

House Visit Guidelines

Dear Volunteer: You have a critical job – to help us evaluate the suitability of these applicants to adopt one of our precious dogs. Be non-confrontational, and be ready to listen as much possible – that’s the way you’ll learn the most. In general, you are meeting with these people to determine if they will be responsible, loving dog owners and to ensure that they want to adopt a basset to be a companion animal that lives indoors with the family.

Call the applicant and tell them that you are a volunteer for BROOD. Set up a date and time that is agreeable to both you and the applicant. Provide the applicant with your contact information in the event they need to postpone the meeting. Tell the applicant that all members of the applicant's family need to be present for the house visit. This is to make sure the wife is not getting a dog that the husband does not know about and vice versa and to see how the children act around dogs.

Print the following and take with you on the house visit -

- **Application** so you will have it for reference.
- **House Visit Form** from the BROOD website
- **Disclosure** sheet that is on the website along with the House Visit Report
- **Sample contract** from the website – on website under “Adoption Process”
- **Child Safety Waiver** form if they have children under the age of 7

Some basic information about BROOD that you can tell them at the beginning of the visit –

- BROOD was formed in 1996.
- BROOD serves most of Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, DC, Delaware and parts of Pennsylvania.
- BROOD is made up of a large network of volunteers who live around all of the locations we serve.
- The volunteers communicate via e-mail and phone calls.
- Our dogs come from various sources – Most come out of shelters (came in as strays or were turned in by their owners). Also, owners turn them over to us if they can no longer keep them (owners are moving and cannot take the dog with them, owners have children and do not have time for the dog, owners got a puppy and did not know how much work it would be, owner is moving into a retirement or nursing home. etc.).
- The dogs are fully vetted - current on distemper-parvo, Rabies, Bordetella, have had a fecal (treated for parasites if necessary), have been heartworm tested and are on heartworm preventive.
- All dogs are spayed or neutered.
- Most of the dogs are in foster homes scattered about the areas we serve. Some are in a kennel in Maryland waiting to go into a foster home once one is available.

Part I: Personal Information: Transfer the adopter’s name, address, phone number etc. to the House Visit Report. It is good to verify the information with the applicant - sometimes they make an error in the phone number or e-mail address.

Part II – The Family. These questions are designed to help us learn about the family’s commitment to owning a dog. Everyone who will be living with the dog should be present.

- Are they ready? Do they understand their responsibilities? Have they thought dog ownership through? If they have children, are they under control? Do they understand that children cannot be left unattended with any dog?

- If they have children under the age of 7, leave a copy of the Child Safety Waiver form (this is also on the website under Adoption Process).
- Regarding the age question - do not ask them how old they are - just guess when you fill out the form on-line. It is OK to say "20-something" or "mid 30's" or whatever.
- Some of the questions on the HV Report will be obvious and you will not have to ask - for example "is everyone in the family committed to getting a dog". Frequently that is obvious because they are all very excited and tell you how much they look forward to getting a basset. If you do not get that excitement from them, just ask to make sure they all want to get a rescue dog.
- Where will the dog spend its time - ask where the dog will be when they are home and where the dog will be when no one is home. BROOD does not adopt to people who leave their dogs outside all of the time. It is OK if they leave the dog outside when they are at work as long as the dog would have shade and shelter, water, the fence is secure and they live in an area where that would be safe to do so. If they are going to leave the dog outside when they go to work, the dog must have access to a building, a garage or an adequate dog house.
- If it is convenient for you, take one of your bassets on the house visit with you. This helps break the ice and lets you see how they react to a dog - or if they already have a dog, it lets you see how that dog reacts to another dog.

Part III – Physical Environment. These questions will give us a picture of the environment that the dog will be living in.

- What type of home do they have? If they live in an Apartment, Townhouse or Condo, will a barking dog disturb neighbors?
- Is the home well kept? Will a drooling and/or shedding dog upset them? Or is it home a pig pen? Are there things lying about that a dog could get into and get hurt?
- If they have a fenced yard, ask to go out in the yard and look at their fence. Make sure that the fence appears to be stable and that the gate has a sturdy latch/lock on it.

Part IV – Other Animals.

- If the applicant has other dogs, cats or other animals, please mention this in the house visit report and state how many they have. This helps us know if they have dogs they did not tell us about.
- If the applicant has dogs that are "outdoor" dogs or dogs that are left in a kennel all of the time, please state this on the house visit report form. If they have outdoor dogs now, it is always possible the basset they adopt from BROOD would become an outdoor only dog, so this is a key piece of info to report (since BROOD dogs are to be treated as companion animals).

