

Behavior Helpline

Updated April 24, 2019 / Heather Kalman, CPDT-KA, ABCDT, SBA

Behavior Helpline

At the SHELTER NAME, we understand that one of the many reasons pets are surrendered to shelters is because of undesirable behaviors. In our efforts to end pet homelessness, SHELTER offers a free Behavior Helpline to help pets be successful!

Behavior Department Technicians are responsible for communicating with clients via phone and email in a timely manner to offer training and management advice. All information provided is reward-based and supported by the latest in scientific research.

COMMUNICATION BY PHONE

All Behavior Technicians must exercise excellent customer service and respond to phone calls on the Behavior Helpline in a timely manner. Behavior Technicians may provide immediate advice via phone. Additionally, a Behavior Technician may direct the client to complete the SHELTER Behavioral Questionnaire or to schedule a behavior consultation and/or register for obedience class in order to provide the most appropriate help to a client and their pet.

All phone calls and voicemails should receive a response from a Behavior Technician no later than 48-72 hours of receipt.

All information collected during phone communication with clients must be documented in Petpoint under the respective Person or Animal file. Additionally, voicemails should be documented in the shared *Behavior Helpline Voicemails* log in Google Sheets.

Voicemail Log Example

Date of VM	Date of Response	Person Name	Message	Phone Number	Follow-up	Initials
4/2/19	4/2/19	John Smith	Requesting information about litter box avoidance. Recently adopted a cat from the shelter.	123-456-7890	Instructed client to schedule a veterinary appointment to rule out medical causes. Also provided initial management instructions: increase the number of litter boxes in the home, clean boxes daily, and increase vertical space. Awaiting more information. Client will complete the Litter Box Avoidance Questionnaire.	XX

COMMUNICATION BY EMAIL

All Behavior Technicians must exercise excellent customer service and respond to emails on the Behavior Helpline in a timely manner. Behavior Technicians may provide immediate advice via email. Additionally, a Behavior Technician may direct the client to complete the SHELTER Behavioral Questionnaire or to schedule a behavior consultation and/or register for obedience class in order to provide the most appropriate help to a client and their pet.

Behavior Technicians may utilize approved, third-party resources in email responses. Approved resources can be found on the shared Google Docs drive, *Behavior Helpline Resources*. New resources must be approved by the Behavior & Training Manager prior to use in Behavior Helpline communication.

All emails should receive a response from a Behavior Technician no later than **48-72 hours** of receipt.

All information collected during email communication with clients must be documented in Petpoint under the respective Person or Animal file. Additionally, emails should be sorted into their respective Folders within the Behavior Helpline Gmail account once answered.

Some folder topics include:

- Awaiting Behavioral Questionnaire
- Adult Obedience Class
- Puppy Obedience Class
- Advanced Training and Tricks Class
- Canine Coaching
- Behavior Consultations
- Completed (Other)

INFORMATION GATHERING

In some situations, it may be unethical to provide immediate advice without first collecting more information about a pet's behavior concerns. Behavior Technicians should feel free to request additional information from the client or advise that in-person behavior consulting will be the best alternative to provide the most accurate advice and help to the client and their pet. This approach may often be used when consulting on cases involving aggression.

SUMMARY

All Behavior Technicians are responsible for continuing education in **evidence-based training methods** that are to be used when providing SHELTER Behavior Helpline services to the public. All Behavior Technicians must strive to provide excellent customer service while thoroughly addressing pet behavior and training needs. All changes or inquiries about this program must be directed to the Behavior & Training Manager or Director of Operations.