

Policy & Information

Handbook

 ![C:\Users\ksimmons\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\RACPZR6C\MC900052886[1].wmf]()

Rev 11/2013

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**About Gold Ribbon Rescue**

**Hotline**

**Intake Process**

**Fostering**

**Foster Coordinator**

**Adoption Policies**

**Application Process**

**Matching – Adoption**

**After the Adoption**

**Bits and Pieces**

 **Using GRR email**

 **Conduct as a GRR representative**

 **Vaccinations**

 **Therapy vs. Service dogs**

 **Volunteer training sessions**

 **Volunteer opportunities**

 **Educational Sessions**

 **Fundraising**

 **Events**

**About Gold Ribbon Rescue**

Gold Ribbon Rescue, Inc. (GRR) was founded in 1998 to meet three objectives.  We are a [non-profit 501(c)(3) organization](http://www.grr-tx.com/sites/default/files/GRR%20IRS%20letter.pdf) as recognized by the IRS.  GRR's main function is to provide a network for sheltering, rehabilitation and placing Golden Retrievers in permanent homes in Central Texas.  GRR’s second function is to provide public education about responsible dog ownership and, in particular, about the Golden Retriever breed.  Third, GRR provides a forum for Golden Retriever fanciers to meet.

GRR members assist each other with advice and information about training, health problems, and local dog activities.  Occasional social activities include the dogs and give GRR members and friends a chance to meet and enjoy the company of Golden Retrievers.

Gold Ribbon Rescue is an *all-volunteer* nonprofit corporation.  It is recognized as a rescue organization by The Golden Retriever Club of America, Inc.  Membership dues, [adoption fees](http://www.grr-tx.com/guidelines/how-adopt), fund raising activities and donations finance its activities.

**HOTLINE**

**About the Hotline**  - The hotline is the phone number posted on the GRR website and on business cards and fliers. It leads to a voice mail system which is monitored by volunteers. Each volunteer signs up for a one week rotation, from Monday morning to Sunday night, and will check for messages no less than 3 times per day. Volunteers can choose which week(s) work for them and can volunteer as often as they like. The Hotline Coordinator will send an email asking for volunteers to choose a week and will typically fill a schedule 2-3 months at a time. The volunteer checking messages will return all calls in a timely manner and answer the caller’s question, if the answer is not known they can check with other volunteers for the correct response before returning the call. Working the hotline is a great way for new volunteers to learn all about GRR. Answers to many questions can be found in various parts of this handbook. Volunteering for hotline duty is a great way to learn a lot about GRR and rescue in a short amount of time.

**Types of calls** – There are many types of calls coming into the hotline: Someone needing to surrender their own, or a found golden; requesting a status on an application; asking how to apply; asking if they are in our service area; they lost a golden and think we might have it (**this call should be forwarded immediately to the GRR Board and should not be returned by the hotline volunteer**); some are just looking for vet or trainer referrals or general Golden Retriever information. Volunteers signing up for Hotline duty will be given detailed information and instructions by the Hotline Coordinator.

**Emergency phone tree** – Hotline volunteers will be provided with a list of people whom to contact in case of an urgent call to the Hotline. This should be used if a hotline call is received saying someone has lost or found a GRR dog. Return the call to get as many details as possible then send an email to surrender2@grr-tx.com, if no one responds to the email quickly, use the phone tree starting at the top and working down until you reach someone. Another call that would prompt use of the emergency phone tree would be someone calling to say they need to get rid of their own or a found golden immediately or they will shoot it or dump it if no one comes to get it asap. Again, return the call for details, assure the caller we are on it, try to calm them down and not do anything drastic, send an email then use the tree if the email is not responded to right away.

**Intake Process**

Dogs come to GRR care either from a shelter or from a surrendering owner or Good Samaritan. If the dog is coming to GRR as an owner surrender we must always request that the caller send pictures of the dog to surrender2@grr-tx.com so we can first determine that the dog in question actually is a golden. If the pictures show what appears to be a golden we will fill out a Surrender form with the caller and ask them to send in any medical records they might have. (Note: the Surrender form can be filled out before receiving the pictures but caller should be informed that if the dog proves not to be a golden we will not be able to take it. We will attempt to provide information for other rescue groups as appropriate). If it is a found dog there will not be much information for the form but we still need one with as much information as possible. Then we will arrange for a volunteer to go out and conduct an Intake Evaluation on the dog (see below for Intake Eval details).

**Bringing in a shelter dog** – GRR has good working relationships with many of the shelters in South Central Texas and they will typically automatically contact the GRR hotline or a member of the GRR intake team when they have a Golden that comes into their shelter. Sometimes someone will alert GRR to a golden in a shelter and an Intake Team member will contact the shelter. In either case, if the shelter wants to turn the dog over to rescue, a surrender form will be filled out and photos obtained to ensure the dog is a golden. A volunteer will then go to the shelter and conduct an Intake Evaluation. In most cases we cannot take the dog until the mandatory stray hold is up, usually this is three days. Sometimes the volunteer conducting the Intake Eval will also be asked to take the dog right away if the stray hold time has already been met, or if the dog is being released early for medical reasons (in these cases the volunteer will take the dog directly to a GRR vet).

