

Foster Care Program Creation and Implementation

Realistic Program Preview

Action Item	Approximate Time Required	Templates and Resources	Impact
Pre-Implementation Planning			
Collect and discuss your organization's data on outcomes for different types of pets	30 minutes or more	For more information on collecting and interpreting data, read ' Every Nose Counts: Using Metrics in Animal Shelters ' and page 5 of Saving Cats and Kittens with a Foster Program	This will enable your organization to determine which populations of pets need foster care the most (neonatal kittens, big dogs, etc.) so that you can build your program based on this.
Create a list of goals for your program and a timeline for achieving them	45 minutes or more	See a template in this document: https://www.alleycat.org/resources/saving-cats-and-kittens-with-a-foster-care-program/	This will enable you to break up tasks (completion of program documents, pilot program begin date, etc.) into meaningful goals and set a timeline that you can follow for achievement.
Create goals and parameters for foster pilot program (dog characteristics, number of dogs, length of time in foster, etc.) and/or Standard Operating Procedures for your program	45 minutes or more		This will enable you to focus the pilot program on a small population of pets who are carefully screened in order to have a successful program pilot. SOPs will enable your organization to run the foster program safely and efficiently.
If needed, create a proposal for the foster program and get approval, if	90 minutes or more		It is considered a national best practice for animal services to have a foster program. Foster programs are

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required.			crucial for lifesaving.
Create a budget for the program		See a template on page 24 of this document: https://www.alleycat.org/resources/saving-cats-and-kittens-with-a-foster-care-program/	This will enable you to estimate the costs of implementing the program and help to make sure you have the funding you need.
If needed, figure out where funding for medical care for pets in foster will come from. For example: -Grants -Request increase medical budget, if needed -Consider process for transferring pets with medical issues to rescue	2 hrs. or more	See document below, Grant Sources for Medical Funding	This will assist your organization in finding the funding to provide medical care for foster pets.
If needed, make a chart of local emergency veterinarians; research them; decide on 3-4 in different areas to contract with; contract with them if needed	2 hrs. or more	See our spreadsheet template for making veterinary clinic comparisons. Read this article about relationships between animal welfare groups and veterinarians.	Many shelter- and rescue-operated clinics do not have the capacity to provide medical care after hours or in the event of an emergency. Contracting with one or several emergency veterinarians will enable your organization to provide emergency medical care on an as-needed basis.

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Determine the process for fosters whose pets need medical care and for spay and neuter of pets in foster care	30 minutes or more		Having a policy for medical care will make it easy and efficient for your foster caregivers to get veterinary care for their foster pet and will clarify the process for spay and neuter of foster pets.
Create a system to track medical appointments and vaccinations	Edit from template: 10-30 min.	This can be done via spreadsheet, shelter software, Maddie's Pet Assistant, Volgistics , etc. Scheduling apps like Acuity and Fullslate (see their tutorial) may be helpful.	This will help the foster coordinator to schedule medical appointments and keep up with vaccinations more efficiently.
Create foster application or edit from template	Edit from template: 15-30 min.	See example from Austin Animal Center	This is the first step in onboarding foster caregivers.
Draft foster agreement or edit from template; get approval if required	Edit from template: 15-30 min.	See example from Pima Animal Care Center	This will provide a legal framework for the responsibilities and requirements of foster caregiver and your organization. You may want to have this document reviewed by a lawyer.
Draft foster manual or edit from template; get approval if required	Edit from template: 1 hour or more	You can use Austin Animal Center's manual as a template	This will provide foster caregivers with an understanding of program basics, what to expect, their roles and their responsibilities.
Start volunteer & foster Facebook group	10-30 minutes	(See page 17 of Marketing Techniques for Adoption from Foster Care for sample group guidelines)	This will enable your shelter or rescue to learn more about the animals in your care. It will make posting on social easier much less time-intensive, as photos, videos stories and bios can often be copied, edited and posted

