



Policy

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Adoption Policy

At TLHS, we believe that open, progressive adoption policies save lives. Our goal is to match animals to homes which are good fits while providing exemplary customer service that creates community support and turns visitors into animal advocates and lifelong adopters.

Adoption Philosophy & Approach

Open Admissions Philosophy

Open admissions address this reality by doing away with rigid policies and adoption applications and instead focusing on conversations designed to help anyone walking into a shelter feel respected, and anyone walking out to be more educated, and hopefully, with a pet to love.

Adoption Conversations

Our goal is to have an open, honest conversation with potential adopters that is both more encompassing than relying on an adoption application alone, but also less confrontational and judgmental to the potential adopter. Open also means we, the organization, are open and honest with the adopter about our process and the pets within our care.

Philosophy of "Yes"

Our philosophy from the arrival of a visitor is that the visitor is a good person who came to an animal shelter today to do the right thing—adopt a shelter pet or even support the organization in some form. When the adoption process starts, we come from a place of "yes." This means we believe that when you apply to adopt an animal, we start from the position that the visitor is going home with that pet today unless the adopter presents a reason otherwise that cannot be overcome.

Barriers and Education

Even if the adopter presents a potential barrier to adoption, we will come from a place of education versus denial or judgment. Not everyone has all the experience and knowledge we do from working in animal rescue. So in turn we try to educate versus assume the worst in a person if a concern occurs. When discussing concern, we also believe in being honest (while still being sensitive and professional) when expressing those concerns to an adopter. If we are judging someone to be an unfit adopter, we believe that person has the right to respond and maybe even change our minds.

Adoption Process

Initial Process

The adoption process begins the moment a visitor arrives and is greeted by an adoption counselor. By asking what type of animal the visitor may be interested in, information is obtained as to the application and the environment, experience level of the adopter, history of pet ownership, other animals in the home, etc.—all before the applicant even considers completing an application. This allows staff to steer the visitor towards certain animals who



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may be a match for the visitor. Conversely, if the adopter is focused on an animal we believe would be a poor match, we strive to disclose why this may be a poor match before the adopter has spent a long time with the animal and would then be disappointed after falling in love with the animal.

Application Use

The application itself is a launching pad for conversation only. It is not an end-all where a wrong answer disqualifies an applicant. Questions on the application are restricted to only areas we deem very valuable. We will not ask applicants what their job title is, their salary, or make lists of every pet he or she has ever owned. Our areas of concern lie in the home being a good fit for the individual animal and the adopter's ability and desire to provide a safe, loving home. To that end, we only ask questions which address these major areas.

Home Checks

We do not perform home checks for routine adoptions as data and common sense have long since dictated the lack of efficacy behind home checks. Home checks are statistically not indicative of responsible pet ownership and can be resource intensive.

Same-Day Adoptions

We perform same-day adoptions, meaning the day you adopt a pet, the pet will go home with you as long as he or she has been spayed/neutered and has undergone heartworm treatment (if applicable). Again, waiting periods have proven to do nothing more than be a barrier to adoption.

Eligibility & Requirements

Age Requirement for Adopters

Adopters must be at least 18 years of age to adopt an animal from TLHS. Parents or legal guardians may complete the adoption process on behalf of minors under the age of 18, provided the parent or guardian is the legal adopter of record.

Employee Adoptions

Employees of TLHS are eligible to adopt after completing at least thirty (30) days of continuous employment. This policy ensures fairness and consistency in the adoption process. After the thirty-day period, employees must follow the same adoption process and requirements as all other adopters.

Landlord Verification

TLHS will contact landlords or property managers to verify that pets are permitted in the adopter's residence and that all applicable pet deposits or fees have been addressed. This ensures that the adoption is a good fit for both the animal and the family, and helps reduce the likelihood of an animal being returned due to housing restrictions.

Gift Adoptions

TLHS will not adopt animals as "gifts." The person who will be the primary owner of the animal must be willing to complete the adoption process in person.



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Breed Non-Discrimination

TLHS does not discriminate against breeds or create unnecessary hurdles to adoptions for our adopters or pets. We believe all breeds are equally deserving of a safe home with families that love them. We will match an animal with the person or family that is best for the animal. TLHS has breed specific legislation (BSL) and information available for adopters or members of the community who would like to learn more.

