Dog Program Adoption Philosophy

At Austin Pets Alive!, we believe that open, progressive adoption policies save lives. Our goal is to match dogs to homes which are good fits while providing exemplary customer service that creates community support and turns visitors into animal advocates and lifelong adopters.

Open adoptions address this reality by doing away with rigid policies and adoption applications and instead focusing on conversations designed to help anyone walking into a shelter feel respected, and anyone walking out to be more educated, and hopefully, with a pet to love. - Million Cat Challenge

Our goal is to have an open, honest conversation with potential adopters that is both more encompassing than relying on an adoption application alone, but also less confrontational and judgemental to the potential adopter. Open also means we, the organization, are open and honest with the adopter about our process and the pets within our care.

The application process begins the moment a visitor arrives and is greeted by an adoption counselor. By asking what type of puppy or dog the visitor may be interested in, information is obtained as to the applicant and the environment, experience level of the adopter, history of pet ownership, other animals in the home, etc - all before applicant even considers completing an application. This allows staff to steer the visitor to certain dogs who may be a match for the visitor. Conversely, if the adopter is focused on a dog we believe would be a poor match, we strive to disclose why this may be a poor match *before* the adopter has spent a long time with the dog and would then be disappointed after falling in love with the dog.

The application itself is a launching pad for conversation only. It is not an end-all where a wrong answer disqualifies an applicant. Questions on the application are restricted to only areas we deem very valuable. We will not ask applicants what their job title is, their salary, or make lists of every pet he or she has ever owned. Our areas of concern lie in the home being a good fit for the individual dog and the adopter's ability and desire to provide a safe, loving home. To that end, we only ask questions which address these major areas.

Our philosophy from the arrival of a visitor is that the visitor is a good person who came to an animal shelter today to do the right thing: adopt a shelter pet or support the organization. When the adoption process starts, we come from a place of "yes". This means we believe that when you apply to adopt a dog, we start from the position that the visitor is going home with that pet today unless the adopter presents a reason otherwise that cannot be overcome.

Even if the adopter presents a potential barrier to adoption, we will come from a place of education versus denial or judgement. Not everyone has all the experience and knowledge we do from working in animal rescue our entire lives. So we try to educate versus assume the worst in a person if a concern occurs. When discussing a concern, we also believe in being honest - while sensitive and professional - when expressing those concerns to an adopter. If

we are judging someone to be an unfit adopter, we believe that person has the right to respond and maybe even change our minds!

We do not perform home checks for routine adoptions as data and common sense have long since dictated that these are not only ineffective and resource intensive, but are a barrier to adoptions.

We perform same-day adoptions, meaning the day you adopt a pet, the pet will go home with you. Again, waiting periods have proven to do nothing more than be a barrier to adoption.

We do not contact landlords to ensure pet deposits have been paid or that you are allowed to have pets. In this case, the adopter is the one taking all the risk while there is no risk to the pet. (In the worst case, the pet is returned to APA!, which is not a such a bad thing.)

For an explanation of adoption denials, including when we would deny an adoption, please see the Dog Program Adoption Denials document.