



Maddie's
Fund

Supporting and Engaging Foster Caregivers During COVID-19

Sheila Segurson, DVM - Director of Research, Maddie's Fund
Kelly Duer - Foster Care Specialist, Maddie's Fund
Lea Williams, PhD - Nonprofit Consultant

1

Overview

- **Goal: provide foster coordinators with information to best support and retain foster caregivers during this challenging time**
 - We'll provide...
 - What the research says about engaging fosters and reducing turnover
 - Specific examples from organizations about how this looks in practice
- **5 topics + Q&A**



Maddie's
Fund

2

1. Tackling an Influx of Foster Applications

- Auto-reply with an overview
- Create a waiting list and let them know where they are in it
- Let them know about other needs while they wait

Thank you for reaching out to the Lost Dog and Cat Rescue Dog Foster team.

If you are emailing to foster a dog over the next coming weeks, thank you! We have received so many amazing requests and are working hard to match homes with animals. Please know that we will look over your request and will be back in contact shortly. Requests to take additional animals are already coming and new animals are arriving almost daily.

Our partner shelters have never needed us more—please consider these additional ways to help so we are ready for the dogs and cats that will need us:

Help us save lives right now:

* Donate funds: <https://lostdogrescue.org/donate-now/>

* Donate items from our Amazon wish list: <http://www.tinyurl.com/lostdogwishlist>

* Help us spread the word on social media!

<https://www.facebook.com/ldrc/>

<https://www.instagram.com/lostdogandcatrescue/>

<https://twitter.com/lostdogrescue>



Maddie's
Fund

3

1. Tackling an Influx of Foster Applications



- **Communication is essential with waiting lists**
 - Research shows that we are willing to wait much longer if we know we are still top of mind



Maddie's
Fund

4

2. The Importance of Training

- **Results from large-scale foster caregiver survey show that providing training is key for foster retention**
 - < 20% of respondents strongly agreed that they had received adequate training on basic topics
- **Most important training topics (according to survey results):**
 - Basic handling and behavioral issues
 - Basic healthcare/medical issues



5

2. The Importance of Training

PACC's Adult Dog Foster Orientation



Adult Dog Foster Orientation

Welcome!

Watch this introductory video and answer the following questions.

Dog Foster Orientation - Welco...

Dog Foster Orientation

Buckle up, Buttercup!

1. How is PACC's foster program funded? * 1 point

- ☐ PACC's foster coordinators are volunteer positions
- ☐ Girl Scout cookies
- ☐ Through a grant from Maddie's Fund

2. Where can you find a current list of dogs we're seeking foster placement for? * 1 point

- ☐ Under the bed
- ☐ The foster plea board: www.stmct.com/nacubofundat
- ☐ Hidden within Ryan Goding's expensive Wikipedia page



6

2. The Importance of Training

Instagram Stories vs. Posts

Stories:

- Disappear after 24 hours
- A place to casually check in with your followers & show off your everyday life.
- Ideal for engagement with your existing audience
- Sound on (most users watch with sound)



Rescue Pet Marketing 101 Part A



Maddie's
Fund

7

2. The Importance of Training

Using Social Media to Help Shelter Pets Shine

[START COURSE](#) [DETAILS](#)

- ☐ Overview
- ☐ BASIC USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA
- ☐ Ways to advocate
- ☐ Celebrity foster pets



Maddie's
Fund

8

3. Recognition



- **Recognition is a key buffer against foster turnover**
 - “A simple thank you when fostering is done would go a long way” -- common response from foster caregiver survey
 - Research shows that the type of recognition is not as important, just so long as it's given



Maddie's
Fund

9

3. Recognition



Rachel Jones

Admin · April 11



I just want to say a big fat THANK YOU to all the volunteers and fosters that have been supporting each other, PACC and the animals in their care.

There's plenty PACC is still working to improve on right now but for the most part things are going SO MUCH MORE SMOOTHLY than I could have anticipated and that is because of you all bearing a big portion of the load when you don't have to..

FOR REAL, you are all making this possible and holy **** am I grateful. THANK YOU!!!

Special shoutout to [Christy](#) who's here almost as much as staff and [Wendy](#) and [Kerry](#) for helping fosters with offsite adoptions. Y'all blowing my mind.



Lost Dog and Cat Rescue Foundation

Published by Hootsuite [7] · October 26, 2019 ·

One of our foster caregivers has a knack with fearful dogs. She works with them diligently to prepare them for their adoptive homes, while sharing their progress with our volunteers and fosters. Here's what she told us about an important moment she recently shared with Fanny.

"Fanny came downstairs for the first time today! You know I'm very big on giving the the fearful pups choices, and though I've left the bathroom door open numerous times before, she always got no further than the top of the stairs before she scurried back to her safe spot.

Today, while making soup with my dad, we heard some clicking on the stairs, and--Voilà! Look who popped into the kitchen! And bonus: She's not afraid of dad's wheelchair!"

You too can be a hero for rescue pets! Learn about our foster program and sign up at <https://lostdogrescue.org/foster/what-its-all-about/>



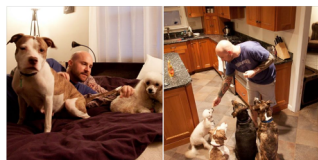
Maddie's
Fund

10

4. Foster Teams: Team Sweet Jane

Kelly Keut Duer
April 23, 2014

Kristen asked me to post and see if someone might be willing to foster Sweet Jane, until her adoption or even just for 5 days or so. During her training this week, Almee Sadler suggested sending her to a different foster (or even several fosters, depending how long we have her) in order to build her confidence around new people and to keep her from attaching to one person so much that it gets in the way of her adoption. Sweet Jane would need an experienced foster due to her issues with fear of strangers and some barrier reactivity, and to be placed in a home with no cats. She usually does well with other dogs when she can meet them in a lower-stress environment like a home. We're dog-sitting a senior miniature poodle this week while his mom is out of town, and while we were prepared to keep them separated, Sweet Jane has integrated with him really well. He's had to correct her several times (she doesn't always know when to back off on the sniffing), and we've been impressed that she has taken every correction appropriately and has adjusted her behavior accordingly. My whole family loves Sweet Jane to tears (literally!), and she's one of the most affectionate, loyal dogs I've ever known. Seeing the look on her face after a long day is better than any therapy. It hurts like hell, but we want to do what's best for her. If you're interested, please message me. Thank you!



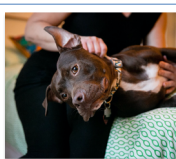
Maddie's
Fund

11

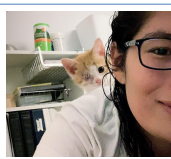
4. Foster Teams



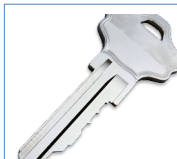
Team Coordinator



Primary Caregiver



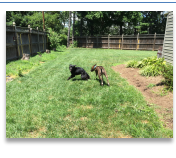
Reserve
Caregiver(s)



Transport
Specialist



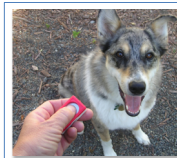
Photographer



Enrichment
Specialist



Marketing/Social
Media



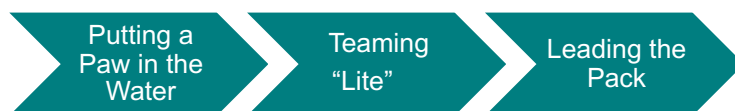
Etc.



Maddie's
Fund

12

4. Foster Teams: The Continuum



Creating an environment where teams can form organically

Assembling the team yourself



Maddie's Fund

13

4. Foster Teams: Putting a Paw in the Water



- Host social gatherings for fosters
- Create a Facebook group where fosters can get to know one another
- Let fosters know they can network to find coverage for their fosters
 - Posts in group
 - Blurb in foster manual, in welcome email, etc.



Maddie's Fund

14

4. Foster Teams: Teaming “Lite”




- In training material, explain what foster teams are and encourage their formation
- Ask expert fosters & volunteers to be available for specific team tasks
- Create a list of expert fosters to add to your foster manual, Facebook group or resource page

SECTION 3: FOSTER 2 FOSTER SUPPORT

FACEBOOK GROUPS

[PACC Foster](#) 
[PACC Dog Fosters and Volunteers](#) 
[PACC Decompression Program](#) 

GROUPME CHATS

[General PACC Foster Chat](#) 
[Dog Foster Chat](#) 
[Kitten/Cat Foster Chat](#) 

*These are mostly dead but who knows, anything can happen


DOG FOSTER TRAINING SUPPORT

[PACC Top Dogs Volunteers](#)



SHY OR FEARFUL DOG SUPPORT

[Decompression Volunteers](#)
[Robin](#)

FOSTER 2 FOSTER TRANSFERS

[Foster Transfer Board](#) 

OFFSITE DOG TO DOG INTROS/ADOPTION ASSISTANCE

[Kerry](#) 
[Wendy](#) 



Maddie's
Fund

15

4. Foster Teams: Leading the Pack



- Create teams for specific types of pets: cats with ringworm, puppies with parvo, etc.
- Encourage friendly competition between teams
- Host events where you can introduce experienced fosters in a group setting



Maddie's
Fund

16

4. Foster Teams

- Reactions from fosters about the team concept are overwhelmingly positive**

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: I think this is a concept that could work well for some people/organizations.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Percent Favorable	Mean
2.00%	2.10%	13.20%	49.80%	32.80%	82.60%	4.09

- Foster teams can provide support/make fosters feel “less alone”
- Teams can work well for difficult-to-place animals
- Opportunity to contribute even if you can’t have an animal in your home
- Diffuses responsibility/spreads the load
- Could reduce burnout



Maddie's Fund

17

5. Foster Assessment System Tool (FAST-15)



1

Step One:

The FAST-15 process will start with a short screener survey which the foster manager can fill out during the application process. The screener survey takes just a few minutes and asks basic questions about your foster program.



