

Introduction

The IACP Best Practices for Pet Dog Training Businesses (PDTB) is a guidance document containing a comprehensive description on the most important elements of running a pet dog training business. Regardless of the Business size (1 employee or 50+), it is up to the Business owner to decide how each section applies.

It is important to note that some cases, sections or portions of sections may not apply. For example, some businesses may only provide lessons in the client's home and therefore may not require details surrounding adequate space, exercise, cleaning and sanitizing of areas, etc.

1. Establishment as a Business

The Business Owner should meet the applicable legal requirements of the governmental jurisdiction in which it conducts Business. These requirements may include, but are not limited to:

- Obtaining a Business or other license.
- Filing other documentation with the government, as required.

Liability insurance - Liability insurance should be obtained as additional proof of establishing the Business.

Organizational structure - The organization should be identified in terms of the legal status (LLC, sole proprietor, etc.) and employee roles and reporting (e.g. organizational chart).

Other aspects - Things that can help validate the legitimacy of a Business for the consumer may include, but are not limited to:

- a web site;
- social media presence;
- participation in competitions, trade shows, certifications of trainers, etc
- memberships in professional organizations;
- Business cards, letterhead, etc.

2. Management Responsibility

The Business Owner is responsible for following all required legal business practices for the business location. The Business owner is also responsible for ensuring the business is operating according to any applicable best practices detailed in the document below.

3. Contract Activities

Contract activities can be broken down into two major areas: Pre-Contract and Contract Execution.

Pre-Contract - The Business should provide as much information as necessary to the prospective client. In order for the prospective client to make an informed decision

Best Practices for Pet Dog Training Businesses

about whether or not to hire the Business, the following information can be helpful. There may be other useful information unique to an individual Business.

- A description of how the Business addresses each section of the PDTB;
- Training standards for obedience;
- A description of methods and tools used during training;
- A cost estimate for the training.

Contract Execution - A contract (physical, digital, or both) should be signed by an authorized member of the Business and the Client. It should be tailored to the individual Business and developed with the assistance of a qualified legal professional.

The contract should contain information such as:

- Client information (e.g. address, contact, etc.);
- Dog information (e.g. feeding requirements, age, questions, etc.);
- Veterinary information (e.g. vaccinations, medications, etc.);
- The agreed upon training program;
- Business and client responsibilities;
- Policies, including payment and cancellation.
- Cost(s)
- Medical care of dog in case of medical emergency and a cost limit if desired.

Training Plans - A Training Plan should be developed for each Client Dog. In the case of group classes, a syllabus would constitute a training plan. For a single lesson, the training plan may be agreed upon between client and trainer when meeting for each lesson, or it may be written down what goals are to be achieved.

Training plans might contain information such as:

- Name of Owner
- Name of Dog
- Training dates, schedule, or equivalent
- Program goals
- Obedience commands to be taught
- Behaviors to be addressed and expected results
- Training equipment and methods to be used during the program
- Training provided to the Client
- Other features of the program (e.g. types of support provided to the Client, like a private Facebook group) included in the program;
- Critical Limitations -Program content, duration, or cost may need to be adjusted based on unforeseen circumstances." (1) We expect certain things to happen according to what we have planned. (2) In some cases, unforeseen circumstances may arise. (3) Adjustments may be made based on any unforeseen circumstances.
- Signature of client acknowledging/agreeing with training plan

Consumer Acknowledgment Form (CAF) - Consideration should be given to using a CAF for protecting both the Business and the consumer by making sure important aspects

of the training have been discussed or presented. These aspects may include but are not limited to:

- The Business philosophy on dog training;
- The tools to be used during training;
- The consumer's right to terminate the training;

4. Dog Trainer Qualifications

Dog trainer qualifications should be determined by the Business Owner. Establishing qualifications should include experience, competency, the need for certifications, and what is expected to maintain skills.

Experience - Consideration should be given to the type and length of experience needed for dog trainers to be considered qualified.

Competency - Consideration should be given to the criteria, minimum or otherwise, required for the dog trainer to demonstrate competency as a dog trainer.

Certifications - Consideration should be given to the types of certification(s) required, if any, as part of a dog trainer's qualification. If a certification is required, it may be administered by a third party or it may be administered within the business. If administered within the business, the test criteria, acceptance/passing requirements, and actual results should be documented. An business with one employee would not generally have an internal certification program.

Continuing Education - Consideration should be given to what continuing education is required to adequately maintain the competency of dog trainers employed by the Business. Examples of continuing education includes but is not limited to conferences, seminars, workshops, reading books, magazines, or other print media, watching digital media, such as DVDs and YouTube, or working under a more experienced trainer.

5. Supplier Evaluation and Control

The Business should choose suppliers wisely and purchase products and services from companies they have researched based on alignment with a number of factors such as the mission, vision, core values, and any other product that the business deems appropriate.

