**Dog- Dog Play Guidelines**

**for GDB Training Dogs in Foster Care\***

Created 23 JUNE 2022; Updated 30 AUG 2022

**First things first! Before play can begin, set up a plan for success…**

* **Introduce the Dogs**
* On leash, neutral environment (park across street, front sidewalk), when possible.
* Parallel walks are also helpful to create familiarity in a comfortable manner.
* **Establish structure and routine for the foster dog**

(Confinement management to establish and pattern desired house & relief behavior)

* + Ensure the dogs have their own space.
  + Keep energy in home low. Only allow “zoomies” (playful sprinting with quick turns) outside in an enclosed yard.
  + Settling behavior – FC dog remains quiet and calm when on tie down or in crate.

**Now that a foundation of behavior and familiarity have been established, play may be introduced …**

* + After a few days of settling in and co-habitating together, structured play may be introduced between resident dog and FC dog, if both are compatible and healthy.
  + Dogs must wear a collar with a “quick-release” feature (in case a jaw gets caught).
  + Keep intro session short.
  + Have both dogs on leash and allow short dabbles of interaction interspersed with recalls (‘Fido, Come!’). Food reward (1 kibble) may be used for coming promptly. If dog is excitable, asking for a ‘sit’ behavior can be calming. ‘OK’ is a verbal cue to release the dog back to playtime. Rinse and repeat.

\*\*Note: If the FC dog’s recall response is slow or non-existent, please notify the instructor\*\*

* + If dogs are compatible and responsive to the handler, off leash time may begin. Start with a long drag line to mimic off leash, while maintaining the ability to manage the dog as needed. If dog remains appropriate and responsive, no long line may be needed.
  + All play is directly and actively monitored.
  + No toys for initial play sessions off leash.
  + Occasionally call the FC dog to create pauses in play, encourage calm energy, and reinforce recall. For a prompt response (coming on the first call), give a kibble food reward. Offer in a cupped palm to avoid any pinching.
  + Watch for any over arousal in either dog (growling, barking, hackling, jumping up on or mounting other dog), and interrupt play with a recall to help calm the dog. Food reward (kibble) may be used to reinforce a prompt recall.

**Toys may be added once dogs demonstrate appropriate play behavior & recalls**…

* + GDB approved toys (Kong®, Nylabone®, Goughnut®) only – make sure to have more items than there are dogs to ensure a feeling of abundance of toy options.
  + Watch for toy possessive behavior (growling, lip raise, hoarding, stiff body). Recall or re-direct dogs’ attention to something more desirable and then separate the dogs and pick up the toys.
  + If either dog shows over arousal or resource guarding behavior during play, stop immediately and speak with the instructor assigned to this dog.

\*\* For any questions about interactions between dogs in the home,

please reach out to a GDB Training staff member.

**Thank you!**

* GDMI: Please hand out these guidelines and provide coaching to the FCP, including a conversation and a demo of what appropriate play looks like, how to conduct recalls, and give food reward (especially for hard food takers).