**Surrendering a found dog** – When a Good Samaritan calls the hotline to surrender a found Golden we must make sure steps have been taken to locate an owner and extinguish ownership before GRR can take possession of the dog. This can be done in two ways. The best and most common way is to have the Good Sam take the dog to one of the shelters that we work with to do a stray hold. When the dog is dropped off the Good Sam should let the shelter know that they have contacted GRR and ask the shelter should put our name on the dog, and then they should call us back and let us know that the dog has been dropped off so we can follow up with the shelter right away. The second possible way to extinguish ownership is dependent on how long the Good Sam has had the dog and what steps they have taken to find the owner. They should be asked to have the dog scanned for a microchip and post flyers near where the dog was found. If they have done this and if they have had the dog for at least 2 weeks we can consider them the surrendering owner and treat it like any other owner surrender. GRR preference is that all found dogs be taken to a shelter to extinguish ownership, the Intake Director will make the decision if option two above can be used for a particular dog (often in the case of a puppy or elderly dog).

**Surrendering an owned dog** – A surrender form will need to be filled out and the owner will need to send pictures to surrender2@grr-tx.com and have copies of any medical records faxed to the GRR Medical Director. There may be a wait before GRR can bring in an owner surrendered dog as shelter dogs and dogs in imminent danger have first priority. Timing will always depend on available foster space. Once we have received photos and medical records a volunteer will conduct an Intake Evaluation. Based on all of this information the Intake Team will work on finding a foster space for the dog.

**Surrendering a GRR Dog** – If an owner must return their adopted GRR dog they must return the dog to GRR rather than trying to rehome on their own and we will always take them back regardless of circumstance. Once a GRR dog, always a GRR dog. Surrender procedure will be the same as above, “Surrendering an owned dog”.

**Surrendering an aggressive dog** – GRR cannot accept any dog that has a bite history either to humans or other dogs. A surrender form should still be filled out so we have the information on file should the dog happen to resurface on our radar at a later date. In some rare cases the Intake Director may decide that there were extenuating circumstances and that the dog is not a bite risk and may be accepted into GRR. These exceptions are few and far between and are totally at the discretion of the Intake Director and/or the Board of Directors. If GRR accepted a dog with a known bite history and then adopted it out and there was another bite incident we could be sued and it could close down our rescue group forever. We must keep our eyes on the greater good and not jeopardize our ability to help many goldens in favor of one.

**Intake Evaluation** – All dogs coming in to GRR care are evaluated prior to acceptance. This applies to all dogs, owner surrender, shelter or foundling. Once pictures have been received and a surrender form filled out the Intake Team will send a volunteer to the dog to conduct an evaluation. There is a form on the GRR website that should be taken along and filled out by the volunteer conducting the evaluation. The Intake Evaluation Form will guide the volunteer through a series of questions and tasks which helps determine physical appearance (is this a pure bred Golden) and personality (is this dog showing any signs of aggressive behavior). The volunteer will also be asked to take additional pictures from as many angles as possible. Once the additional pictures and Intake Evaluation Form are submitted by the volunteer the Intake Director will decide if the dog can be accepted in to GRR and the Intake Team will locate a suitable foster home. If, for any reason, the dog is not accepted in to GRR the Intake Director will notify the surrendering party. There are times that the Intake Team will ask the volunteer doing the Eval to go ahead and take the dog right then but this is only to be done at the direction of the Intake Team. **(NOTE: volunteers new to Intake Evaluations can first accompany a seasoned volunteer on an Eval before doing one on their own).**

**Bill of Sale** – We must have a signed Bill of Sale transferring ownership of the dog to GRR before we can take possession of a dog from an individual. A dog being transferred to GRR from shelter does not require a BOS although in some instances we may ask for one if it’s a small shelter or one GRR does not work with on a regular basis. If you are retrieving a dog from a shelter for GRR the Intake Team will advise if a BOS is needed. The transport volunteer will fill out the BOS and bring two copies when picking up the dog, one for the surrendering owner to keep and the other must be signed by the owner. The transport volunteer will scan a copy of the signed BOS and email to a GRR designee and/or mail the original signed copy to a GRR designee.

**Transporting the dog into GRR care** – Once all the surrender information has been received and a foster home or veterinarian destination has been chosen, the Transport Coordinator will arrange transportation to bring the dog into care. A request will be sent via email outlining when the dog needs a ride as well as the pick-up and drop off locations. Any GRR volunteer who has time can volunteer to do all or part of the transport. Often, when transporting between long distances (San Antonio/Austin, Waco/Austin, etc.) the transport can be divided into two or three legs with one volunteer picking up the dog and meeting another volunteer at a halfway point where they will hand the dog off to the next volunteer for the remainder of the trip. It is recommended that a crate be used to transport but not mandatory when transporting just one dog. At times volunteers will transport more than one dog at a time, if these dogs are unknown to each other than at least one dog must be crated for the safety of the dogs and the driver (should a fight break out whilst driving down a freeway at 70mph it could be very dangerous).

**Intake medical** – Upon coming into GRR care all dogs will either first stop at a GRR vet or will be taken to one shortly after arriving in foster care. All dogs receive a wellness exam, are given any necessary vaccinations, a heartworm test and started on HW preventative as appropriate. Any known medical issues will be treated prior to adoption. The Intake Director or Medical Director will send a fax to the chosen clinic with a list of procedures for each incoming dog. An email with the same information will be sent to the “surrender2” and “fostercoordinator” email groups so everyone is aware of what is happening with each dog. The email will also announce the foster home if it has been identified at that point. Foster Coordinators should watch for these emails to see what dogs will be going to one of their foster homes.

