Starting a Medium and Large Adult Dog Foster Program

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Introduction

Corey had been waiting for his adopters for 7 months due to adoption restrictions on blocky-headed dogs. He was sweet, intelligent and obedient. Over time, his behavior in the kennel became more and more frenetic, disintegrating to the point that he displayed the same behavior over and over. First, he would pick up his dinner Kong and hurl it into his water bucket. He'd stand there for a moment looking around, as if to ensure that he had an audience for his trick. Suddenly he'd throw his entire giant head into the bucket and bob around for the Kong. Like a whale breaching, his head would soar backwards out of the bucket, water flying in all directions, soaking his kennel and the adoption floor. There he would stand, triumphant, water pouring off his head, the Kong in his mouth.

His behavior on the adoption floor tickled the funny bone of a few volunteers, but it was off-putting to potential adopters. Some shelter workers saw it as a sign that he'd had enough. They believed he was no longer able to handle living in the shelter and that adopters would continue to overlook him. Worse, they began to insist that at this point, euthanasia was his best outcome.

But was there another option for him that we had never tried? We believed there was.

With a fledgling short-term foster program and two families who could only keep him for a few days at a time, Corey went into emergency foster with the understanding that if he was brought back to the shelter, he would not survive.

Outside of the shelter, glimmers of the old Corey were seen within hours. He went to work with his foster family and even on a road trip. They documented everything. Pictures were posted on the shelter's Facebook page. The post was forwarded to a family who had recently lost a dog who looked very much like Corey. The next day they met him at the shelter and decided to adopt him. It took all of 4 days.

Over the next 2 years, the shelter placed many more dogs like Corey into foster care for varying lengths of time and saw equally astonishing results. Foster care was the most obvious factor in their success, but many other factors, such as marketing, were equally important. This manual will explain each of these factors and how they work together to facilitate adoptions for long-stay dogs.

Figure 1. Corey in foster care

Traditionally, foster programs in shelters have been seen as a luxury program that few resources have been devoted to. They've been focused on infant pets and those with medical needs, who are hand-picked by staff to market for foster care. A lengthy onboarding and training process is usually required, during which many potential fosters are screened out through background checks, home visits and rarely-offered training classes. Ironically, in many cases, the people who are turned down to foster a pet could visit the shelter and adopt the same animal with no problems.

We believe that shelters need to bring foster care to the forefront of their lifesaving operations. In order to do this, shelters need to make taking an animal home to foster as easy as it is to adopt.

7 Guidelines for Adult Dog Foster Care

Here are some changes that you should consider making to your foster program right away. This manual will dive deeper in to the logistics of these ideas and more:

1. Know your data
2. Get rid of barriers
3. Create a pro-foster culture
4. Find your fosters everywhere
5. Make it easy to foster
6. Be open, honest and transparent
7. Commit to marketing and adoption counseling as separate processes

The most important thing you can do to find live outcomes for long-stay dogs is to treat each dog as an individual. Get to know each dog and take note of their needs, level of kennel stress, strengths and weaknesses. Only by knowing each dog individually will you be able to know what their needs are as well as the personality traits that make them a good fit for particular foster and adoptive homes.

In all cases, heavy marketing is advised. For this, you will need help from the foster caregivers.

Know Your Data

Before beginning any new program, it is important to review your data in order to define the problem, find a solution that will have an effect on the target population and measure your success. You need to find answers to questions such as, what pets are at risk of euthanasia for space? What types of pets are at risk of euthanasia for behavior? What are the lengths of stay for various types of pets? What types of pets have the longest length of stay?

Get Rid of Barriers

Barriers can include a lengthy, cumbersome onboarding process, rules and restrictions that only apply to fosters as well as a regimented placement or matching process. They can be internal barriers, such as the shelter limiting the number of pets who can go into foster, or external, such as having breed-specific legislation in the community.

Here are some examples:

- Potential fosters need to fill out an application, undergo a background check and attend one of two orientation sessions that are only held on Saturdays, twice every 6 months.
- The organization conducts home checks and calls veterinarians and personal references for every potential caregiver.
- Foster caregivers must isolate foster dogs from their own dogs for a minimum of 10 days.
- Foster caregivers must have a fenced yard.

Even in shelters where some adult dogs can go to foster, there are often so many barriers in place, most dogs don't often get a chance to have a shelter break.

Nobody puts up barriers for the sake of having barriers. Most are put up in the name of safety, but only give the illusion of control. If dogs are introduced by staff at the shelter, does it mean they'll get along in a home? Not always. Will telling your fosters that they need to keep their healthy foster dog completely separate from their own dogs for 10 days prevent fighting? Not necessarily, and this barrier may cause you to lose a lot of potential fosters.

Create a Pro-Foster Culture

Interested in starting a foster program for adult dogs, but don't have fosters who will take home medium and large dogs? Find 1-2 people who will try it for a day, a weekend or longer. Have them tell others about their experiences. This may go a long way toward getting others interested in trying it too.

Make it clear to your community that foster care is a vitally important, lifesaving program for your shelter. Ask for help. Share foster success stories with your community. Your fosters are heroes—make sure they know it!

Find Your Fosters Everywhere

Just as you go about looking everywhere for your adopters, do the same for your fosters. Increase your options for short-term foster, process foster caregivers on-the-spot so they can take home a dog immediately, and send the message that your shelter needs fosters to your supporters often through social media and other communications.

Volunteers Cross-Trained as Fosters

Making it as easy as possible for your volunteers to foster your dogs is a key component of this program. Often if a volunteer would like to foster a dog they've met at the shelter, they're required to go through yet another training or orientation session first, while an adopters could take that dog home the very same day. Many of them already know your shelter's dogs and want them to take the next step to ease their stress. Even if they're

not able to foster long-term, there's a good likelihood that your volunteers would enjoy taking a dog on a day outing or overnight.

As for behavioral foster, volunteers who are competent in handling your toughest dogs are great prospects for two reasons: they have the dog savvy that you need in a foster, and since they're the ones getting to know these dogs, the bonds they've made make it much more likely that they will want to take the next step in saving their lives.

Finding Fosters for Dogs with Challenging Behaviors

Dogs who live in the shelter environment for 30+ days are particularly vulnerable to shelter stress that could send their behavior into a downward spiral. In many cases, certain behaviors (barrier reactivity, leash reactivity, etc.) develop or become markedly worse during a dog's shelter stay. Dogs who seem particularly vulnerable to this should be spending as much time outside of the shelter as possible.

In mild to moderate cases of shelter stress, dogs may be fostered for 3 days to a week until their stress level diminishes and then returned to the shelter for adoption. In more severe cases, it's safer to keep the dog in foster care until their adopter is found. There is no one formula that fits all dogs, as kennel stress affects each one differently.

Long shelter stays increase stress on pets and can often be a trigger for undesirable behaviors that can end a pet's life. Foster care can short-circuit this cycle and save lives, but finding enough fosters for all the pets who need them can be difficult.

If you have a medical foster program, you've most likely had several fosters who have taken home a dog with challenging behaviors, whether you'd planned for this or not. Experienced fosters who you can already depend on are great candidates for fostering medium and large adult dogs. Another place to look is at your best medium and large dog volunteers, since they have the needed dog skills and have most likely already developed a relationship with the dogs that need foster.

We conducted a survey of the Fairfax County Animal Shelter's foster families, and they had some great suggestions for places to find foster caregivers for adult dogs:

> *"Provide success stories from other organizations with this program…if the organization already has a group of dedicated volunteers, perhaps begin by recruiting from this group."*
>
> *"The shelter could target recently retired people or empty-nesters. (After our kids left home, the house was so quiet. That is when we decided to start fostering dogs.) Also, seek referrals from existing fosters and volunteers."*
>
> *"I think you have to "grow" into fostering, so having new fosters have wonderful experiences with lots of support with relatively easy dogs first…then helping them accept more and more challenging dogs as they grow and their skills increase."*

Dogs who have stayed in the shelter for a long period of time build stress. This can often be slowed or reversed by a stay in foster care. If you wait to find a foster until the dog is in crisis, the dog's behavior may make it difficult to find a foster. The best way to find foster is to give shelter breaks when you begin to see stress taking its toll. Consider asking your fosters in this way:

Where should you look for fosters for medium and large dogs who have challenging behaviors?

