

Field Trip Pilot Program Toolkit

Pilot Program Template	2
Program Preview	6
Best Practices for Field Trips.....	9
Field Trip Program Checklist	10
Job Description for Field Trip Program Assistant	12
Marketing Plan	14
Press Release Template.....	16

Pilot Program Template

Directions

This pilot program is a template that can be tailored for your organization's use (delete this paragraph before finalizing your pilot program). It was designed with best practices in mind, but some administrators or counties may not be comfortable enough or able to reduce barriers to this extent. In these cases, it may be advantageous to start very small in order to prove that the program is safe and effective, and later reduce barriers as success is seen and confidence in the program has grown. Options are listed at the end of this document.

Background

Field trips are quickly becoming known as a great way to find new foster caregivers, engage with the community, reduce kennel stress and get better information on a dog's behavior. Field trips are helpful in marketing dogs for adoption, as potential adopters want to know what a dog looks and acts like outside of their kennel. The opportunity for creative photography, videos and stories is increased.

A 2018 study of the field trip program at Louisville Metro Animal Services (LMAS) found that dogs on field trips were happier, more relaxed, more playful and calmer than dogs in the shelter. Dogs on field trips showed less nervousness, anxiousness, insecurity, barking, shaking/trembling and repetitive behaviors such as jumping. With 350 field trips occurring during the study and 70+ dogs finding homes as a direct result of their field trips, 20% of field trips led directly to a dog's adoption. LMAS's field trip program specifically targets dogs that are suffering from kennel stress and are at risk for euthanasia. During the study period, LMAS cut the number of dogs euthanized for behavior in half.

Goals

- To engage with the community in a fun, new way
- To increase the number of people who can participate in all types of foster care
- To increase the number of long-term fosters
- To increase adoptions of medium and large dogs due to increased information on the dogs' behavior outside the shelter and more marketing material
- To increase safety within the building by keeping dogs' stress levels down
- To increase enrichment for our organization's dogs

Pilot

- Pilot will last for 1 month
 - Program will be open to the public.
 - Program will be accessible any day of the week.
 - Foster coordinator will keep a running list of between three and ten dogs that can participate in the program (depending on the size of your facility and access to volunteers)

- At the end of 1 month we will meet, look at program data, determine if program is viable and adjust program guidelines and logistics.

Logistics

Before program begins

- Create a template for kennel/condo signs that can be placed on dog kennels when they leave for a field trip to inform staff and volunteers of the dog's current location
- Dedicated program volunteers
 - Create a job description for dedicated program volunteers (decide on duties such as gathering supplies, assisting with matching dogs and fosters, harnessing and leashing dogs, checking dogs in and out in the organization's software, etc.)
See job description template on page 5 of this document
 - Train 3-4 dedicated program volunteers to assist with running the program
 - Decide on data to be gathered and create system for tracking it.
 - Create a list of good local places for fosters to take pets on field trips. Note which places might make especially good field trips for dogs who are fearful or reactive (for example, quiet parks might be best for reactive dogs)

Staffing

- Behavior staff (or caretaker, foster coordinator, or program volunteer) will meet available dogs and select 10-15 dogs that will be offered for participation weekly (unless all dogs are made available, or all dogs of a specific behavior dot color)
- Field trip program volunteer (or foster coordinator, behaviorist or adoptions staff) will assist field trip fosters in gathering supplies, choosing dogs, harnessing and leashing dogs, and deciding on a great location for their trip
- Field trip program volunteer (or adoptions staff or foster coordinator) will check dogs out of the organization's software for field trips and back in when they return

Length of time

- Dogs can be picked up for field trip foster between the hours of ___ and ___ and dropped off ____.
- Field trips should last at least 1 hour (except in the case of emergency).

Training

- Field trip fosters will be trained on-the-spot by foster coordinator (or program volunteer) by discussing pertinent ground rules, what to do in an emergency and other important information
- We will collect the following information on potential field trip foster caregivers:
 - First and last name(s)
 - Home and mobile phone numbers
 - Address
 - Information on their experience with dogs, and what they're looking for in a field trip companion

Safety

- Dogs must leave the building and be walked wearing an EasyWalk or Freedom harness, martingale collar, sturdy leash and a carabiner linking the harness to the collar as a backup at all times (or use two leashes—one for the harness and one for the collar).
- Only dogs on the adoption floor are allowed to go, except with a manager’s approval
- Dogs are not allowed off-leash in public places (okay at private homes provided dog is in secure area without other dogs around) or in dog parks. **SHOULD THEY EVEN BE ALLOWED IN A DOG PARK ON-LEASH GIVEN LEASH REACTIVITY?**
- Before leaving the building, the foster caregiver(s) will have the organization’s emergency contact information programmed into their phone or written down and carried with them throughout the field trip.
- Dogs must be supervised at all times.