**GRR does not buy dogs** – from auctions/ads/craigslist etc. Reasonable adopt/shelter fees are allowable. When a puppy mill or back yard breeder is selling or auctioning off their “stock” the problem is only continued by buying these dogs and putting money back in the breeders pocket to go out and buy new “stock”.

**Fostering**

**Point of Contact** – Each foster home will be assigned a Foster Coordinator, referred to as an FC (see Foster Coordinator section below for explanation of FC duties). This person will be their point of contact for any questions they might have and will provide the foster home with the Adoption Contract when their foster dog is matched to a forever home. Each new foster home will be sent a “Welcome to Fostering” letter which will contain a list of approved vets as well as a list of GRR contacts and a host of helpful information.

**Medical** – GRR provides all medical needs, including heartworm and flea prevention, to all foster dogs. All vet visits will be arranged through your FC and the GRR Medical Director at which time the Medical Director will fax an authorization to the vet clinic in advance of the appointment. If the dog needs to see a vet while in foster care he/she must be taken to a GRR approved vet clinic. If the dog is taken to a vet outside the GRR network without prior approval the foster home will be responsible for the vet bill. Using a GRR vet incurs no expense to the foster family as the vet will bill GRR directly. If there is a medical emergency the dog should be taken to an emergency vet on the approved GRR list. Obviously this cannot be arranged in advance, however, the FC and/or Medical Director should be contacted en route or after arrival at the emergency clinic.

**What GRR provides for dogs in foster care** -  GRR pays for all medical needs at a GRR approved vet and we provide heartworm and flea preventative (mailed to the foster home) while the dog is in foster care. We will provide a GRR crate for the family to borrow while they are fostering. If they will be leaving town while they are fostering we will provide respite care for the foster dog while they are away. We can also help transport the new foster dog to the foster home and help with introductions to any resident dogs. If transport is needed for trips to the vet it can be arranged through the FC. We will also provide training support for the dog and family if they are experiencing any behavior issues. We will also provide respite foster care if you need to go out of town for business or vacation during your foster period. This is another foster home that will care for your foster dog until you return at which time the foster dog will return to your home.

**What the foster family provides for dogs in foster care** – Love, compassion, understanding and positive leadership. Remember that many of the dogs that come to GRR are shelter dogs, strays or dogs who have not had a very good previous home and they may need extra attention, TLC and guidance as they settle in and learn to be part of a loving family. We ask that you provide a good quality dog food and plenty of fresh water and that you begin working on teaching good manners and house breaking if needed. If there are particular training/behavior issues we can arrange training for your foster dog with a GRR trainer. Some foster dogs will need extra medical care, such as heartworm treatment, spay/neuter recovery, etc. You get to decide what dogs you want to foster so if you do not have time or resources for a medical needs or extra training needs dog that is okay, those dogs can be placed elsewhere. If you take a foster dog and that dog is not working out with your household we will find a new foster home as soon as possible. Do not feel bad if a foster dog does not fit with your household, not every dog is a good fit for every home.

**The Adjustment Period** – See section under “After the Adoption”

**Lost GRR dog** – If your foster dog gets loose contact GRR immediately by phoning your FC or another GRR volunteer and leave a message on the GRR Hotline. *Please keep calling until you actually speak to a GRR representative*. GRR volunteers will mobilize quickly to help post fliers and actively search for the dog. The hotline volunteer on duty will be alerted to check the hotline voicemail frequently for reports from the microchip company or anyone who might have seen the dog or has the dog in their possession. This does happen from time to time, it will not reflect poorly on you as a foster home. We understand these dogs are new to your home and in many cases are frightened or unsure of what is happening with them. Because of this it is always best to accompany your new foster on trips out to the backyard and to be very vigilant about where the dog is when coming in and out of front doors. Most foster dogs that get loose do so by slipping past humans who are coming/going through an open door or by digging under/going over a fence. Typically, once they have settled in and become used to their new surroundings and people, the flight risk is reduced, but vigilance is still important.

**Damage to home** – although not frequent, sometimes a new foster dog is very scared and unsure in their new surroundings or if the foster dog is a youngster, damages can occur. It could be something as minor as a chewed pillow or throw rug all the way up to scratched or chewed doors or other large items. Higher degrees of damage are rare but typically the result of a storm phobic dog or one with separation anxiety. This is why GRR provides crates for use by foster homes and encourages their use when the dog is alone or cannot be watched for one reason or another. GRR does not pay for damages to homes or belongings.

**Injury to resident animals** – As above, this is not a frequent occurrence but injuries can happen. It is highly recommended that the new foster dog and any resident animals be kept separated at all times for the first 2-3 days at a minimum. Even when all dogs are doing well together under supervision they should still be kept separated when home alone or during unsupervised. This can be by use of a crate or baby gates. All high value items (bones, balls, toys, etc.) should be picked up until you are sure these items will not cause squabbles and, even then, should only be brought out under supervision. Care should be taken when giving treats and meals. The new foster dog should be fed separated from resident dog(s). Most fights occur over toys, treats, affection and when multiple dogs are going through a doorway or small space, care should be taken at all times but even more so in these instances. GRR does not pay for vet bills or hospital bills.