- Your most skilled dog volunteers
- Your best current fosters
- Keep an eye on new fosters; new ones who have great dog skills could work up to it
- Consider recruiting dog trainers and/or paying a stipend

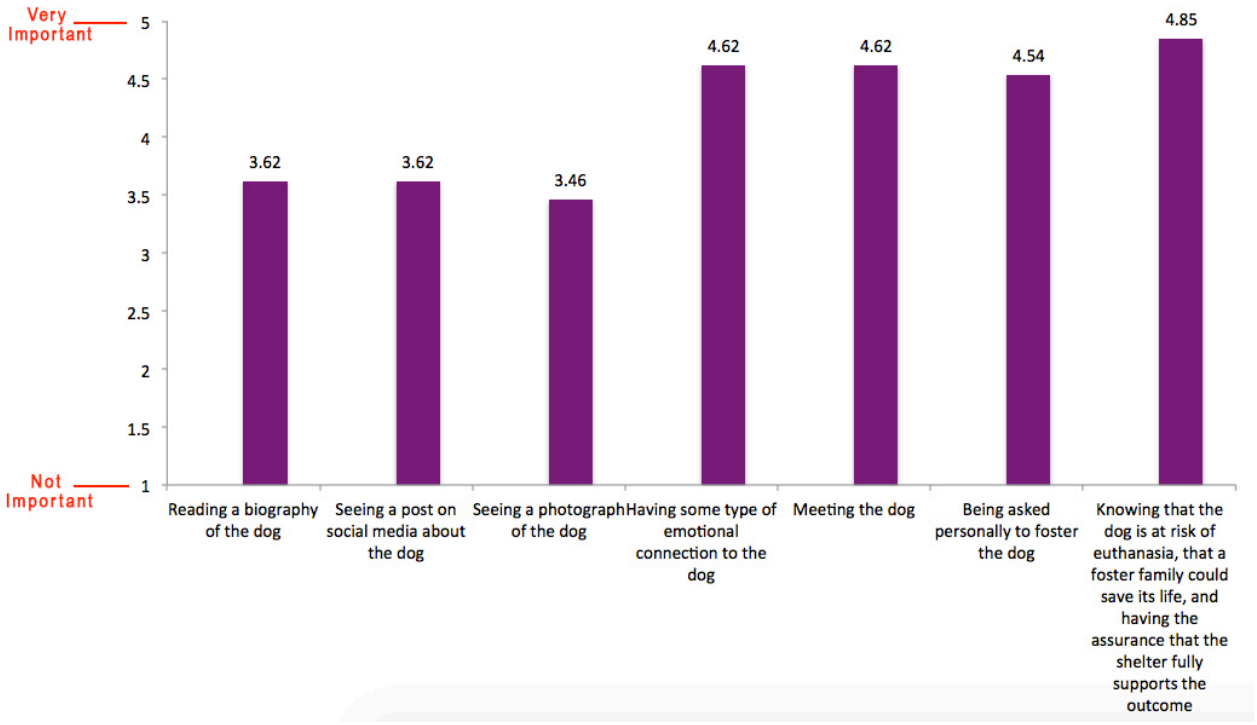


Figure 3. Foster Survey Results: How likely would you be to take home a foster dog based on the following, on a scale of 1 to 5?

Foster Recruitment Ideas

Foster coordinators can recruit fosters for adult dogs in many ways. Here are a few examples of ways that have been successfully used to recruit foster caregivers:

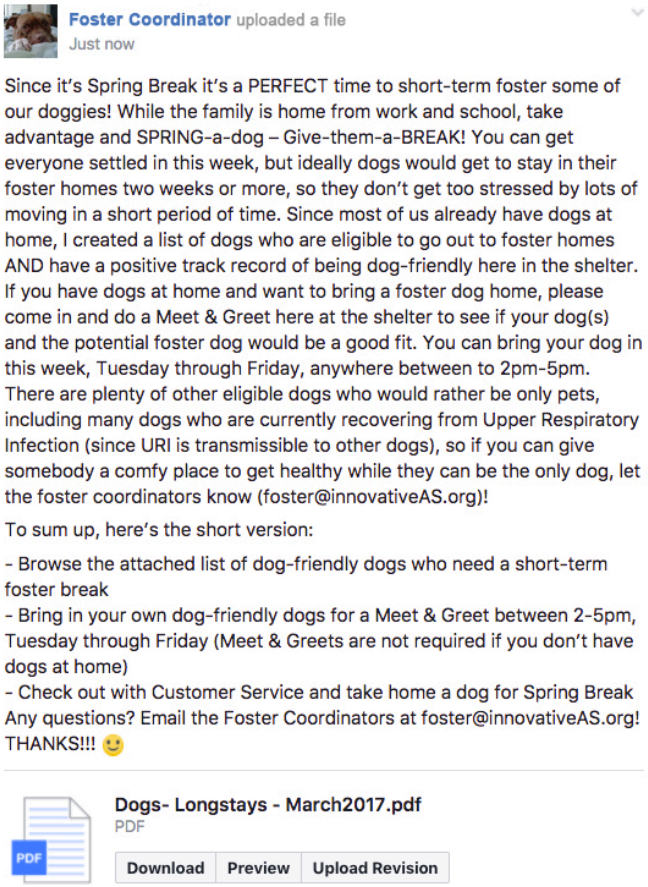


Figure 4. Foster recruitment for many dogs via social media group

Figure 5. Foster recruitment for one dog via social media group.

foster caregivers

Frodo needs a foster!

Meet Frodo!

Do you like fostering and training puppies? Well how about a BIG one? Frodo is a young, adult dog who seems to have never gotten the socialization and structure that he needed as a puppy, and he seems stuck in puppy-mode. He excitedly wants to say hi to EVERYONE he meets, but he doesn't know how to do that with good doggie manners. His greetings consist of jumping and licking and mouthing and trying to get as close as possible to people so he can capitalize on belly rubs and cuddles. Frodo needs an experienced dog handler who's comfortable handling a large, excited, wiggly guy. Frodo has a large following of experienced handlers in the shelter, so anyone who accepts him as a foster will get lots of hands-on handling training, behavior advice, and general support while he's in foster. He's making some progress in the shelter, but we think he'll excel in a foster home where he can get lots of love while practicing his manners. He knows how to wear a head harness, loves cream cheese, has learned Sit and is practicing Down. Email me back to reach out about fostering our 'puppydog' Frodo!

Sans Serif

Send

Saved

Figure 6. Foster recruitment for one dog via email

More Foster Recruitment Ideas

Figure 7. Yard signs from Ventura County Animal Services

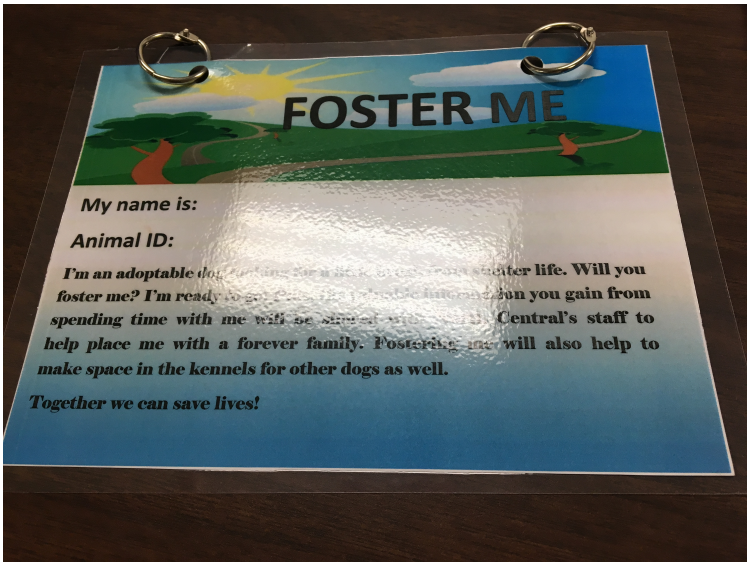


Figure 8. Foster kennel sign for a dog who needs a break from the shelter at Los Angeles Animal Services

Figure 9. The kennels of dogs who have been at Austin Animal Center over 30 days have this sign attached.

