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The Basics

Our Culture

Your business culture is a set of attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and customs that are practiced, learned and accepted as the norm among your team. Small business culture will determine what kind of customers it attracts, the service it delivers, and the growth it experiences. Employees that believe in the company culture will also live and share it with others.

At [COMPANY NAME] we strive to create an environment where pets enjoy spending time away from home. The same should be true for each member of our human team! To achieve this, we must have an effective, helpful and encouraging culture. We pride ourselves on having a staff that is upbeat and happy with the customers and with each other. All members of the team, regardless of position, deserve to be heard and understood. We are lucky to be able to work with pets and their parents each day, but it is hard and tiring work. Everyone must support and encourage each other every single day.

Our Core Values

These are rules and boundaries that define your business personality that will help employees think like you and keep your culture strong by allowing employees to make decisions. These are the ideals that are more important than money.

Our primary goals in providing care are:

- Focus on pet health & well-being by providing fun daily activities for pets
- Personal service – know pets and their owners
- Partner in health & behavior concerns with owners
- Create environment where the pets enjoy spending their time away from home

Our Vision

Things to keep in mind when formalizing a vision statement:

- *Project five to ten years in the future.*
- *Dream big and focus on success.*
- *Use the present tense.*
- *Use clear, concise language.*
- *Infuse it with passion and emotion.*
- *Align it with your business values and goals.*

We believe our customers' dogs are family members. No, not in a ridiculous way, but in a humane way - we should view them as deserving of respect and loving care. At [COMPANY NAME] our goal is to improve the lives of dogs and their

General Business Policies & Procedures

Business Hours

Insert hours of operation.

Directions to Center

Insert simple driving directions from a variety of landmarks (for example – we are located 2.5 miles East of the intersection of Hwy X and X Street).

Overview of Services and Fees

Insert summary of services offered and associated fees.

- Lodging
- Daycare
- Training
- Grooming
- Transportation

Discounts

The center provides the following discounts to clients:

- Multi-pet discounts for lodging stays and daycare packages
- Long-term lodging (over 14 days) receive additional benefits
 - Discounted departure bath and/or nail trim

If a client requests an additional discount, you must refer the client to a manager.

Vaccination Policy

*Establishing your **health and vaccination protocol** is another balance. You should consider the health and safety of all pets in your center with the reality of the negative health effects of:*

- *Pet over-vaccination, and*
- *Lack of early socialization of puppies*

Local and state laws must be complied with first and foremost, but beyond these legal requirements you have latitude in setting your policies.

This area does deserve your time to research through your own veterinarian, other local vets and veterinary associations (traditional and holistic). Also find out what policies other pet businesses have and the vaccinations they recommend or require.

Pet Care Essentials

Pre-Entry Exam

A Pre-Entry Exam is performed to make sure that all pets entering the facility are healthy and free from contagious diseases, cuts, scrapes, injuries, and ear and eye infections. The Pre-Entry Exam also protects the center from liability in case of a customer complaint or dispute. For example, a customer may claim that the center allowed the dog to get a cut on the face, when in fact this occurred *before* the dog came to the center. In a Pre-Entry Exam, the dog is carefully examined, and scrapes or cuts pointed out to the owner prior to the dog entering the facility. This way, the owner is made aware of any potential issues with the dog.

The pre-entry exam takes about a minute and **MUST** be performed on every dog entering the facility. Fill out a Pre-Entry Exam worksheet for every dog.

To perform a pre-entry exam:

1. **GREETING:** Approach the dog and let the dog become familiar with you. Have the owner hold the dog by the leash while you perform the exam. Ask the owner if there are any places on the dog that are sensitive (this may help protect you from a dog bite).
2. **EYES:** Once you are familiar with the dog, check the dog's eyes. Look for excess discharge or redness. Some breeds may have "weepy" eyes (Maltese, Poodle, etc.) and they will often have reddish stains from their eyes. This is usually normal.
3. **EARS:** Check the dog's ears for signs of infection. Dirty, foul-smelling discharge, excess redness, inflammation, or matted hair inside the ear canal should all be noticed.
4. **FEET:** Check each of the dog's paws for long toenails, cracked toenails, cuts, or sores on the pads of the paws.
5. **FUR:** Run your fingers through the dog's fur and note if the fur is dry or flaky or has mats. Check behind the elbows and ears for mats on long-coated dogs, as these are the most common spots. Pull the fur back and carefully look for any signs of fleas – fleas themselves or white or black "flea dirt" (eggs and feces, respectively). Check for hot spots, cuts, or sores all over the coat.

Off-Leash Dog Play Supervision

Creating policies focused on the physical safety and the emotional well-being of all dogs attending off-leash playgroups is the first step to operational excellence. Your policies will provide the meaning behind the procedures you use in your facility. The next step to operational excellence is documenting off-leash play program operating procedures to achieve consistency of performance by all staff members.

General Guidelines

- On-site supervision is required 100% of time when dogs are not in private enclosures. On-site supervision means a physical presence at all times in the same room with the dogs playing.
- When more than one staff member is present in the play yard they should be in separate areas. The goal of this policy is to prevent staff from standing together in one area while supervising dogs, and to reduce the time it takes to intervene if dogs need management in the far corners of the play area.
- The safest industry average tends to be one staff person per 10 - 15 dogs depending on the size of the dogs and the experience of the staff. The numbers of dogs will decrease when dogs are larger and more active or when staff members have less education or experience. The number of dogs can increase when the dogs are smaller in size and less active or staff members have more education and experience.
- The safest way to let dogs play is to remove all collars and harnesses so that the dogs “play naked.” (Since dogs play with their mouths there is a high risk for teeth and jaws to become caught in another dog’s collar. Dogs have died as a result which is the reason that “playing naked” is recommended for safety). However, in some situations, for safety purposes, it is necessary to identify dogs in a playgroup. When collars are required for safety, velcro or breakaway collars are a good option.
- Slip leads are the recommended handling tools for safely moving dogs within the pet center (indoors and outdoors).
- Toys are available for use in the play areas. Resource guarding is a risk in group play and requires good leadership and dog management procedures. The leader should control the availability of toys and written policies should describe instances when it is not safe to have toys in playgroup (e.g., high excitement events, full moons, etc.).
- Games are controlled by the staff leader by starting and ending them. Their purpose is to get the dogs physically active and mentally stimulated. Games can increase the arousal level of dogs, so leaders need to be selective on when they initiate games and in their game choices. Consider using rest periods for individual dogs that can become aroused during