Data to be collected

- Data will be collected on the program and its results in order to determine the program’s efficacy and success. We will track the following data:
 - The total number of field trips
 - The number of dogs who are served by the program]
 - The total number of field trip fosters
 - The number of incidents (bites and other emergencies) that happen on field trips, with written details
 - The number of dogs that are adopted or fostered for a longer period that are directly related to a field trip (for example, field trip foster who decides to foster for the weekend, dog who meets adopter on a field trip or through social media done on the dog’s field trip, etc.)

Marketing the program

- We will create a marketing plan for the program to ensure its long-term success.
- We will create a press release to announce the start of the program and put out the word to local media and community members.
- We will create several graphics and a video to educate the community on the benefits of field trip programs and how they can get involved.
- We will market the program consistently by posting photos, stories and video from field trips at least 2-3 times per week.
- With our field trip fosters, we will set the expectation from the beginning that creating marketing material for the pet they take on a field trip is part of the job.
 - Suggest that field trip fosters take a partner with them to help take photos and video; if they don’t have someone to partner with, we can try to set them up with a photographer or volunteer.

Potential barriers

- The more successful the program is, the more work it could become. Assigning other staff and/or volunteers to assist with (or run) the program can mitigate this. See below for a sample job description.

- Liability concerns
 - With foster care, one of the biggest areas of risk is in neglecting to be completely transparent about pets' behavioral histories. You must ensure that fosters be given pets' full behavioral histories before taking them out of the shelter.
 - Having a watertight foster agreement and having all of your fosters, from field trips to longer-term foster sign it, can protect your organization. We recommend having your city or county's attorney review it first.
 - The liability that an organization has with foster care is similar to the liability they have with adoptions.

For more information

- Webcast: Foster Field Trips: A Gateway to Community Engagement in Getting Pets Adopted
<http://www.maddiesfund.org/foster-field-trips-community-engagement-in-getting-pets-adopted.htm>
- Study: Can foster field trips improve welfare in dogs?
<http://chewonthis.maddiesfund.org/2018/05/study-can-foster-field-trips-improve-welfare-in-dogs/>
- Short-Term Foster Manual, Medium & Large Adult Dog Foster Apprenticeship
https://drive.google.com/open?id=1U1pMIRyHVDM7XpMg9Blvu_S0_xxDz_-
- Mutual Rescue: Doggy Day Out Toolkit and Support
<http://mutualrescue.org/doggy-day-out/>
- How field trip foster saved a dog named Kathy
<https://chewonthis.maddiesfund.org/2018/10/kathy/>

Options

- Program can be piloted with current volunteers and fosters only.
- Pilot the program on 1-2 specific days of the week, and/or at times your organization is closed.
- If needed, in-person orientations can be scheduled on days and times that are convenient to the general public; online orientations can also be created.

Program Preview

Action Item	Approximate Time Required	Templates and Resources	Impact
Planning Tasks			
Create a list of goals for your field trip program based on your length of stay and outcomes data.	30 minutes or more	See page 8 of Alley Cat Allies' toolkit	This will help give your organization a strategy for building your program. It will also help you break up tasks into meaningful goals that can be achieved easily.
Create a pilot program document that describes program goals, logistics and data to be collected	30 minutes or more	You can use this template	This will enable you to create a thoughtful, organized plan for the program that can be presented to administrators and other stakeholders.
Create or update documents for your program, such as a manual for participants, kennel signs, etc.	30 minutes or more	You can use Austin Animal Center's manual and foster agreement and Fredericksburg SPCA's Adventure Tails protocols as templates	You can add program information to your existing manual, use your current foster agreement or create a separate set of documents just for field trips. The manual will provide foster caregivers with an understanding of program basics, what to expect, their roles and their responsibilities. A good agreement or waiver will help protect your organization; we recommend having it reviewed by an attorney.
Create field trip program onboarding process	45 minutes or more	You can use Austin Animal Center's presentation , Best Friends Animal Society- LA's online training or do on-the-spot onboarding.	This will help foster caregivers to understand the program's requirements and rules. Onboarding of new foster caregivers can be done on-the-spot or on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. Using the shortest amount of time from foster application to onboarding will help ensure that you don't lose any potential foster caregivers due to the length of the wait.