Figure 10. This bulletin board gets the word out about the pets who are available for adoption from their foster homes and those needing foster.

Figure 11. These t-shirts from Ventura County Animal Services advertise foster care and make fosters feel like heroes when they wear them!

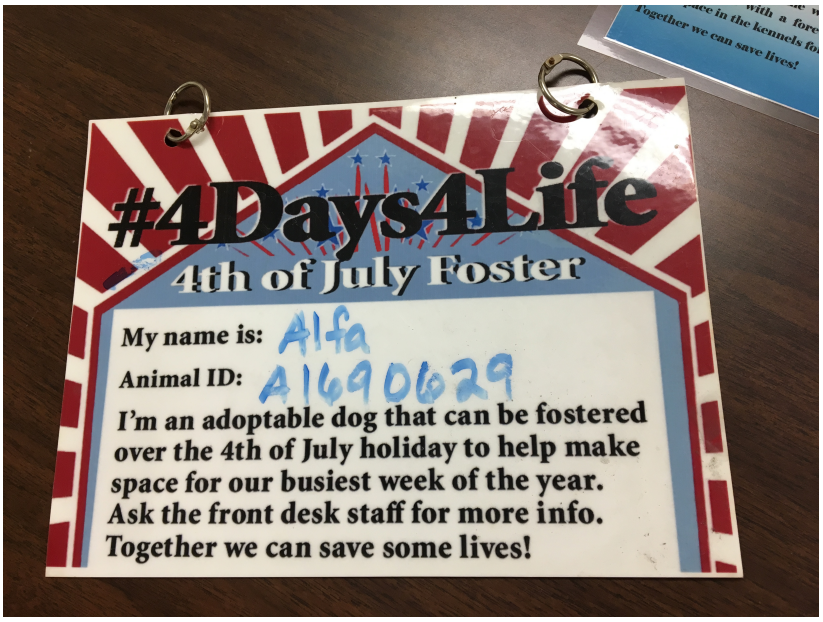


Figure 12. Sign for a foster event at Los Angeles Animal Services

Make it Easy to Foster

The process for becoming a foster should be simple and efficient in order to maximize the number of people who can do this. Here are some ideas

- Same- or next-day foster processing
- Short-term foster options
- Make more of your pets available for foster, and let your community know who they are!

Be Open, Honest and Transparent

Always be completely transparent with fosters and adopters about a pet's behavior and history. Make sure they read all of the notes and have all of their questions asked before they take the pet home.

Commit to Marketing And Adoption Counseling as Separate Processes

See manual, 'Marketing Techniques for Adoption from Foster Care.'

Foster Logistics and Training

Your Relationship with Foster Families

Cultivating a positive relationship with your foster families is vitally important. Not only should they trust you, you should trust them. In fact, in a survey of behavioral fosters from the Fairfax County Animal Shelter, feeling as though the shelter staff sees them as a trusted member of the team was one of the most important aspects of their relationship with the shelter.

Communicating Objectively to Shelter Staff

Families need to describe their foster pet's behavior objectively when communicating to shelter staff in order to communicate effectively about behavior in a way that does not allow for multiple interpretations. The value of information a foster provides is influenced directly by what words they choose to use.

Objective	Subjective
• Fact-driven • Measurable, observable verifiable through evidence • Only what is seen and heard is recorded • Neutral tone; carries no emotional charge	• Opinion-driven • Feelings, opinions, judgements; cannot be evaluated or verified • Motivations and internal feelings are attributed • Positively or negatively charged; conveys a good or bad impression of animal

Objective descriptions help shelter staff to:

- Collect accurate data and information about when and how often a behavior occurs.
- Design effective interventions and individualized goals.
- Determine whether an intervention is working.
- Write individualized goals.

The pitfalls of subjective writing:

- The writer loses credibility: When writing an opinion, if someone disagrees they will be less inclined to listen to you.
- It allows for multiple interpretations. For example, “I do not trust this dog,” could mean that the dog is unpredictably aggressive, that the dog has some fearful behaviors that can be improved via training and socialization, that the observer is afraid of large dogs, that the observer is biased against the dog’s breed, etc.
- The reader cannot get a clear picture of the behavior.

Guidelines for writing objective descriptions

- Be observable and measurable. Describe the behavior precisely as it was seen or heard. Rather than writing, ‘He wanted to attack the other dog,’ write, ‘When the dog on the other side of the fence came within 3 feet of him, he began barking and showing his teeth.’
- Use action words.
- Avoid ascribing motivations, feelings or reasons for doing things. There is no way to observe a dog’s motivation or feelings. Is a dog playing fetch because he loves it, or for another reason, such as boredom or toy guarding? Rather than saying, ‘She loves playing fetch,’ say, ‘When we went into the backyard, she picked up a tennis ball in her mouth and ran away from me. I threw another tennis ball. She retrieved it and let the other ball go. I threw the first ball and she retrieved it, letting the second ball go. We did this for the next 20 minutes, until she laid down in the grass and dropped the ball.”
- Be specific, not vague. Rather than writing, ‘He is a sweetheart,’ write, ‘When he met my husband and daughter, his body was loose and wiggly and he immediately licked both of their hands and faces.’

- Be concise.
- Record enough detail to relate what happened, but avoid biasing your description.
- Words should describe but not judge.
- Record behaviors in the order they occurred.
- Context is important! Make sure to include this information. Behaviors that appear in the shelter do not always appear in the home. A dog who plays fetch for hours at the shelter may not do this at home.

The Teacher Test

When writing about an animal's behavior, imagine that you are a teacher writing the behaviors into a human student's file. How would you describe the behavior so that the student's parents can intervene appropriately, yet not feel that the writing is biased or take the description in a personal way?

Include Detail

When recording behavior, include details such as where, when, and how much. Depending on the situation there may be other details that would be helpful to include, such as preceding events, number of people in the area, preexisting medical issues or how much food the animal had eaten in the past day or two. For example, if a cat hissed at someone who came up to meet him, it might be helpful to note details like if the person was wearing sunglasses and a hat, if they were holding a toddler who was crying loudly, or if the room was noisy and crowded with people.

Avoid Labels

stubborn *sweet* *aggressive* *sketchy* *affectionate*

Labels tell us nothing about an animal's behavior. Instead of using labels, describe the behavior that made you want to apply that particular label.

"I extended my hand, and she rubbed her face on my knuckles. She approached me and rolled over on her back at my feet while rubbing her cheek on my shoe. I petted her for approximately 10 minutes."

Avoid Vague Words

N ever *frequently* *usually* *always* *some* *often*

Instead of using vague words, use exact numbers to document interactions, items, or times a behavior occurred.

"We took four short walks today. 3 out of the 4 times I put her leash on, she began jumping and biting at the leash for approximately 20 seconds each."

Avoid Using First Person

"I don't trust this dog." *"I would assume that…"*

Keep it about the animal's behavior, not your feelings about it. Use facts to make your point. If you feel a certain way about an animal, describe only the behavior that made you feel this way, not the feeling it produced.

“Her behavior toward me has been inconsistent today. This morning when I gave her a treat, she took the treat quietly with loose body language. This afternoon I offered her a treat in the same way and she stiffened, stood and barked at me.”

Only Report Behavior that has Happened

“He has yet to bite but he has come close.” “She didn’t cower when I pet her this morning, but that may have been a one-time thing.”

Only report the facts. Do not make predictions about how an animal will behave in the future.

For example, “He learned away and showed the whites of his eyes when the vacuum got within 2 feet of him.”

