



PSI's Global Standards for Professional Pet-Sitting and Dog-Walking Businesses

Purpose:

Pet Sitters International (PSI) has been the leading educational organization for the professional pet-sitting industry since 1994. *PSI's Global Standards for Professional Pet-Sitting and Dog-Walking Businesses* establishes public, baseline best practices for professional pet-sitting and dog-walking businesses, elevating the industry and ensuring consistent, safe, and ethical care for pets and peace of mind for their owners.

Business Legitimacy

The professional pet-sitting and/or dog-walking business owner:

- Operates as a registered and insured business, with required local/state/provincial business licenses and/or permits, if required.
 - Maintains separate business finances for clarity and compliance and accurately claims income and files business taxes as required by law.
 - Maintains active membership in professional and educational associations, such as PSI, to stay informed on best practices, standards, and continuing education opportunities.
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Contracts & Compliance

The professional pet-sitting and/or dog-walking business owner:

- Uses a legally compliant contract (i.e., services agreement) with all clients to document agreed-upon terms of service and establish clear expectations for both parties.
- Complies with labor classification laws (i.e., independent contractor [IC] vs. employee rules) and any federal, state or provincial regulations and ensures staff members understand their classification.
- Adheres to payment card industry data security or similar standards if accepting credit/debit payments and ensures they use business accounts for any payment processors used.
- Practices fair recruitment, hiring and management practices, ensuring they do not discriminate against a person due to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin,

citizenship, disability, veterinary/military status, age, genetic information or any protected classification established by law.

- Follows advertising and communication regulations, including FTC endorsements/testimonials and TCPA texting/email rules, as applicable.
 - Understands and upholds local ordinances and laws applicable to animals in their care, including policies regarding animal abuse and neglect.
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Insurance & Risk Management

The professional pet-sitting and/or dog-walking business owner:

- Maintains adequate general liability insurance specific to pet sitting/dog walking that covers all services they provide and includes care, custody or control (CCC) coverage that provides sufficient coverage for both the pets in their CCC and their clients' personal property.
 - Obtains bonding or coverage for theft, as appropriate.
 - Obtains workers' compensation insurance, as required, and educates all team members on injury-prevention strategies.
 - Seeks professional advice on additional business coverage options (e.g., cyber liability, employment practices liability, non-owned automobile coverage) that may be needed depending upon business structure, size and procedures.
 - Seeks current information on common insurance claims and develops protocols to mitigate risks and reduce likelihood of insurance claims.
 - Documents all incidents and reports any claim promptly; maintains accurate records for accountability and continuous improvement.
 - Reviews insurance policies annually to ensure adequate protection for business and clients.
 - Can provide proof of clear criminal history, when requested, and adequately screens and obtains proof of clear criminal history for any team member assigned to enter clients' homes.
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Animal Care & Stewardship

The professional pet-sitting and/or dog-walking business owner:

- Learns as much as possible about the routines, behaviors and needs of animals in their care and documents and maintains the pet profile and care instructions.
- Has adequate experience and training in caring for pets and is knowledgeable in pet behavior, first aid and care to ensure safety and well-being of pets in their care.
- Adheres to humane, evidence-based care practices to minimize pets' stress and foster a positive, trusting relationship between pet and care provider.
- Monitors animals closely for signs of stress, illness, or injury and responds promptly and

appropriately, including contacting the pet owner or veterinarian when needed.

- Demonstrates commitment to continuing education and professional development for themselves and team members, ensuring skills and knowledge remain current and aligned with industry standards and pet-care best practices.

Health, Sanitation & Safety

The professional pet-sitting and/or dog-walking business owner:

- Demonstrates competency in pet handling (i.e., safe leash skills, body language recognition, and other safe-handling protocols) and ensures all team members demonstrate competency.
- Has up-to-date training in pet first aid and CPR.
- Uses appropriate biosecurity protocols (i.e., handwashing, sanitation, footwear, outbreak communication), as necessary, to reduce disease spread and/or cross-contamination between households.
- Implements clear protocols to ensure safety of owner and team, including but not limited to policies and clear reporting procedures regarding animal-related injuries, zoonotic diseases, chemical hazards, ergonomic strains, and unsafe environments in clients' homes.

