



Welcome Committee

Enhancing Behavioral Well-being for
Shelter Dogs and Empowering Staff and
Volunteers through Canine Behavior
Knowledge and Skill Development

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**PEDIGREE
FOUNDATION.**

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PART 1: Welcome Committee Overview



The Welcome Committee (WC) program is a shelter operations initiative dedicated to improving the welfare of shelter dogs. While supported by the Behavior and Training team, this program is designed to be spearheaded by a shelter's admissions and animal care teams. Trained volunteers and staff members focus on implementing environmental management strategies, enrichment, and behavior interventions to support newly admitted dogs who display low to moderate levels of fear, anxiety, and stress.

The primary goal of the WC is to facilitate a swift and smooth transition for newly admitted dogs, helping them acclimate to their new surroundings with less discomfort. The program is not merely about initial care; it also serves as a vital tool for implementing a comprehensive behavior evaluation process, offering insights into each dog's sociability and personality. The essence of the WC lies in its commitment to providing a positive, low-stress introduction to the shelter environment, reducing fear, anxiety, and stress-induced behaviors commonly observed in and experienced by shelter dogs.

Key Welcome Committee Activities:

These activities are crucial for implementing early intervention and care to preserve behavioral well-being.

- **Communication and Documentation:** Observing, interpreting, and communicating objectively about dog behavior and body language through written notes.
- **Low-stress Handling:** Ensuring each dog feels safe and cared for through considerate and calm interactions.
- **Basic Training:** Providing foundational training sessions to aid behavior management and adaptability to the shelter environment.
- **Enrichment:** Engaging dogs in activities that are both fun and tailored to their individual needs, promoting mental well-being.

The benefits for dogs, staff, and volunteers

The Welcome Committee presents a myriad of benefits for all involved parties. For dogs, it leads to improved behavior, socialization, and well-being. Staff benefit from enhanced job satisfaction, easier management of dogs, and skill development. For volunteers, the WC offers a deeply rewarding experience, opportunities for learning, and a sense of community. Together, these benefits contribute to a more positive and effective shelter environment.

Benefits for Dogs

- **Reduced Stress and Anxiety:** The Welcome Committee (WC) provides a nurturing and friendly environment for new arrivals, significantly reducing their stress and anxiety levels.
- **Enhanced Socialization:** Through environmental management, enrichment and low-stress handling, the WC helps dogs become more sociable and friendly, improving their chances of adoption.
- **Behavioral Improvement:** The basic training offered by the WC aids in behavior modification, helping dogs to adapt better to the shelter.
- **Improved Behavioral Health:** Regular engagement and enrichment activities contribute to improved welfare, preventing the development of stress-related issues in the shelter environment.

Benefits for Staff and Volunteers

- **Enhanced Knowledge and Skills:** Participation in the WC leads to increased knowledge about animal behavior, training, enrichment and welfare, enhancing participant skills.
- **Effective Behavior and Management:** WC dogs are often better able to effectively cope with the shelter environment, which in turn makes daily care and handling safe and more efficient for those providing it.
- **Increased Satisfaction:** Seeing the positive impact of their work on the dogs' welfare enhances satisfaction and morale among participants.
- **Better Adoption Matches:** Shelters can make more informed decisions about adoption matches, as they understand each dog's personality and needs more deeply.
- **Community and Connection:** Participants become part of a community that shares a common passion for animal welfare, fostering a sense of belonging and connection.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Welcome Committee involves roles and responsibilities focused on integrating behavioral support into shelter operations to reduce stress in dogs. Key responsibilities include managing dog selection for the program, providing enrichment activities, tracking dog progress, and ensuring effective communication among staff and volunteers. The goal is to improve the welfare of sheltered dogs, improving adoptability chances by reducing stress and enhancing their well-being through structured activities and care.



Admissions Responsibilities:

- Identify the immediate needs of all incoming dogs through health exams and behavioral observations.
- Collect any available history on the dog's background, behavior, and health from finders or owners.
- Determine which animals might benefit most from the Welcome Committee's enrichment and stress-reduction activities by assigning FAS scores to all incoming dogs.
- Record observations and communicate any immediate needs for behavioral intervention to the relevant shelter teams.
- Work closely with caregivers to ensure a smooth transition into the shelter and the WC program.
- Engage in continuous learning to improve dog care strategies under the Welcome Committee program.

Animal Care Responsibilities:

- Review daily reports identifying program candidates.
- Implement enrichment activities to reduce FAS.
- Monitor and record behavioral changes in dogs.
- Follow and implement specific behavior plans for dogs with identified FAS scores.
- Collaborate with the behavior team for assessments and updates on enrolled dogs.
- Engage in continuous learning to improve dog care strategies under the Welcome Committee program.

Behavior & Training Responsibilities:

- Train and support staff and volunteers in implementing welcome committee activities.
- Collaborate with participating teams and monitor dogs' progress within the program.
- Conducting behavioral assessments as needed to determine individual needs.
- Adapting behavior interventions based on ongoing assessments, observations and feedback from staff and volunteers.

Volunteer Coordinator Responsibilities:

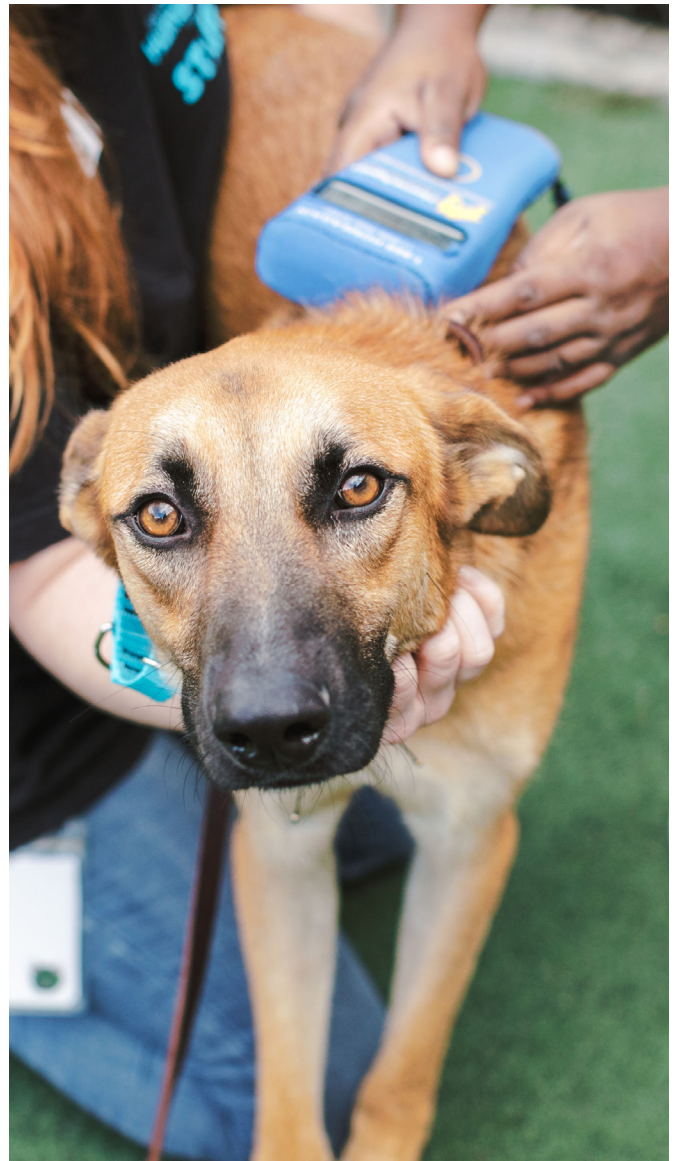
- Recruiting new volunteers for the program.
- Managing volunteer schedules and assignments.
- Providing ongoing support and education to volunteers.
- Serving as the liaison between volunteers and shelter staff.
- Tracking and evaluating volunteer contributions and effectiveness.
- Facilitating feedback for continuous program improvement.