Examples

Saki continues to do extremely well in our home. He had a good visit to Austin Animal Center this week for a meet and greet with a different family with dog. He visited the vet and remained in control of himself. He enjoyed riding in the car (finally), with his head out of the window. He is now reconditioned on his interactions with our cat, and does not react to her even when she enters a room at full tilt or walks right by his nose. He is now reconditioned with strangers at the fence; he does not bark at children or strollers, and can be easily called away if barking at passersby with dogs. He is not reactive to cars passing by. He sits to be leashed or let into doors, he sits and waits to be released before feeding, he "kennels up" on command. He comes when called, even from across the yard. We have started his muzzle training and he's doing well -- not afraid, not reactive. He is showing control of himself when uncertain or startled; we have continued his "startle awake" training and he has not snapped or shown any disconcerting behavior. He learned to play Frisbee this week and within 8 minutes of being introduced to it, had learned to catch, retrieve, drop it and reset for the next toss. I can't say enough positive things about this dog and I'm extremely excited about the future ahead of him. Thanks for giving Saki a chance!

Foster Mentors

In order to maximize the amount of support for fosters and ensure that your foster coordinator’s time is used efficiently, consider creating foster mentors. Foster mentors are chosen from your most experienced adult dog foster providers and can assist other foster families by giving advice, helping with dog introductions, and training new fosters. This way, the foster coordinator’s time is reserved for the most critical tasks.

Foster Training

You may want to provide medium and large adult dog foster care providers with training in dog body language, behavior issues that they may encounter, techniques they can use to help their foster decompress between the shelter and their home, dog-to-dog interactions and how to work with potential adopters.

Important Things to Teach Fosters

- Where to find different types of help
- What to do if a dog has bitten
- They must have the dog’s shelter ID # with them at all times
- Who to call in case of emergency; have the phone numbers programmed into their phones
    - Foster coordinator
    - Who to call for a medical emergency (vet?)
    - Who to call for a bite report
    - Who to call for a lost dog

More Considerations:

- Consider every dog and every situation individually
- Consider using local trainers as 'bridge' fosters
    - Get more information and assessment outside the shelter
- Whenever possible (and safe), if the foster family wants to continue to house and work with the dog, consider providing the resources including training support to allow them to do so. If you do not have resources for training, think about allowing the foster to create a funding campaign if they wish, for a trainer pre-screened by the shelter.

Training for Behavioral Fosters

You may want to consider providing fosters with training in the following areas:

Canine Body Language

Fosters must be able to understand what a dog is communicating to them in order to respond appropriately. Education in canine communication can help fosters identify when a dog's signals early and understand what they mean. The Center for Shelter Dogs has some great graphics on dog body language that you can use (see Appendix B for a link).

Decompression

Using the time period between when the dog leaves the shelter and when it enters a foster's home wisely can improve safety and can mean the difference between a dog who is brought back from foster within hours and a successful foster placement. When a pet is suffers from kennel stress, it can take from 5 minutes to 48 hours or more for that pet's anxiety to return to near normal levels. Additionally, it takes time to build trust, and trust is the basis for obedience. The more a dog trusts it's foster, the more likely it will follow the rules.

In some cases, the buildup of shelter stress can make a dog difficult to tire out. Even after a long walk, the dog may run in circles around the house, jumping on furniture and have a difficult time settling down. Others may manifest anxiety by whining almost constantly for the first 24 hours, or by having separation anxiety so intense that they panic if the foster gets more than 4 feet away from them or jump up from a sound sleep if the foster even shifts in their chair. This nearly always improves with time.

There are several things a foster can do to help this process along:

- Create a plan for burning off the dog's nervous energy. This may include taking the dog for a very long (1-2+ hours) walk or hike, biking while the dogs runs alongside, or playing fetch.
- If the time of day is flexible, fosters should consider taking a dog right after it's been expending energy in play group—just don't skip the long walk!
- If the dog is fearful, consider walking with a longer leash (in places that are not public) so that the dog doesn't need to be closer to you until it's more comfortable.
- If it's not possible to take the pet into foster right away, it will help if the foster comes to the shelter to bring the dog treats or take it outside several times. Consider leaving something with your scent on it, such as a towel, with the dog while it's there. This will help the dog to feel more comfortable and associate the foster with good things.
- Use a pheromone diffuser or collar.
- If the dog still can't settle down after the initial long walk, use a laser pointer, puzzle toys or play fetch to keep the dog's mind active and keep it from getting itself in trouble.

- Consider only using essential (safety-related) commands during this period. Don't want the dog to jump onto your couch while jumping around the house? Think about saving that lesson for another day when they are more calm and available for learning.
- Make sure your activities don't overstimulate the dog.
- Do only essential meet-and-greets with humans and other dogs for the first 48 hours to week, depending on the dog's comfort level.
- Stick it out for the first 24 hours. It will get better, we promise.

Common Behavioral Issues

Some of the most common behavioral issues that fosters see in dogs are:

- Home alone problems
- High energy level
- Jumpy/mouthy behavior
- Lack of socialization
- Lack of house manners
- Fear of new people and/or other dogs
- Leash and/or barrier reactivity
- Resource guarding
- Handling issues

Lack of House Manners

The Behavior:

- Incomplete or absent understanding of behavior that's normally expected of a dog indoors
- May stem from having lived outdoors for a long period of time, having several owners with different house rules (or few rules), or long shelter stays
- Dogs may exhibit behaviors such as marking or other potty training difficulties, jumping, walking or chewing on furniture, etc.

The Approach:

- Triage behaviors and work on one at a time.
- Teach them an alternate behavior
- Catch them being good and reward for it!
- Give them things to do, stuffed Kongs, nosework, food puzzles.

Lack of Socialization

The Behavior

- Fear when confronted with new parts of a normal human society due to a lack of exposure to them as a puppy.
- Fears may include different environments, buildings, sights, noises, objects, people, other pets, etc.
- Many undersocialized dogs are unfamiliar with normal canine social behavior

The Approach:

- Triage the dog's needs
- Systematic desensitization; introduce to new things while keeping them from being overwhelmed
- Ask for help in Volunteer/Foster group!

Home Alone Problems

The Behavior:

- May bark or howl, be destructive, and/or urinate or defecate in the house when left alone.
- Most dogs get over this in time

The Approach:
- Find out where dog is most comfortable (in crate, in room, with access to front door, etc.)
- Systematic desensitization; keep dog under threshold

High Energy Level

The Behavior:

Pent-up energy that can lead to all sorts of unwanted behaviors, such as jumping, mouthing, destruction of belongings, digging and more.

The Approach:
- Walk, hike, run!
- Playing with another dog
- Activities that make them think can tire them out just as much as regular exercise. Try food puzzles, nose work, or teaching new tricks.

Jumpy/Mouthy Behavior

The Behavior:
- Adolescent or adult dogs who have an energetic, playful and outgoing personality. These dogs energetically jump up, put their mouths on people and may grab at clothing or the leash.
- There is no intent to harm.
- May use a soft mouth or a hard mouth.

The Approach:
- The role of attention
- Put bone/toy in mouth
- Do not overstimulate
- Basic training skill set
- Metal leash
- Ensure adequate exercise

Fear of New People

The Behavior:

May demonstrate one or more of the following body language signals in the presence of new people: move away, avoid eye contact, tuck their tail, crouch, cower, tremble, put their ears back or hide. Dogs may also display fear aggression (lip lift, growl, snap, bite, lunge or bark).

The Approach:
- Don’t look in eye
- Have new person sit down and let dog come to them (don’t crowd the dog) when they meet the dog
- Ignore them while they sniff, and move slowly
- New person = lots of treats!
- “Watch” command
- Don’t put the dog in a situation where they are overwhelmed with new people

Leash Reactivity

The Behavior:

- A leash reactive dog may lunge, pull, whine, bark or growl at other dogs while on leash. They may snap or bark at another dog if they get close enough while on leash.
- Many times these dogs are friendly toward other dogs if they meet off-leash.