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			to your organization's main page.
Purchase or request supplies, if needed: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Martingale collars- Harnesses- Leashes- Crates- Etc.	20 minutes or more	Consider creating an Amazon wish list.	Having foster supplies available to foster caregivers will help to increase safety and make it easier for people to foster.
Create foster emergency phone line and decide how it will be staffed	30 minutes	Google Voice	This will enable the foster coordinator(s) to respond to any foster-related emergencies in a timely manner.
Edit job description for foster assistant; recruit and train foster assistants	2 hours or more	Here are several job descriptions for foster assistants and teams	Creating a specific job description will make the qualifications for responsibilities associated with the foster mentor/volunteer job clear. Foster mentors/volunteers will help the foster program run more efficiently, saving the foster coordinator's time and allowing more pets to be placed into foster.
Create and train fosters on how to use a Foster on Deck system	1 hour or more	Read this article describing the system and use Humane Rescue Alliance's template for a Foster on Deck spreadsheet	This will allow you to know at a glance which foster caregivers are ready for which fosters and can help save time.
Set up Maddie's Pet Assistant	20 minutes or more	Maddie's Pet Assistant	This app will help you better communicate with foster caregivers and keep abreast of medical needs and records.

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<p>Create a way to track the data for your foster program.</p>	<p>1 hour or more</p>	<p>Here is a spreadsheet that Humane Rescue Alliance uses to track data on their 'In Real Life' program.</p>	<p>Tracking data will help you get a better understanding of information about your foster program and how successful it is (which pets are being fostered, for how long, by whom, etc.)</p>
<h3>Ongoing Tasks</h3>			
<p>Touch base with fosters who email and call with questions or concerns</p>	<p>30 minutes or more per day</p>	<p>Maddie's Pet Assistant and foster mentors can be helpful with this.</p>	<p>This will go a long way toward making your foster caregivers feel supported.</p>
<p>Continually recruit fosters</p>	<p>1 hour or more</p>	<p>See ideas for recruitment in the Medium and Large Adult Dog Foster Manual</p>	<p>Recruiting fosters enable the shelter to save more pets by freeing up more kennel space, providing specialized care, and reducing stress on staff and pets. Strategies may include adding a foster page to your website, requesting fosters on social media and networking with the community and its media outlets (see foster program goals, attached).</p>
<p>Onboard new foster caregivers</p>	<p>2 hours per month or more, depending on your process</p>	<p>Here is one template for tracking foster information and completed steps in foster onboarding. Using Google Forms to put orientation/training online is the most efficient way to do this (see example, Best</p>	<p>Onboarding of new foster caregivers can be done on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. Using the shortest amount of time from foster application to onboarding will help ensure that you don't lose any due to the length of the wait.</p>

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		Friends Animal Society-LA's online training). Other ideas include doing orientations on-the-spot or scheduling in-person group orientations. If in-person group orientations are chosen, make sure they are scheduled often and at times convenient for your foster caregivers.	
Send current caregivers lists of pets who need foster caregivers and/or contact caregivers individually about specific pets who need foster care	15 minutes or more, as often as every day	Some shelter software can be automated to send these requests out; we recommend sending pet photos with every request.	Part of your foster coordinator's ongoing duties will be sending out requests for current fosters to take home the pets who need foster care. This can be via email, phone or in person and can include lists of pets needing foster or asking a caregiver personally to take home a particular pet.
Check pets in and out of foster homes	1 hour or more per week	This process includes getting paperwork signed, supplies gathered, signing pets out to foster caregivers and updating computer software to reflect a pet's entry into foster care. Consider training adoptions/customer service staff or foster volunteers to assist with all or part of this task.	This ensures that your organization always has an accurate record of where its pets are located. It includes collecting extra supplies and logging a pet back into your shelter software when the pet returns from foster.

