HUMAN ANIMAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Intake Triage: In-Person and Form Response Sample Scripts

Sample Scripts

The following sample scripts can assist with a conversational approach between staff/volunteers and community members. These scripts are **suggestions** and can be adjusted to fit your organization's process. The words we use have an impact. Ensure each conversation centers around compassionate communication to best provide support to your community.

Support Topic: Supporting Lost Pet Reunification Efforts

[Client]
I found this dog today and I'm not sure what to do.

[Personnel]
Thank you so much for caring about the well-being of this pet! Can you answer a few questions for us so that we can best assist you?

1. Where did you find this pet?
2. Have you seen this pet before?
    a. **If yes**: Do you know who they might belong to/the neighborhood they might live in?
        i. **If yes**: Did you attempt to locate the pet owner prior to bringing the pet to us?
3. Does this pet appear to be healthy?
4. Does this pet appear to be friendly with people? Do they appear to be friendly with other pets (*if applicable*)?

We would love to help get this pet back home. Are you interested in helping reunite this pet with his/her owner? We can provide you with all the supplies and tips you may need to make this process as easy as possible. Data shows that pets are far more likely to be reunited if they stay out of the shelter and in the same neighborhood where they are found!

Consider options! *Any finder can assist with being a lost pet's advocate. Finders have already shown that they care for the well-being of the pet they found by safeguarding them and contacting the shelter. Consider other ways in which their compassion can support reunification efforts. You can offer the opportunity for them to house the pet in their home during the stray hold and/or to pursue efforts to reunify the pet with the original owner.*

Option 1 - Finder Keeps Pet and Helps with Reunification (Short or Long-Term)

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Pet owners who lose their pets often don't know they've been taken to the shelter. Many pets are found only blocks away from their homes! By staying in the area they are found, they have a greater chance of finding their family. Sadly, pets are only reclaimed from the shelter XX% (your organization's reclaim rate) of the time and we've learned that when the finder works to find the owner, pets get home much more often! We're very grateful to have people like you in the community who love animals and want to help.

Many pets are found only blocks away from their homes! By staying in the area they are found, they have a greater chance of finding their family. We're very grateful to have people like you in the community who love animals and want to help.

> **Short-Term:** If we gave you food/crate/supplies and tips to reunify the pet with the owner, can you hold on to the pet until [specific date, 48-72 hours from now/date stray hold ends] so they have a better chance of being reunited with their family?
>
> **Long-Term (Foster Program):** If we gave you food/crate/supplies and tips to reunify the pet with the owner, can you hold on to the pet until they are reunited with their family or are adopted? After the pet's stray hold period is complete, if they have not been reunited with their family, you will become the pet's official foster and advocate to help them get adopted. We can give you all the information you need to participate in the process!

If the answer is no/they cannot hold the pet for any duration of time, move to Option 2.

Option 2 - Finder as an Advocate

If this pet has an owner, they likely live near the location where the pet was found, and we would love your help trying to reunite this family! We can share resources with you that will walk you through options to help this process. This includes [list available options: a flyer, places to post the pet online, etc.]. The pet will be housed at the shelter until [date stray hold ends] and then become available for adoption.

> ***Consider available resources!*** *Provide flyer templates (or create one on behalf of the pet and share the PDF/print options for the finder), recommendations for social media posting, recommend reaching out to neighbors with information about the pet in case they recognize them, and provide the best way to reach the shelter if they'd like the check the status of the pet once in care.*

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Support Topic: Reason for Owner Surrender

Note: *This sample highlights* ***one scenario*** *you might encounter as part of the* ***larger conversation*** *occurring when processing an intake request form. This script is for an* ***owned pet,*** *not a stray/found pet, which will be identified at the beginning of an intake request. This sample uses the surrender reason of "****Cannot afford****" and the client selected secondary reasons of "****pet food, supplies/license, Treatment for illness (non-emergency)****". In the "free text" field for primary surrender reason, they said "****lost job****".*

[Personnel]
Thank you for reaching out to us. We see you are requesting to surrender your cat, Pickles. Can we ask you a couple of questions to ensure we can support you and your pet in the best way possible?

Please tell us a little bit about what's going on/what brings you here today.

[Client]
I need to give up my cat because she is too expensive.

[Personnel]
Thank you for sharing that with us. I see in your form you mention you recently lost your job. That sounds like a really difficult situation. Since you mentioned Pickles' care is expensive, is there a specific aspect of her care that you're referring to?

[Client]
Vet visits and medical, mostly.

[Personnel]
We see you mentioned Pickles may be experiencing a non-emergency illness. Can you tell us a little more about that?

[Client]
Pickles had ringworm as a kitten and sometimes it comes back.