**Aggression** – GRR has a zero tolerance policy regarding true aggression and any instances should be reported immediately to your FC. If there is an act of aggression towards a person or another animal you will be asked to fill out a form with as many details as possible. This form, as well as discussions with witnesses, will be reviewed by a team of GRR volunteers and a decision will be made on next steps.

**Can I adopt my foster dog?** – Absolutely! Many foster homes do fall in love with their foster dog and end up adopting, which is why foster homes go through the same application process as adoptive homes. You will need to let the Match Makers know by the end of the second week as, after that time, they will begin talking to potential adoptive homes about your foster dog. Once a dog has been matched we cannot pull that dog away from the potential adopter.

**Getting you foster dog adopted** – GRRs team of Matchmakers work very hard to ensure the right families are matched to the right dog. They review all information about the dogs and about the prospective families to make the best, most informed decision possible. The foster home should not try to match their foster dog on their own for friends, family or perhaps an applicant that they have met. If you think you know someone that would be a good match feel free to mention that to the matchmakers but do not lead anyone to think they will be able to adopt your foster dog. They may not be the best match or the matchmakers may have already been talking to another family about the dog. We do realize that, as the foster home, you will have a very good perspective on the type of home that would be a good fit for your foster and the matchmakers will seek your thoughts on prospective homes prior to making an official match.

**Foster Reports** – The foster family will be asked to fill out a weekly “Foster Report” on each foster dog. This is invaluable information and will help get your foster dog matched to the best possible family. The matchmakers will have a very difficult time trying to match your dog without these foster reports. The link to the foster report can be found in the “Welcome to Fostering” letter you will receive upon joining the GRR foster family network. Fun photos and a short bio that can be posted on the GRR website are also very helpful in getting your foster dog into their very own forever home.

**Allowance for tax deductions** – Depending on how you file your taxes you may be able to take a tax deduction for every day that you foster. If you need a tax receipt GRR can provide a statement showing how many days/dogs you fostered in a given year.

**Foster Coordinator**

All foster homes will be assigned a Foster Coordinator, referred to as an FC. The FC will act as the Point of Contact for the foster home.

**FC Duties** – The FC will act as a single point of contact which helps reduce confusion for the foster home regarding who they should contact for whatever they might need. The FC is responsible for:

* Introducing themselves to the foster home and explaining their role
* Reminding the foster to submit weekly foster reports
* Asking the foster to submit photos/web stories as needed
* Answering any questions the foster might have (the FC may need to ask another volunteer if they do not know the answer and then relay the answer back to the foster)
* Writing up the Adoption Contract when the foster’s dog is matched
* Gathering up all vet records for the dog being adopted to include with the contract

**ADOPTION POLICIES**

**Fence requirement** – All adoptive and foster homes must have a fenced yard. Exceptions may be made for appropriate senior goldens (age 8+). There are no minimum height requirements but shorter fences may limit the choice of dogs that can be matched to that home as we will try to ensure no jumpers or escape artists go to a home with a shorter fence. Electric or Invisible fencing does not suffice as a primary barrier under GRRs fencing policy. Goldens love to chase things. An excited dog will forget about the shock or decide the shock is worth the fun and chase the deer, ball, child, etc. right out of the yard regardless. What they won't do is come back into the yard because, now that the excitement of the chase is over, they know the shock is coming. In addition, there have been reports of dogs "freezing" at the transmitter line and getting shocked over and over again. In addition, this type of fencing only affects the animal wearing the special collar. It does not keep things ***out*** of the yard. It won't stop other dogs, animals, people, etc. from coming into the yard and harming, attacking, or stealing the dog.

**Dog Door** – Dog doors are not an immediate rejection, however, the applicant must agree to keep the dog door plated or blocked when no one is at home.

**Children** – In general we will not adopt any dog to families with children age 5 years or under and only dogs age 2+ to families with kids age 8 and under. Exceptions may be made if the family has proven experience with large dogs and children. Exceptions will be at the Adoption Team’s discretion.

**Trucks** – The dog may never be allowed to ride in the open bed of a truck, crated or not. If in a convertible with the top down the dog must be in a vehicle harness (seat belt) designed for dogs.

**Leash** – The dog must always be on leash when in an unfenced area.

**Spay/Neuter** – All GRR dogs will be spayed/neutered before being adopted out. Only exceptions are puppies too young to alter at the time of adoption in which case adopter must have the puppy altered when it is of appropriate age and must submit proof of same to GRR. All resident dogs belonging to applicant must be spayed/neutered before they can adopt a GRR dog. Exceptions may be made in the case of medical issues which would make it potentially hazardous to sedate the dog for surgery (epilepsy, sensitivity to anesthesia, etc.). This policy is based on responsibility and ethics. As a rescue group we see hundreds of unwanted animals and part of our mission is to educate about adoption and spay/neuter. To adopt a dog to a home with unaltered pets would go against what we represent.

