after the dogs. Waste receptacles are provided around the property.

Treats/Treat Pouch

Treats should be used to reward good behavior. Never feed a dog treats if they are jumping, barking, or otherwise acting naughty. Instead, feed treats as a reward if the dog is sitting or standing quietly or performs a command. Treats should be broken into small pieces (about the size of a pea) to prevent over-feeding.

If a dog is being fed a prescription diet you may feed them their kibble in place of treats. If a dog is recovering from a dental procedure they are only allowed to eat soft treats.

Walkie Talkies

Some CHS locations require the use of walkie talkies for safety. Walkie talkies will allow you to quickly communicate with the front desk in case of an emergency such as a loose dog or dog fight. Walkie talkies should be kept on during your shift. When returning the walkie talkie to the charging station, turn it off so it will recharge for the next user.

General Information:

Once you've gathered your supplies, check the dog walking board to see which dogs need walks and read any notes. Dog walkers may walk one dog at a time. If two dogs are being housed together in a kennel, two dog walkers may take them on a walk together.

Signage:

Always familiarize yourself with the dog's paperwork before taking them out for a walk and make sure you know their name and assigned color code. Pay close attention to signs on their kennel for special instructions about their health or behavior and any restrictions such as "short walks only" or dietary considerations.

Prescription Diets

If a dog is being fed a prescription diet they may have a food allergy or are being treated for an illness or medical condition. Do not feed these dogs treats. Even a tiny treat can cause them major medical problems such as an allergic reaction. Instead, their prescription kibble may be used as a treat.

Short Walks Only/Leash Walks Only, No Pen Time

Pay attention for signs such as "short walks only" or "leash walks only, no pen time." These dogs may be sick or injured or recovering from surgery and failure to heed the warning may result in injury to the dog.

No Hard Toys/No Soft Toys

Signs that say "No Hard Toys" may be used for dogs with dental issues, and "No Soft Toys" may be used for dogs who shred and swallow their toys.

Kennel Codes

Abbreviated Kennel Codes are used to communicate if the dog has any known behavior issues. For example, JD means they are a jumpy dog. Refer to the posted Kennel Code reference sheet to know what each code stands for. Our detailed Kennel Code Reference Guide will give you tips for handling dogs with each listed behavior issue.

Color Coding:

Behavior Evaluations

All dogs over 6 months old that are new to CHS will be marked "staff only" and must have a behavior evaluation before volunteers are permitted to walk them. Once evaluated, they will be given a color code. Volunteer dog walkers will be given a color-coded name badge that corresponds with the highest level of dog they are allowed to walk. Always double check the dog's color code as it may change from day to day.

Yellow Dogs are generally calm, friendly, rarely pull on the leash or jump and are not reactive around other dogs. Think of them as "Mellow Yellow."

Purple Dogs have minor behavior issues such as pulling on the leash, jumping or barking excitedly when they see other dogs. Think of them as "Peppy Purple." Most dogs who arrive at CHS fall into this category and all volunteer dog walkers will be trained to start at the purple level.

Orange Dogs have more serious behavioral issues such as aggression towards other dogs or the tendency to become overstimulated. Think of them as “Energetic Orange.” They may also be excessively fearful or undersocialized. Experienced volunteer dog walkers may request to train to work with the orange dogs and must demonstrate excellent handling skills and the ability to read body language cues to receive orange clearance.

Staff Only Dogs (Blue)

Dogs marked with a blue staff-only sign may be under quarantine for biting or be off-limits to volunteers due to a medical or behavioral issue. They may be aggressive towards people, have a history of fighting with other dogs or may be sick or injured.

Volunteers must not handle Staff Only dogs or open their kennel for any reason.

Green puppies are under 4 months old and are too young to be walked outside because they are not fully vaccinated. Dog walkers can interact with these puppies in an empty adoption room at the end of their shift, once all of the healthy adult dogs have been walked. Please do not feed the puppies treats as they have sensitive stomachs and be careful not to get bitten- they have very sharp teeth!

Dog Training

Volunteers who have been walking dogs for at least six months are eligible to join the Dog Training program. Dog trainers use positive reinforcement to teach dogs their basic commands and manners.

