

“Road to Rescue” Best Practices Manual

Summary: The nation’s largest pet adoption database, Petfinder.com, showcases well over 10,000 “adoption groups” listing hundreds of thousands of adoptable animals at any given time. Many of these groups are private animal rescue organizations operated out of someone’s home with a network of transport and foster volunteers to support the immense number of animals taken in each year. Despite the fact that this industry is obviously sizable and growing, it is virtually unregulated without even a best practices handbook for rescues to reference.

Up For Pups, a 501(c)3 non-profit animal welfare organization, has set out to develop an indispensable manual that will serve as a guide for established and developing private rescue organizations, helping them to work most effectively. The goal is that this manual will help rescues save the most lives, spend the least money, and ensure a good experience for all volunteers involved.

**Manuals and standards are available for shelters, but “rescues” generally run very differently from shelters and cannot necessarily follow similar practices.*

Data-Gathering Process: Up For Pups is partnering with 15-20 experienced, diverse private rescue organizations to compile data regarding their practices. Up For Pups will evaluate that data and compile commonalities into this manual. Up For Pups will also compile data on what hasn’t worked well for these rescues. Participating rescues will be rewarded with a donation to their organization for their time and effort, as it is expected that each rescues will need to invest at least 15-20 hours into this project between live interviews and manual reviews.

Final Document: This project is expected to take six months to complete. The first edition of the *Road to Rescue Best Practices Manual* will focus on decentralized dog rescue organizations that function with the use of foster homes. It will be as many pages as necessary to describe the best practices of these organizations. The following outline highlights many of the general concepts that will be covered.

Following a successful first edition, Up For Pups will tailor the manual for other types of organizations like cat rescues, mixed-species rescues, and centralized rescues that have a common facility housing their adoptable animals.

Outline

1. Brief history of animal rescue organizations
2. Comparison of rescues and shelters
 - a. Similarities and differences
 - b. Relationship between rescues and shelters
 - c. Relationship between rescue and local law enforcement/animal control
3. Starting a rescue
 - a. Why start a rescue
 - b. Necessary skills and competencies for running a rescue
 - c. Non-profit Status
 - i. Why file
 - ii. How to file (brief overview)
 1. Self-filing vs. hiring a lawyer
 - d. Key considerations
 - i. Time commitment
 - ii. Financial commitment
 - iii. Emotional commitment
 - iv. Structure
 1. Centralized vs. decentralized
4. Homeless pets needing help
 - a. Where animals come from
 - i. Owner Surrenders
 - ii. Strays
 - iii. Shelters
 - iv. Abuse cases
 - v. Commercial breeding farms (mills)
 - b. Unique considerations for animals in each situation
 - c. Handling cases involving lawsuits (ex. Puppy mill busts)
 - d. Working with local law enforcement to ensure animal welfare
 - e. Intake policies
5. Legal concerns
 - a. Dangerous animals
 - i. Aggression toward humans
 - ii. Aggression toward animals
 - b. Adoption contracts
 - i. Standard language
 - ii. Important information to include
 - iii. Return policy
 - c. Taking donations
 - d. Disclosures

- i. To potential adopters
 - ii. To volunteers
 - iii. To donors
- 6. Standards of care
 - a. Veterinary care
 - i. Becoming an advocate for your dogs
 - ii. Understanding common medical issues
 - b. Spaying/neutering
 - c. Microchipping
 - d. Tending to extraordinary behavioral/medical concerns
 - e. Euthanasia
- 7. Fundraising
 - a. How to raise money
 - i. Grants
 - 1. Foundations
 - 2. Government
 - 3. Corporate
 - ii. Events
 - iii. Mailings
 - iv. Online
 - v. Raffles
 - b. Where to find donors
- 8. Managing costs
- 9. Marketing
 - a. Key elements to a good website
 - b. Community events
 - c. Utilizing animal adoption websites
 - d. The importance of good photos
 - e. Local media
 - f. Social media networking (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
 - g. Newsletter management
 - h. Chat rooms/forums
 - i. Rescue logo paraphernalia (t-shirts, mugs, hats, etc.)
- 10. Volunteers
 - a. Board members
 - b. Foster families
 - c. Transport
 - d. Event coordinators
 - e. Misc. volunteer positions
- 11. Foster home management
 - a. Finding fosters
 - b. Training fosters

- i. What they should know
 - ii. Ongoing trainings
 - c. Standard foster parent obligations
 - i. Foster expenses (food, transportation, shelter, etc.)
 - ii. Socializing foster pets
 - iii. Interacting with applicants
 - iv. Attending events with foster pets
 - d. Lost dog procedures
 - e. Key considerations
 - i. Breaks
 - ii. Burnout
 - iii. Acknowledging hard work
 - iv. Tangible support
 - 1. Get-togethers
 - 2. Coupons for food and toys
 - 3. Free toys, beds, harnesses, etc.
 - 4. Online forums
 - f. Letting fosters go
- 12. Training
 - a. Volunteer enrichment programs
 - b. Animal training obligations
- 13. Transporting animals
 - a. Local volunteers
 - b. Transport organizations
- 14. Adoption Process
 - a. Setting fees for dogs
 - b. Finding adopters
 - i. Online listings
 - ii. Events
 - iii. Local press
 - iv. Local business partners
 - c. Adopter qualifications
 - i. Application
 - 1. What to ask
 - 2. Determining red flags
 - 3. Response time and appropriate response to pass/fail applicants
 - 4. Who processes applications?
 - 5. Managing applications
 - a. Taking bad applicants out
 - i. Educating applicants
 - b. Ensuring good applicants are connected with an appropriate pet
 - ii. Home visit

1. What to look for
 - a. Bringing a representative animal
2. Interview questions
3. Determining red flags
4. Using a home visit as an education opportunity
5. Who conducts home visits?
- iii. Meet and Greet
 1. When and where should potential adopters meet adoptees
 2. Introducing would-be “siblings”
- d. Adoption Kit
 - i. Breed Information
 - ii. Contract
 - iii. Vet paperwork
 - iv. Coupons
 - v. Insurance information
 - vi. “Personal Items” (collar, harness, leash, toys, etc.)

15. Humane education

- a. Resources
- b. Hot Topics
- c. Getting the message across
 - i. Blogs
 - ii. Social media
 - iii. Events

16. Resources for rescues

- a. IRS 501(c)3 information and other filing examples
- b. Social media websites
- c. Web development resources
- d. Transportation organizations
- e. Websites that market adoptable pets