**Out of Area** – Gold Ribbon Rescue’s main service area is Austin, San Antonio and all areas between and immediately surrounding. If we have an active Home Visit volunteer at the time someone applies we may be able to consider applications from Corpus Christi, San Angelo, Houston, Dallas and a few other areas. Check with the Home Visit Coordinator for current HV volunteer coverage. Refer inquiries from people outside our area to GR rescues in their area. *We do not adopt out of state and we do not ship dogs*. Anyone wanting to adopt from areas outside our main service area must be willing to drive to wherever the dog is to meet/adopt the dog (assuming we have checked and can conduct a Home Visit in their area).

**Giving GR as a gift** – Applicants who want to adopt a dog as a surprise for a family member should be informed that we do conduct a home visit at which all family members must be present. Once matched to a dog all family members must be present for the meet.

**In While Gone** – The dog must ALWAYS be kept indoors when home alone. Leaving the dog in an enclosed porch or sunroom is not an appropriate option unless the room is temperature controlled and free of hazards.

**Hunting** – GRR does not have a policy against hunting, however, we do have a policy that the adopted dog must always be on lead outside fenced areas which would make hunting difficult. Also most rescue dogs likely would not be suitable to train as hunting dogs. If someone specifically wants a hunting dog they should be directed to locate a reputable hunting dog breeder.

**Renters/Apartment dwellers** – If an applicant rents the Adoption Director will confirm landlord permission before moving the application forward to the phone interview. If they are in an apartment or condo with no fence they would fall under the fencing policy outlined above. However, we have come to realize that many apartment dwellers tend to ensure their dogs get more exercise than people with fenced yards as they have no options but to walk their dogs and go to dog parks or other enclosed areas for off leash exercise. The Adoption Team will review each of these applications on their own merit and determine if it appears to be a dog savvy, active family in which case it will be the Adoption Teams decision to “bend” the no fence policy and allow the applicant to be considered for a younger dog.

**Red flags** – There are “red flag” questions on the phone interview form. Certain answers to these could result in a denied application or may just flag the Adoption Director to have a conversation with the applicant to obtain more details or a commitment to abide by GRR policy before moving the applicant forward for a Home Visit. Some red flags are: renters who do not have landlord permission to have a dog; dog will be left outdoors at night or when no one is home; dog will ride in the back of an open truck; unfenced yard and asking for a young dog; plan on breeding dogs; all family members not on board with adopting a dog; resident dog(s) not spayed/neutered.

**Application Process**

**Submitting an application** – Anyone wishing to adopt or foster must start the process by going to the GRR website (www.grr-tx.com) and filling out the on-line adoption application. There is a $10.00 application fee which will be taken off the cost of adoption when/if the applicant adopts a dog from GRR. Those wishing to foster and previous adopters can submit their application without paying the application fee. Once the fee is paid (if applicable) and the application submitted it will go to the Adoption Director for review. She will either forward to a volunteer to conduct a phone interview or will email the applicant for further information about an issue on the application or with a reason why GRR cannot adopt to them (typically for one of the Red Flag issues covered under the Adoption Policies section).

**Phone Interview** – Full instructions for conducting a phone interview will be sent to volunteers wishing to participate in this activity. All applicants (with the exception of some repeat adopters) will require a phone interview. The Adoption Director will assign a volunteer to conduct the interview. The volunteer will call the applicant (only one member of the household needs to participate) and conduct an interview using the Phone Interview Form located on the GRR website. This is the first step for the applicant and typically their first contact with a GRR volunteer so they are often excited and eager to have their interview.

**Home visits** – Full instructions for conducting a home visit will be sent to volunteers wishing to participate in this activity. Basically, all applicants (with the exception of some repeat adopters) will require a home visit. ALLfamily members living in the home including resident pets must be present for the home visit. Home visit volunteers must bring a golden with them on the visit. We want to see how all family members react/interact with the visiting golden. Also the volunteer golden acts as a “demo dog” for the HV volunteer to demonstrate proper grooming and how to use/fit different types of training collars/leads. The same volunteer cannot be used for both the phone interview and the home visit. Having different volunteers gives the Matchmakers more insight and more information for making the best match. The volunteer conducting the home visit cannot be a close friend or family member of the applicant.

**NOTE:** At the end of both the Phone Interview Form and the Home Visit Form there are fields available for the GRR volunteer to add their own thoughts, feelings and comments about the interview. We have found that “gut feelings” are real and to pay attention to them. These fields are the volunteers chance to tell GRR about any feelings they had during the interview, good or bad, and provides very valuable information. Remember our first duty is the well-being of the dogs, so if an applicant just does not “feel right”, even if you can’t quite put your finger on why, we want to know about that. Your thoughts and insight are very valuable to ensuring we find the very best homes for our dogs

**The application process: Adoption vs. Fostering** - The interview and home visit for a foster application is handled the same as for an adoption application since so many foster homes end up adopting at some point. Both adoptive homes and foster homes must submit an application for initial review and then go through a phone interview and home visit and the forms submitted for each will be reviewed by the Adoption Team. Once the team has approved the applicant they will be sent an email either welcoming them to the foster team or letting them know they are approved for adoption and have moved on to the matching stage.