Behavior Mod Squad

Volunteer dog trainers who have exhibited excellent dog handling skills are eligible to join the Behavior Mod Squad (BMod) team. These volunteers use behavior modification techniques to rehabilitate dogs and change unwanted behaviors such as dog reactivity or fearfulness.

Asking a Dog to Sit:

Many of the dogs learn how to sit soon after arriving at CHS. With a treat in your hand, simply raise your hand from your side up to your waist. If the dog knows how to sit, they will likely respond to your hand signal. Immediately feed them a treat once they sit. If they do not respond, they may not have learned it yet. Never force a dog to sit by pushing on their rear end.

Safety 101:

- Never stare directly at a dog.
- Never interact with a dog if you are feeling nervous or afraid.
- Watch and listen for signs of fear and aggression.
- Never approach a dog that is eating.
- Never enter a dog's kennel- lure them to you instead.
- Know your limits- don't walk a dog you can't physically handle.
- Stay out of the dog's face- no kissing, hugging or bending over the dog.
- Never sit or lie down on the ground with a dog- kneel with one knee up.
- Do not use your cell phone to call, text, surf the internet or listen to music while handling dogs.

Removing Dogs from the Kennel:

- Prepare your slip lead so you can easily slip it over the dog's head.
- Be aware of your surroundings- wait until other dogs are fully secure before opening the kennel door.
- Ask the dog to sit. Only open the kennel door if the dog is sitting or standing quietly.
- Prop open the door, using your foot as a stopper to prevent it from swinging open.
- Slide your slip lead over the dog's head when they come to you.
- Tighten the leash then move the leather stopper into place to prevent the leash from loosening.
- If the dog requires a harness, use the slip lead to remove them from the kennel then take them to an empty adoptions room to put on their harness.
- If the dog rushes out past you, do not try to grab them by their head or fur. Instead, lasso them with your slip lead or get a staff member for help.

Walking a Dog Through the Kennel:

Keep your dog under control and on a short leash while inside the building. Do not get between the dog you are walking and the dogs in the kennel. This is to prevent you from being caught in the middle if the dog you are walking begins to aggress toward a dog in their kennel. Walk briskly past the kennels to avoid the dogs fighting through the bars. Every time you reach a doorway, pause and check to make sure there aren't any dogs on the other side of the door.

Correct Leash Hold:

Hold the leash with two hands. Do not wrap the leash around your wrist. Instead, loop the handle over your thumb then hold the excess leash in your fist. This will prevent an injured wrist if the dog pulls or jerks the leash. If the dog is hard to manage, bring your hands into your torso for extra stability.

Walking Procedures:

Dogs are walked in designated areas. Some areas are for healthy dogs and other areas are for sick dogs. It is important that you walk dogs in the proper areas to prevent the spread of contagious illnesses and diseases.

All dogs must stay on CHS property during their walks.

Keep the dogs outside for at least 20 minutes. We only shorten walks during extreme weather conditions.

Pick up after the dogs and pay attention to stool consistency. Fecal scores should be recorded on the dog's daily chart. If the stool is a consistency of 6 or 7, give your poop bag to a staff member so they can get a fecal sample.

Never allow customers to interact with a dog you are walking. If approached by a customer, simply direct them to the front desk for assistance.

Ideally, all dogs should get a little time to run around in the fenced-in pen each day unless they have a medical restriction. Only one dog is allowed in the pen at a time unless accompanied by staff. Always make sure the gate latches behind you so the dog can't get loose. Let their leash drag on the ground. This will be handy for catching the dog if needed. Always pay attention to your dog- make sure they are not trying to jump over the fence or are digging under it. Dogs who are coded FR for Flight Risk must have a long-line attached to their collar when they are loose in the pen.

Loose Dogs:

- Make sure equipment (leashes and harnesses) are on and fitted properly.
- Always check kennel latches, gates and doors to make sure they are closed properly.
- If a dog becomes loose, yell or use your walkie talkie to radio for help.
- Try kneeling down and calling the dog to you. Try luring them with treats.
- Run away from the dog while calling them to you. Have them chase you into a fenced-in pen or open car door.
- Never grab a loose dog by their head or fur. Instead, loop them with a slip lead.