The Approach:
- Find the dog's comfortable distance away from other dogs and/or people
- Use treats to lure
- "Watch" command or name game
- Turn around or move to the other side of the road to avoid conflicts
- Walk regularly with other dogs!

Barrier Reactivity
- A leash reactive dog may lunge, pull, whine, bark or growl at people or other dogs while a barrier is between them. They may snap or bark at another dog if they get close enough to the barrier.
- Many times these dogs are friendly toward other dogs if they meet without a barrier in between them.

Handling Issues

The Behavior:

Uneasiness when particular parts of the body are handled, such as tail, mouth, feet, ears and hind end.

The Approach:
- Go slowly and monitor behavior
- Muzzle training
- Systematic desensitization
- Avoid putting the dog in situations where they become nervous, if possible
- Punishment can exacerbate this issue

Resource Guarding

The Behavior:
- Behavior intended to convince others to stay away from something or someone they highly value. A resource can be anything the dog values highly: food, treats, a place, a person, etc. The value of each resource may change with time.

The Approach:
- Do not disturb dog while she's eating or playing with a toy
- "Place" command
- "Say please" program
- Trade high value items for items of higher value
- Don't leave food/toys out when visitors/other dogs are around

Dog-to-Dog Introductions

- Fosters can choose introduction method, but the parallel walk system is recommended
- Consider asking foster mentors or volunteer trainers to assist with dog introductions
- Foster can also bring their dog to the shelter to get help with introductions by staff

Dog Play

Not only do shelter playgroups enable shelters to better evaluate dogs to determine which would benefit most from foster care, they assist in making better foster matches as well. We highly recommend that fosters read the Dogs Playing for Life playgroup manual at http://dogsplayingforlife.com/dpfl-manual/ and check out the videos and information their organization produces.

Even if your organization does not conduct play groups, here are some things fosters should know:

- What play looks and sounds like
- When and when not to correct them or slow them down
- When to separate dogs (in cases of bullying, when one dog is making the other uncomfortable, etc.)

Foster Mentors

- 3-4 mentors chosen by staff
- Give presentations and/or lead small groups in hands-on training sessions
    - Demonstrate how to use essential supplies
    - In-shelter practice with techniques for common behavioral issues
    - Discuss plan for introducing foster dog to other dogs and potential adopters
    - Where to go for help
- Provide email and phone support for fosters

Suggested Equipment for Fosters

- Sturdy 4', 5' or 6' leash
- Suggest using the EasyWalk or Freedom harnesses
- Martingale collar
- Foster tags
- Crate
- Food puzzles, Kongs and/or other toys

Other Helpful Tools

- Several types of treats
- Plug-in or spray pheromone diffuser
- Stuffed Kongs/Nylabones/Goughnuts
- Metal leash (for persistent leash-biters)
- Laser pointer
- Your walking shoes

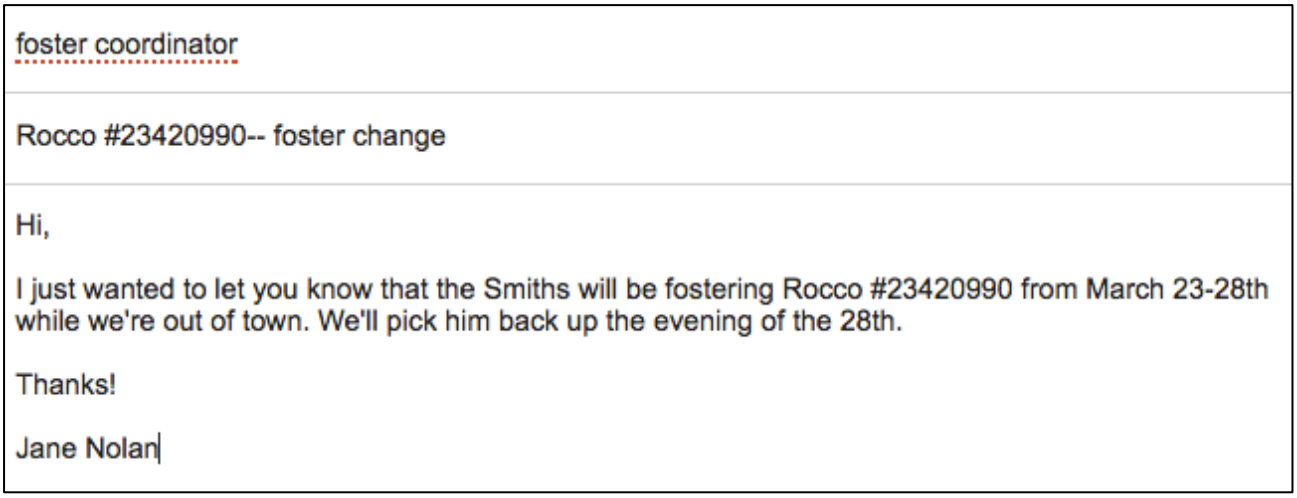
* Baby gates can be helpful, but a good rule of thumb is to only use them as a second line of defense when separating a dog from another dog or cat. Some dogs can jump even the tallest baby gate; others have been known to barrel right through them.

Flexible Fostering

Opening your foster program up to short-term, more flexible options allows more people to become involved and more dogs to get out of the shelter. Some of these people may realize that they are able to take on longer-term dogs. Others may be able to help provide respite to long-term foster families.

Allowing your fosters to network to fill gaps in care will help to relieve the burden on your shelter's foster coordinator and will empower families to find solutions for their foster dogs. There are many ways this can be helpful. If a family has a vacation planned, they might post a request for a temporary foster in the shelter's volunteer and foster group or contact another foster they know is open personally. A foster might be more willing to take on a higher-energy dog if they know they can post a request for another foster to take the dog on a power hour walk once a week.

Once a sub-foster is found, an email is sent to the foster coordinator to alert them to the details of the placement change. The foster coordinator can then contact the sub-foster to ensure that all needed paperwork has been signed.


foster coordinator

Rocco #23420990-- foster change

Hi,

I just wanted to let you know that the Smiths will be fostering Rocco #23420990 from March 23-28th while we're out of town. We'll pick him back up the evening of the 28th.

Thanks!

Jane Nolan

Figure7. Example of an email about a change of foster

Supporting Your Fosters

The Foster Team

While each dog may have one main foster home, other volunteers can help with photography, videography, writing bios and marketing. Other volunteers may assist with training advice and support and even serve as a back-up fosters if the main foster family goes out of town or needs a break. This approach costs organizations nothing and gets dogs adopted faster, often without them having to return to the shelter. Foster teams help ensure that your adult dog foster program is community-focused and your fosters are given multiple avenues of support.

The traditional approach to fostering is that all foster questions, shelter check-outs, medical approvals and other support are handled by the foster coordinator. This puts an enormous amount of pressure on one person, and often accidentally leads to unanswered questions and bottlenecked logistical issues.

Medical approval logistics are much easier if fosters can make needed appointments on their own. Shelters can create an allowance of a specific amount of money that can be spent on emergency care without approval. This

removes the barrier of waiting sometimes hours to get approval for treatment, and fosters will love the reduction in red tape.

When a shelter has a volunteer and foster social media group, questions posted there often receive answers instantly. Foster mentors can also help answer questions and provide support.

Behavioral Support

- Fosters can receive support from:
    - Behavioral staff
    - Foster coordinator
    - Foster mentors
    - Other fosters/volunteers
- Consider forming partnerships with good local trainers
- If a dog needs behavioral support that your organization is unable to afford, consider discussing it with the foster– you'll be surprised at how many will be open to creating a GoFundMe or even funding it themselves

Adoptions from Foster Care

Making Contact with Potential Adopters

Shelters have different methods for putting potential adopters in touch with foster caregivers, and there are benefits and drawbacks to each system. Shelters should consider the options and choose a system that will work the best for them.