**Process for repeat adopters** – If the adopter is still in the same home and has not had any major life changes (a new baby/child, marriage, divorce, etc.) they can skip the interview/home visit process and move directly to matching. If they have moved and have had no major life changes we will skip the phone interview and full home visit and just send a volunteer out for a “fence check” to ensure the new yard is secure and safe. Regardless if they have moved or not, if there have been any major life changes or a significant amount of time has passed since last adoption, we will skip the phone interview but do a full home visit.

**Matching – Adoption**

**The Matching Process** – GRR has a team of Matchmakers who work very hard to make the best possible matches for our dogs and approved families. They review all the information about each dog and each approved family to ensure the best possible fit. They take into consideration a multitude of factors such as age of children, age of GRR dog, resident pets, the experience of the family, work schedules and on and on. Once a match has been determined the matchmaker will consult with the foster family to ensure they agree with the match or listen to concerns. If foster home agrees with the match the matchmaker will discuss the dog with the adopter, disclosing everything we know about the dog including any known medical or behavior issues. If the family decides they would like to meet the dog the matchmaker will send a “match email” to the “surrender2” and “fostercoordinator” groups advising of the upcoming meet. This will give the FC time to write up the contract and pull vet records together to be ready for the meet as well as keeping the core volunteer group informed of potential adoptions.

**Handling a meet** – Once the match is made the foster family will contact the potential adoptive family to set up a meet, typically done at the foster home although arrangements can be made to have the meet at the adopters home if needed. Everyone living in the potential home *must* attend the meet including resident dogs (cats or other small animals do not need to attend the meet). It is crucial for everyone to attend the meet to help ensure a good match with the people and resident dog(s). We all know that pretty much every dog pulls at the heartstrings upon initial meeting so we ask the potential adopter to meet the dog than take a step back to make sure this is really the right dog for them. They should have the meet and then go back home and decide if this dog is the right fit for them, if so they can go back first thing the following morning and pick up their new dog. If they are driving a distance to meet the dog we will not expect them to make the trip twice but do ask that they meet the dog than maybe go somewhere nearby for a soda/coffee or just take a walk and think about the appropriateness of the match. Again, if it is a good match they can go back and pick up their new dog that same day. If either the foster family or the adopter does not feel it is a good fit they should contact their matchmaker and let them know.

**Contracts/Adoption Fee** – The Foster Coordinator will provide a contract to the foster home prior to the meet along with copies of any vet records GRR has for the dog. Two copies of the contract will be provided (or should be printed off if the contract was sent via email). The adopter should be given a copy of the contract along with the copies of the vet records. The other copy of the contract needs to be signed and initialed where indicated by the adopter. The adoption fee MUST be paid before the dog leaves with the new family, absolutely no exceptions. They can pay by check or can use a credit card by paying on line via the GRR website. The foster will mail the signed contract and the check to the appropriate GRR addresses as outlined in the match email.

**GR Identification** – Encourage new adopters to keep GRR tags on the dogs’ collar always. They should also have an ID tag with new owner info, current rabies tag and micro-chip tag on the collar at all times. If the dog should ever get loose these tags will likely make the difference between getting him home again or having him lost forever.

**Micro chipping** – All GRR dogs will be micro-chipped prior to adoption. The chip will be registered to GRR. The new owner should contact micro-chip company to update the chip registration with their information. We strongly suggest they leave GRR as a secondary contact with the micro-chip company. Should the dog become lost while the family is away GRR would be contacted and can keep the dog safe until the owner returns home.

**After the Adoption**

**The Adjustment Period** - If an adoption is going to fail, it is typically during the adjustment period so we do everything we can to educate our families about what to expect and what not to expect.

• Set your expectations low. People often set higher standards for a new dog than they do for their human counterparts.
• Your new dog will not know where the door is. He will not understand you only want him to go potty “on this side” of the yard unless you diligently work with him for weeks.
• Your new dog will not know his new name for a while.
• Do not let your new dog off leash. Would you go to an open field and let your child loose?
• Do not expect your new dog to know how to walk up and down stairs or how to swim in the pool the first week you bring him home. He may not have ever seen these things before. It is up to you to patiently teach him.
• Your current dog and your new dog may not become best friends over night. That’s ok. Do you love everyone you meet right away?
• Your current dog and your new dog may squabble over toys, affection and food. It’s up to us humans to anticipate this and set up an environment for success.
• Your current dog and new dog may have a fight. But they typically forgive and forget quickly. We wish as many humans did this.
• Don’t expect your dog to understand immediately that he is not allowed on the couch or bed. That is something you have to teach him. Gently lure him off the couch with yummy treats. **NEVER pull on a collar**. If you find yourself with a stubborn kiddo, gently leash and lead him off the couch/bed.
• Give your new dog time to adjust with just your immediate family for the first few days. As hard as it is not to show off your new pride and joy, don’t bring the neighborhood over to meet him. Let him rest, relax and bond.
• Set realistic expectations for yourself. It is a lot to bring a new dog into your home. It may take a little bit to get used to the big clumsy boy who walks one inch behind you at all times. It may take a while to remember to put that bread away in a taller cabinet. It may take a while to get used to finding water splashed all over the kitchen floor when he sticks his whole face in the bowl to get a drink, or golden fur bunnies hiding under all the furniture.
• When frustrated, take a deep breath. Be patient. Be kind.
• Before threatening to return a dog to rescue, ask yourself “Have I given this new dog a chance to succeed? I know what this dog has been through, am I setting realistic expectations? Have I tried, and I mean really tried?”