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Edit or create foster profile form that fosters can use to send in behavioral information on their foster pets; send out foster behavioral profiles.	No time, or up to about 20 minutes per week	You can collect information via individual documents or use a Google Form .	This ensures that your organization has accurate behavioral on every pet. This will enable foster caregivers to report information that you need on foster pets' behavior in the home.
Record behavioral and medical information from pets in foster care in the shelter's software	30 minutes or more	Maddie's Pet Assistant can be helpful, as it can send foster profiles out to foster caregivers automatically.	This ensures that your organization has accurate behavioral and medical records on every pet.
Schedule medical vaccines and appointments	15 minutes or more, daily or weekly	Maddie's Pet Assistant can be helpful with scheduling and reminders. For online scheduling, check out Acuity and Fullslate .	This ensures that all of the pets in your organization are vaccinated on time and as healthy as possible. The time this will take depends on your process for medical scheduling and appointments, the number of current fosters and how much of the medical process (giving vaccines, attending appointments, etc.) is the responsibility of the foster coordinator.
Check pets back into the shelter from foster homes	30 minutes or more per week	Consider training adoptions/customer service staff or foster volunteers to assist with this task.	This ensures that you always have an accurate record of where its pets are located. It includes collecting extra supplies and logging a pet back into your shelter software when the pet returns from foster.
Recruit new foster caregivers from the community	20 minutes or more per week	See ideas for recruitment in the Medium and Large Adult Dog Foster Manual	Due to normal foster turnover and the rate of 'foster failure,' recruitment for new foster caregivers should be ongoing in order to keep the program strong.
Check and monitor staff, volunteer & foster Facebook group	10 minutes or more per day		This will enable you to give support as soon as it is needed and find marketing material created by foster

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			caregivers easily.
Track the data for your foster program	10 minutes a day or more	Get more information on data tracking in this document: https://www.alleycat.org/resources/saving-cats-and-kittens-with-a-foster-care-program/	Tracking data will help you get a better understanding of information about your foster program and how successful it is (which pets are being fostered, for how long, by whom, etc.)
Give your foster caregivers The Foster Caregiver Marketing Guide	10 minutes or more	The Foster Caregiver Marketing Guide	Fosters will have a step-by-step guide to writing pet biographies, taking photos, and marketing their foster pets for adoption.
Optional/Miscellaneous			
Create a list of pets urgently needing placement for your organization's website	unknown	Chameleon software allows shelters to list the pets most at risk on Petharbor so that fosters and rescues can help. Example: http://www.laanimalservices.com/volunteer/new-hope/	This will enable you to put the animals who are at highest risk for euthanasia in one place so that fosters, rescues and adopters know who needs help the most.
Train foster caregivers in marketing foster pets	1 hour or more	Create an online training via Google Forms and a video presentation or hold in-person trainings at specified	This will help your fosters to create and post marketing material to help get their fosters adopted without taking up room on the shelter's adoption floor.

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		intervals	
Create and host 'foster' adoption events	1 hour or more per event		Scheduling offsite adoption events at places throughout the community (pet stores, etc.) can help prevent pets in foster care from ever having to come back to the shelter. Offsite events can also help to expand a shelter's adoption capacity.

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Foster Retention

- Assign volunteers to tasks that match their skills
 - Consider start new foster caregivers off with “easier” foster pets; if they are already experienced in a certain area (e.g., dog trainers or experienced neonatal kitten fosters), give them the opportunity to work with that population if they would like
 - Ensure that fosters have the support needed to foster the animal they take home
 - Give experienced, trustworthy foster caregivers the opportunity to become foster mentors or help with the program in other ways
- Provide opportunities to share experiences with other volunteers
 - Create a volunteer & foster social media group where they can share stories and get support
 - Consider hosting ‘happy hours’ or other social events
- Support new volunteers
 - Ensure that fosters have adequate support to provide care for the pets they take home
 - Consider training foster mentors that new fosters can call on for advice and support
- Inform volunteers through regular communication
- Welcome and respect volunteers
- Recognize volunteers
 - Host a volunteer and foster appreciation event once a year and give out awards
 - Post shout-outs on your internal social media page to fosters and volunteers who have gone above and beyond the call of duty
 - Thank them in person often

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Foster Program Marketing Plan Template

Goals

- Create a foster-centric culture with a high number of active foster caregivers per capita (add estimated goal)
- Create awareness in (your community) about (your organization)'s need for foster caregivers and the pets who need foster care

Objectives/Desired Outcomes

- Increase our live release rate
- Increase our number of foster caregivers
- Increase the amount and quality of marketing material that our foster caregivers supply us with
- Increase page likes and engagement on social media by using new, exciting content that highlights pets in foster care

