Adoption Counseling Role-Play Facilitator Guide

Scenario 1: The Active Family

Overview:
Family with two kids meets a high-energy Husky mix. Dog is over-aroused; kids are loud and excited.

Learning Focus:

- Use open-ended questions to assess activity level and household dynamics.
- Manage child-dog interaction safely.
- Teach adopters about arousal and suitability of match.

Counselor Skills to Observe:
☐ Greeted family warmly and built rapport
☐ Redirected children calmly and kindly
☐ Explained dog body language (e.g., stress vs. play)
☐ Asked about daily routine and exercise plans
☐ Gave gentle guidance on calming strategies or alternative dogs

Debrief Prompts:

- How did the counselor re-set energy in the room?
- Was information shared in a positive, educational tone?
- What language helped normalize exploring better matches?

Scenario 2: The Apartment Renter

Overview:
Single renter wants a hound who barks frequently. Lives in an apartment and minimizes concern about noise.

Learning Focus:

- Gather details on housing, landlord policy, and tolerance for barking.
- Emphasize enrichment, mental stimulation, and realistic exercise needs.
- Model supportive education rather than discouragement.

Counselor Skills to Observe:
☐ Used open-ended questions ("Tell me about your typical day…")

☐ Discussed breed traits factually, not judgmentally
☐ Suggested enrichment ideas ("sniffaris," food puzzles)
☐ Kept the tone friendly and collaborative
☐ Normalized considering other matches

Debrief Prompts:

- How did the counselor avoid sounding like a "gatekeeper"?
- What phrases conveyed partnership with the adopter?
- Did the adopter leave feeling respected and informed?

Scenario 3: The Dog-Reactive Resident Dog

Overview:
Couple introduces their senior dog to a new dog who approaches her toys; growling occurs. Couple minimizes it.

Learning Focus:

- Recognize resource-guarding or tension cues.
- Safely pause or stop a meet-and-greet.
- Use professional language when suggesting staff involvement.

Counselor Skills to Observe:
☐ Recognized red flags and took calm control
☐ Paused meet-and-greet appropriately
☐ Explained resident-dog decision-making ("She gets to decide")
☐ Recommended slower intros or different dogs respectfully
☐ Radioed or involved staff when unsure

Debrief Prompts:

- How was safety maintained for both dogs and people?
- What phrases kept conversation calm and professional?
- Could the counselor have reframed the situation to protect the relationship?

Scenario 4: The Nervous New Adopter

Overview:
Older adult meets shy Chihuahua mix who avoids them; adopter feels rejected.

Learning Focus:

- Practice empathy and reassurance.
- Coach adopter on gentle, confidence-building interaction.
- Explain decompression and 3/3/3 rule.

Counselor Skills to Observe:

☐ Validated adopter's feelings
☐ Modeled quiet, sideways body language and treat-tossing
☐ Explained dog stress and decompression
☐ Offered handout or resources (3/3/3 guide)
☐ Ended on an encouraging note

Debrief Prompts:

- How did the counselor balance empathy with education?
- What statements built adopter confidence instead of disappointment?
- How can handouts support post-adoption success?

Facilitation Tips

- Run each scenario for **5–7 minutes**, followed by **3–5 minutes debrief.**
- Encourage observers to jot notes and then share one "what worked" and one "try next time."
- Reinforce **core themes:** open-ended questions, empathy, safety, and resource-based problem solving.
- End the session by summarizing:
  "Our goal is not to *screen out* adopters — it's to set them and the dogs up for success."