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Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist



About Dogs LLC

Behavioral Consulting &
Relationship Training

What to Expect from a Behavioral Consultation and How to Prepare for the Appointment

Thank you for inquiring about the behavioral consultation services offered through About Dogs LLC. Dr. Ward is experienced in addressing the behavioral problems of dogs and the concerns of their guardians. The goal of the behavioral appointment is to help you to understand your dog's behavior and to help you and your dog to live together more comfortably and safely.

Managing Your Dog's Behavior While You Wait for Your Appointment

Because of the shortage of qualified, board-certified behaviorists available, there may be a wait time to be seen for an appointment. In between now and our appointment, please manage your dog and his/her environment to avoid the rehearsal of the problem behaviors. You don't want your dog practicing, and inadvertently getting better at, those problem behaviors that you will ultimately be working to change. This involves identifying the triggers that lead to the undesirable behaviors and avoiding them when possible. For example:

- Don't pet the dog while sleeping if this has led to a bite in past.
- Avoid leaving your dog home alone in cases of separation anxiety. If your dog gets anxious when you are away, he or she may do better at daycare if your dog likes other dogs, you may be able to take your dog to work with you, or your dog may do better with a house sitter rather than being left home alone. In some cases, your dog's veterinarian may recommend situational anti-anxiety medication to use when you absolutely must leave your dog home alone.
- If your dog is aggressive towards visitors, keep her/him crated or behind sturdy gates to avoid an unwanted interaction.
- Avoid walks or walk during off hours if you dog is reactive to other dogs on walks.
- If you have two or more dogs fighting in the home, use gates, crates, and/or leashes to keep them separated.

Once Dr. Ward meets with you and she learns more about your dog, she'll be able to make specific recommendations based on your dog's temperament, home environment, and behavioral history.

How to Prepare for the Initial Appointment

Appointments in Your Home:

Please make sure that you haven't fed your dog a full meal for at least 6 hours prior to the appointment. Dr. Ward uses food treats during the appointment, so it's important that your dog is slightly hungry and motivated to work for food. You may want to have 1 cup of your dog's favorite treats available. Please let Dr. Ward know in advance if your dog has any food allergies or restrictions.

Ten-fifteen minutes before the appointment, please have your dog is in a crate, behind gates, in a back room, or outside in the yard. You can provide a special chewy or a Kong toy stuffed with a small amount of canned dog food or peanut butter to help keep your dog occupied. Shortly after arriving for the appointment, Dr. Ward will ask you to bring your dog out so that they can meet.

Appointments Online (ZOOM):

For online appointments, please make sure that you download the latest version of Zoom and familiarize yourself with the software prior to our appointment. If you aren't familiar with Zoom, you can read more at <https://zoom.us/>. I recommend spending some time getting comfortable with Zoom prior to our actual appointment if you've not used it before.

Make sure that you have enough working space around you for the appointment. Dr. Ward may demonstrate techniques and then watch you perform them with your own dog and provide needed feedback.

For remote appointments, video sent in advance of the appointment is STRONGLY recommended when possible. Specifically,

- Some video of your dog's problem behaviors, but only if you can get video safely.
- Video of your dog engaged in his/her daily routine.
- Video showing the layout of your home can help me to make management recommendations as needed.

The Initial Behavioral Appointment

Before your appointment, Dr. Ward will review your dog's behavioral history form and any relevant video. The behavioral consultation will take place at your home (for in-person appointments) or remotely (online via video or by phone) and lasts approximately 2.0 hours. It may take more than one appointment to thoroughly address all behavioral problems if multiple, complex issues are present. During the consultation, Dr. Ward will discuss the concerns described in your behavioral history form and observe your dog's behavior. For in-person appointments, she may perform behavioral tests to better assess your dog's personality. Behavioral tests are not designed to frighten or provoke your dog, only to provide clarification of your dog's behavioral responses if needed.

Dr. Ward will discuss motivations and factors contributing to your dog's behavior problem and formulate an individualized treatment plan. Treatments always include reward-based behavioral modification exercises, humane training and control aids, and environmental management.

After Your Initial Appointment

A written comprehensive treatment plan will be provided within 1 week of the appointment. A copy of the plan will also be sent to your dog's primary care veterinarian. After the initial consultation, we welcome your e-mail communications for progress reports, clarification, or questions. Should you need more extensive support before your next appointment (see follow-up appointments, below) a video or telephone appointment may be recommended.

Follow-Up Appointments

Follow-up sessions are almost always recommended. Behavioral problems often have complex causes, and, therefore, often no quick-fix solutions. Although some dogs show improvement very rapidly, long-term changes in your dog's behavior will take time. Follow-up appointments are important because they allow Dr. Ward to monitor your dog's progress and adjust the treatment plan as the dog's behavior and family dynamics change.

In-person follow-up appointments typically run 60-90 minutes, and remote appointments run 30-60 minutes. The number of follow-up appointments is dependent upon the nature of the problem(s), the animal(s), and the family, but most cases benefit from an average of 1-3 follow-up appointments.

Cancellation and Rescheduling

About Dogs LLC appreciates the courtesy of early notification if you are unable to keep your scheduled appointment. Please provide a minimum of a 72-hour notice of cancellation (or change) for all returning appointments to avoid a cancellation fee. An initial appointment cancelled within two weeks of the scheduled appointment will be assessed a cancellation fee.