- Forwarding potential adopters' contact information to fosters when they make contact
    - This system only works when the shelter is able to forward the information to the foster immediately; if time goes by between the initial contact and the foster receiving the information, the potential adopter may have found a pet before contact with the foster is made.
- The shelter posts or gives the foster's contact information to potential adopters when contact is made.
    - There may be issues with privacy here; it does allow for instant contact with fosters without the shelter needing to forward messages or information.
- The foster chooses or is assigned an email address that does not include any private information; this email address is given to potential adopters directly.
    - The privacy issues are avoided, as are any issues with the shelter needing to forward messages. The foster coordinator may need to create a database of emails and foster names to ensure that the information for the correct foster is given.

Figure 8: The foster's email, which does not include identifying information, is given directly to potential adopters in this post

Screening Potential Adopters and Making Adoption Matches

Fosters may need to be trained in how to contact potential adopters, host meet-and-greets and talk to potential adopters about their foster dog.

When a shelter removes adoption counseling from their marketing, it brings in a wider range of adopters. This is a great thing because it means that you will have a choice of adopters, but it also means that some potential adopters will be wrong for the particular dog.

Hi!

I'm Jack's primary foster Mom and will be fielding requests about him. There's been a lot of interest in him, so at this point I'm just looking to get some additional information from people to help determine if Jack would be a good fit. I'm hoping you won't mind answering a few questions for me.

- Can you tell me a little more about your home situation. Do you live in an apartment, condo, house with a yard? How many people live in the house? Any children? Any other pets?

- What are you looking for in a dog? What traits are important to you?
(i.e. an active pup or one that's more sedentary. A super cuddly dog or one who's more independent. A playful pup or one who's calmer.)

Once I've gone through all the requests we'll make a decision on meet & greets, most likely sometime next week.

Thanks for your interest in Jack, he's a wonderful dog and we just want to take the time to find the right home for him!

Jenny

Figure 9. Information-gathering email to potential adopter

While in contact with a potential adopter, you may want your fosters to:

- Ask questions about the person/family that may help you determine if they are a good match for the dog
- Point out their foster's adorable quirks
- Describe any behavioral issues objectively
- Keep an open mind, but put safety first
- Phone call vs. Email on first contact
    - Canned email about dog saves time if there are multiple inquiries
- Attach or follow up with photos, video

If a foster is certain that a safe placement for a dog is a home without young children, go with it. However, fosters might want to keep an open mind about other qualities of adopters. Here's an example that illustrates why:

> *"Patty had fairly severe, destructive separation anxiety, so we were looking for an adopter who worked from home or was retired. A woman inquired who lived in a rented apartment over a retail store– the opposite of what we were looking for– but she had a very interesting job: teaching severely autistic children using a specialized technique. Doing this therapy requires an incredible amount of problem-solving skills and motivation. I felt comfortable that she would do whatever she could to make it work, so after meeting her, the adoption was approved. I told her it might be best to crate Patty to limit possible destruction. She took her home, put her on Prozac and left her loose in the apartment when she went to work. Problem solved."*

If the foster has the potential adopter's email, they should send a polite thank you for their time, confirm any meeting dates and add some photos or video they may not have already seen so that they can get to know the dog better.

Queueing Potential Adopters

You'd never expect to have more than one potential adopter at once for a long-stay dog, but once you begin using the marketing techniques in this manual, you'll find it happening all the time. Dogs have no interested parties for months, but just a weekend stay in foster and a great write-up can open up a whole new world of

possibilities.

Having more than one potential adopter inquiring can be overwhelming to fosters. Additionally, potential adopters will think highly of your shelter if they feel they are treated fairly. Queuing potential adopters is one way to handle this type of situation. Here's one way to queue the potential adopters via email:

- Let them know there's a queue and what their place is in it
- Give them a date/time when you'll get back in touch
- Let them know of any other dogs who may fit their lifestyle

I've been fostering Dalton for about 2 weeks now and the shelter asked me to get in touch with you about him. He is a fabulous dog! He had a meeting with a potential adopter tonight, and they told me they would let me know their decision tomorrow around 11am. There are several people interested in him, so if they decide not to adopt, I'll start setting up meetings in the order that the contacts occurred.

I also wanted to let you know that there are several dogs at the shelter who you might want to take a look at: You may have seen Solomon on the shelter's Facebook page lately. We did a photo shoot with my 3-year-old nephew at the shelter on Sunday, and Solomon was a rock star! He also enjoyed meeting my 8-year-old nieces. You can read more about him at http://www.petango.com/Adopt/Dog-Mastiff-25061303. Bella is currently in foster care. She is very sweet and is also whip-smart. You can read about her at https://www.facebook.com/FairfaxCountyAnimalShelter/posts/994446753916914. You can email FCPDPetResources@fairfaxcounty.gov for more information on Bella. Clive is a big, sweet goofball and a volunteer favorite. You can meet Clive at http://www.petango.com/Adopt/Dog-Terrier-American-Staffordshire-25030191

Figure 10. Example of an email to queue potential adopters

Meeting with Potential Adopters

- Be honest
- Ask questions
- Describe any behavioral issues objectively
- Control the introductory process
- Meeting location:
  - Shelter may not be best meeting location (stressful)
  - Consider any behavioral issues
  - Meeting other dogs?
  - Neutral location
- Follow up

If there's any one piece of advice that we have for families who are introducing their foster to people or other animals, it is that **they MUST remain in control of the introductory process**. This is critically important for dogs with behavioral issues that make it necessary for them to be introduced in a particular way for safety reasons.

Addressing Behavioral Issues

Guidelines for fosters:

- NEVER withhold information about a dog's behavior from potential adopters.
- Discuss anything that's likely to come up when they read the pet's file in an objective way.
- Show them techniques you've found that work with their dog.
- Consider scheduling multiple meetings if dog has behavioral issues that the adopter will need to address.
- Make sure the adopter sees the whole range of the dog's behavior and know how to address any behavioral issues.

Describe any behavioral issues objectively:
DON'T *"He's aggressive with other dogs when we walk."*
DO *"When he's on a leash and a new dog comes close, he will begin barking and pulling toward them. He was evaluated in playgroup and he really enjoys playing with other dogs, but when he's on leash and can't get to a new dog, he sometimes gets frustrated. We have some exercises we're working on that are helping with this, which I'll show you when we meet."*

Adoption

Make it easy for your foster families to assist in getting their foster pets adopted. Make sure each family has several copies of any literature you give to the public on the adoption process. When families meet with dogs in foster, they almost always ask about the adoption process. Austin Animal Center makes it really easy on their fosters to do adoptions right from their home (see Example E).

When fostering a dog who is severely stressed by being inside the shelter, allow fosters to complete as much of the adoption process from home as possible. Fosters can check with the shelter pre-adoption to make sure the dog's vaccinations were up-to-date and that they had been microchipped. If these are complete, the dog might not need to return to the shelter during the adoption at all. The adopter could go to the shelter, do the adoption paperwork and pick up their new family member afterward. If vaccines and/or microchipping are still needed, fosters could ask the adopter to call them about 30 minutes before the paperwork was completed and bring the dog to the shelter for their new adopter then, sparing the dog what could be hours inside the shelter if there was a long line for adoptions.