Part V – Adopter Preferences. These have nothing to do with deciding if the applicant will be approved or not. This just helps in matching them up with a dog. It also makes them think a little bit. It gives us an idea of just what their expectations are.

Part VI – Wrap Up. This is your opportunity to give us your opinion of this Adopter.

- What do you see as their strongest and weakest points? Is there anything about them that sets off a "warning bell?" If you do not want to recommend them for adoption, please be ready to give us a reason. Just a "feeling" is not good enough. It must be a tangible reason (such as the kids were running around screaming out of control the whole time I was there and the parents didn't make a move to control them).
- This is also the point where you can go over BROOD policies and answer their questions (if any). Be sure you have a copy of the Contract and Disclosure Form with you.
- **Contract:** Go over the basic info in the contract and leave a copy of the contract with them. Some things to specifically point out –

- If there is ever a time they cannot keep the dog, the dog has to come back to BROOD.
- They agree to provide regular vet care, including monthly heartworm preventive.
- The dog cannot be chained outside.
- The dog cannot be left outside all of the time – this is to be a house pet, a companion animal. It is ok for the hound to be outside in a fenced yard some of the time, but not all of the time and not overnight.
- If the dog is missing, the adopter is to notify BROOD immediately. BROOD has a large network of volunteers and all volunteers are notified immediately of a missing dog and BROOD will offer advice in finding the dog.
- The adopter is required to take the dog to their vet within 10 days of the adoption – this is to ensure there is not something wrong with the dog that we are not aware of and so that the applicant can get heartworm preventive from the vet for the dog.
- Once the contract is signed, the responsibility for all care of the dog is theirs.
- If there are problems with the dog, the dog can be returned within 30 days and the adopter can get a refund of the adoption fee or can use that fee to apply towards another dog.
- BROOD can do follow-up visits to check on the dog if there is a reason to do so.
- **Disclosure Form:** Briefly go over the disclosure sheet and leave a copy of the disclosure sheet with the applicant.
 - Make sure they realize how much regular everyday expenses are and how much it can cost for vet expenses.
 - Please make sure to specifically discuss **heartworm testing and heartworm preventive**. Ask if they understand what heartworm disease is and if they know what heartworm preventive is. Please explain that heartworms are different from other parasites and that heartworm preventive is given monthly in a tablet form. Explain that heartworm treatment is very expensive and dogs will die from heartworms if not treated. You would be amazed at how many people think they know about heartworms, but we find out later that they did not understand heartworms are different from other parasites.
 - Regarding training their dog - you can discuss training and tell them that some of our dogs would benefit from obedience training or just the people working on training the dog with basic manners.
 - Explain the adjustment period that is sometimes needed for a rescue dog - might have house training issues, barking, not wanting to eat, etc. It can take a few days to a few weeks for the dog to feel comfortable. Explain that some of our dogs will have gone through a lot of changes before coming to them and they can get confused from so many changes.
- **Ask them if they have any questions for you.** They will probably ask about -
 - Once approved, the applicant will be assigned to an Adoption Placement Coordinator who will help match them up to a dog.
 - The applicant will have the opportunity to talk to the foster parent to get details about the dog.
 - If the applicant wants to meet a specific dog, they will go to the foster home to meet him/her and can adopt the dog that day and bring the hound to its new forever home.
 - The adoption fees vary depending on age of the dog. The fee is listed on each dog's web page.
- **Finally, it is important to tell the applicant that you do not make the final decision on their approval and that you cannot tell them that they are approved. Tell them that the house visit is one step in the process and that they will hear from the Adoption Team Leader regarding their approval.**

After your visit, please go to the BROOD website and enter the information into the form and submit it on-line. The sooner this is done, the better, but it is OK if you cannot do it immediately. Please do not wait days to do it – it becomes a problem when the adopter contacts BROOD and wants to know why they have not heard from anyone after their house visit.

Once the house visit is submitted electronically, it goes out to the appropriate people. The house visit is not the only piece in determining approval. Once the Adoptions Team has all of the pieces, the applicant will be notified of their approval.

The Adoption Team wants to take this opportunity to THANK all our house visit volunteers for taking the time and spending the gas to do this important job. We cannot thank you enough.