Returning a Dog to the Kennel:

- Be aware of your surroundings. Wait until other dogs in the kennel are secure before putting your dog back in the kennel and make sure they are going into the proper kennel.
- Without entering the kennel, lead the dog back inside.
- If the dog resists, try tossing a treat into the kennel. You can have them follow you in, but quickly exit so you aren't remaining inside with them.
- Stand at the threshold and close the door so it is only slightly ajar, using your foot as a stopper to prevent the door from swinging open.
- Slide the slip lead over the dog's head then close the door.
- Double check that the latch has closed properly so the dog cannot become loose.
- Wash or sanitize your hands then sign your initials on the white board to indicate the dog has been walked.
- Mark the dog's daily chart. Follow the instructions for recording whether they urinated or defecated. If they defecated, use the fecal scoring system to assign them a number 1 through 7. You can find the scoring chart hanging in the kennel.
- If you have any concerns about the dog, notify a staff member.

Isolation Kennel:

Volunteers may walk the sick dogs in the Isolation Kennel (ISO) once all the healthy dogs have been walked. Volunteers who would like to interact with healthy puppies must do so before moving on to the Isolation kennel.

Dogs in the Isolation kennel are usually being treated for "Kennel Cough" which is highly contagious to other dogs, so the ISO kennel should always be the last stop and volunteers should not re-enter any healthy kennels or touch any other dogs after walking the sick dogs

Kennel Cough is a cold caused by a number of different viruses. Symptoms include a persistent cough, sneezing, runny nose, eye discharge, lack of appetite and decrease in energy. Volunteers will be shown where to walk the sick dogs and will be trained on the proper use of gowns, gloves and foot baths.

Trouble Shooting Common Leash Problems:

Pulling On Walks

When a dog pulls on the leash the behavior is reinforced any time they move forward.

To discourage leash-pulling:

- Utilize a no-pull harness. If the dog has not been assigned a harness, check with a staff member.
- Stop walking as soon as the leash goes taut. Do not move forward until the leash becomes loose again.
- Use treats to lure the dog back to you and reward them for staying by you while you walk.
- If the dog is not interested in treats, switch direction every time the dog gets to the end of the leash so the dog has to learn to follow you.

Jumping Up

Dogs jump on people for attention. They are rewarded when you touch or talk to them, even if it is just to scold them or push them off.

To discourage jumping:

- Turn your back and ignore the dog when they jump on you. Do not speak to them.
- Once the dog is back on the ground reward them with attention and praise. Try to stay calm. Enthusiasm may encourage them to jump again.
- If the dog knows the "Sit" command, you can ask them to sit. Once the dog sits reward them with praise and treats.

Over Arousal in Dogs

Some dogs become overly aroused or excitable while you are handling them. The release of excess energy may result in undesirable behaviors such as lunging, mounting or biting either at their leash or at their handler.

To prevent over-arousal in dogs:

- Make sure the dogs get plenty of exercise.
- Don't encourage rough play and don't wrestle with the dogs.
- Don't play tug of war with the dogs.
- Don't tease the dog by waving toys in front of them.

If a dog becomes overly aroused and is mounting, jumping or biting at you, stop playing with them and return them to the kennel. If you need assistance, use your walkie talkie or yell for help. Use the carabiner clip on your leash handle to clip the dog to a stationary object and walk away if needed.

Leash Biting

Some dogs begin biting at their leash when they become overly aroused. This needs to be discouraged as soon

as it begins. Not only can a dog bite right through their leash and become loose, the biting may escalate and they may turn and begin biting your arms or pant legs.

To discourage leash biting:

- Engage dogs throughout the walk. Make a game out of it. Toss treats on the ground as you go and ask the dog to “find it.”
- If the dog begins biting at the leash, ask them to sit. If they respond, reward them with a treat right away.
- Allow the dog the option of carrying a toy on the walk.
- Step on the leash and ignore the dog until they settle. Never drop the leash, the loop should remain on your hand.
- Dogs that routinely bite their leash may be issued a metal chain leash to discourage the behavior.



Safety Note:

Never try to pry the leash out of a dog’s mouth. This could result in a bite. Instead, offer them a treat and wait until they open their mouth for the treat to take the leash away.

Reactive Dogs

Some dogs become agitated and reactive towards stimuli in the environment such as other dogs or small mammals. The first sign that they are about to react is when they begin to focus on the trigger. Their body will tense up and they will stare at the other animal. This is generally followed by lunging and barking. As a dog walker, your job is to try your best to avoid their triggers.