Volunteer Responsibilities:

- Assisting with foundation volunteer tasks to support daily operations such as creating food-based enrichment, cutting treats, implementing basic in-kennel behavior plans.
- Implementing enrichment activities and behavior plans for animals.
- Recording observations and behavior changes in animals under the program.
- Engaging in educational courses to improve understanding of animal behavior and welfare.

Leadership Responsibilities:

- Coordinating daily reports on dogs' progress within the program.
- Ensuring adherence to the Welcome Committee's operational procedures.
- Ensuring communication between all teams involved in the implementation of the program.
- Managing and overseeing the training and development of staff and volunteers involved in the program.
- Assessing program effectiveness and making strategic adjustments as necessary.



Identifying which dogs qualify for the Welcome Committee

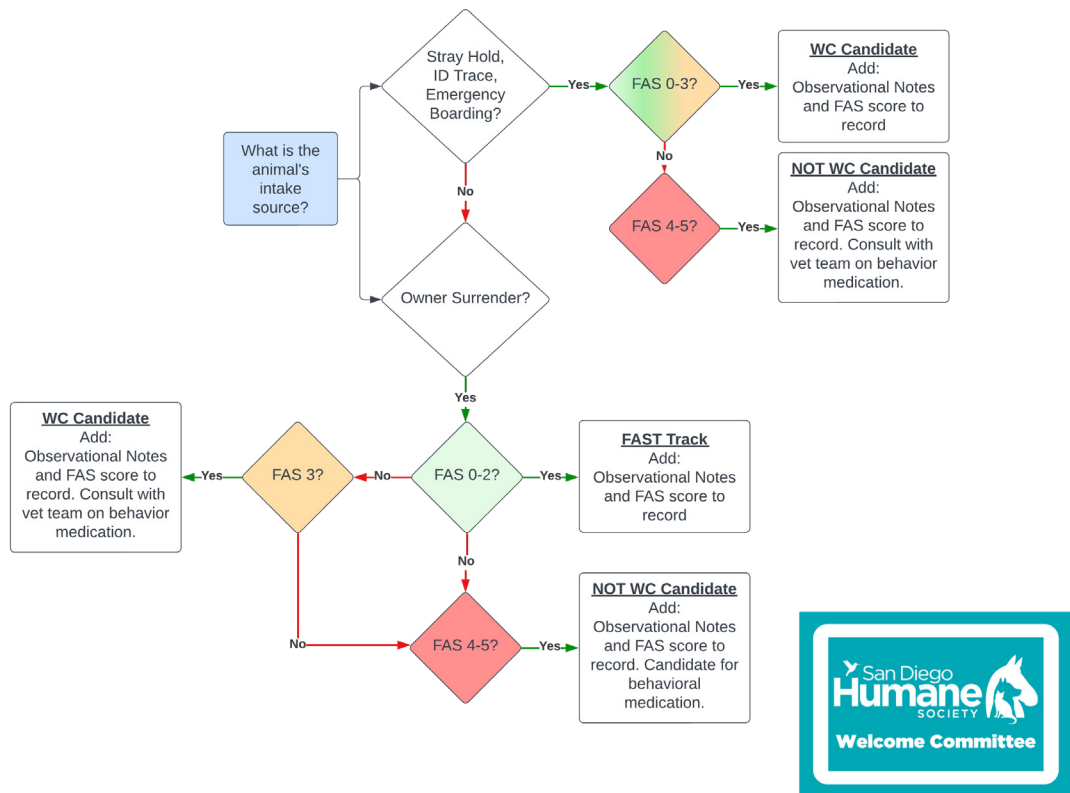
The process of identifying which dogs are suitable for the Welcome Committee (WC) begins at intake and is a critical step to ensure program success and safety for the staff and volunteers supporting implementation. San Diego Humane Society's flowchart provides a structured approach to making these decisions based on the animal's intake source and behavior.

Eligible dogs can come into the shelter as strays, owner surrenders, or through other means such as emergency boarding. The source of intake may influence the animal's immediate needs and suitability for the WC. For instance, canines entering the shelter under certain statuses, such as Protective Custody or Bite Quarantine, may not be suitable for WC activities due to safety considerations.

Once the intake source is established, the dog's behavior and stress levels are evaluated using the [Fear Free™ Fear, Anxiety, and Stress \(FAS\) scale](#). Animals exhibiting a FAS score of 0-2, indicating low stress and fear levels, are generally good candidates for the WC and can be fast-tracked to an adoption, foster, or rescue pathway while receiving this extra support.

Dogs with a FAS score of 3, presenting with a moderate level of fear or stress, are likely to benefit most from the support of the program. Behavior medication may be considered at this time.

Dogs with a higher FAS score of 4-5, showing high levels of stress or fear, may not be immediate candidates for the Welcome Committee. These dogs require further evaluation by qualified behavior personnel or leadership after being admitted to the shelter prior to being considered for Welcome Committee. Behavior medication is highly recommended at this time. Medical teams will be alerted for further evaluation.



Welcome Committee In Action

Everyone can support Welcome Committee dogs! The heart and purpose of the WC program is to provide early behavioral support. All staff members and volunteers can participate in supporting WC dogs by ensuring their housing is enriched (see below), providing them additional in-kennel enrichment and by tossing or dropping treats when passing the kennels of WC dogs.

Behavior plans and out-of-kennel enrichment are additional core components of the Welcome Committee, however, not all staff and volunteers will be equipped with the skills needed to implement these activities effectively. These activities should only be implemented by approved staff and volunteer participants who have completed the WC educational course.

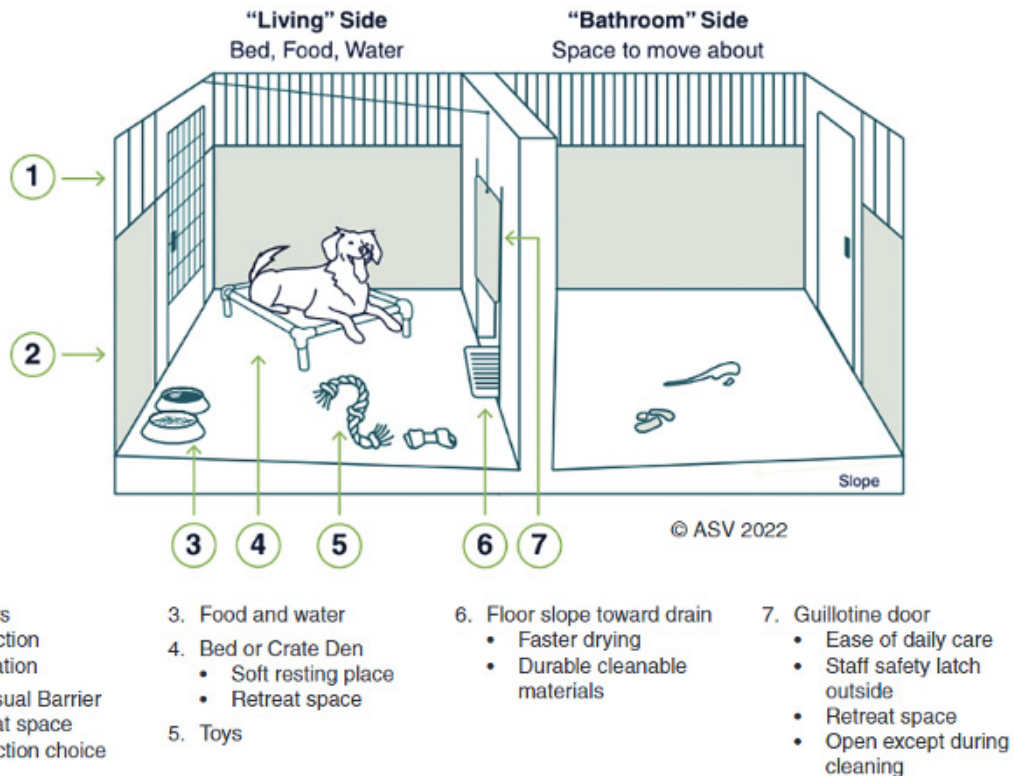
Enriched Housing Overview

Enriched housing plays a pivotal role in environmental management and addressing the well-being of dogs in shelters by enhancing their living environment. This approach not only caters to their basic needs but also offers them enrichment and opportunities for social interaction. The significance of enriched housing lies in its ability to mitigate stress among kennel dogs. It achieves this by empowering them with choices and control over their surroundings, thus fostering a sense of security and comfort.