Here's a great example of behavioral recommendations that a foster created for an adopter:

> Adopter understands the following with regard to the behavioral needs for Saki:
>
> A structured, predictable environment is recommended for this dog. His routine should include multiple periods of exercise and training daily, followed by quiet, "down time" during which he can "turn off," think about the day's lessons, and not feel the need to monitor and control his environment. His foster home recommends that that he continued to be crate trained and that his crate be considered a safe place for him to retreat.
>
> Saki will do best if he has a dedicated handler; a person with whom he can bond, work for, and whom he can trust to partner with him as he is trying to learn to maintain control over himself. Saki needs to slowly acclimate to new environments, new people and other animals. His foster home has observed that he is naturally curious about people and other dogs, and friendly when he becomes familiar with them. In foster, he has shown that he is deferential to humans and has learned better introductions with dogs. Saki needs positive reinforcement when he interacts with people and other dogs in an appropriate manner.
>
> Saki has shown no obvious signs of stranger reactivity in his foster home. However, because of his past encounters, he needs to be introduced to strangers respectfully and carefully. It is advised that structured training be continued to help him develop familiarity and comfort with people in the home. The adopter is advised to consult with a behavioral specialist on this issue and follow the trainer's instructions for introductions to new people and children. Prior to forming a plan with the behavioral specialist, the adopter is advised to limit interactions with new people and to secure the dog in a room or crate when new people enter the home.
>
> The foster home has observed that Saki does well with on-leash introductions to new people in the yard. The foster home has trained Saki to not react to doorbells or knocks at the door. The adopter is advised to continue this training, utilizing the Relaxation Protocol and other methods recommended by a behavioral specialist.
>
> Most importantly, Saki requires structure, routine and familiarity. He requires careful, slow introduction to anything "new." The adopter is advised to recognize the typical signs of stress or anxiety in dogs. These include: body

tensing, upright posture and alertness, “whale eye,” lips pulled back to bare teeth, growling. Adopter is advised to call the dog away from the stimuli when he displays these signs. Adopter is advised to not necessarily correct the dog for showing signs of discomfort, recognizing that the dog is communicating to his handler through these signs that he is in an uncomfortable situation, prior to escalation.

The foster home has observed that Saki pants and yawns when anxious or excited, but these are not necessarily signs of discomfort. The adopter is advised to take note of these signs and monitor that they do not escalate to the signs of stress noted above. The foster home has also observed that Saki grunts in his sleep; this should not be confused with a growl or sign of distress.

A recommended plan for rehoming is as follows:

1. Adopter will take Saki into their home on Saturday, February 4.
2. Adopter is advised to provide 2-3 days of adjustment for the dog, allowing him to decompress in “his room/space” and limiting activity and interaction with new people. Adopter is advised to introduce Saki to his housemates while on leash, and to keep introductions brief and positive during this time.
3. During the first week, adopter is encouraged to establish an early routine of “exercise - learn something - rest” in order to help Saki process his new environment. In the first few days, “learning something” can be, for example, exploring new areas of the home on leash, meeting housemates on leash, dedicated sessions of training in 10-15 minute intervals, etc.
4. Adopter is advised to contact a behavioral specialist/trainer within the first week and to work with them to create a training plan. The adopter can contact Saki’s foster home with questions or assistance with behavioral training in the meantime, or at any time after adoption.
5. Adopter is encouraged to continue following the Relaxation Protocol with Saki in his new environment, and to utilize this tool throughout the first three months of his new living arrangements. Upon completion of the Relaxation Protocol (15 days), the adopter is advised to periodically return to the training, and utilize the training particularly when he encounters stressful situations and needs to refocus.
6. Adopter is advised to create structure and rules around Saki’s home behavior, and to enforce them consistently and insist that all house members stick to the same rules. Keeping Saki on a dropped leash while in the home will help all humans feel comfortable redirecting him if needed. Adopter is advised to use only positive reinforcement training with Saki.
7. The adopter is advised to create and follow a plan with her behavioral specialist/trainer on how to introduce Saki to strangers in the home. Prior to the implementation of this plan, adopter is advised to limit visitors to the home. All visitors should be notified of Saki’s behavioral concerns and will not be allowed to interact with Saki prior to the development of a training plan. Prior to implementation of the training plan, Saki will be crated or otherwise isolated when visitors are present.
8. The adopter is advised that Saki’s exposure to, and interactions with, children are unknown. The adopter is advised to consult with a behavior specialist and create a training plan prior to introducing Saki to children.
9. The adopter is advised to introduce Saki to other dogs carefully, and be mindful of the potential for territorial behaviors and a tendency toward resource guarding of food and high-value treats like bones and rawhides. Further, the adopter is advised to exercise caution with Saki around cats and to be mindful of the potential of chasing and resource guarding. The adopter is advised to consult with a behavioral specialist and create a training plan to address these issues if Saki will be interacting with other pets.
10. If Austin Animal Center agrees to waive the adoption fee for Saki, the adopter agrees to put the typical adoption fee of $75 toward the cost of Saki’s training and development.

Post-Adoption Support

A major benefit of having animals adopted directly from foster is that the foster caregiver and adopter get to know one another during the process. If a dog who has been in foster is adopted directly from the shelter, the shelter can put the two in touch to discuss the dog’s needs. Often this develops into an informal support system.

Fosters can elect to keep the line of communication with adopters open post-adoption and be a resource for the

new family. We've seen adopters ask for advice on things like where to find a great dog trainer or pet sitter, what harness works best for a strong puller, and how to best go about setting up a play date for their dog.

Many times, we've seen adopters contact a foster when they are seriously considering returning their dog to the shelter. In most cases, all it took was listening to the adopter and making a few suggestions, and the dog has remained in the home.

Here's an example of advice and recommendations for the adopter of a high energy dog, who was considering returning the dog (spoiler alert-- they kept their dog!):

Hi Ann,

I realized when I got off the phone with you that I made one very important mistake. I forgot to tell you one thing that Sage does that may seem unusual to you: she growls when she plays. When we first adopted our own dog, this trait took us a while to get used to. If you don't know that it's a signal of play, it can be easily mistaken for aggression. In time, you'll be able to tell her 'play growls' from her other types of vocalizations.

It sounded like you could use some guidance on wearing her out, as dogs tend to get into the most trouble when they are in need to exercise. Luckily, there are several things you can do to tire out a dog mentally that can work just as good as a long walk or run.

- Kong toy: Fill this with a mix of wet and dry food, peanut butter, or a combination of your own food that is okay for dogs to eat: regular & sweet potatoes, banana, meat, peas, etc. Freeze overnight and give it to your dog the next day. My dogs spend from 20-60 minutes with these, working to get all the food out. This provides some mental stimulation for them and some quiet for you. Make sure to do it in the kitchen or somewhere contained so that the food doesn't end up in places it's not allowed.

-Kong Wobbler: Put her dry food in it when you feed her, and she'll need to work by pushing the Wobbler around to get the food back out. Again, make sure to do it in the kitchen or somewhere contained.

-Food puzzle toys: More ways to stimulate a dog's mind. You can put dry food in a Kong wobbler, and she'll have to work to get it out. http://www.firecrackerdog.com/dog-puzzles

-Training: learning something new is also a great way to stimulate the mind.

-Bones: she loves to chew on bones and bully sticks. You might try giving her a bone upon return to the house after a walk to see if she might use up that extra energy on it.

-Other games: One of the other fosters likes to hang a balloon from the ceiling on a fishing line. Their foster will play with it for hours. Lots of dogs will also chase laser pointers just like cats; we had a foster who loved to chase the laser at night in the yard when it was dark.

If you decide that she is not the right match for you, don't worry; the shelter will be happy to take her back and will probably have some recommendations of other dogs that might be a better fit. Please let me know if you decide on this so I can meet you at the shelter and take her back to foster.

Sincerely,

Kelly

Figure 11. Email to an adopter who was adjusting to the exercise needs of her high-energy dog

Keeping Your Foster Caregivers

To figure out how to keep medium and large adult dog fosters, we first needed to find out why they do what they do. When we surveyed Fairfax County's behavioral fosters, nearly all of them mentioned saving lives that might be ended due to kennel stress and/or the behavioral improvement most dogs show in foster care as the major reasons that they foster. Here are some of their answers:

- "We've noticed an appreciable change in behavior in dogs who are not adjusting well to the shelter. A foster setting helps ease anxiety and helps us pinpoint specific behavioral needs. That way, not only can we begin training and reconditioning, but we can also market the dog more appropriately to find the most suitable family."
- "We enjoy helping the dogs and as empty-nesters, we have a quiet, calm home that the dogs seem to respond well to."
- "To give them a second chance they might not otherwise have, due to no fault of their own."
- "I know shelter behavior almost never reflects a dog's true personality. Every dog deserves the chance to be judged on who they truly are."