<p>Purchase or request supplies, if needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Martingale collars - Harnesses - Leashes - Etc. 	<p>20 minutes or more</p>	<p>Consider creating an Amazon wish list, or asking for donations of specific items. 'Adopt me' vests and supply bags can even be made by members of your community!</p>	<p>Having foster supplies available to foster caregivers can help increase safety and make it easier for people to foster.</p>
<p>Edit or create a foster profile form that fosters can use to send in information on their field trip fosters, the process for sending the forms out to fosters and for recording the information they report in your files.</p>	<p>15 minutes or more</p>	<p>Use this dog foster profile template or this report card</p>	<p>This will enable foster caregivers to report the information that you need on foster pets' behavior in the home. Collecting information on a timely basis will help ensure that your organization has accurate records on every pet.</p>
<p>Update or create job descriptions for your foster coordinator, other staff and/or volunteers assisting with the program</p>	<p>30 minutes or more</p>	<p>Here are several job descriptions for foster assistants and teams</p>	<p>This will enable staff, program volunteers and your organization to be clear on their responsibilities.</p>
<p>Recruit and train staff or volunteer assistant(s) to help with the program</p>	<p>1 hour or more</p>		<p>Some organizations ask their adoptions staff to assist with the program. Dedicated program volunteers will help the program run more efficiently, saving staff time and allowing more pets to be placed.</p>
<p>Create and implement a marketing plan</p>	<p>1 hour or more</p>	<p>You can use the marketing plan that follows as a template</p>	<p>This will help you to get the word out about your program and recruit participants.</p>

Ongoing Tasks

Onboard new field trip participants	30 minutes or more per week	Using Google Forms to put orientation/training online is an efficient way to do this (see Best Friends Animal Society-LA's online training).	This ensures that you're always growing your program and that foster caregivers are aware of your organization's policies, procedures and best practices for foster care. You can do orientations on-the-spot, have training online or have scheduled in-person group orientations. If in-person group orientations are chosen, make sure they are scheduled often and at times convenient for your foster caregivers.
Continue marketing the program and the pets who participate in it	30 minutes or more	You can use the marketing plan that follows as a template	Continually marketing the program and the pets that participate is needed for the overall success of the program.
Update and monitor the data on your program	20 minutes or more per week		This will enable you to see if your program is working efficiently enough to meet your needs and will help you to define areas that need improvement.
Formalize Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the program	45 minutes or more		Once the pilot program is successful, create SOPs for the program to ensure it runs efficiently and safely.

Best Practices for Field Trips

- Ideally, field trips should be open to the public
 - New caregivers can be emailed a manual in advance
 - A staff member or dedicated program volunteer should help match caregivers with dogs, fit the harness on the dog and assist with putting the dog into their vehicle
- Field trips should be held every day of the week
 - Organizations can schedule pick-up and drop-off times in order to run program efficiently
 - Program manager should get caregiver's contact information in case a potential adopter asks to meet a dog who is on a field trip
- Only dogs on the adoption floor should be eligible to go, unless the caregiver is skilled and has a manager's approval
 - Dogs should have no history of aggression and shouldn't be excessively reactive or mouthy, except in cases of skilled caregivers that have a manager's approval
- Caregiver must sign organization's foster agreement or field trip waiver
- Dogs should be wearing a collar and a harness
 - For added safety, attach a carabiner from the dog's collar to its harness or attach two leashes, one to the collar and one to the harness
 - Attach foster tags if possible
- Dogs must have been vaccinated for rabies
- Dogs should be wearing an 'Adopt Me' vest, leash or bandana
- A laminated field trip sign should be placed on the dog's kennel during the outing
- Caregivers should be given emergency contact information cards or must put this information in their phone before leaving with the dog
- Caregiver must be given information on the dog's history before leaving the building
- Dogs should not be taken to any public off-leash areas including dog parks
- Caregivers should not introduce the dog to other dogs during the outing except with manager's approval

Field Trip Program Checklist

Documents

- Participant signup form created
- Pet report card or feedback form created and printed, if needed
- Kennel signs made and laminated
- List of suggested field trip locations completed
- Job description for program volunteers created
- Business cards and/or information for participants (adoption, emergency numbers, etc.) are created and/or printed
- Marketing plan for program completed
- Press release for program completed and sent to local media outlets

Tasks

- Online or in-person orientation materials created, if needed
- Logistics for dog selection, if needed, are created
- Any training for the program's volunteers is completed (sign-out process, harnessing dogs, etc.)
- Copies of foster agreement are printed, if needed
- Spreadsheet or other method of tracking data is created
- Posts, video and/or graphics to kick off the program on social media are created and scheduled

Supplies

- Martingale collars
- Sturdy 4' - 6' leashes

___ 'Adopt me' vests or leashes

___ 1-2 types of harnesses

___ Hiking bowls

___ Water bottle for pet

___ Foster tags

___ Carabiners (to connect collar & harness)

___ Doggie waste bags

___ Treats

___ Supply bag

Job Description for Field Trip Program Assistant

POSITION TYPE: Voluntary

POSITION REPORTS TO: Foster Coordinator, (name)