Gold Ribbon Rescue is here to help our adopting families through any issue, no matter how big or small.

**Medical issues after adoption** – GRR does everything possible to ensure all dogs are completely healthy prior to adoption. If there are known health issues or vets have predicted there might be health issue down the road this is all disclosed to adopters prior to signing a contract and such issues are added to the contract. These adopters are aware of any ongoing or future issues and have agreed to be responsible for same. On very rare occasion a medical issue may crop up shortly after adoption that was unknown or undetected at the time of adoption. GRR will absolutely take the dog back if the adopter is unwilling or unable to provide the needed medical care. If the adopter wants to keep the dog there may times when GRR will help with some medical expenses. This is at the discretion of the Board of Directors.

**Behavior issues after adoption** – Very similar to medical issues. GRR does everything possible to ensure known behavior issues have been identified and disclosed to adopters. Most behavior issues are minor and are handled through basic obedience training provided by the foster family. If more extensive training is needed GRR will provide training to the dog and foster family by a certified trainer and lessons learned will be passed along to the adoptive home. If behavior issues were undetected until after adoption (such as storm phobia) GRR will work with the adoptive family to provide guidance and training tips. GRR may set up sessions with a certified trainer at GRR expense at the discretion of the Board of Directors. As always, we will take the dog back if training is not an option for the adoptive family or if the training does not provide the desired results.

**Bits and Pieces**

**Using GRR email** – Be professional. Be aware! If you are included on any of the GRR group email lists and an email comes in from someone outside of GRR and you want to comment on that email to the rest of the group please ensure you have removed the senders email address before responding. If a question is asked and you are not sure of the answer please ask another volunteer before responding or let someone else answer. Always be aware of who is copied on an email; do not share personal information about an adopter or potential adopter; do not share information about a dog if you do not know who/why someone is asking.

If GRR is contacted by someone claiming we have their dog, **do not respond**. Pass the information to the GRR Board and the Board will handle the situation.

**Your conduct as a GRR representative** - When corresponding or meeting with someone as a GRR volunteer always be courteous and professional, remember you are an extension of the organization and your interaction will determine how they will view the entire organization. We all know how difficult it can be when dealing with a clueless, neglectful or even cruel surrendering owner but must always remember our number one goal is the safety and well-being of the dogs. Be professional and courteous until we have the dog safely in our care, other volunteers will always lend an ear when you need to vent, we all understand.

**Vaccinations** – For puppies here are some rough guidelines on what vaccines will be needed:

9-22 weeks old: Distemper, Hepatitis, Parainfluenza, and Parvovirus (“DHPP”) usually given in one shot spaced 3-4 weeks apart.  Puppies should receive at least 3 DHPPs with at least one at 22 weeks or older in case the maternal antibodies were particularly long-lasting.

6 Months old: Rabies (Texas law may require it earlier).

Optional: Bordetella (Kennel Cough). There are several strains of Kennel Cough and the Bordetella vaccine may or may not cover the particular current strain. However, many boarding kennels, daycares and groomers require certification of Bordetella vaccination.

**Imperative: Heartworm preventative!** Some vets start at 8 weeks of age, we usually start at 3 months.  Heartgard works well. Be careful using products that cover everything including the kitchen sink although manufacturers would dearly love for you to embrace their products. We assault our pets daily with housecleaning chemicals, lawn and gardening chemicals and poisons, etc.  Try to use the bare minimum you can get by with in fighting diseases, fleas, etc.

Corona and Lyme vaccine are not recommended.

**Vaccinations for adult dogs**: The adult dog should get a DHPP booster at 2 years of age and from then on once a year. The rabies vaccination is given, after the initial Rabies vaccination at 6 months, every 3 years. If the dog is due for DHPP and Rabies at the same time, make sure to administer vaccinations at least 2 weeks apart.

However!!!! (Please read on)

Vaccine Titers

No one knows exactly how long the effect of a vaccination lasts. The vaccine companies make recommendations to veterinarians as to how frequently they think that vaccines should be given, and most veterinarians pass this information on to their clients in good faith. The vaccine company — which profits from the administration of vaccines — is probably not the best source of that information. However, there has been very little study of how often vaccines are really needed.

Homeopathic veterinarians believe in vaccines for pets, but they do not recommend they be given quite so frequently. They also recommend the use of titers to determine just how much immunity a given animal has toward a disease. A vaccine titer is a blood test that is used to determine a ratio of immunity. The lab that performs the test usually comes up with a value that tells how much of a response the dog's body has had to that particular part of the vaccine. This provides the vet with information about whether revaccination is warranted or not.

Titers are usually checked every year to determine whether the dog is still carrying immunity to that particular disease. Arguments among conventional and holistic veterinarians abound because no one can decide just how much immunity is enough. Most homeopathic vets say that any immunity is immunity and is enough to justify not revaccinating. Most conventional vets, on the other hand, say that the risk of contracting these diseases is real and probable without frequent (yearly or every other year) vaccination. Deciding the right approach for your Golden is tricky. Everyone wants to do the right thing and protect their Goldens from these awful diseases. No one can give you absolute answers, and no one wants to face the consequences of making the wrong decision.

Rabies is the only vaccination that is required by law to be done every 3 years, and there is no effective Rabies titer available at the moment.