The design and location of dog kennels are crucial factors that influence canine behavior. It's important to thoughtfully consider the type of kennel and its placement to ensure it positively affects the dog's behavior and emotional state.

Checklist: Reducing Fear, Anxiety and Stress During Intake

- **Prepare a Calm Environment:** Arrange admission areas to minimize FAS, considering sight, smell, and sound.
- **Control Visual Stimuli and Noise:** Use barriers or separate areas to prevent pets from seeing each other, reducing stress. Calming music or white noise can be played in the admissions area.
- **Use Calming Pheromones or Scents:** Spray calming pheromones or scents like lavender or chamomile in the intake area before the dog arrives.
- **Ensure Non-Slip Surfaces:** Provide rubber mats, yoga mats, or rugs for secure footing.
- **Engage in Non-Threatening Body Language:** Avoid direct eye contact and approach from the side.
- **Allow Time to Acclimate:** Let the dog explore the intake area at their own pace.
- **Use Soft Voices and Slow and Smooth Movements:** Speak softly and move slowly around the dog.
- **Practice Gentle Handling:** Avoid force and practice low-stress handling techniques during the intake process.
- **Minimize Physical Restraint:** Use the least amount of restraint necessary for safety. Tools like a restraint cage can provide a safe, humane, and effective way to provide intake vaccines.
- **Offer High-Value Treats:** Use treats to lower stress and create positive associations during the intake process.
- **Continuous Monitoring for Stress Signs:** Be observant and ready to adjust your approach if the dog shows signs of stress. Give the dog a break if needed.



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Essential Components for Dog Kennels

To support enriched housing, dog kennels should incorporate the following elements:

- **Comfortable Bedding:** Soft materials that provide warmth and comfort.
- **Elevated Beds:** Beds raised off the floor to ensure dryness and enhance comfort.
- **Accessible Food and Water Bowls:** Always available, clean sources of nutrition and hydration.
- **Varied Toys:** A selection of toys that encourage natural behaviors like chewing, exploring, and foraging, rotated regularly to maintain interest.
- **Visual Retreat Options:** Kennel covers or spaces that offer privacy and a sense of safety. This can include the use of airline crates or covered wire crates as secure hiding spots.
- **Divider Doors:** Kennels with divider doors offer additional benefits by allowing dogs to move between spaces, giving them more control over their environment. Divider doors also provide separation of living and resting space from elimination areas. They also facilitate no contact care, ensuring both animal and staff or volunteer safety.

Incorporating these components into dog kennels not only addresses the physical comfort of dogs but also their psychological needs. Enriched housing, through thoughtful kennel set-up and strategic placement, significantly contributes to the overall welfare of dogs in shelter environments.

Enrichment:

Enrichment is an essential component of animal husbandry in any setting, and is especially important for animals housed in shelters. It serves as a key strategy to alleviate stress and enhance the mental well-being of animals by facilitating both physical activity and mental stimulation. This approach not only fosters the expression of species-specific behaviors but also empowers animals with more autonomy over their environments, aligning with the principles set forth in the ASV Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters.

Enrichment programs and behavior modification go hand-in-hand. When implemented appropriately, enrichment may increase the success of behavior modification efforts.

Enrichment strategies are designed to be comprehensive and adaptive, catering to the distinct preferences and requirements of each dog, while also considering the resources at the disposal of each shelter. For example, San Diego Humane Society organizes its enrichment activities into several categories, each addressing different aspects of animal welfare:

- **Enriched housing** (e.g. visual barriers, novel toys, raised beds)
- **Sensory enrichment** (visual, auditory, olfactory, taste, tactile)
- **Social interactions** (e.g. play pairs or groups, co-housing, 1:1 time with people)
- **Physical exercise** (e.g. walks, K9 adventures/field trips, toy play, enrichment yards)
- **Cognitive enrichment** (e.g. clicker training, puzzle toys)

This comprehensive approach to enrichment is framed within the five domains of animal welfare: nutrition, environment, health, behavior, and mental state. It recognizes the varied needs of shelter animals, striving to enhance their quality of life through a diverse array of experiences and interactions that address these five key domains. By doing so, it not only meets their basic needs but also enriches their lives in a meaningful way, contributing to their overall welfare and readiness for adoption.



Try This: Project Party

Projects parties are a volunteer engagement initiative to support shelter operation needs through various projects. The goals include making a positive impact, teaching humane



care essentials, requiring no prior preparation from volunteers, fostering connections with staff, encouraging friendships, providing animal interaction, and celebrating volunteer service. The program welcomes all volunteers, including those needing to fulfill service hours, and suggests hosting these events indoors or outdoors, depending on weather, with a flexible size and duration to accommodate varying numbers of volunteers and projects available. Preparation involves ordering supplies, booking spaces, advertising, and setting up stations for different activities like laundry folding, meatball making for dogs, treat preparation, and enrichment item stuffing.

Try This: In Kennel Enrichment

Goal: Provide dogs with an enrichment item that stimulates their brain via problem solving, helps them present well in their kennel by facilitating quiet/calm behavior, and makes their kennel a more enjoyable place to be.

Supplies Needed:

- Cardboard Boxes
- Dry food, wet Food
- If available: treats, peanut butter or cream-cheese
- Toys
- Spoon or butter knife

Instructions:

1. Use an appropriately sized cardboard box for the dog, and ensure that all tape and staples have been removed. Fold the box closed.
2. Sprinkle tasty treats or kibble inside the box. Optional: Smear peanut butter, cream cheese or wet food on/in the box for an added treat.
3. Add 1-2 toys into the box, keeping in mind the size of toy is appropriate for the dog.
4. For more enrichment savvy dogs, you can layer the enrichment box with paper, treats, add in smaller boxes and close it tightly for more of a challenge! For dogs who are less engaged with enrichment items, make the box easier to open by not folding in the top flaps.

Try This: Out of Kennel Enrichment

Build an Enrichment Yard

Enrichment yards are a novel way to give dogs a break from kennel life, and help them practice natural behaviors like sniffing, foraging, and exploring. To set up an enrichment yard, choose an enclosed space where a dog can be safely off-leash and place prepared items throughout the area prior to bringing in the dog. Ideally, enrichment items should be unique to the dog and not something they encounter in kennel every day, or that utilize common items in a new or different way.

For example, a Kong filled with a smelly kibble can be hidden in a half-closed cardboard box filled with shredded newspaper. Dog-safe essential oils can be dripped on towels or bundled-up sheets to create a unique scent experience. Puzzle toys hiding a few bits of cheese can promote mentally stimulating problem-solving skills. And if it's available to you, agility equipment can be set up for fun maze or tunnel challenges.

Items in the yard should stimulate multiple senses like smell, touch, and taste. You can be as creative as you like and provide as many items as you like! An enrichment yard is all about giving dogs freedom of choice and time to explore. Just be sure to supervise them at all times, that any materials used are stripped of potentially harmful ingestible components like tape or staples, and that any natural items like plant material, small mammal hay, or essential oils are considered non-toxic and dog-safe.





Behavior modification programs in shelters have their limitations, though the Welcome Committee will address and mitigate some of these challenges. By providing early, positive experiences for shelter animals, the WC sets a foundation for more effective behavior intervention and improves and expedites the overall assessment process for dogs in the shelter. It is an essential component of a holistic approach to animal welfare in shelters, contributing to improving animal outcomes.

