

Capital Area Humane Society Foster Program Overview

The foster program is designed to provide temporary homes for potentially adoptable animals that are, for various reasons, not immediately ready to go on the CAHS adoption floor. Foster volunteers open their homes to animals that are too young to be vaccinated, or have some other temporary condition that benefits from care outside the shelter environment. Some potentially adoptable rescue animals are offered space in foster homes where they receive more attention and socialization while their case and custody is worked out in court. The humane society is always in need of more foster homes.

Benefits

Foster kittens and puppies tend to be more socialized and healthy compared with their unfostered peers when they are returned to the shelter for adoption. Most of the animals entering foster care would be euthanized if foster homes were not available. Animals returning from the foster program constitute more than 17% of the adopted CAHS animals; the foster program provides a steady stream of year-round healthy kittens available for adoption to good homes.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Can I foster if I work full time?

A: Yes. Most of our foster parents work full time. You may need to foster only animals that are eating on their own or litters with moms if you are gone for very long hours. We have great need for foster homes that will take litters with moms as well as for kittens and puppies eating on their own.

Q: How often do I need to feed and care for the foster animals in my home?

A: It depends on their age and if they have a mom. Here's a general guide:

Adult cat, no kittens: check and care for her every 16 hours.

Kittens with moms: check and care for them every 12 hours.

Adult dog or Puppies with mom: check and care for them every 9 hours.

Kittens or puppies > 4 wks old, w/o moms, able to eat on their own: check and care for them every 8-9 hrs.

Kittens or puppies 3- 4 weeks old, without moms, able to eat some on their own, require supplemental bottle feedings: check and care for them every 6-8 hours.

Kittens or puppies < 3 wks old, w/o moms, require bottle-feeding: check and care for them every 4-6 hrs.

Q: Will it cost me money to foster?"

A: A little bit. The shelter will provide supplies if they have extra. You should buy non-tip food bowls and a litterbox, litter scoop, litter (if fostering felines). This will run about \$20. You may have to buy food and litter if the shelter doesn't have any to spare. You may be able to borrow animal carriers and cages from the shelter. You should buy at least one baby gate. We hope to have the funds some day to have all supplies and food provided, but for now, there are small out-of-pocket costs to fostering.

Q: Will I end up adopting my foster animals?

A: Hopefully not. It does happen, but ideally, we want our foster homes to be just that – temporary foster homes. We want you to foster multiple times since our greatest need is for reliable, trained foster homes. The Humane Society has an excellent adoption-screening program, so you can have confidence that your foster animals will go to a good home when you return them.

Q: How much time does it take to foster?

A: It depends on what you are fostering. For every foster case, you will need to make at least three trips to the shelter: one to pick up the animal(s), one to have the animal(s) vaccinated, and another trip to return the animal(s) to the adoption floor. Foster chores and animal socialization will take 20 minutes to an hour a day, depending if you are fostering dogs, kittens, etc., and how large of a litter you have.

Q: Can I pick the animals I want to foster?

A: Yes and No. You can choose to foster only puppies or only adult cats with kittens, etc. But, you cannot pick animals from the shelter holding area. The shelter staff and foster coordinator will choose animals based on health, temperament, breed, rescue status and foster home availability. The foster coordinator sends out a list of animals needing foster care on a regular basis. If you see an animal posted that you think is a good match for you, you contact the foster coordinator to let her know you are interested. She will match all homes with animals.

Q: Can I take foster animals to other peoples' homes, to school, etc?

A: Generally, no. Unvaccinated foster puppies and kittens may not leave the foster home (e.g. no walks in the park, visits to school, work, etc) and must be kept completely separate (no nose-to-nose contact) as much as possible from permanent animals of the same species in the foster home. Puppies under 8 weeks of age do not need to potty outside. You may potty older puppies in your yard, preferably an area your dogs cannot reach. Foster animals over 6 months of age that have received their full series of vaccines may leave the home and be treated like any other animal in your home.

Q: Where should I put foster animals while they are in my home?

A: You must confine them. Everyone's home has a different set up, but the home must have a spare room (bathrooms and basements are ok) dedicated to the foster animals during their stay. Remember no nose-to-nose contact between foster kitties and your cats or foster pooches and your dogs. This is especially important for the first 2 weeks they are in your home in case they are carrying a disease that doesn't show itself until after they are placed in foster care.

Q: Why do my animals need to be vaccinated if the foster animals are kept separate?

A: This requirement is primarily for the safety of your own animal(s). Foster animals come from the street and unknown conditions. They may break with serious diseases after they are placed in foster care. The shelter will not be able to treat or care for your permanent animal should he/ she become sick from a foster animal. All felines and canines in the home must receive annual vaccinations if you want to foster.

Q: My vet says my cats only need to be vaccinated every three years because they are indoor cats. Why do you require annual vaccinations?

A: Tell your vet you plan to foster animals with unknown medical history. Most vets will then treat your cat the same as they would if your cat went outdoors and was exposed to more germs. If your vet refuses or your cat has vaccine reactions, you may be approved to foster canines, but not felines.

Q: How do I sign up?

A: Complete and return a foster application. The foster coordinator will then review your application and contact you to review your application.

Q: What else will be expected of me?

A: Foster homes must follow the instructions of the shelter vet, make and keep appointments for check ups, vaccinations and return of foster animals. Spend time playing with and socializing your foster animals. Have an adult in charge of the animal care, although children are welcome to help, especially with the socialization. Contact the foster coordinator if you have any questions or concerns.