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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 and the volunteers you recruit will be responsible for making and placing signs, distributing flyers, engaging the media, following up on sighting calls and in many cases, maintaining the feeding station and providing fresh bait daily for the trap. You may also be called upon to release any

inadvertently trapped animals, such as cats and raccoons, even skunks. 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**

Facebook is a great help in lost dog cases, as it allows 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 flyer and other awareness efforts, so be sure to take advantage of this free resource.

While you will likely post about your lost dog on a number of Facebook 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, it 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 will 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, select the applicable link in the right-hand sidebar of the Request Assistance 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.