Limitations of Behavior Modification Programs

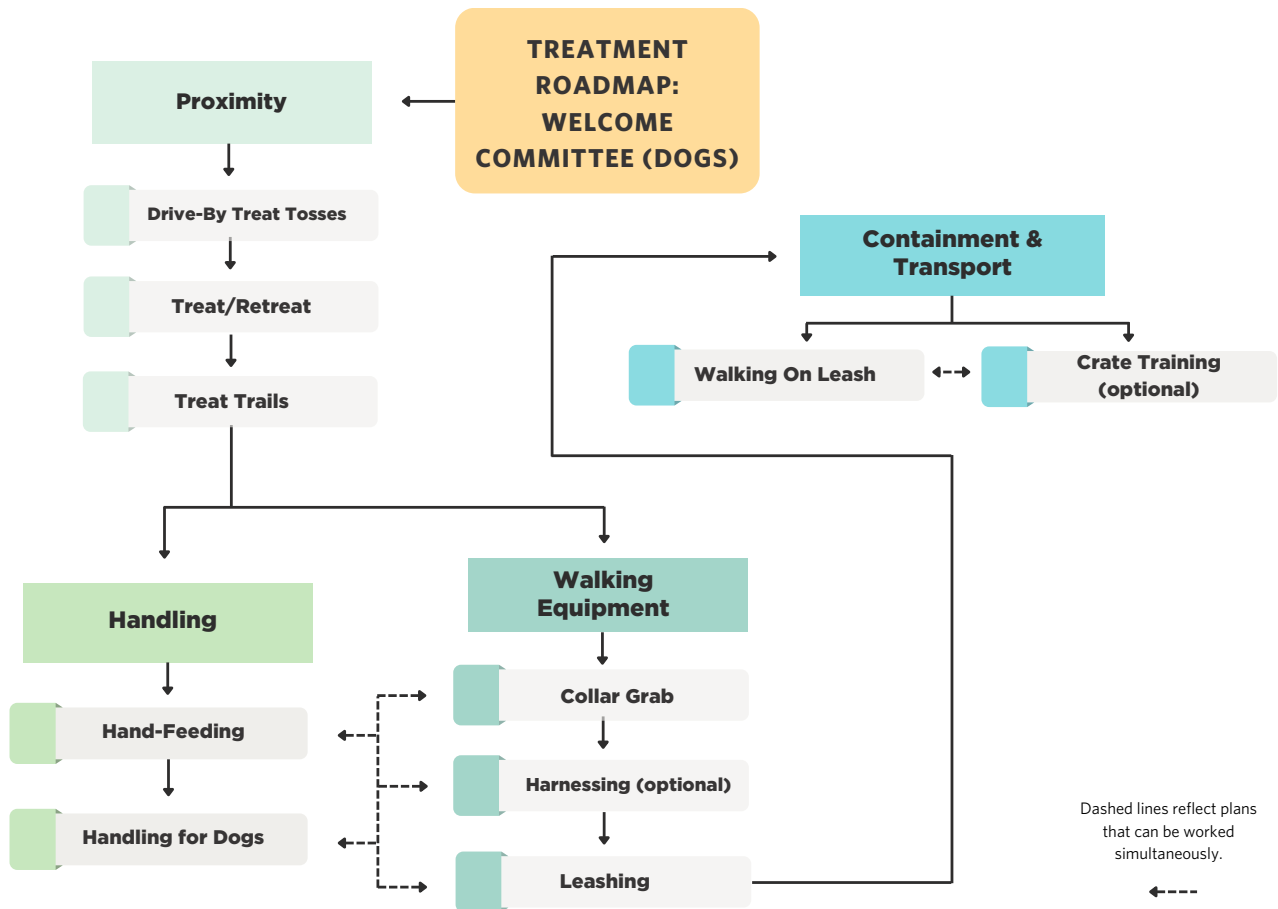
Behavior modification programs in shelter environments face many challenges:

- **Time Constraints:** Shelters often experience high turnover rates, limiting the time available to work with each animal on behavior modification.
- **Resource Limitations:** Not all shelters have the resources necessary for comprehensive behavior modification programs, including staffing, space, and materials.
- **Individual Variability:** Animals respond differently to behavior intervention, and some may require more intensive and specialized interventions with qualified professionals than others.
- **Stressful Environment:** The shelter environment can be stressful for animals, which may impede the progress of behavior modification efforts.
- **Inconsistency:** Variability in volunteer or staff training can lead to inconsistency in behavior modification techniques, potentially confusing animals.
- **Outcome Uncertainty:** There is no guarantee of success with behavior modification, and some behaviors may not be safe to work within a shelter setting or place in a foster or adopted home.



Treatment Roadmaps and Behavior Plans:

Behavior plans that employ the use of Desensitization and counterconditioning to Proximity (of people), Handling, Walking Equipment, and Containment & Transport are utilized by the WC team. The following Roadmap organizes these Behavior Plans in the sequential order they should be introduced:



Monitoring Behavior Changes

NAME: _____		AID: _____			
<input type="checkbox"/> Friendly		<input type="checkbox"/> Go Slow		<input type="checkbox"/> Caution	
Day of the Week					
Date					
Staff Initials					
FAS SCORE					
CATEGORIES BELOW APPEAR:					
NORMAL					
ABNORMAL (indicate below)					
Appetite					
None, Poor, Devours,					
Stool Score					
Bloody, None					
Urine					
Bloody, Straining, Excessive, None					
Vomiting					
Food, Bile, Blood					
Nasal Discharge					
Clear, Yellow, Green, Sneezing					
Ocular Discharge					
Clear, Green					
Medical Exam Request					
FAS, A, S, U, V, ND, OD					

Dogs join the Welcome Committee program for a maximum of 72 hours, during which designated staff watch for any changes in their behavior, expecting a reduction in stress indicators within this timeframe. It's crucial to regularly assess the records of these dogs and for staff and volunteers to communicate effectively about any issues encountered. At San Diego Humane Society, animal care supervisors check these records daily and hold daily huddles to discuss the well-being of these dogs. If a dog requires further assistance after the initial 72 hours, enrolling them in a specialized behavior modification or foster program is recommended.

Guidelines for Entering Notes:

Welcome Committee participants are responsible for sharing their objective behavioral observations using the provided Welcome Committee notes template.

- **Enrichment Activity or Training Plan:** (list the name of the enrichment activity or training plan(s) you are working on)
- **Observations:** (objective description of your interaction)
- **Progress:** (how far or what level of the training plan(s) were you able to work to)

Guidelines for Writing Objective Descriptions:

Observations should be described objectively, whether reporting our experiences with an animal, performing an evaluation, or recording information about its history. This helps us to communicate effectively about behavior in a way that does not have multiple interpretations. The value of the information we provide is influenced directly by the words we choose.

Objective

- Fact-driven
- Measurable, observable verifiable through evidence
- Only what is seen and heard is recorded
- Neutral tone; carries no emotional charge

Subjective

- Opinion-driven
- Feelings, opinions, judgements; cannot be evaluated or verified
- Motivations and internal feelings are attributed
- Positively or negatively charged; conveys a good or bad impression of animal

- Be observable. Describe the behavior precisely as it was seen or heard. Rather than writing, *'He wanted to attack the other dog,'* write, *'When the dog on the other side of the fence came within 3 feet of him, he began lunging and biting the chain links.'*
- Use action words.
- Avoid ascribing motivations, feelings or reasons for doing things. There is no way to observe a dog's motivation or feelings. Is a dog playing fetch because he loves it, or for another reason, such as boredom or toy guarding? Rather than saying, *'He loves playing fetch,'* say, *'When we arrived at the pen, he picked up a tennis ball in his mouth and ran away from me. I threw another tennis ball. He retrieved it and let the other ball go. I threw the first ball and he retrieved it, letting the second ball go. We did this for the next 20*

minutes until it was time to go inside.'
See additional examples below.