Emergency Preparedness

The professional pet-sitting and/or dog-walking business owner:

- Has a documented contingency plan for common scenarios (e.g., pet illness/injury, sitter illness/injury, inclement weather, natural disasters, lost keys).
- Obtains veterinary notification/emergency pet-care authorization and emergency pet guardianship forms from all clients authorizing appropriate care decisions in the owner's absence.
- Establishes an emergency backup and client communication plan for personal illness or emergencies that prevent them or team members from completing assignments or prevent clients from returning as planned.
- Ensures that all clients and team members are notified of contingency and emergency plans and advised of any updates.

Client Security & Privacy

The professional pet-sitting and/or dog-walking business owner:

- Stores keys, alarm codes, and client data securely.

- Does not disclose client personal information, travel details, or household security access to unauthorized parties.
 - Ensures all client information, including contracts, contact information, payment information and visit details, are stored in a secure online portal, password-protected file and/or locked physical location.
 - Takes reasonable precautions to ensure a client's absence from home is not detectable and works with clients to ensure neighbors and local law enforcement officials are notified, as needed, regarding the sitter's permission to access the home.
 - Educates team members on confidentiality and data protection.
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Professional and Ethical Conduct

The professional pet-sitting and/or dog-walking business owner:

- Exhibits courtesy, respect and professionalism in all dealings with clients, staff and industry colleagues to positively represent their business and the pet-sitting industry.
 - Conducts business with honesty and integrity and observes all federal, state and local laws pertaining to their business operations.
 - Sets healthy professional boundaries (e.g., availability, scope of services, communication expectations).
 - Protects their own mental health through workload management and self-care.
 - Works to foster an inclusive work environment with clear anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies and ensures adherence of these policies to ensure the safety of staff and clients.
 - Refrains from slander of competitors, peers, industry organizations and affiliates and follows appropriate venues to provide feedback and/or address concerns in a respectful, constructive manner.
 - Upholds high ethical standards in all aspects of business practice, decision-making, and representation of the profession.
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Client Communication & Reputation

The professional pet-sitting and/or dog-walking business owner:

- Visits any potential client's home prior to accepting an assignment to meet the pets, obtain/record detailed pet information and complete the pet-sitting contract.
- Conducts comprehensive client onboarding (i.e., gathering detailed pet information, medical history, emergency contacts, etc.) and maintains a pet profile for each pet in their care.
- Provides clients with clear service descriptions, visit schedule and pricing before care begins

and ensures clients have been informed of company's policies and procedures regarding liability, payment options, cancellations, veterinary consent, and emergency procedures.

- Sends timely updates to clients during services.
- Encourages and manages client feedback and online reviews with professionalism.
- Responds to any client inquiries and complaints promptly.
- Commits to ethical marketing practice, including not making false claims, promoting misleading offers, or disparaging competitors.

Sustainability & Community Responsibility

The professional pet-sitting and/or dog-walking business owner:

- Implements environmentally responsible practices whenever possible, including proper waste disposal, efficient route planning, and sustainable product and supply choices.
- Builds positive relationships with local contacts including fellow professional pet-care business owners, veterinarians and other industry professionals to strengthen the community pet-care network and educate local pet parents.
- Actively supports and promotes local animal welfare initiatives, encouraging community engagement and awareness among clients, staff, and peers.

About Pet Sitters International

Founded in 1994 by [Patti J. Moran](#), author of *Pet Sitting for Profit*, Pet Sitters International (PSI) is the world's largest educational association for professional pet sitters and dog walkers. PSI's motto is "pet-sitting excellence through education" and the association is dedicated to educating professional pet sitters and dog walkers, and promoting, supporting, and recognizing excellence in the industry. For more than three decades, PSI has been a pioneer in the pet-sitting industry and a trusted educational resource for pet sitters and pet owners alike. Their contributions to the industry include partnering to provide the first-ever business insurance for professional pet sitters, publishing the first-ever magazine for pet sitters, now called *Pet Sitter's World*, introducing the first educational program tailored exclusively for professional pet sitters and developing PSI's CPPS-Certified Professional Pet Sitter® Exam, which provides candidates with the only knowledge-based assessment designed specifically for professional pet sitters. CPPS-Certified Professional Pet Sitter® is a federally-trademarked certification mark. Since its inception, PSI has helped over 40,000 pet lovers start and grow pet-sitting businesses and currently has more than 4,000 member businesses in the United States, Canada, and 20+ other countries. For more information, visit www.petsit.com.