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ENGAGING WITH THE RETRIEVERS

A GUIDE FOR NEW CLIENTS

We're honored that you have asked us to help you find your lost dog. So that we can work together most effectively, here are some things you should know.

Initiating a Case

If you have not already done so, please initiate a case by submitting the form on our [Request Assistance](#) page. This is the quickest way to have a case manager assigned. Whether you engage the team or not, please follow the suggestions in our [Action Plan](#), particularly the recommended steps to take within the first hour of the dog's disappearance.

Our Role

Collectively, the team has many years of experience with lost dog cases. Our expertise is offered on a volunteer basis at no charge to you. We are here to provide guidance regarding search strategy and tactics, i.e. what to do in each phase of a search and how best to accomplish these goals. At the proper time, we will provide humane trapping services using our equipment.

We need to have a single point of contact with the dog's family or rescue. This is usually the owner or foster, but you may wish to authorize someone else to make decisions for you. Everyone involved in the search should be informed as to who is the responsible party for the dog, and who is the Retrievers case manager. Once your case manager has been assigned, please communicate using his/her personal cell phone number, not the Retrievers' general line.

While good ideas and suggestions can come from anyone, **we require clients to consult with the case manager before implementing them**, so that efforts can be coordinated and any dangerous, illegal or counterproductive ideas are not acted upon. You and your case manager should be in close contact, particularly when the case is fluid and rapidly changing. In these situations, please provide updates at least once a day.

Please remember that for most phases of a search, **we engage with you as advisors and not helpers on the ground.** You will be responsible for making and placing signs, distributing flyers, engaging the media, following up on sighting calls and apprising your case manager of sightings and tips. If you are personally not able to complete such tasks, please designate a friend or family member to do so.

Sightings

Sighting calls should be communicated with your case manager ASAP, and you should have a response planned. Depending upon the situation, this may result in someone hurrying to the area to catch the dog, or avoiding the area entirely to let the dog settle in, or posting volunteers in a perimeter to observe the dog's behavior and direction of travel, etc. Your case manager will advise you on the best response for your dog's case at any given point in time. **Do not publicize exact sighting locations.**

Social Media

Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, etc. can be a great help in lost dog cases, as they allow you to not only spread the word about your missing dog, but also to build a network of supportive friends and strangers. Many people will volunteer to help with flyering and other awareness efforts, so be sure to take advantage of this free resource.

While you may post about your lost dog on a number of pages and groups, we prefer that updates and planning conversations take place on the case thread that we will create for your dog on the [Retrievers main Facebook page](#). This helps keep important information in a single place where your case manager can easily find it. Please encourage others to shift their conversations over to our page.

However, if a search becomes protracted and begins to require extensive planning, we recommend that you create a Facebook Group (not a Page or Event) as a "home base" for public communications. Be sure to give your case manager admin privileges so you have a backup in case the Group needs to be managed quickly. If you don't know how to create a Facebook Group, your case manager can do that for you. You'll want to introduce yourself as the owner of the lost dog and invite people to share the Group with their friends. **Do not share exact sighting locations unless your case manager gives the OK. And never publicly reveal the location of a trap or feeding station.**

Mapping

Your case manager needs to know exactly where the dog was seen and when. By placing a marker on a map for every sighting, a pattern often emerges giving clues to the dog's route and whereabouts. This is vital information that informs an effective search strategy. Because you are receiving the sighting calls, it falls on you to keep track of them. It's not difficult to create and use a Google Map for this purpose. (See the [Resources](#) page on our website for a tutorial.) Be sure to share the map with your case manager.

Feeding Stations

We usually recommend putting food out at your home and/or the point of flight to attract the dog back. But often, feeding stations are deployed elsewhere, such as at a sighting location. These feeding stations are monitored 24/7 with a cellular camera so that we can know what, if anything, is eating the food. Your case manager will select a good location for the feeding station. It's your responsibility to secure permission from property owners to place and maintain a monitored feeding station and, ultimately, a live trap.

Trapping

Humane trapping is the Retrievers' specialty, and we have developed some innovative techniques and technology that make our traps more effective than those sold commercially. We do have some policies around trapping, however, that must be followed.

First and foremost, unless you are outside of our service area, **do not deploy your own traps, or allow other interested parties to attempt to trap your dog.** It only takes one malfunctioning trap to derail a search, as once a dog learns that traps are scary, he will be much more difficult to recover. Noncompliance with this policy will result in our disengagement from the case.

If we are deploying one of our traps, you must get permission to place it on public or private property. (It's often easier to get approval from homeowners than from government agencies or businesses.)

Trapping is time-intensive. Traps must be monitored round-the-clock by wireless video, cellular trail cameras or a nearby person. Bait must be refreshed daily. When your dog is captured, he must be secured—and any other captured animal must be released—within 10-15 minutes, day or night.

For these reasons, we do not place traps randomly. **We must have evidence that the dog is not only in the area, but also returning to the location where the trap will be set.** That's why, before we place a trap, we will set up a feeding station and monitor it with a camera. This allows us to confirm that the dog has fed there more than once. We will then place the trap nearby, which may or may not be armed the first night, depending on the situation. We will not arm an unmonitored trap.

Please understand that in most cases, the dog is not captured on the first night that the trap is deployed. Skittish dogs usually need to be conditioned not to be afraid of the trap, and this will take time. Your case manager will advise you on the best approach for your dog, given the behavior observed on camera.