POSITION SUMMARY:

Volunteers in this role will assist the Placement Coordinator with tasks related to coordinating, managing, and expediting the shelter's field trip program, which includes:

- Communicate with the Foster Coordinator about dogs who are eligible for field trip or are currently on field trips
- Gather supplies needed by foster families for their field trip dogs, and assist with organizing the foster supply area on a regular basis.
- Harness, leash and ensure that a martingale collar and carabiner is on every field trip dog before they leave the building
- Use the shelter's animal inventory software to enter information on field trip dogs including foster profiles, photos, and bios
- Have a working knowledge of commonly-asked questions and answers about the field trip program

POSITION SPECIFICATIONS:

Volunteers must have the ability to interact with staff, visitors, and other volunteers in a courteous manner, and be able to stay focused and polite even in stressful situations. They must have the ability to follow directions with minimal supervision, and to communicate well in a fast-paced environment. They also must have data entry skills and a willingness to learn and properly utilize the shelter's animal inventory software.

WORKING CONDITIONS:

The working conditions described here are representative of those an employee encounters while performing the essential function of this job.

Subject to animal bites and scratches. Exposure to chemicals, prescribed drugs such as antibiotics, topical medications, etc., and cleaning products. Exposure to zoonotic (animal transmitted) diseases.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS:

The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential function of this job.

Regular lifting to 10 lbs., frequent lifting to 35 lbs., and occasional lifting over 35 lbs. with reasonable accommodations. Frequent walking, standing, bending, and stooping.

TIME COMMITMENT:

As needed by the Foster Coordinator. Foster program assistants should be able to commit to a 6 hour a month minimum with regular shifts.

Marketing Plan

News Media

2-3 Weeks Prior to Launch: Press release; invite local news/weather personality or reporter to take part
Ongoing: Press releases on success stories, program expansion, program data

Social Media

1-2 Weeks Prior to Launch: Announcement campaign

At Least 3 Times a Week: Posts on dogs who recently went on field trips

At Least Once a Week: Posts recruiting Dog Day Out (DDO) participants for individual dogs who need a day out

Ongoing: Soliciting field trip fosters, post poll on favorite places to go on DDO, Facebook group or page for participants, crowd sourced Instagram account or common hashtag for participants to use

Website

One Week Prior to Launch: Slider or pop up about program, branded landing page for the program (for example, www.myshelter.com/doggydayout)

Ongoing: Updated information on program webpage

Distribution List/Newsletters

1-2 Weeks Prior to Launch: Send information on program via email or newsletter

Regularly in Newsletter: Doggy day out success stories and instructions for how to get involved, recurring segment on best DDO photos

Ongoing in Newsletter: Program expansion and updates

Printed Materials

Fliers about program

Foster agreements and/or packets

Business cards for participants with space for pet's name and adoption information (business cards can be made cheaply via vistaprint.com and designed for free on canva.com)

Outreach

Monthly meet-up events

Form partnerships with local businesses in order to cross-promote the program

Meet with your city or county's Chamber of Commerce to discuss partnership and cross-promotion

OPTIONAL:

Program Promotional Items

"Adopt Me" leashes and vests

Cloth bag for supplies with program logo

Water bottle with program logo

Cloth water bowl with program logo

Stickers with program logo

T-shirts for participants

If promotional water bottles, etc., are out of your range, you can find inexpensive sticker printing online and use those to brand your water bottles and bowls.

Press Release Template

Use: Immediate (or use the week the program begins)

Agency: (Organization Name)

Title: (Shelter Name) Invites Public To Take Dogs On Field Trips

(Town, state) Someone let the shelter dogs out - and it's saving their lives and bringing out the public in droves. (Your organization's name) is proud to announce it's new (Doggy Day Out/program name) program, which pairs members of the community with shelter dogs for field trips. Outings can last from one hour to all day, and can include a hike, a trip to a beach or lake, a sleepover in a home or even a nice dinner in a pet-friendly restaurant. Whether you already have a dog or aren't ready to have one, it's a great way to get your pet fix in.

The (name) program was created in order to help reduce kennel stress and provide dogs with enrichment and increased visibility. Outings give the shelter valuable insight on how the dogs behave outside a shelter environment. It's also a great excuse to spend a day doing something new or exploring (your town's name).

(Add quote from your organization's director)

The program was designed to make it easy for the community to participate, so signing up is easy. Participants will be provided with everything they need for a successful field trip (or list items). Individuals interested in the (name) program should email (contact info) to sign up. (Describe process)

Similar programs at shelters across the country have been enormously successful, and (Shelter name) is excited to introduce this to the community.

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