

# FEAR OF PEOPLE TRAINING & ENRICHMENT PLAN

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Dogs who are fearful of people may demonstrate one or all of the following body language signals when in the presence of people: move or back away, avoid eye contact, tuck their tail, crouch, cower, tremble, put their ears back, run away and/or hide when in contact with a person.

The fearful behavior is usually directed toward people the dog does not know and decreases or is eliminated once the dog becomes comfortable with new people. Fear is likely the most common cause of aggression toward unknown people.

The focus of a training plan for fearful dogs should be focused upon providing the dog with adequate and appropriate enrichment opportunities, and interacting with the dog in a way that reduces the dog's fear.

The goal of the training plan should be to reduce the dog's stress and increase the frequency of friendly body language (ears forward, tail wagging, soft/wiggly body posture) toward people.

## THE TREATMENT PLAN CONSISTS OF 6 PARTS:

Before you begin, note the existence of the problem behavior on the dog's cage, so that staff and volunteers can identify fearful dogs before they enter the kennel. [\[Shy Kennel Card\]](#)

**PART 1: PRACTICE AVOIDANCE** - Whenever possible, avoid the types/kinds of people that the dog is scared of, except during controlled training sessions.

**PART 2: PROVIDE A SAFE PLACE** - Provide the dog with a hiding place in its kennel/enclosure, such as a barrier to hide behind or a plastic crate, so that the dog can choose to avoid visual contact with people, when the dog is afraid.

**PART 3: HAVE APPROPRIATE INTERACTIONS** - Every time you interact with a dog that is fearful of people, interacting with him appropriately is an important key to success. Appropriate interactions will increase the success of your treatment and inappropriate interactions will greatly hinder or setback the treatment plan. [\[Interacting with fearful dogs\]](#) [\[Desensitizing and counter conditioning to the leash\]](#)

## PART 4: PROVIDE BASIC ENRICHMENT -

A. Playgroup: Take the dog to playgroup once daily, if the dog is dog friendly.

[\[Running Doggie Playgroups\]](#)

B. Quiet time: 10 to 30 minutes, once daily [\[Quiet time for shy dogs\]](#) [\[Video Demo\]](#)

C. Play/training: 5-15 minutes, once daily, once the dog is interested in treats and toys. Note that many fearful dogs are initially not interested in play or training - quiet time and playgroup are then the focus of enrichment. As the dog's fear decreases, training and play can be started.

D. Walks: 10 minutes, 3 times daily (it is acceptable to substitute playgroup for one of the walks). Fearful dogs, who enjoy time outdoors, should go on walks. Some dogs with severe fear do not enjoy walks, and should be taken outdoors for elimination only. For these dogs, whenever possible, all interactions should be in a quiet indoor location plan.

(next)

**PART 5: USE TREAT BUCKETS** - Staff and volunteers should be taught to toss treats every time they walk by a fearful dog's kennel. [\[tossing treats video\]](#) Shelters with more extensive behavior modification programs can follow the Treat Buckets for Shy Dogs plan. We put the [\[Treat Buckets for Shy Dogs\]](#) document on one side and the [\[Treat Buckets Log\]](#) on the other side of one piece of paper, and hang them on the dog's clipboard.

**PART 6: REASSESSMENT** - Dogs with fear of people should be reassessed 3-4 days after a plan has started, and then weekly thereafter. A dog should be considered to have responded to the treatment plan when it demonstrates less fearful/stress-related body language and an increased frequency of friendly body language (ears forward, tail wagging, soft/wiggly body posture) toward people. [\[Fearful of People Body Language Poster\]](#)

For dogs that are either not responding or responding sub-optimally, see the [\[Behavior Modification Plan \(For Dogs Who Do Not Respond To Basic Enrichment & Training\)\]](#)