Loaner Raytripper Security Deposit

Due to the generosity of our supporters, equipment security deposits for most types of cases are now covered by a special fund, and payment is no longer required of owners. The exception is when we ship equipment out of our service area for trapping consultation cases. For these remote cases, we require a \$250 security deposit, which is fully refundable less a \$10 handling fee and the cost of outgoing shipping (usually around \$20 for the continental US). Your case manager will notify you if and when a deposit is needed. To submit payment, visit our [Equipment Deposit](#) page.

Working Together Effectively

So that activities are following a cohesive plan, we ask that you work solely with us as your lost-dog experts. If you wish to work with a different team or consultant, please disengage with the Retrievers before implementing other strategies.

The Retrievers Volunteer Lost Dog Team reserves the right to withdraw our services if we are unable to lead an effective search due to a client's unwillingness to follow our recommendations or policies, or due to actions that are counterproductive to success. You are also free to disengage with us for any reason.



LOST DOG ACTION PLAN

HOURS POST-FLIGHT	ACTION	IN CASE OF SIGHTINGS
IMMEDIATELY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put food and scent article* at place where dog bolted, if feasible, or was last seen. Keep these items out until dog is found. • Drive immediate area and look for dog. • Talk to neighbors and others on the street and ask if they have seen your dog. <p>* The scent article should be an item the dog associates with a familiar and desired person or animal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For a dog bonded with you, it could be an article of your clothing. • If the dog is new and/or frightened of you, use an item with its own scent, i.e., a dog bed or toy. • The dog's own scent may also be used for a dog bonded to its owner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to the area with high-value treats (cheese, bacon, rotisserie chicken, etc.) and a slip lead. • Remain very calm. • When you see your dog, DO NOT CHASE. • Lower your body to the ground and use familiar, positive words like "treat" or "go for walk," etc. • Understand that he may not come to you right away. • The longer a dog is missing the more likely he has gone into survival mode, which means he is focused on food, water, shelter and security. He may perceive all humans as a threat — even you. • If the dog flees, set up a feeding station using good-smelling food such as canned cat food, tripe, or fried chicken (deboned), and place a scent article nearby. • Restock every day with fresh food. The goal is to keep your dog from leaving the area by providing for all his needs. • If possible, monitor the feeding station with a trail camera, or ask a neighbor to observe whether the dog is returning to the feeding station on a regular basis. • Be sure to tell the neighbor not to approach the dog and scare it away. • Once it has been confirmed that the dog is remaining near the feeding station, contact the Retrievers by completing a Request Assistance form, and if you are within our service area, we can arrange to capture your dog with a humane trap.

HOURS POST-FLIGHT	ACTION
1 HOUR OR LESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call local police departments/law enforcement (city, township or county, as appropriate), vet clinics, animal control agencies and shelters. Be sure to include those in your surrounding counties/communities. • See the list of Minnesota impound facilities here, or Google facilities in your area. • Place missing dog ad on local Craigslist Community > Lost & Found and Community > Pets • Report dog on Facebook lost dog pages for your area (i.e., Lost Dogs - MN) and other social media such as Instagram, TikTok, etc.
4 HOURS OR LESS	<p>VERY IMPORTANT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make intersection signs. • Use brightly colored poster board and draw text large enough for drivers to see from the road. • Attach securely to stakes. <p>(See our signmaking tutorial video here: https://bit.ly/2LIKV5X)</p>
8 HOURS OR LESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place intersection signs. (The most effective way to bring a dog home!) • Post at nearby intersections and the place where dog went missing. If the dog is known to be in a relatively small area, door-to-door flyering can be an effective means of spreading the word. • Prepare and duplicate flyer. • Begin flyer distribution. • Place flyers in newspaper boxes or door-to-door all around the area where your dog went missing, or was last seen. Do not put in mailboxes, as this is against the law. • Take along sturdy tape, a marker if needed and a staple gun to post on utility poles and street signs. These may or may not be removed by authorities per local ordinances. <p>(Here's a flyer template in Word: https://bit.ly/2LLwhuH)</p>
24 HOURS OR LESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve tracking dogs if available in your area. • Add your dog to the database at these websites: http://www.helpinglostpets.com http://www.pawboost.com http://https://www.findingrover.com/

HOURS POST-FLIGHT

ACTION

2 DAYS

- Place a lost dog ad in your community newspaper in the Lost & Found section of the classified ads.
- Contact local radio stations — many will broadcast a free public service announcement for your missing dog.
- Send out a robocall (automated telephone call) from a fee-based service such as: findtoto.com
petamberalert.com
- Be sure to specify the address for where your dog went missing, if other than your home address.
- Visit shelters in your area and surrounding jurisdictions to see if your dog has been picked up. Continue every other day.

3 DAYS AND MORE

- If no sightings are reported, expand your signage and flyering area by a mile per day and keep expanding as time goes on.
- Look for your dog on local and regional rescue groups' websites
Sometimes, well-meaning people will find a stray dog and give it to a rescue without reporting it anywhere as found.
 - Search for your dog using Petfinder.com
 - For keywords, use any breed that might be used to describe your dog, even if that is not what your dog actually is
 - If your dog is purebred or appears to be, contact local breed rescues and alert them to your missing dog
- Refresh your social media posts and flyers if you are still distributing them, and ask people to check their door bell camera footage in case your dog got within view of the camera.