



MICHIGAN DOG RESCUE ADVOCATES CODE OF ETHICS FOR PRIVATE DOG RESCUE GROUPS

This code of ethics for dog rescue groups was created by the Michigan Dog Rescue Advocates for the benefit of the members and the shelters who work with those members. By signing onto this code of ethics, dog rescue groups indicate to shelters and potential clients that they abide by these principles and follow these practices. If a group is later accused of violating one or more of the conditions, Michigan Dog Rescue Advocates will investigate to determine if that organization should be removed from this list.

Rescue Organization Policy

1. To always, above all, act with the best interest of the dog in mind and to advocate for the dog.
2. To maintain this rescue as a non-profit endeavor,
 - a. whether or not this group is recognized by the state or federal government
 - b. regardless of tax status
 - c. regardless of group's size, ranging from an individual to a large group
3. To conduct the rescue on a voluntary basis, with no paid staff or formal employees.
4. To educate potential adopters about the issues regarding the temperament, health, training and required care for the specific dog(s) they are considering, including the breed traits when the breed of the dog is known.
5. To ensure that all volunteers in the rescue group, regardless of their area of service have the following resources:
 - a. Training in the duties they are expected to perform
 - b. Support from other more experienced members of the organization
 - c. Telephone and/or email access to resources within the group, including other members and outside contacts, to answer questions or direct their actions when the need arises
6. To provide all fostering volunteers with additional resources, including:
 - a. A written manual that explains the rights and responsibilities of the foster home, adoption policies, the group's rules for care and handling of foster dogs and contact information for senior members of the group and guidelines to be used in cases where an immediate medical decision may need to occur
 - b. Appropriate around the clock telephone access to Rescue personnel for use in a medical or behavioral emergency
 - c. A written foster care contract, signed by a rescue representative and foster parent, that clarifies ownership of foster dogs and acknowledges that the foster parent has received, reviewed and accepts the policies and rules outlined in the manual
7. To acknowledge that rescue does not cease with the placement of a dog, we pledge that our rescue will be there for the dog and the adopter after the adoption.
 - a. We will provide timely follow-up advice and assistance to adopters
 - b. We will always take back any dog placed by the group at the request of the adopter or at such time that the adopter is found to be in significant violation of the adoption contract at any time in that dog's life. This policy is to be documented in the adoption contract
8. To pay agreed upon fees to releasing agencies and agreed upon expenses to individuals who assist with acquisition. Once the rescue has agreed to acquire a dog, the dog will be accepted into the program regardless of any change in individual foster circumstances.

9. To maintain written records for each dog in their care that states:
 - a. Where the dog came from, with the name, address and phone number of surrendering party with their signed owner release document, or the shelter the dog came from with any original shelter documentation
 - b. Information which identifies the adopter, date of adoption and name of rescue representative completing the adoption contract and the name of the foster home
 - c. Documentation for any other type of discharge from the rescue program, such as transfer to another organization, euthanasia, etc. and identifying the receiving party, the date and circumstances
 - d. Contains a summary of all medical procedures performed on the dog, by whom and the dates
10. To keep all records, including the contracts for a minimum of 10 years.
11. To make Michigan dogs a priority. Breed rescues operating as chapters of national breed rescue organizations will work to achieve a balance of Michigan dogs sent to other chapters and dogs received from other states.
12. To act appropriately when accepting a dog that was found as a stray, documenting the measures the finder took to advertise the found dog, obtaining an owner surrender form for any dog that was in the Finder's possession for at least seven full days. If the surrendering party did not have the dog for a full seven days or did not take these steps, the rescue will scan for a microchip, and make appropriate attempts to find the original owner.
13. To not place any dogs that we have not had in foster care or our facility for less than ten days. We will not charge fees for referrals to shelters or private owners.
14. To never pass on any Kennel Club or other Registry type documentation, including pedigree, that has been received with a dog coming into rescue, to an adopter.
15. To seek assistance from professional trainers /behaviorists when the needed skills are not available in-house.
16. To ensure that any "Courtesy Postings" on our websites for dogs that are privately owned are clearly identified as privately owned and to never accept any fees for these dogs.
17. To conduct all communications with shelters, adopters, and the public in a courteous manner to maintain a positive perspective on rescue.
18. To cultivate a working relationship in a spirit of cooperation with other member rescue organizations, learning from each other, mentoring newer rescue groups, advocating for rescue and the animals we serve, but always placing the welfare of the animals and our mutual commitment to these ethics above matters of personality and individual differences.

