**Key Background Information for Adoption Staff and Volunteers**

Staff and volunteers helping adopters all need to understand the mechanics of your adoption process from start to finish. They will also be expected to answer questions about individual animals and fill in any gaps adopters have in their own pet care knowledge, without being preachy! Finally, they need to know when to say, “I’m not sure, but let me find out for you” and where to go for answers.

What follows is a basic checklist of information to include in your training program. You’ll need to fill in the blanks with details unique to your organization. You can find a brief reading list for tips about common pet care issues at: [*animalsheltering.org/counselorinfo*](http://www.animalsheltering.org/counselorinfo).

This list is just a start. To make sure you’ve covered all the bases, ask counselors what *else* they need to know.

**Facts about your organization (some of this will be a review from other trainings and orientation)**

* Organization’s mission:
* Basic statistics:
* Details about services offered by your organization:
* Details about services offered through community partnerships:
* Details about how adopters can get more involved (volunteering, donations, wish lists):
* Where to go with questions unrelated to adoptions (a contact list by department):

**Facts about your adoption program**

* Adoption program mission:

*Identify a mission that matches your Adopters Welcome philosophy, such as “To make adoptions succeed by getting rid of barriers and partnering with people to help pets.”*

* All adoption policies:

*Help staff and volunteers understand how your policies serve animals, adopters, your agency, and your community, including other adoption agencies, all without driving pet lovers to less humane sources for pets. This can be especially helpful when switching from more restrictive policies to an Adopters Welcome approach.*

* Details about services included in adoption fees (or waived fees) such as:
  + Microchips
  + Pet insurance
  + Access to discounted services such as health checks or training classes
* Administrative details of your process including paperwork and filing:
* How to direct adopters to ask follow-up questions:
* Where to go with adoption related questions (team leaders, supervisor, etc.):
* Local pet- related laws:
* How to direct adopters to share pictures and stories about their pets with your team:

**Facts and observations about the pets adopters are interested in**

* How to access medical and behavior information on pets including:
  + History
  + Staff and volunteer observations
  + Results of information about formal behavior assessments, if applicable
  + Medical notes
* How to be transparent with facts and observations, while avoiding promises:

*For example: Use, “Rover has done great with housetraining” instead of “Rover is housetrained” to avoid setting unrealistic expectations for adopters that can lead to frustration or confusion.*

* Where to go with detailed medical or behavior questions: