



Short-Term Foster Care



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Table of Contents

Short-Term Foster Care	3
Weekend and Overnight Foster Care	4
Sample Guidelines	4
Overnight Foster Process Case Study: Austin Animal Center.....	5
Weekend Foster Process Case Study: Fairfax County Animal Shelter.....	5
Power Hour and Field Trip Fostering	7
Suggested Items to Bring:.....	7
Suggested Rules:.....	8
Power Hour Case Study: Austin Animal Center	9
Power Hour Case Study: Fairfax County Animal Shelter.....	9
Power Hour Location Examples	10
Dog Walking Groups.....	11
Example: Volunteer-Created Walking Group	11
<i>Welcome Post:</i>	11
<i>Sample Group Rules.</i>	12
Appendix A: Resources.....	13
Power hour and field trip fostering	13
Weekend/overnight fostering.....	13
Dog walking groups	13
<i>Many thanks to the following individuals and organizations, whose lifesaving work has inspired this manual:</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>



Short-Term Foster Care

There are lots of great reasons why short-term foster care is great for shelters. It helps get dogs out of the shelter and reduces kennel stress. It enables more of the community to get involved with the shelter in a fun way. It enables shelters to learn more about the behavior of the dogs in their care and to market them in new ways.

Short-term foster care options make it easy for people to make a commitment. With busy lives, many people like the flexibility of having short-term foster options, and you will find a much larger pool of fosters if you give this a try. Better, what we found is that when short-term foster is tried, families often realize that they're also suited for long-term foster care as well.

There is a perception held by some of the public that shelter dogs are “unknown.” Short-term foster care does much to combat this stigma. The better our shelters get to know the animals in their care, the better things will be for all shelter dogs.



Weekend and Overnight Foster Care

Weekend or overnight foster care is a great way to get to know shelter dogs better, reduce kennel stress and find new ways to market them for adoption.

Sample Guidelines

Consider these sample guidelines for weekend foster care:

- Foster caregivers must have adequate training to take home the dogs they are matched with.
- Only dogs on the adoption floor are eligible to go, unless a manager gives approval.
- Fosters must have shelter's emergency contact numbers programmed into their phone.
- Dogs must have had a rabies vaccination.
- List the day(s) and time(s) that the dog should be brought back to the shelter.

- Foster must read and sign the shelter's Foster Contract.
- Advise that foster dogs be kept separate from other pets in the home, especially small animals, cats, and smaller dogs. The foster family should have a plan in place if they do wish to introduce the foster dog to their dog (or other animal) and it doesn't work out – i.e., a place to keep their animals separated from the foster dog.
- Dogs must:
 - At all times wear a martingale collar with foster dog tags attached.
 - Be fitted with an Easy Walk or other approved harness, worn on walks.
 - Be walked using a leash.
 - Off-leash areas, including dog parks, are not permitted.
 - You might consider providing the following supplies to weekend fosterer:
 - Bowls
 - Crate
 - Toys
 - Treats
 - Bed/towels
 - Dog food, dry and wet. (*Note: remember to check for special diets!*)
 - Ensure that caregivers are given any medications needed by their foster dog. (*Note: always check for meds!*)
 - "Weekend Foster" sign placed in the dog's cage card holder so that caretaking staff can see where they are at a glance.

Overnight Foster Process Case Study: Austin Animal Center

All customer service staff are trained to process fosters, and they're managed just like adoptions. The shelter makes it just as easy to provide foster care as it is to adopt. When they kick in to emergency foster mode during population surges, the shelter invites the public to come and meet dogs. Staff help them find what they believe will be a good match for their family. They counsel fosters just like they would an adopter. People can typically become fosters and leave the same day with a dog.

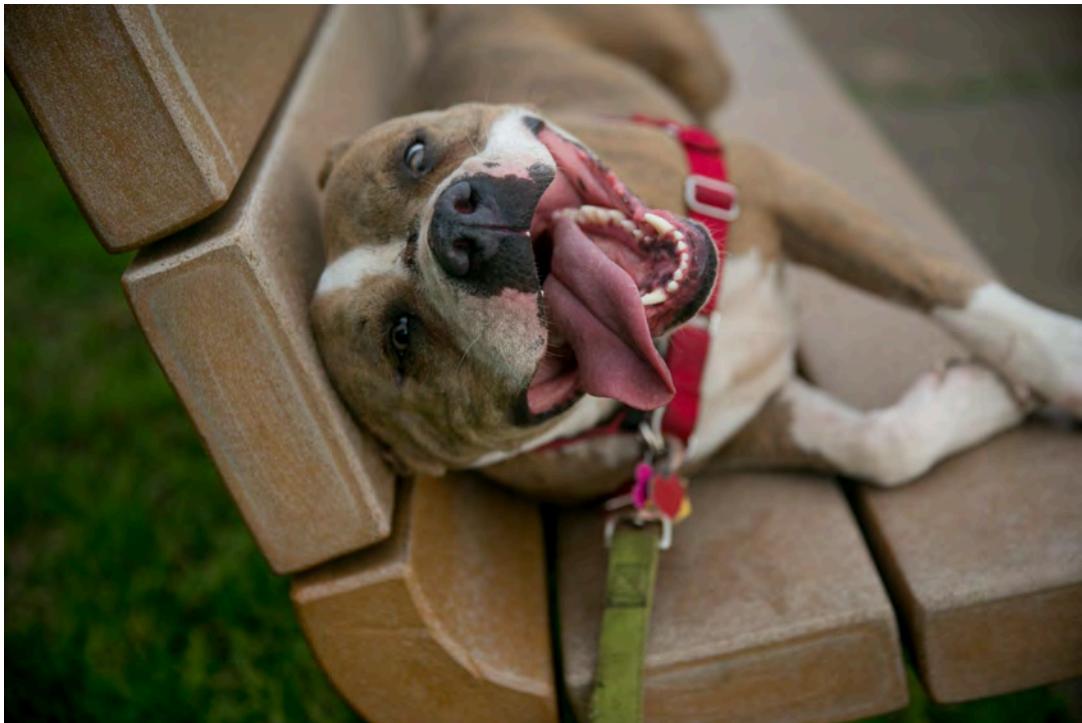
Weekend Foster Process Case Study: Fairfax County Animal Shelter

The shelter is closed on Sunday and Monday, making Saturday evening the perfect time to take dogs home for overnights. The shelter has 3-4 trained weekend foster volunteers, whose job it is to help implement weekend foster. On Saturday, at least one of these volunteers is at the shelter to assist in making matches, getting paperwork in order and helping families get the supplies they need.

Around noon, a post goes up on the shelter's volunteer and foster social media group

with the names and a short description of the animals who may be available for weekend foster. Fosters are encouraged to reply with questions and offers to take a dog home. The list is updated in real time as the dogs are spoken for as weekend fosters or are adopted. Foster families arrive at the shelter around 4pm, when the shelter is about to close for the weekend. Volunteers check to make sure the families have the training required to take the dog that they choose home. They help them locate needed supplies and make sure the relevant paperwork is read and signed.

Families are encouraged to post photos, videos and stories about their weekend. Families can bring the dogs back from weekend foster anytime from Sunday evening to Tuesday morning.



Power Hour and Field Trip Fostering

Power hour fosters take a dog off the shelter grounds for a day trip outing, which can last from an hour to all day. The short timeframe makes it easy for busy volunteers and fosters (who may not have the ability to take a dog overnight) to take a dog out of the shelter and get to know them better.

Fosters should be aware that the purpose of the outing is to learn more about the dog's behavior outside the shelter and to get the dog adopted by documenting what is learned through photos, video and text. Fosters should take the dog to fun places that will make for great pictures. It may be helpful if they bring a buddy so that one person can take pictures while the other is handling the dog.

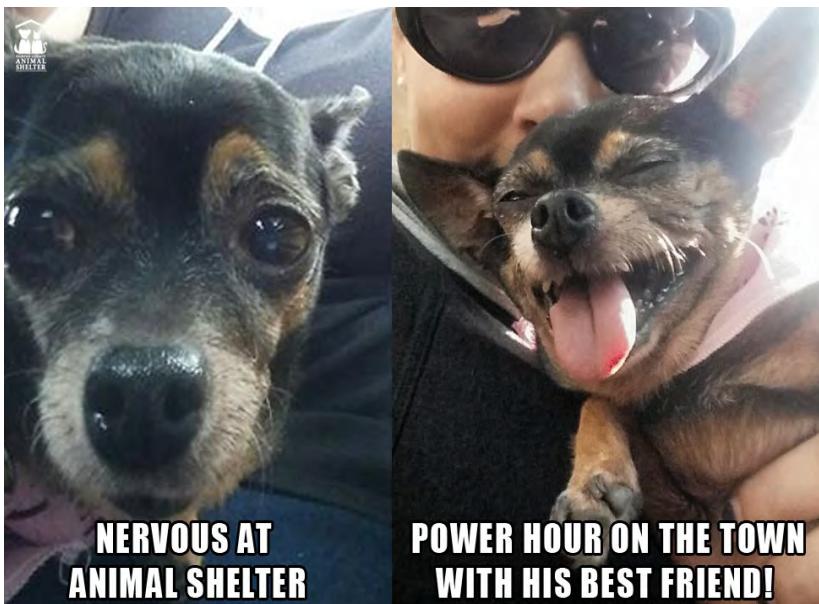
Suggested Items to Bring:

- Water
- Bowl
- "Adopt me" vest or bandana
- Treats

- Dog waste bags
- Leash
- Properly fitted harness
- Foster dog tags
- Properly fitted martingale collar (snug-fitting with room for no more than two fingers between the collar and the dog's body)

Suggested Rules:

- Foster caregivers must have adequate training to take home the dogs they are matched with
- Foster must read dog's biography before checking dog out
- Only dogs on the adoption floor are eligible to go, except with manager approval.
- Dogs must have had a rabies vaccination.
- Foster must read and sign shelter's Foster Contract.
- Dogs need to:
 - Be wearing a martingale collar with foster dog tags attached at all times.
 - Be walked using a leash.
 - Not go to any off-leash areas, including dog parks.
 - Be fitted with an approved harness.
 - Be wearing an 'Adopt Me' vest.
- Put a 'Power Hour' sign on the dog's kennel.
- No interaction with other dogs except with manager's approval.
- Fosters must have shelter's emergency contact numbers programmed into their phone.



Power Hour Case Study: Austin Animal Center

The people who take dogs on short outings are already volunteers, fosters or staff members. The volunteers manage the short term foster outings. They assist with matching dogs and people, processing paperwork and getting the dogs ready. Weekend or overnight fosters can be managed in the same way with oversight from the foster coordinator.

Power Hour Case Study: Fairfax County Animal Shelter

The shelter's volunteer coordinator creates slots in the shelter's volunteer management software so that volunteers and fosters can sign up to take dogs for power hour foster at specified times. The slots coincide with times the shelter is closed, such as mornings and Sundays. This enables the dogs to get more exercise before the shelter opens to visitors and enables the dogs to be visible at the shelter while it's open.

The shelter has several trained volunteers who assist with the power hour program. These volunteers arrive at the shelter before the power hours begin, assist in matching fosters with dogs, help fosters gather needed supplies, and check power hour fosters in and out via the shelter's software, saving the foster coordinator's time.



Figure 1: Volunteers knew that getting a 'puppachino' was French Fry's favorite way to end an outing

Power Hour Location Examples

It may help to give your fosters a list of suggested locations for power hour fostering (or better yet, ask one of them to create a list!). The following is an example of locations near the Fairfax County Animal Shelter in Fairfax, VA. The locations are listed from closest to the shelter to farthest, and include parks, outdoor shopping areas and stores that allow dogs.

Fairfax Government Center- 12000 Government Center Pkwy, Fairfax, VA

- Less than 5 minutes away
- Expansive lawn in back, with paths leading to short, wooded trails.

Fairfax Corner- 4100 Monument Corner Dr. Fairfax, VA

- Approx. 5 min away from shelter
- REI, Lucy, and Plow and Hearth are dog friendly. Cupcakes Actually sells Pupcakes.

Ox Hill Battlefield Park-4134 West Ox Road, Fairfax, VA

- Approx. 5 minutes
- Mile loop in the park

Old Town Clifton- 7150 Main St, Clifton, VA

- Approx. 10-15 min away
- Petersons – sells mini dog sundaes

Frying Pan Park- 2709 West Ox Road, Herndon, VA

- Approx. 15 min
- Interact with kids and farm animals

EC Lawrence Park- 5040 Walney Road, Chantilly, VA

- Approx. 15 min

Reston Town Center-11900 Market Street, Reston, VA

- Approx. 15 min
- Shelter dogs can get exposure

Mosaic District- 2910 District Ave, Fairfax, VA

- Approx. 15-20 min
- Can interact with people

Fountainhead Park-10875 Hampton Rd, Fairfax, VA

- Approx. 20 min
- Great for energetic dogs-hiking/trails

Burke Lake- 7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station, VA

- Approx. 20 min
- Great for energetic dogs-hiking/trails. Loop around lake is 5 miles.



Figure 2. ResQCrew by NOVA Pets Alive is a volunteer-run walking group. In addition to community members joining the group for walks, local shelter fosters often bring their foster dogs on walks for added socialization and to learn more about them.

Dog Walking Groups

A dog walking, hiking or running group is a great way for shelter dogs to expend energy and practice walking on leash with other dogs. The best part is, even very reactive dogs tend to walk calmly after the first half-mile or so with the pack.

Pack walks are easy to set up and run. They can be designed with formal rules or a more informal style. Shelters can schedule offsite walks for volunteers, and volunteers can be trained to lead them. Informal groups outside the shelter can create dog walking groups as well.

Example: Volunteer-Created Walking Group

Welcome Post:

(Group name) is a community based group dog walk geared towards socialization, fellowship, and education of all breeds. (Group name) is open to all dogs and their guardians.

We'd like to remind everyone that events should be inclusive to dogs, as that is the nature of this group (Although we do love our winery/brewery/yappy hour trips, and events that benefit animal rescues).

We love that this board has become a forum for questions and advice, but please keep posts to the topic of the group. So if you have questions or concerns, feel free to ask, share pictures, and comment! This is not a place to post adoptable pets or events that do not relate to dogs in some way. This is also not a place to rehome pets.

If you are interested in cross posting events from other groups, please create a (group name) event for that event. That way we can track how many people from the group are going and we know who to look for when we get there. If you are cross posting to gauge interest, that is fine, but make sure to create an event afterwards.

Thank you everyone and welcome to the group! If you have any questions please let us know!

Sample Group Rules

It is imperative that the following rules be followed in order to ensure a safe and productive experience.

1. Ask before introducing dogs to each other. Some dogs are reactive and others are working on mastering specific skills. Assumptions can lead to risk; communication is key to the success of every walk!
2. EVERY dog must be on a leash, 6 feet or less, and handled by an adult (18+) at ALL times. NO RETRACTABLE LEASHES. Minors are welcome to participate in the walks but must be accompanied by an adult at all times.
3. It is expected that all parties participating follow all ordinances set forth by (local jurisdiction). We encourage you to read over the laws established by (local jurisdiction).
4. As the dog's guardian, it is *your sole responsibility* to walk your dog, engage in safe procedures, address any warning signs your dog gives and heed fellow walkers' warnings.
5. Pay attention to your dogs needs and make sure to maintain a safe distance between dogs and others. Be aware of your surroundings and please be respectful of the needs of other dogs and individuals in the group.
6. Dogs with specific needs should wear a yellow bandana to notify other walkers.
7. (Name of group) walks are open to anyone who has joined (name of group).

Appendix A: Resources

Power hour and field trip fostering

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/arin-greenwood/shelter-dog-hiking_b_6041240.html

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/06/20/dog-eating-ice-cream_n_5514558.html

<http://www.northernvirginiamag.com/family/pampered-pets/2015/03/23/doggie-day-trips/>

<http://www.latimes.com/travel/la-tr-d-1018-kauai-canines-20151018-story.html>

http://www.dailypress.com/newsvirginian/news/local/give-em-a-break-program-aims-to-give-dogs-a/article_69ac22c2-b4f4-11e6-b64b-0ba8b51d9539.html

https://www.petSMARTcharities.org/blog/take-a-shelter-dog-hiking?utm_source=social&utm_campaign=content&utm_medium=facebook

Weekend/overnight fostering

<http://people.com/pets/looking-to-adopt-a-shelter-dog-slumber-party-might-seal-the-deal/>

Dog walking groups

<https://animalfarmfoundation.blog/2017/03/22/a-simple-walk-can-teach-reactive-dogs-how-to-make-friends-and-help-owners-find-the-support-they-need/>