Target Audiences

- Current foster caregivers
- Supporters, staff and volunteers
- Residents of (your community)
- Supporters of shelters, rescues and animal welfare organizations locally and within (state)

Key Messages

- Foster care saves pets' lives
- Becoming a foster caregiver is easy
- In order to save more pets' lives, we need more foster caregivers for all types of pets
- Our community values pets' lives
- Our community believes in foster care and is supportive of the needs of homeless pets

Strategies

- Electronic communication
- Print communication
- News reports

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Tools/Opportunities

- Ask our foster families and volunteers for help:
 - Marketing foster pets for adoption
 - Recruiting new foster caregivers
- Use social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) to communicate key messages and to market animals and events
 - Work foster care into our communications at least once per day
 - Tell foster pets' stories often
- Our website
- Flyers, e-flyers, events and promotions
- Local, state and national conferences

Measurement

- Increases in live outcomes due to foster placement
- Increase in number of active fosters
- Increases in number of pets who have been in some form of foster care
- Decrease in the total length of stay for pets who have been in foster care

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Grant Sources for Medical Funding

Grant Source	Information	Link
ASPCA Anti-Cruelty Grant	These expenses include veterinary care, housing, transport, spay/neuter, and placement*. Requests for such funds are limited to organizations with law enforcement authority having jurisdiction over the case or whose involvement was requested by same	https://www.aspcapro.org/grant/2017/07/20/aspca-anti-cruelty-grants
Bissell Pet Foundation	Veterinary Care Funding grants are awarded for vaccinations, heartworm treatment, FeLV/FIV testing, deworming, blood work, dental, and emergency medical needs up to \$200 per dog and \$100 per cat.	https://www.bissellpetfoundation.org/grant-guidelines
Doris Day Animal Foundation	Currently, many of their grants are focused on assisting senior companion animals, whether it be assisting with their food, care, veterinary costs, or need for adoption.	https://www.dorisdayanimalfoundation.org/grants/guidelines-and-faq
Grey Muzzle Organization	Funds medical care and other programs that increase the potential for senior dogs to be adopted and medical expenses for hospice care dogs.	http://www.greymuzzle.org/grants/about-grey-muzzle-grants

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Healthy Paws Pet Insurance Medical Grants	Go to the bottom of the page, where it says “Apply for a Homeless Pet Medical Grant.” There will be a link where you can contact them to inquire.	https://www.healthypawspetinsurance.com/how-we-help
Ian Somerhalder Foundation	Award decisions are able to be made within one week.	https://www.isfoundation.com/ISFEmergencyMedicalGrant
Pedigree Foundation	Has funded medical supplies and improvements to Isolation rooms in the past	https://www.pedigreefoundation.org/grant-program/
Petfinder Foundation Emergency Medical Grant	Grants of up to \$1,000.00 for one pet’s emergency medical funding	http://www.petfinderfoundation.com/shelters/apply-for-a-grant/
Second Chance Grants from the American Humane Association	Financial assistance to help offset the costs of rescuing animals who are homeless or the victims of human cruelty. To qualify, your rescue group must be a member of American Humane Association.	http://www.americanhumane.org/initiative/second-chance-grants/
In-Kind Donations		
1-800-PetMeds-Cares	1-800-PetMeds Cares™ organizes product donations to shelters and rescues located within the contiguous U.S. and Washington D.C. area. Product donations are comprised of returned items and manufacturers samples, meaning many items may be open or have damaged packaging.	https://www.petmeds.org/request-petmeds-donations/

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Chewy.com	The Chewy.com Rescue and Shelter Network is open to all registered non-profit organizations that specialize in assisting pets in need. By joining our free Rescue Network, your non-profit organization will have access to programs providing donations and fundraising opportunities. Email rescue@chewy.com to join the rescue program.	https://www.chewy.com/app/content/about-us
<h3>Other Possibilities</h3>		
Trupanion Rescue Grants	The Rescue Grant is designed to provide high impact assistance to your shelter or rescue organization in times of need.	https://trupanion.com/shelter/rescue-grant
Amazon	They do not solicit unrequested grant proposals, but if you would like to introduce your organization you can email donationrequests@amazon.com	https://www.amazon.com/p/feature/evmc8u96fp595js