> *If any* ***immediate*** *medical care is needed, proceed with triage (externally or internally). Preferably this can be offered as a service and not as part of a surrender, if they can keep their pet while they receive care. Get information on pet's last treatment / if any chronic medical considerations are currently active (active ringworm spots, etc.).*

If you have not already provided this: We would love to find a way to support you and your pet if possible. If we can provide support options to help with [food/supplies/medical], would you be interested in keeping her?

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*If **yes**, follow scripts for offering pet support options. Sample in next section, "**Alternative pet support options to keep your pet**".*

[Client]
No, I don't think so. I love her but it's too hard to care for her.

[Personnel]
We understand and know this decision was not an easy one and we are here to help you through this process. Do you have any interest in helping find a new adopter for Pickles? We prefer to keep pets in home environments instead of the shelter whenever possible, and since you know Pickles best you can be her best advocate to a potential adopter. We can provide you with [food, supplies, and medical care] while going through the process.

***If yes**, provide client with all self-rehoming or foster information relevant to your organization and instructions for how to participate.*

[Client]
No, I need to give her up no matter what.

[Personnel]
Okay, I understand

You mentioned several components that apply to your situation including Pickles' chronic medical issues, the cost of her care, and your recent job loss. What would you say is the main reason you need to surrender Pickles? *Be sure you give them space to reflect on this.*

Asking the question in this way will allow you to, with the owner's input, identify a primary surrender reason for this complex scenario, which can then be used to input intake data into your shelter software.

Thank you for speaking with us today and telling us all about Pickles. We can help get you scheduled for a surrender appointment.

Follow all established procedures for scheduling an intake for a surrendered pet.

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Support Topic: Alternative Pet Support Options to Keep Your Pet

You may find other examples of pet support script options here.

Note: *This sample highlights* ***one scenario*** *you might encounter as part of the* ***larger conversation*** *occurring when processing an intake request form. This script has omitted basic questions like client and pet information and this is an* ***owned pet*** *not stray/found which will be identified at the beginning of an intake request. This sample uses the surrender reason of "****This pet's behavior per owner****" as the primary form selection and "****Nuisance behavior (e.g. marking, barking, escapes, scratching furniture, strained pet interactions - non-safety, etc.)****" as the secondary topic.*

[Personnel]
Thank you for reaching out to us. We see you are requesting to surrender your dog due to their behavior in the home. Can you tell us a little more about your dog and what you've been experiencing?

[Client]
My dog is high-energy and constantly runs and pulls while walking leash. I got this dog for my kids to grow up with but they can't walk him without being nearly knocked over and he jumps all over them when he gets excited.

[Personnel]
Thank you for sharing this information with us. We would love to find a way to support you if possible. If we can provide behavior and training support options to help manage some of what you're experiencing in the home, would you be interested in keeping him?

[Client]
Maybe. I got this dog for my kids to take care of so I don't want to be responsible for all the work.

[Personnel]
Consider options! *Does your organization offer public-facing behavior support for free? If you do not offer behavior support directly, do you have a partner organization, referral system, or recommendations in place for existing practices that offer free or low-cost options?*

Option 1 - Direct Offer

We would love to help you with that. Our behavior team can offer a few free sessions to your family on ways to support particularly energetic pups. We can also provide you with supplies that may make walking easier *(such as a harness, martingale collar, etc).* [Provide direct instructions on how and when to access this

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support and if registration is required, complete the registration on behalf of the individual.]

Option 2 - Offer Through Partnership

While we do not directly offer behavior support at this location, we partner with [organization/behaviorist/private practice] that offers [free/low-cost] behavior support for pets. We would be happy to connect you with them. [Provide instructions/information on how to access and complete a direct referral (email, call, online submission) on behalf of the individual as applicable.]

Option 3 - Does Not Offer - Give Alternative Solution

Potential solutions to consider:

- *Reference pethelpfinder.org to search for behavior support services nearby and give them contact information or create a direct referral.*
- *Provide support for other items such as toys or supplies (that are helpful in keeping energetic pups occupied) that may allow funds to instead be focused on the behavior sessions.*

If the answer is no/they cannot hold the pet long-term and/or they do not want to try the support options you provided: *Try encouraging a self-rehoming process so they can help find the pet a new adoptor or encourage fostering through the shelter and the shelter will provide behavior support for free while the pet is available for adoption. Both options are less stressful for the pet and they know their pet best so they can be their best advocate.*

Bonus: Create a Public-Facing Support Resource

In addition to sample scripts, consider using this template to list the most requested pet support services and resources in your community. Having this type of list easily available can help save staff and volunteer time when responding to requests.

Update Policies and Procedures

Ensure that scripts and templates are included in organizational policies and procedures, and are regularly evaluated and updated for consistency and relevancy.

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