2

Step Two:

Once your organization's application has been accepted, you will be able to create an account and start delivering the surveys to your fosters via email. A template letter will be provided to you.



3

Step Three:

The survey will remain open and available to your foster volunteers for two weeks. Please send a reminder to your foster volunteers to complete the survey one week after you send the first email and again one to two days before the survey closes.



4

Step Four:

At the end of the 2 weeks, the survey will close and a report will be instantaneously generated based on your fosters' responses. The report will include a foster demographics, an overall FAST-E (engagement) score, the aggregated results for each survey item, and recommendations based on your results and best practices.

<https://www.maddiesfund.org/fast-15.htm>



Maddie's Fund

18

FAST-15 More Info

- <https://www.maddiesfund.org/fast-15-faqs.htm>
- <https://www.maddiesfund.org/assets/research/FAST-15-Foster-Questions.pdf>

The Foster Assessment System (FAST-15)

The Foster Assessment System (FAST-15) is a diagnostic tool developed in partnership between the University of North Carolina Charlotte and Maddie's Fund. This report presents the results of the survey provided to your current foster caregivers to understand their engagement, perceptions, and experiences at your organization. Review the Report Instructions for more information about how to read and interpret your results.

Report Instructions

This report summarizes the responses from the users surveyed by . A total of 2403 surveys were completed, yielding a 64% response rate for all fosters. The response rate is calculated as the number of survey respondents divided by the total number of fosters reported in application survey. The report contains the following sections:

Section 1: Foster Demographics

- Summarizes the characteristics of fosters who completed the survey

Section 2: Your FAST-E Score

- Provides an overall engagement index for your volunteers
- Based on the average of 4 items related to pride, enthusiasm, attachment, and giving time

Section 3: Item-Level Results

- Item-level Item Ratings - Red indicates lowest rated items, yellow indicates middle of the road items, and green indicates highest rated items. Various item recommendations are provided for items in the "red" zone.
- Average Scores - The average item divided by total respondents across all respondents for each item, on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Higher scores indicate more favorable ratings.
- % Favorable - Calculated by adding together the % of respondents who chose 4 (agree) and 5 (strongly agree) for an item, or in other words, the percent of people who rated the item high.
- % Neutral - Calculated by adding together the % of respondents who chose 3 (neutral) for an item.
- % Unfavorable - Calculated by adding together the % of respondents who chose 2 (disagree) and 1 (strongly disagree) for an item, or in other words, the percent of people who rated the item low.

Section 4: Word Cloud

- Shows a graphic representation of answers to the question "How would you describe your foster program in one word?"

- Provides potential areas to improve to better meet areas based on best practices and survey results



Section 1: Foster Demographics

What is your level of foster activity with this organization?

ANSWER	RESPONSE	%
Currently Active	1214	51%
Currently Inactive	542	4%
Taking a Break	1012	43%
Total	2368	100%



How often have you had a foster animal in your home in the last 12 months?

ANSWER	N	%
All time of the time (1 to 20%)	792	34%
Some of the time (21-40%)	351	23%
Around half the time (41-60%)	551	23%
A majority of the time (61-80%)	203	9%
Most of the time (81-100%)	258	11%



How long have you fostered with this organization?

ANSWER	N	%
Less than 1 year	907	38%
1-3 years	960	41%
4-6 years	310	13%
7-9 years	111	5%
10 or more years	81	3%



Section 2: Your FAST-E Score

Understanding your Results Summary

Table #1 shows the 4 engagement questions and Table #2 shows the 12 questions used by your fosters with their average scores and the % favorable. The questions are ranked highest to lowest based on the % favorable.

% Favorable refers to the percentage of respondents who Agree and "Strongly Agree."

% Neutral refers to the percentage of respondents who are "Neutral."

% Unfavorable refers to the percentage of respondents who "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree."

Color Coding indicates your areas of strength and opportunity based on the following criteria:

Green indicates your areas of strength (% favorable = 80% or above) - keep it up!

Yellow indicates your potential future strengths, some opportunity for improvement (% favorable = 70% to 79%, 60% of opportunity)

Red indicates your areas of greatest opportunity (% favorable = <70%) - focus improvements here!

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Average % Favorable:
92%

Based on fosters' ratings of 4 engagement indicators (pride, enthusiasm, attachment, giving time), your FAST-E score, out of 4, is:

4.75

TABLE #1

TABLE #1						
COLOR CODE	RAW	QUESTIONS	AVERAGE SCORE	UNFAVORABLE	NEUTRAL	FAVORABLE
	1	Pride - Overall, I am proud to work for this organization.	5	2%	3%	94%
	2	Enthusiasm - I am enthusiastic about my foster role.	5	2%	3%	94%
	3	Attachment - I feel attached to this	4	4%	10%	85%



Maddie's Fund

19

Q & A



Maddie's Fund

20