Rescue Dog Care

1. To house rescue dogs in foster care under safe, sanitary conditions that would be acceptable for normal human and dog habitation.
2. To provide appropriate routine veterinary care of rescue dogs including age appropriate vaccinations, spay or neuter, heartworm tests and heartworm treatment for positive dogs, and other vet recommended treatments.
3. To examine all dogs for internal and external parasites, treating as needed, and provide appropriate heartworm and flea preventive.
4. To provide appropriate food, clean water, climate controlled shelter, socialization and exercise consistent with the individual needs of each dog.
5. To evaluate each dog to the best of our ability and exercise good judgment in the placement of that individual dog to the best matching home/environment. Rescue groups will not knowingly place a vicious or dangerously unstable dog in an adoptive home. Full disclosure of any known issues is provided to the adopter in writing at the time of adoption.
6. To always make the ultimate goal of our decisions the quality of life for the dog. At the point where quality of life cannot be obtained in the opinion of the rescue, the dog will be evaluated and euthanized by a veterinarian.

Adoption Policies

1. To adhere to the following adoption procedures:
 - a. Written or electronic application
 - b. Review application for compatibility
 - c. A positive vet check on previous and current animals
 - i. Vet check = very good. Proceed with screening
 - ii. Vet check = client needs education. Proceed as follows:
 1. If receptive to education = proceed with screening but adopt only after compliance
 2. Not receptive to education = do not adopt
 - iii. Vet check = totally inadequate or very poor. Do not adopt
 - d. Phone interview with the adoption candidate
 - e. Contact at least one personal reference
 - f. Home visit is conducted with all household residents and current pets present or a drive by has been conducted with conclusive findings regarding fencing, safety of neighborhood, conditions of property, etc.
A home visit or drive by may be waived if:
 - i. this is a repeat adoption from the same rescue at the same location
 - ii. Adopter has undergone reference checks and a home visit by another rescue known and trusted by the placing rescue and the family's location and composition are unchanged
 - iii. this is a current foster home with the adopting group, or another group trusted by the adopting group
 - g. Fully review contract, expectations, medical records and needs of the individual dog
 - h. Provide information on current brand of food, collar, and educational materials
 - i. Recommend that all dogs be micro chipped, and the rescue remains a point of contact as either purchaser of the chip, or as an additional registered contact
2. To require sterilization of all rescue dogs prior to placement. If the vet recommends that the dog not be sterilized due to health concerns, one of the following will apply:
If the vet determines that the dog has a permanent condition that precludes sterilization, the dog may be placed with an addendum to the contract. The vet recommendation must be documented.
If the vet determines that the dog cannot be sterilized due to a temporary condition, [six months or less in duration] the dog may be placed with the adoptive family but remains the property of the rescue organization until the sterilization can be completed. The vet recommendation must be documented.
3. To obtain verified landlord approval for prospective adopters who rent or lease their residences.
4. To require that adopters be at least 18 years of age.
5. To refuse to adopt a dog where the intention is to make a gift of the dog to another person unless that person is the subject of the adoption procedures and is the signer of the contract.
6. To provide a written contract which includes
 - a. All known health needs backed up with all medical records from the rescue period
 - b. All known behavioral issues
 - c. Name, age, weight, sex, coloring and presumed breed(s), and microchip number
 - d. Contact email and telephone number for the Rescue (Rescue must make every effort to return contacts within 48 hours.)
 - e. A statement that encourages the adopter to enlist in an obedience class as soon as possible
 - f. A statement that adopter agrees that the dog may not be sold, placed in a shelter, given to another rescue or individual without written permission from the original rescue. If the rescue approves of placement with an individual the adopter recruited, a new contract between that individual and the rescue will be carried out and added to the dog's rescue file. The rescue reserves the right to screen the individual fully

- g. A statement that requests advance notice of a return be given to the rescue
- h. Statements defining the basics of acceptable care the adopter agrees to provide:
Nutritious food, clean water, indoor housing, human companionship, vaccines, heart worm preventatives and other preventative medical care as advised by adopter's veterinarian, timely treatment for all illness or injuries, routine grooming and adherence to local governmental requirements for licensing and confinement
- i. Any specific, additional requirements regarding a particular dog need to be reflected in a specific addendum to the contract

[Click here for the Rescue Group printable copy of the MDRA Code of Ethics](#)