- Be specific, not vague. Rather than writing, *'He is barrier reactive to most people,'* write, *'He has barked at 3 out of 4 staff members who walked past his kennel today.'*
- Be concise.
- Be measurable.
- Record enough detail to relate what happened, but avoid biasing your description.
- Words should describe but not judge.
- Record behaviors in the order they occurred.
- Context is important! Behaviors that appear in the shelter do not always appear in the home (or vice versa). A dog who plays fetch for hours at the shelter may not do this at home.

Evaluating Existing Resources

Prior to the introduction of the Welcome Committee (WC) in any shelter, it is imperative to conduct an assessment of existing behavioral programs. This evaluation will help in understanding how the WC can synergize with and enhance these initiatives. The effectiveness and scope of current programs provide a baseline for integrating the WC.

Physical Layout and Space Considerations

The physical structure of the shelter and dog housing (kennels) plays a critical role in accommodating the WC, as adequate space for interactions and enrichment is a necessity. Ideally, shelters will provide dog housing consistent with the ASV Guidelines (Canine primary enclosure set up) and have designated areas where WC activities can be conducted that are sanitary, private and contained. This can include double-compartment kennels with adequate space for dogs to move away and/or larger spaces directly adjoined or connected to kennels where dogs can be let-out and returned to kennel easily without being directly handled.

Staff and Volunteer Engagement

The success of the WC heavily relies on the involvement and commitment of staff and volunteers. Their willingness to participate in and support the program is crucial. It's important to gauge the level of enthusiasm and readiness among the shelter team to embrace the responsibilities that come with the WC.

Intake Procedure Alignment

Shelters must review and possibly modify their intake procedures to ensure a smooth integration with the WC. This step ensures that new arrivals are quickly and efficiently identified as candidates for WC activities.



Budgetary Considerations

Implementing the WC may require additional resources. Budget considerations are essential to determine the feasibility of the program. This includes potential costs for training and supplies.

Understanding the Dog Population

Identifying potential candidates for the WC from the current dog population through the use of a shelter database and adapted operations protocol is essential. This process involves gaining an understanding of the needs, behaviors, and characteristics of dogs in the shelter through the use of objective information gathering, note-taking and referencing FAS scales during intake.

Setting Clear Objectives

Shelters should establish clear, measurable objectives for the WC that align with their overall mission and goals. These objectives will guide the implementation and ongoing management of the program.

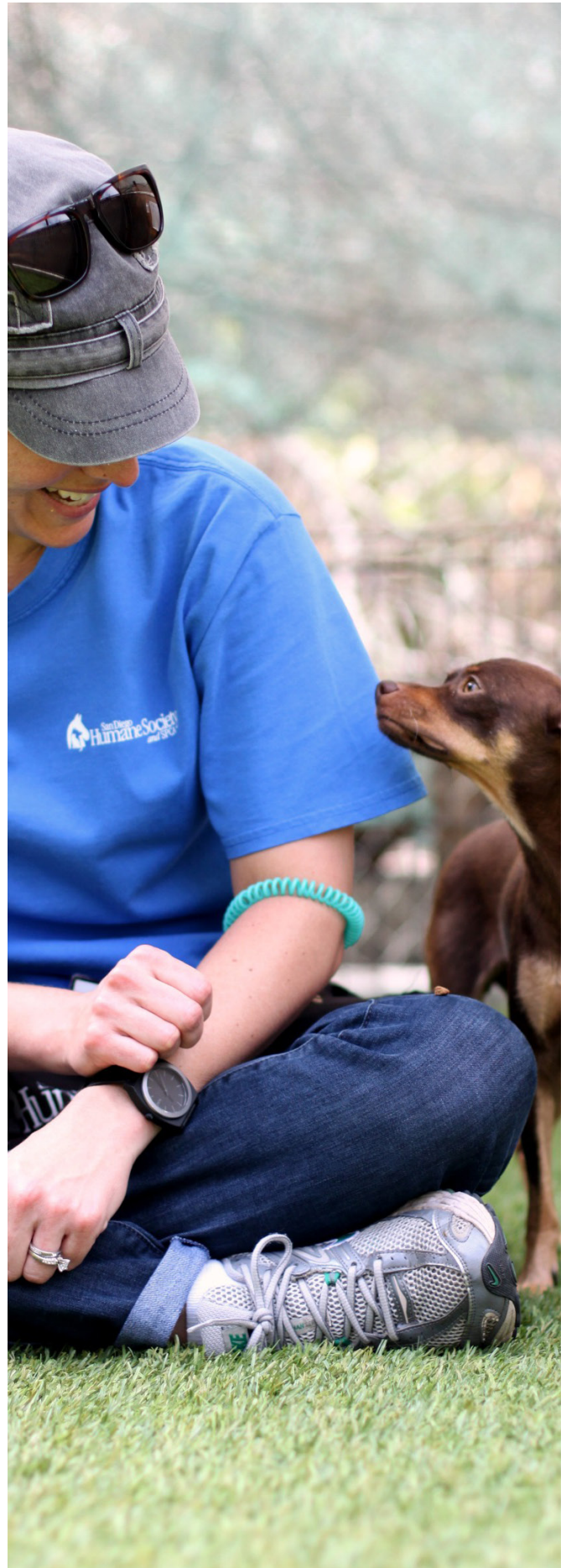
Training and Skill Levels

The training and skill levels of staff and volunteers must be evaluated to ensure they are equipped to manage the WC effectively. This may include additional training or workshops to prepare the team for the specific needs of the program.

Consistency in Care and Attention

Lastly, shelters must assess their capacity to provide consistent care and attention as part of the WC. This includes ensuring that there are enough resources and personnel to maintain the program's activities regularly.

Implementing the WC requires careful planning and assessment. By considering critical factors, shelters can determine if the WC is the right fit for their environment and ensure its successful integration and impact.



Welcome Committee Success Stories



Elke

Elke entered San Diego Humane Society's care as a stray. She was displaying fearful behavior on intake, including tense body, direct eye contact, ears forward and looking for a place to escape. She was enrolled in the Welcome Committee, and multiple staff members worked through program training plans to make her more comfortable and help her adjust to the shelter environment. Staff entered detailed behavior notes after every interaction, which is also a Welcome Committee protocol to ensure consistency and to monitor progress. After just a

few days in the program, staff documented soft eyes, ears up, loose body and tail wags. Elke was made available for adoption and continued to progress quickly. She was adopted 10 days after entering our care, but not before charming staff with her play yard zoomies during her outside enrichment time.



Little

Little displayed fearful behaviors on intake, snapping at the person who found her and brought her to our San Diego Campus. Our staff moved very slowly and cautiously with her, and our Welcome Committee worked with her to ease her tension and stress. We saw progress in a very short time, and she is now thriving in her new home!

"I adopted Bean, aka Little, in October from San Diego Humane Society. She wouldn't even let me pet her, but I knew she was my next dog! She came home with me and

quickly adapted to living with her older and wiser fur sister Sydney. Bean loves to hit the beach and run as fast as she can off leash, showing up all the bigger dogs. She has a lot of energy and between wrestling with her sister, chewing everything but her toys, and constantly looking for food, she sometimes sleeps. I love her so much!!!"

—Annie, Little's adopter

Identify if the welcome committee is appropriate for your shelter

Recognizing that each shelter has unique resources and constraints, the WC program is adaptable. This flexibility allows shelters to implement the program in a way that best suits their capabilities and the needs of their animals.

This table serves as a guide for shelters to assess their current status and identify areas requiring attention or improvement as they work on an implementation plan. It balances essential requirements (Must) with advanced practices (Should, Ideal) that contribute to the program's success and the overall welfare of animals in the shelter.