**GRR dogs as Therapy or Service/Assistance dogs** – Occasionally GRR will receive an inquiry about adopting a dog through GRR to be trained as a service dog. They should be directed to seek a dog through a recognized service dog organization as service dogs are typically trained from puppies for the particular form of assistance needed. The training is can be a months or even year’s long process and the dog must be evaluated and deemed suitable for such training. On the other hand many dogs adopted through GRR have gone on to become wonderful therapy dogs bringing much joy to the people they visit. Often people do not understand there is a difference between a service/assistance dog and a therapy dog, following is some helpful information regarding various types of assistance dogs and an explanation of a therapy dog.

Assistance Dog International, the policy making and educational organization for national and international assistance dog programs, identifies 3 categories of dogs that assist people with medical/physical challenges. They are:

1) Guide Dogs for the blind or visually impaired. These dogs assist by avoiding obstacles, stopping at curbs, steps and/or uneven surfaces and negotiating traffic. Occasionally a combination of a Service/Guide Dog is trained to assist the client with daily living activities and to guide them when they travel independently.
Most Guide Dog organizations selectively breed Labrador Retrievers, Golden Retrievers or crosses between these two breeds.

2) Hearing Dogs for the deaf or hard of hearing assist by alerting individuals to a variety of household sounds such as a knock at the door or a doorbell, alarm clock, oven buzzer, telephone, crying baby, name call or smoke alarm. The dogs are trained to make physical contact and lead their deaf partner to the source of the sound.  They are generally mixed breed small dogs and are often acquired from animal shelters. They must be energetic and ready to work the instant they hear a sound and must be friendly people-oriented dogs.

3) Service Dogs are used by people with disabilities other than visual or hearing impairments. These dogs are specially trained to help mitigate many different types of disabilities. They are trained to work with people who use power or manual wheelchairs, have balance related issues, various types of autism, need seizure alert or response, or need to be alerted to medical issues like low blood sugar or have psychological or psychiatric disabilities. Service dogs frequently learn as many as eighty commands to include retrieving objects, pulling wheelchairs, opening or closing doors, turning light switches off and on, barking to indicate help is needed, finding another person and leading that person to the handler, assisting ambulatory persons to walk, and many other individualized tasks. Most service dog organizations train Labrador Retrievers, Golden Retrievers or a cross between the two although many other breeds have proven to be successful service dogs.

Service animals are working animals, not pets. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, businesses and organizations that serve the public must allow people with disabilities to bring their service animals into all areas of the facility where customers are normally allowed to go. This federal law applies to all businesses open to the public, including restaurants, hotels, taxis and shuttles, grocery and department stores, hospitals and medical offices, theaters, health clubs, parks, and zoos.

Therapy Dogs are not assistance dogs and do not have public access by law. They are usually personal pets of their handlers and accompany their handlers to sites they visit. Therapy Dogs must meet specific criteria for health, grooming and behavior. Other animals besides dogs can be Therapy Animals. Therapy Dog Teamshelp children, hospice families, the aged, the debilitated, those in substance recovery and all number of life crisis situations.

**Volunteer Training Sessions** – GRR is always in need of volunteers in a variety of capacities. There will typically be 2-3 volunteer training sessions per year and anyone wishing to learn more about volunteering is welcome to attend. We try to hold 1-2 sessions in the Austin area and 1 in the San Antonio area. Upcoming training sessions will be posted on the GRR website.

**Volunteer Opportunities** – There are many ways you can help GRR. There are areas to fit everyone’s schedule and you can volunteer to help in as many areas as works for you. If you have just a few hours per month or a few hours per week, or if you prefer to work more with people or more with the dogs there are opportunities for you. Here are some of the ways you can help GRR:

 Fostering (always the most needed area)

 Foster Coordinator

 Respite Foster Care (taking care of a current foster dog when foster family is out of town)

Intake Team

 Adoption Team

 Matchmaker

 Phone Interview Volunteer

 Home Visit Volunteer

 Intake Evaluations

 Transportation

 Events

 Fundraising

 Grant Writing

 Web Page

 Writer (web stories/newsletter)

 Medical Team

 Follow Up Interviews

**Educational Sessions** – GRR strongly believes in education to help people be good dog owners and to help owners teach their dogs to be good canine citizens. The volunteers that make GRR run have a vast store of combined knowledge and experience and are always willing to answer questions and provide tips. We try to provide several educational session every year covering a wide variety of topics and open to all GRR volunteers and members. Some will include dogs some will be human only and may be taught by GRR volunteers, professional trainers or veterinarians.

**Fundraising** – GRR is a 100% volunteer organization funded completely through adoption fees, donations, membership fees, occasional grants and fundraising. There are various events throughout the year as well as raffles and auctions. Pleas to help build the Extraordinary Golden Fund are sent periodically as needed. The EGF was established to help goldens with extraordinary medical needs such as hip or back surgery. Thanks to our generous donors GRR has never had to turn away a dog due to medical needs.

**Events** – As mentioned above GRR hosts various events throughout the year both to raise funds and to provide a forum for volunteers and adoptive families to socialize and have a good time. Nearly all events are open to dogs with the exception of the annual Holiday party which is an adult only event. We are always looking for new events so feel free to share ideas!