Example: a dog that will chase cats will not be able to live in a home with cats.

Adoption Policies

Animal Transport at Adoption

All cats and kittens going home with an adopter must leave in a secure pet carrier. If the adopter does not have a carrier at the time of adoption, they may either purchase one from TLHS for a **small donation fee** (amount subject to change) or bring their own carrier. TLHS will not allow an adopter to leave with a cat/kitten if the adopter or person picking up intends to walk out the door with the animal in their arms, in a blanket, or on a leash/collar. These are unacceptable means of transporting a cat/kitten safely to its new home.

All dogs and puppies going home with an adopter must leave on a leash. If the adopter does not have a leash at the time of adoption, they may either purchase a **TLHS logo slip leash** for a small donation fee, choose from the **free adoptive items** TLHS makes available during adoptions, or bring their own leash. TLHS will not allow an adopter to leave with a dog/puppy that is not properly leashed for safe transport to its new home.

Transport Safety in Vehicles

TLHS will not allow an adopter to leave with an animal if the adopter or person picking up intends to take the animal home in extreme weather in the bed of a truck or trailer or in the back of a truck loose or tethered.

Meet and Greets

Meet and greets are required for all dog/puppy adoptions when the adopter already has a resident dog. This step helps ensure the best possible match for all animals involved. The pet owner must sign a **Meet and Greet Waiver** prior to the session with the adoption counselor. While meet and greets provide valuable insight, they may not always indicate true compatibility between animals, as the shelter environment can cause stress and behaviors that differ from how the animal may act after decompressing in a home environment.

Tethering and Housing Policy

TLHS does not encourage the practice of tethering dogs (placing them on ropes, chains, or cables). However, adopters will not be automatically disqualified if they use a tethering system, provided the animal has access to **adequate shelter, food, water, and enrichment** and is cared for responsibly.

TLHS strongly prefers that dogs live **indoors as part of the family**. We recognize, however, that some dogs may be more suited to spending time outdoors. In those cases, we



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expect that dogs be kept in a **secure fenced area or other safe enclosure** rather than left solely on a tether. Our goal is to ensure every animal has a safe, humane, and appropriate living environment while continuing to educate adopters on best practices for housing and caring for their pets.

Hold Policy

TLHS no longer allows adoption fee deposits or foster-to-adopt arrangements. We operate on a **first-come, first-served basis** and do not maintain waitlists. Holding an animal for a potential adopter who may not complete the process can prevent other families from adopting that pet, delaying its opportunity to find a forever home. This policy ensures fairness to all animals, giving each one the best chance to be placed quickly into a loving, permanent home, and helps us prioritize the needs of every pet in our care.

Out-of-State Adoptions and Transport

TLHS can assist an adopter in arranging transport through a transport service for animals adopted to individuals outside of the state of Mississippi. However, in these special circumstances, the adopter must be willing to comply with all other adoption policy guidelines. The adopter will be responsible for securing payment and receiving arrangements through the transport service prior to release of the animal from TLHS. Please note that any animal crossing state lines must be able to pass a health certificate examination performed by the TLHS on-staff veterinarian on the day of transport. TLHS may not be able to hold an animal due to the need for space.

Post-Adoption Follow-Up

TLHS may perform post adoption follow-ups via mail, email, or phone in order to ensure that the adopted pet is adjusting well to its new environment and to the adopter's home.

Data Driven Policies

The following policies on open and progressive adoption are not just anecdotal; multiple studies exist that dispel long held myths surrounding the adoption process:

- **Do free adoptions increase the risks of poor care and abandonment?**
Results from a recent study conducted by researchers at Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program at the University of Florida says no.
<http://www.maddiesfund.org/free-pet-adoptions-study-results>
- **Black cats at halloween? Not a problem!**
There is no evidence that adopting a black cat around halloween poses any greater risk to the pets than adopting them on any other day of the year.
<http://blogs.bestfriends.org/index.php/2011/10/27/myth-buster-adopting-black-cats-at-halloween/>
- **Shelter adoption lore once held that pets acquired around holidays were more likely to be returned after the glow of the holiday seasons passed.**
This myth has been solidly debunked and proven to be untrue. While TLHS does typically have more adoptions around the holiday seasons, it would seem more reasonable than returns may increase as well.
<https://millioncatchallenge.org/resources/removing-barriers-to-adoptions>