6. Subcontractor Evaluation and Control

The Business should enter into agreements with subcontractors based on alignment with the Business mission, vision, core values, etc. The Business should determine which sections of this best practice apply to the subcontractor and require the subcontractor to comply with those sections. An Abuse Prevention evaluation of the subcontractor should be performed, which should include a criminal background check and review of animal abuse registries.

7. Animal Care and Welfare

The approach to Animal Care and Welfare is multifaceted. A holistic approach is taken while a client dog is under the care of the Business.

Adequate space - In general, each dog will be provided minimum adequate space for resting/sleeping according to the formula: $(\text{length of the dog in inches} + 6) \times (\text{length of the dog in inches} + 6) / 144 = \text{required sq. ft.}$ Length of dog = tip of nose to base of tail. Local jurisdictions may have requirements that differ from the above calculations.

Exercise - Each dog will be provided adequate exercise outside of the resting/sleeping enclosure, commensurate with the breed and age of the dog.

Feeding and Medications - The feeding schedule (including any treats) for each Client Dog will be determined at the outset of the program and mutually agreed upon by the Business and the Client. If medications are to be administered, instructions will also be obtained by the Business.

Medications/Supplements - If a dog requires medications or supplements, this will be mutually agreed upon by the client and the Business in writing.

Cleaning and sanitizing - The Business shall designate the items that need to be cleaned and/or sanitized and have methods for cleaning and sanitizing. These include, but are not limited to:

- Kennels and crates;
- Building floors;
- Food and water bowls;
- Toys and other equipment.
- Towels

Emergency care - The Business should have at least one person trained in canine CPR and first aid along with an outlined procedure to be followed. This procedure should detail the process regarding contacting the owner, back up contacts and include the name and number for a local emergency animal clinic/on call veterinarian.

Incident report - The Business should have a process for documenting emergencies, incidents of illness, injury, or other events having a negative impact on the well-being of the client dog. The Incident Report could have information such as:

- Date and time of incident;
- Name of Client Dog;
- Client name and telephone number;
- Description of incident, including any actions taken;
- The identification of people and/or other dogs involved in the incident;
- Date, time, and means by which the incident was communicated to the Client, along with the agreed next step.

Rodent and pest control - Grounds and facilities should be periodically inspected for evidence of rodents and other pests. Actions to eliminate rodents and pests may be performed by the Business, by a professional service, or a combination of both.

Groundskeeping - Premises where housing facilities are located, including buildings and surrounding grounds, should be kept clean and in good repair to protect the animals from injury, to facilitate sound husbandry practices, and to reduce or eliminate breeding and living areas for rodents and other pests and vermin. Premises should be kept free of accumulations of trash, junk, waste products, and discarded matter. Weeds, grasses, and bushes should be controlled so as to facilitate cleaning of the premises and pest control, and to protect the health and well-being of the animals.

8. Abuse Prevention

Background checks - The Business should have a process to check the background of each employee or prospective employee involved in the handling or training of client dogs. Some examples of how to accomplish this task are:

- Perform a full criminal background check;
- Review animal abuse registries;
- Gather as much information as possible.

Abuse prevention policy - The Business should have a defined policy for the prevention of abuse in their training process.

Use of tools - The Business should have protocols for the use of the tools used in training. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Training collars,
- Muzzles
- Leashes
- Food
- any other pieces of equipment instrumental in the success of the training program.

9. Business Metrics

Client satisfaction - The Business should have a means by which client satisfaction is determined. Examples include:

- Written surveys or questionnaires,
- Discussions with Client,
- Testimonials,
- Other sources of feedback such as text message and emails.

Training effectiveness - The Business should have a means by which the effectiveness of training for the Client Dog is determined. Feedback from the Client may be used as

Best Practices for Pet Dog Training Businesses

part of this determination, there should be objective measures set by the business and communicated to the client prior to the start of training. Two examples are:

Objective Measure of Effectiveness:

- The Client Dog will maintain an x-minute down-stay from X feet under distraction. The distraction might be people, other dogs, toys, etc.

Behavioral Measure of Effectiveness:

- Reduce barking when people walk past the house

10. Corrective Action

Corrective action process - The Business should have a corrective action process by which problems related to dog training are investigated and a course of action is determined to prevent the problem from occurring in the future. Examples of problems which could require corrective action are:

- Client complaints,
- Events from Incident Reports,
- Deviations from the best practices

11. Documentation

The following documents are examples of what should be kept by the Business as part of its overall record keeping system.

- Tax Records
- Business License
- Contracts, however named
- Initial Evaluation Reports
- Training Plans
- Lesson Plans
- Consumer Acknowledgment Forms
- Incident reports
- Cleaning and Sanitizing Records
- Dog Trainer Certifications
- Client Dog Vaccination Records
- Continuing Education Transcripts
- Any other documents identified by the state and local jurisdiction where the business operates