Adult Dog Fostering

AKA “Can I crash on your couch for awhile?”

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Pima Animal Care Center
Tucson, Arizona
Buster's Story

Buster at home

What do we mean when we say ‘foster’?

Getting medium and large adult dogs out of the shelter, off the shelter premises for any length of time for one of many reasons including:

- More humane
- Make space
- Prevent dog from dying
- It’s fun
- Helps get a dog a home
- See the ‘real’ dog
- Show the world how cool this dog is
- AKA market the dog for adoption

Buster at home
How many animals can one shelter send to foster in a year?

• Austin Animal Center – 2,500
• Pima Animal Care Center – 2,100
• Ventura County Animal Services - 2,800
• Kansas City Pet Project – 2,400

In shelters of all sizes, 50% of pets are going to foster!

You need to start a big dog foster program if:

1. Dogs are dying because of lack of space, lack of resources or time limits
2. You have dogs in shelter for more than a week at a time
3. You have dogs that exhibit signs of kennel stress
4. Dogs are dying for ‘behavior’ or because of results of ‘temperament test’
5. You want to increase safety in your shelter
6. You want to increase humane treatment of dogs
7. You need a cost-neutral way to save more dogs
8. You deal with periodic space crises

Successful foster programs:

1. Make most or all adult animals available for foster or adoption
2. Make it as easy to foster as it is to adopt
3. Talk about foster everywhere!
4. Trust their fosters
5. Have a variety of programs
6. Empower fosters to find permanent homes
A word about liability….

• Risk is inherent in anything we do with animals because animals are inherently unpredictable
• You can mitigate risk by having clear, defined processes and procedures
• Full disclosure is your duty to any volunteer or foster caregiver
• A foster caregiver waiver, reviewed by an attorney, helps protect you and your organization

Background

The Maddie’s Fund Adult Dog Foster Study

Over a one-year period, animal shelters place 30 medium and large adult dogs in foster homes, measuring behavior, length of stay and outcomes versus a control group of 30 dogs who stay in shelter.

- Louisville
- Austin
- New York City
- Los Angeles
- Tucson
- Kansas City
- Ventura County

Preliminary results of study:

- Dogs in foster for seven days are significantly more: Happy, content, pleased, confident, sure, assertive, fearless, relaxed, calm and easygoing.
- Dogs in foster for seven days are less anxious, worried and show less of the following behaviors: panting, shaking/trembling, circling, jumping.

The Maddie’s Fund Foster-Centric Project at PACC
Our Maddie’s Fund foster team

Rosio – Medical Needs Pets
Patricia – Adult Dog Foster Coordinator
Post Placement Foster Coordinator

Part 2
Seven ways to get more fosters for big dogs

1. Make all your adult dogs available for foster or adoption
2. Make all your volunteers fosters

3. Talk about foster all the time

4. Make foster pleas public
5. Remove barriers to fostering

6. Make it as easy to foster as it is to adopt

7. Let people foster for any length of time
Part 3
Seven ways to keep your fosters and keep them happy

1. Allow fosters to adopt any dog they foster

2. Allow fosters to adopt OUT any animal they foster
3. Let your volunteers help you!

Ways your volunteers can help:

• Marketing shelter pets to get them to foster
• Taking foster pets to events
• Marketing foster pets
• Identifying dogs who need foster the most
• Being point of contact for fosters
• Meeting potential adopters
• Providing behavioral support
• Providing post adoption follow-up
• Spreading the word about foster!

4. Communicate with fosters

5. Celebrate their successes
6. Have a foster-to-adopt program

7. Let fosters bring dogs back if it doesn’t work out

The bottom line....

Foster is a safe, humane, cost effective alternative to housing medium and large dogs in shelter kennels.

Even the very best shelter is still a place where dogs undergo extreme stress due to living in a near-constant solitary confinement. Foster is the solution to this problem.