Managing reactive dogs:

- Assess your surroundings to identify potential triggers, such as other dogs.
- Avoid congested areas and other dog walkers.
- Do not allow dogs to bark at one another as it increases reactivity.
- If you come upon a dog you were not prepared for, tell your dog “Let’s Go” and quickly walk in the opposite direction. Move behind a physical barrier, such as a tree, so they can no longer see the other dog. Praise and treat the dog once your dog calms down and is able to focus on you.

Safety Notes:

- Never put yourself between two agitated dogs.
- Do not jerk the leash, yell at, or grab an agitated dog. Stay calm and use steady pressure on the leash to remove the dog from the situation.

Preventing Dog Fights:

- Walk one dog at a time.
- Keep at least 15 ft. from other dogs.
- Double check that slip leads and harnesses are on and fitted properly to prevent loose dogs.
- Be sure to securely latch the doors when returning dogs to their kennels.

Handling Dog Fights:

- Stay calm
- Use steady pressure on the leash to pull them apart
- Use your walkie talkie or yell for help
- Dogs can be sprayed with a hose or dog repellent spray
- Use a heavy object (ex. the lid of a garbage can) as a divider between the dogs to break them apart

Safety Notes:

- Never attempt to pull the dogs off of each other using your hands. This will likely result in a bite.
- Never touch a dog after a fight. Walk them away from the other dog once separated, and allow them to calm down.

Timid Dogs

Some dogs are timid or undersocialized. These dogs may bite if they feel threatened. When working with shy dogs, the goal is to make all interactions positive so they learn to trust. Negative interactions must be avoided at all costs.

When working with timid dogs:

- Move slowly and avoid using a loud voice or making sudden movements.
- Use care when opening and closing kennel doors to avoid banging.
- Crouch to make yourself look smaller and avert your gaze so you don't look threatening.
- Speak in a soft voice and try luring them to you with treats or tapping on your leg.
- Never enter the kennel of a nervous dog. If they won't come to you, move on to the next dog.
- Never force a shy dog to do anything or drag them by their leash.
- If they shy away from being petted, don't touch them.
- Only touch them when they come to you.
- Praise and treat more frequently with timid dogs. Reward for pro-social behaviors such as looking at you, walking towards you, or seeking out attention from you.
- Watch for signs of stress and stop the interaction if necessary.
- Shy dogs may benefit from quiet time with you in an empty room. Quietly read them a book or play calming music for them.



Reporting an Incident:

Immediately report any bites or incidents to the manager-on-duty and complete an incident report.

Canine Body Language:



HAPPY/RELAXED

- Generally calm demeanor
- Tail is wagging or lying neutrally
- Mouth may be slightly open or “smiling”
- Ears are in a relaxed state
- Soft eyes
- Willing to approach



PLAYFUL

- Upper body is dipped down in a “play bow”
- Tail is wagging or straight up
- Arms are splayed out
- May be barking excitedly
- Bouncy movements

FEARFUL/NERVOUS



- Hesitant to approach
- Tail is tucked under their body or low tail wag
- Lowered stance (cowering, crouched, or lying down)
- May be trembling or panting
- Ears are pulled back against the head
- Avoiding eye contact
- Yawning
- May be licking their lips
- May be growling
- No interest in food
 - May lift one paw
- Hackles may be up (raised fur on back/shoulders)



ABOUT TO AGGRESS

- Rigid stance- very still
- Intense stare
- Tightly closed mouth
- Tail is straight up in the air or directly behind
- Body weight moved forward onto front legs
- May be growling
- Furrowed brow
- Whale eye (whites of the eyes are showing)



AGGRESSION

- May be growling or deep bark
- Teeth are showing
- Intense stare
- Tail is straight up in the air or directly behind
- Ears are pulled back or perked up
- Hackles are up (raised fur on back/shoulders)
- Body weight moved forward onto front legs or lunging

Summary:

Thank you for making a commitment to help the dogs during their stay at the Connecticut Humane Society. Please make sure you are consistently following the guidelines in this packet so that you and the dogs will stay safe and healthy. We are always happy to provide additional training upon request.

We are constantly working to improve ourselves, and our policies may change. We ask for you to be flexible and to cooperate with any new policies that may become effective.

Thank you again, and happy walking!