READINESS TABLE

	MUST	SHOULD	IDEAL
Staff & Volunteer Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteers trained to work with dogs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trained animal care staff and volunteer managing animals in addition to other tasks and responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicated behavior staff and volunteer teams focused on behavior modification, enrichment, and support for Welcome Committee animals (intakes with heightened FAS)
Intake Procedure Alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice active population management Housing promotes behavioral health of animals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capture all pertinent medical and behavioral information Means of identification should be physically affixed (collar or tag) or permanently inserted (microchip) when safe to do so 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly documented intake policies/procedures aligned to organization mission or mandate
Understanding Animal Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shelters must have an animal database that allows for recording and tracking of animal metrics Housing promotes behavioral health of animals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local animal population dynamics should be considered when planning pathways, housing, and interventions Consistent, clear, and objective animal behavior communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Animal paths and policies based on and/or guided by organization mission/mandate and needs of community
Setting Clear Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General animal behavior plans, focused on maintaining low FAS while in a shelter environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual animal behavior plans, focused on what is needed for significant reduction of FAS and animal placement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly documented, SMART behavior objectives aligned to organization mission or mandate
Consistency in Care and Attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide for 5 Domains/Freedoms Standards of care: Protocols developed and updated regularly to manage population needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sufficient staff/volunteers to care for and support population needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational plan and objectives focused on maintaining consistent care and attention within an organization's capacity

	MUST	SHOULD	IDEAL
Existing Behavior Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrichment program • Direct care team with some basic behavior knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct care team with formal training • Formal behavior or enrichment plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly skilled, dedicated behavior staff using science-based training methods
Training and Skill Levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate objective observation • Clear understanding of basic canine communication • Clear understanding of FAS and how to appropriately assign levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced understanding of canine communication; fear and aggression • Understanding of Learning Theory, Respondent Conditioning, and Operant Conditioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear understanding of marker based training process
Physical Kennel Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kennel space must allow for some form of treat delivery without significantly increasing FAS • Able to perform behavior modification without significant increase in FAS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kennel space should allow for staff and volunteers to periodically move out of animal's view during session to provide significant relief from FAS inducing stimuli 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kennel space large enough for animal to choose to create sufficient distance to provide relief from significant FAS inducing stimuli • Kennel space large enough for staff and volunteers to provide significant relief from FAS inducing stimuli through distance increasing of their own.
Physical Out of Kennel Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be an option for free contact interactions where animal is able to have agency over direct physical interactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow for animal to extend to end of typical 6' lead with room to explore • Containing visual barriers to reduce likelihood of reaction to other animals, people, traffic, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large enough for the animal to be able to create distance while still being contained. May involve an access path directly from the kennel, allowing the animal to be shifted with minimal to no handling.
Supply Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have leashes available for staff and volunteers • Maintain supply through purchase or donation of small easily digestible treats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain supply through purchase or donation of generally considered high value treats (typically hotdog/cheese) • Have harnesses of each size available • Able to purchase leashes and treat pouches for training staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steady supply of high value treats purchased/donated and readily available as needed by animal population (sometimes meaning specialty items like turkey slices or hamburger for specific individuals) • Steady supply of leashes and treat pouches for all animal facing staff • Steady supply of harnesses in various sizes and quantity for all animals that would benefit from them • Conduct preference test for animals to sort individual treat value



PART 2: Education Components

The generous funding provided by PEDIGREE Foundation DOGS RULE.™ Grant allowed for San Diego Humane Society to collaborate with the Shelter Playgroup Alliance to implement a comprehensive education program for staff and volunteers to ensure that all participants are well-versed in canine behavior and the specific protocols for the program. The program's comprehensive educational framework includes:

Required Courses

A total of 20 required courses. 13 courses were from Shelter Playgroups Alliance's core curriculum. 7 courses were designed by San Diego Humane Society for Welcome Committee specific protocols. The courses cover various essential topics, from expectations for learners and canine behavior basics to detailed overviews of the Welcome Committee protocols.

Chunked-Learning

Modules are set to be 10-20 minutes.

Assessment Components

Of these 20 courses, 13 include an assessment component to gauge learners' understanding and ensure they are ready to apply their knowledge correctly and effectively

Feedback and Grading

Feedback is an integral part of the educational process. The Shelter Playgroup Alliance volunteer graders evaluated the participants' performance based on a structured rubric and established grading guidelines.

Optional Modules

In addition to the required courses, there are 5 optional modules focused on dog-dog interactions. These modules are crucial for those involved in introductions and managing playgroups, providing insights into canine social behaviors.

The educational program of the Welcome Committee is comprehensive and requires resource commitments. This investment in education is crucial for the program's success, as it ensures that all participants are well-equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to improve the welfare of shelter dogs and contribute to their adoptability. To successfully implement the Welcome Committee's educational components, San Diego Humane Society leaders made a commitment to:

- Allocating time for staff and volunteers to complete the necessary courses. This investment ensures that everyone involved in the Welcome Committee Educational Program is adequately prepared and supported to complete the program.
- Providing access to technological resources such as computers, video recording devices, and access to YouTube or Dropbox to upload assignments.
- Providing ongoing education and professional development resources beyond this program, as canine behavior and welfare is an evolving field.



Success in the Welcome Committee educational program requires:

Foundational Knowledge and Commitment to Learning

Participants must understand shelter protocols and procedures, must be comfortable navigating the shelter environment, and must maintain a strong commitment to learning. At San Diego Humane Society, staff participants must complete a new-hire 90 day checklist, and volunteer participants must have 40 volunteer hours as a dog team member prior to enrolling in the education program. Participants must also be willing to dedicate the time and effort needed to complete the necessary educational components.

Openness to Feedback

The WC program includes regular assessments and feedback from Shelter Playgroup Alliance graders. Participants must be open to receiving and using this feedback constructively to improve their skills and interactions with the dogs enrolled in the program.

Time Management

Effective time management is crucial for WC participants. They must balance their responsibilities within the education program with other commitments, ensuring that their involvement in the WC does not adversely affect their ability to fulfill their roles in other areas of the shelter.

Try This: Designated Training Spaces

A designated staff training space equipped with a computer and headphones allows for focused learning sessions. This setup facilitates access to online training modules, webinars, and instructional videos. The use of headphones ensures a distraction-free environment, allowing staff to fully engage with the learning material. This dedicated space reinforces a commitment to professional development and continuous improvement, ultimately benefiting both the staff and the animals in their care. Use this checklist to set up a designated training space in your shelter.

- **Space Selection:** Identify a quiet, adequately sized space away from the main shelter area. Add signs to clearly communicate the location of the designated training spaces. Additionally, add the location of the training space on a facility map available to staff.
- **Furniture:** Acquire comfortable seating, desks or tables, and storage for training materials.
- **Computer and Software:** Ensure access to a reliable computer or tablet with necessary software for training programs.
- **Headphones:** Provide quality headphones for individual learning sessions.
- **Internet Access:** Ensure stable, high-speed internet for streaming educational content.
- **Schedule Board:** Maintain a white board, calendar or digital schedule for booking the space.
- **Feedback System:** Set up a method for staff to suggest training topics or report issues with the space.
- **Maintenance Plan:** Regularly check and maintain the equipment and cleanliness of the space.





PART 3: Designing Impactful Educational Programs

For animal welfare leaders looking to design impactful educational programs, here are some considerations using common instructional design frameworks: Bloom's Taxonomy, the ADDIE model, and Kirkpatrick's Evaluation Model.

The following section is a very brief overview of these frameworks and their application for designing educational programs for shelter staff and volunteers. It is essential to acknowledge that this overview is not exhaustive and does not fully encompass the complexities involved. For comprehensive understanding and guidance on instructional design, it is strongly advised to explore additional reputable resources. For more information on instructional design check out these resources:

Instructional Design Resources:

Coursera has low and no-cost introductory courses on instructional design.

- [HRCI Learning and Development Course](#)
- [University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign: Instructional Design Foundations and Applications](#)
- [University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign: Assessment for Learning](#)

ADDIE Model

The ADDIE model is a systematic instructional design framework used to guide the process of creating educational and training programs. It consists of five phases: Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation. Each phase has specific tasks and objectives that contribute to the overall effectiveness of the training material. This model is widely used for its flexibility and iterative nature, allowing for continuous improvement and adaptation based on feedback and evaluation results.

ADDIE Model Examples

- **Analysis:** Identify the specific needs of a program, including the knowledge and skills required for staff and volunteers.
- **Design:** Structure the curriculum to meet those needs, incorporating Bloom’s Taxonomy and ensuring a blend of theoretical knowledge and practical application.
- **Development:** Create course materials, including video content and interactive assessments.
- **Implementation:** Roll out the courses to learners, ensuring access to all necessary technological resources..
- **Evaluation:** Continuously assess the effectiveness of the courses through learner feedback, performance in assessments, and impact on shelter operations.



Bloom's Taxonomy

Bloom's Taxonomy is a hierarchical framework used to classify educational learning objectives into levels of complexity and specificity. It consists of six categories, starting from the basic level of cognition of knowing or remembering facts to more complex levels such as understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. This framework serves as a guide to developing teaching strategies and assessments that foster deeper learning and critical thinking skills.

Bloom's Taxonomy Examples

Remembering and Understanding - Introductory courses on canine behavior basics.

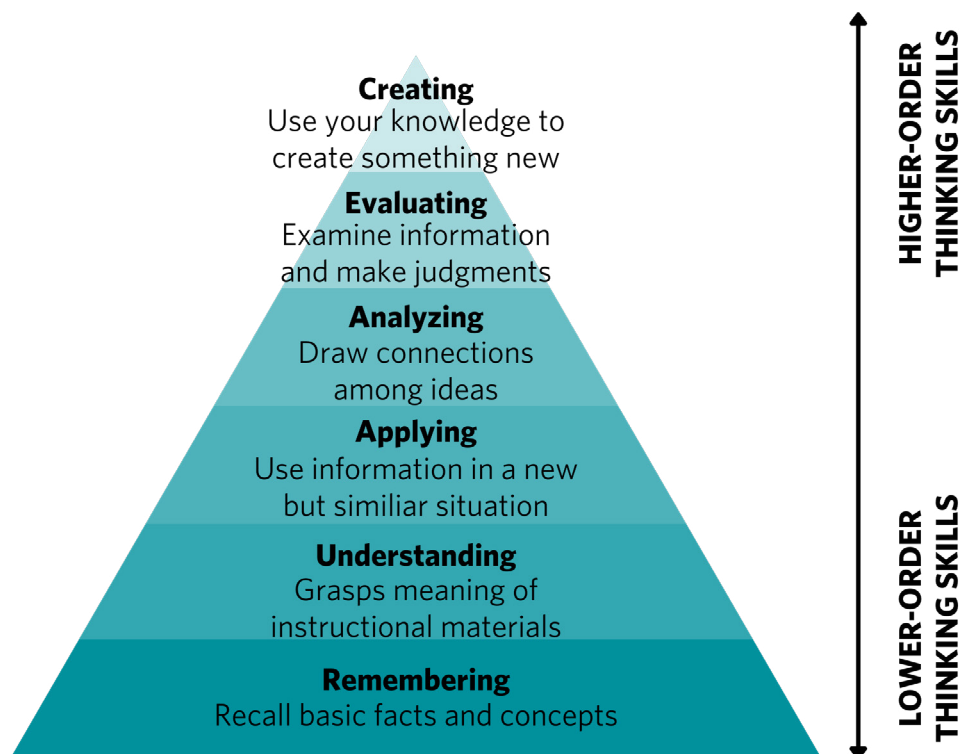
- Remembering: Recall the body language cues for fear, anxiety, and stress.
- Understanding: Explain the reasons behind common canine behaviors like barking or tail wagging.

Applying and Analyzing - Hands-on modules for implementing behavior plans, with assessments that require learners to apply and analyze behavior.

- Applying: Demonstrate how to use positive reinforcement techniques to modify a dog's behavior.
- Analyzing: Differentiate between behaviors stemming from stress versus those from anxiety.

Evaluating and Creating - Advanced modules that task learners with creating and evaluating behavior management plans for specific scenarios.

- Evaluating: Assess the effectiveness of a behavior modification plan
- Creating: Design a comprehensive training program tailored to address a dog's specific behavioral issues, incorporating advanced training techniques and environmental adjustments.

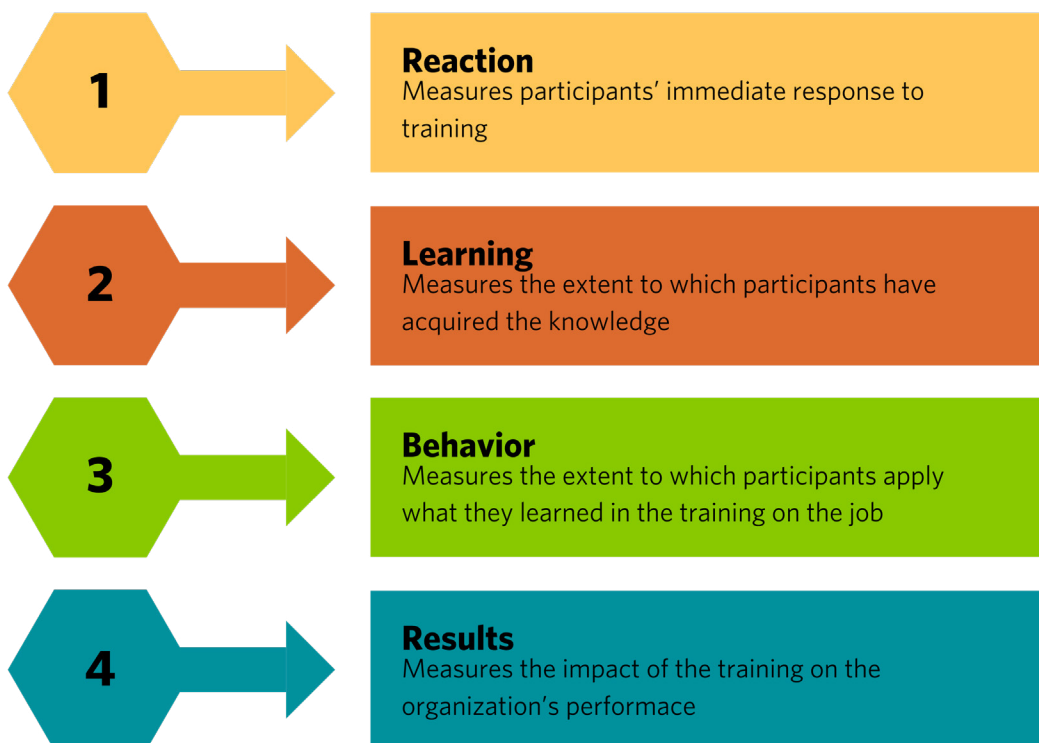


Kirkpatrick Model

The Kirkpatrick Model is a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of training programs. It consists of four levels: Reaction (how participants respond to the training), Learning (the increase in knowledge or capability), Behavior (extent of behavior change/learner improvement and application of the content), and Results (the impact on the shelter or environment). This model helps organizations assess the value and impact of their training, from immediate reactions to long-term outcomes, enabling continuous improvement in educational strategies.

Kirkpatrick Model Example

- **Level 1 - Reaction:** Gather immediate feedback from participants on the courses to gauge their engagement and perceived relevance.
- **Level 2 - Learning:** Measure the increase in knowledge and skills through pre- and post-assessments.
- **Level 3 - Behavior:** Observe changes in behavior in the shelter environment, assessing how well participants apply their learning in real-world scenarios.
- **Level 4 - Results:** Evaluate the impact of the training on shelter operations and animal welfare, including adoption rates and the success of dog-dog introductions.



The following are examples of steps to take as you design impactful educational programs for staff and volunteers.

Analyze Needs: Start with the ADDIE model's Analysis phase to identify the specific learning needs of your staff and volunteers regarding animal care, shelter operations, and community engagement.

Example: Shelter Staff Skills and Knowledge Assessment Survey

This survey is designed to help us understand your current skills, knowledge, and learning preferences related to animal care and shelter operations. Your responses will guide us in developing targeted training programs to enhance our shelter's effectiveness and animal welfare. All responses will remain confidential.

Basic Information

Name (Optional):

Position:

How long have you been working at the shelter?

Animal Care Knowledge

- Rate your confidence in identifying common health issues in animals (1-5, with 5 being very confident).
- Describe any areas of animal health care you would like to learn more about.

Behavior and Training

- Rate your knowledge in managing challenging animal behaviors (1-5).
- What specific animal behavior management techniques are you interested in learning?

Guest Experience and Adoption Processes

- How confident are you in communicating with potential adopters and guests? (1-5)
- What aspects of the guest experience and adoption process do you think could be improved through training?

Shelter Operations

- Rate your knowledge of shelter operations, including cleaning protocols, feeding schedules, and record-keeping (1-5).
- What operational areas do you feel need more training or resources?

Learning Preferences

- What format of training do you prefer? (e.g., online modules, hands-on workshops, printed manuals)
- How much time per week can you dedicate to training?

Open Feedback

- Are there any other areas not mentioned above where you feel training could be beneficial?
- Please provide any additional comments or suggestions regarding our shelter's training needs.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your input is valuable to us as we strive to improve our shelter's operations and the welfare of the animals in our care.

Define Objectives

Use Bloom's Taxonomy to define clear, measurable learning objectives at various cognitive levels, from remembering facts about animal behavior to creating innovative care strategies.

Action Words for Designing Learning Objectives

These verbs are action words associated with each level of learning objectives in Bloom's Taxonomy. They facilitate crafting clear and specific objectives that align with the desired level of cognitive processing.

- **Remembering:** List, Define, Recall
- **Understanding:** Explain, Describe, Summarize
- **Applying:** Demonstrate, Use, Implement
- **Analyzing:** Compare, Contrast, Organize
- **Evaluating:** Judge, Critique, Decide
- **Creating:** Design, Construct, Develop

Design Engaging Content

Structure your program to cover both theoretical knowledge and practical skills, using interactive and engaging materials that cater to various learning styles.

Develop Resources

Create or source comprehensive training materials, including manuals, videos, and online modules, ensuring they are accessible and user-friendly.

Implement with Flexibility

Roll out training in a format that accommodates the schedules of your staff and volunteers, considering in-person, online, and hybrid models.



Create a Communication Plan

A comprehensive communication plan for your training programs can include a variety of strategies to engage learners effectively:

- **Weekly Emails:** Regular emails that outline weekly goals, resources, and any upcoming deadlines help maintain focus and motivation. These should be clear, concise, and include actionable items.
- **Checklists:** Providing learners with checklists for each module or section helps them track their progress, ensuring that they complete all necessary components.
- **Overview Video:** A well-crafted overview video at the start of the program can set the tone, clearly articulate expectations, and outline the program's structure. This can help learners understand what is expected of them and how the training is organized.

Leverage Technology

Video assessment serves as a pivotal tool for staff and volunteer learning. It allows for a detailed review of the interactions between staff, volunteers, and shelter dogs, providing feedback that can be more impactful than theoretical instruction alone. Here are a few more benefits of leveraging video technology as an instructional tool:

- **Visual Learning:** Video provides a direct, visual representation of learner behavior, which can be more intuitive and easier to understand for many.
- **Behavioral Analysis:** Video allows for the observation and analysis of subtle cues in canine behavior that might be missed in real-time.
- **Self-Reflection:** Learners can see themselves in action, enabling a deeper understanding of their own behavior and its effects on dogs.
- **Consistency:** Video assessment ensures that feedback is consistent and based on objective criteria, which is crucial for learning and improvement.
- **Performance Tracking:** Videos provide a record that can be used to track learner progress over time, showing participants how their skills have improved.





Evaluate for Impact and Improvement

Use both formative (during the program) and summative (after completion) evaluation methods to assess the effectiveness of your training programs and make necessary adjustments. Here are several examples of evaluation methods.

Evaluation for Impact

- **Participant Surveys:** Conducting surveys at the beginning and end of the program helps in understanding the change in perceptions, knowledge, and satisfaction levels of staff and volunteers. This feedback is vital for identifying areas of improvement and success within the program.
- **Debrief with the Implementation Team:** Regular meetings with the team to discuss feedback trends and observations can highlight immediate areas for adjustments and reinforce practices that are working well.
- **Behavioral Progress Tracking:** Monitoring the behavior changes and improvements in animals offers direct evidence of the program's impact on animal welfare.

Measuring Impact

- **Length of Stay:** Analyzing whether the program contributes to a reduced average stay for animals in the shelter can demonstrate operational efficiencies gained through the program.
- **Post-Adoption Success:** Tracking the long-term success of animals in their new homes, especially in terms of reduced returns, can highlight the effectiveness of a training program.
- **Staff and Volunteer Knowledge, Skill, and Confidence:** Surveys assessing self-reported measures of knowledge, skill, and confidence pre- and post-program implementation can indicate the program's effectiveness in enhancing staff and volunteer competencies.

Continuous Improvement

- **Adapting Protocols:** Feedback and data analysis should inform ongoing refinements to protocols, ensuring they remain effective and relevant.
- **Tailoring Education:** Adjusting the educational components of the program based on outcomes and feedback ensures that training remains impactful and addresses the identified needs.
- **Resource Allocation:** Analyzing the program's outcomes can guide strategic decisions on resource allocation, emphasizing support for the most impactful aspects.

Promote Collaboration

Encourage teamwork and collaboration among participants through group activities and discussions, enhancing communication and shared learning.

Plan for Sustainability

Consider the long-term sustainability of your education program, including how it will be updated, who will lead or update future versions, and potential budgetary impacts.





Team Activity

Addressing these questions as a team can help with creating a detailed and effective implementation plan for your training programs, ensuring they are well-organized and positioned for success.

Define the Scope and Goals

What specific outcomes do we want to achieve with this program?

How will these goals improve the well-being and adoption rates of shelter dogs?

Resource Assessment and Budgeting

What resources (financial, human, material) are currently available, and what needs to be acquired?

How can we effectively allocate the budget to cover all necessary aspects of the program?

Recruitment and Training

What qualifications and skills are required for volunteers and staff?

How will training be conducted to ensure everyone is equipped to fulfill their role effectively?

Facility Preparation

What modifications are necessary to accommodate the program within the existing facility?

How can we ensure the environment is safe and enriching for the dogs?

Program Development

What specific activities and protocols will be included in the program?

How can we tailor these to meet the diverse needs of shelter dogs?

Communication and Documentation

What methods will be used for staff and volunteer communication?

How will documentation be managed to ensure consistency and compliance?

Pilot Program

How will the pilot program be evaluated to measure its success?

What feedback mechanisms will be in place to gather insights from staff, volunteers, and potential adopters?

Full-Scale Implementation

What criteria will signal readiness for full-scale implementation?

How will the transition from pilot to full implementation be managed?

Monitoring and Program Evaluation

What metrics will be used to evaluate the program's impact?

How will data be collected and analyzed?

Continuous Improvement

What processes will be in place for ongoing evaluation and feedback?

How will the program adapt to new challenges or opportunities for improvement?

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For more Welcome Committee Resources including enrichment and behavior plans, and preliminary research on the education program, visit **sdhumane.org/welcomecommittee**

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