We also needed to find out what aspects of fostering adult dogs were most rewarding to them. Foster caregivers don't get paid, but there are many other reasons that fostering is rewarding to them. Finding out which intangible rewards are the most important to foster care providers helps us to design programs with these rewards built in.

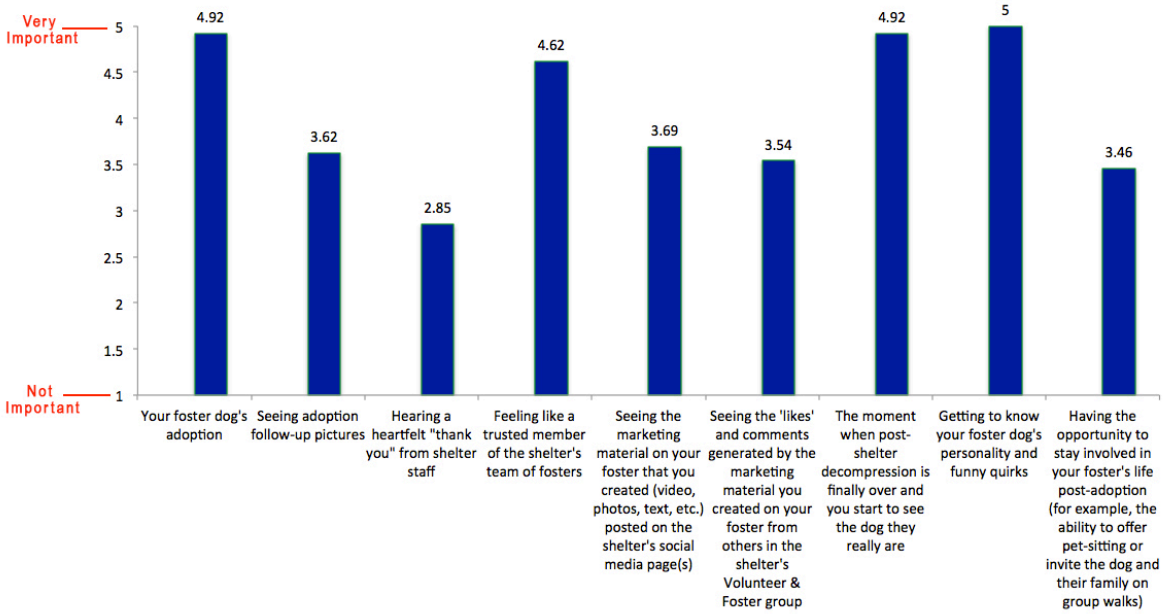


Figure 12. Foster Survey: How important are the following intangible rewards to you, on a scale of 1 (not important) to 5 (very important)

As you can see in Figure 9, the top 3 most important intangible rewards are things that have nothing to do with the shelter, but everything to do with the dog! The # 4 most important reward is something your organization can do: TRUST them. Even though expressing thanks for a foster's hard work is the last on this list, it is still important to do! Here are a few other of the fosters' intangible rewards:

- "*Learning more about my dog as she interacts with a foster dog."*
- *"Being a support system for the adopter should they have questions or issues after the adoption."*
- *"Being able to share the dogs successes with fellow volunteers and fosters that have formed a relationship with that dog while he/she was at the shelter."*
- *"Knowing the dog and the new family are enjoying each other is everything!"*

Appendix A: Resources

Behavioral Support

Center for Shelter Dogs communication and body language
http://centerforshelterdogs.tufts.edu/dog-behavior/dog-communication-and-body-language/

Animal Farm Foundation dog training e-book
http://animalfarmfoundation.org/files/Dog-Training-E-Book_2014.pdf

Center for Shelter Dogs behavior problems and management
http://centerforshelterdogs.tufts.edu/dog-behavior/problems-and-management/

How to introduce two dogs by Randy Mouri
http://media.wix.com/ugd/077aa8_f0e713f7d0ac4963a456ffe74fdbf9b3.pdf

Finding Foster Caregivers

Increase pet foster placement by 50 percent in 6 months? Yes, you can!
http://chewonthis.maddiesfund.org/2017/07/increase-pet-foster-placement-by-50-percent-in-six-months-yes-you-can/?fref=gc

Foster Care for Adult Dogs

ASPCA discusses behavioral fostering for adult dogs
http://aspcapro.org/blog/2015/12/02/we-don%E2%80%99t-know-what-we-don%E2%80%99t-know

How foster reduced length of stay and increased adoptions for adult dogs
http://stories.barkpost.com/shelter-dog-foster-study/

Why fostering a shelter pet is the best thing in the world
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/23/foster-shelter-pet_n_6720804.html

The easiest way to get your shelter's long stay dogs adopted
https://animalfarmfoundation.wordpress.com/2016/10/25/you-might-be-overlooking-the-easiest-way-to-help-your-shelters-long-term-stay-dogs/

How foster can decrease length of stay
http://chewonthis.maddiesfund.org/2015/06/decreasing-shelter-length-of-stay/

Post shelter decompression

Bringing home a new dog
http://www.dogsoutloud.org/2013/05/so-youve-brought-home-a-new-dog-now-what/

Bringing your shy foster dog home
http://www.maddiesfund.org/bringing-your-shy-foster-dog-home.htm

Dog play groups

Dogs Playing for Life Manual
http://dogsplayingforlife.com/dpfl-manual/

How playing saved these dogs' lives
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/05/08/playing-for-life-pit-bulls_n_7226240.html

Appendix B: Austin Animal Center Foster Care Provider Agreement

I, _____, make the following statements and voluntarily enter into this Foster Care Agreement (hereinafter "Agreement") to provide temporary care as a foster caregiver for the Austin Animal Center ((hereinafter "AAC").

1. _____ I have never been convicted of animal cruelty, neglect, or abandonment. I agree to notify AAC if I am convicted of animal cruelty, neglect, or abandonment in the future.
2. _____ I agree to comply with all other federal, state and local laws that pertain to companion animals and pet ownership in the jurisdiction where I reside.
3. _____ I understand that AAC reserves the right to check on the welfare of my foster animal, which may include a visit to my foster home. I further understand that if AAC finds a direct and immediate threat to my foster animal, AAC may remove the animal from my care.
4. _____ I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the AAC Foster Care Manual ("Manual"), and that I have read the Manual. I agree to fully comply with the policies, guidance and requirements set forth in the Manual as applicable to my foster animal.
5. _____ I agree to not take my foster dog(s) or my foster cat(s) to dog parks, off-leash areas, daycare facilities, crowded public areas, or any similar locations, unless given prior approval by the AAC Foster Coordinator. I understand that I will be solely responsible for any injury or damage caused by my foster animal if I do not comply with this provision.
6. _____ I understand that AAC recommends that my foster animal(s) is to be kept separate from any other animals currently living in my home. I agree that if I choose to introduce my foster animal(s) to any other animal living in my home, I will be solely responsible for any illness or injury to other animals.
7. _____ I agree that the animal(s) that I foster will reside in my home, will be kept as household pets, and will not be used for breeding.
8. _____ I agree to notify the AAC Foster Coordinator immediately by phone and in writing at 512-978-0541 and Animal.Foster@AustinTexas.gov immediately if my foster animal(s) becomes lost or separated from me.
9. _____ I agree to notify the AAC Foster Coordinator immediately by phone and in writing at 512-978-0541 and Animal.Foster@AustinTexas.gov if my foster animal demonstrates any aggressive behavior, including, but not limited to, biting a person or another animal.
10. _____ I agree to seek immediate medical attention if I am bitten by my foster animal, or if I receive any other physical injury resulting from interaction with my foster animal. I further agree to seek immediate medical attention for any member of my household who is bitten or suffers any other physical injury resulting from interaction with my foster animal.
11. _____ I agree to return my foster animal(s) at any time upon the request of the AAC Foster Coordinator or any AAC staff member.
12. _____ I agree to receive and respond to calls and emails concerning my foster animal(s), from AAC.

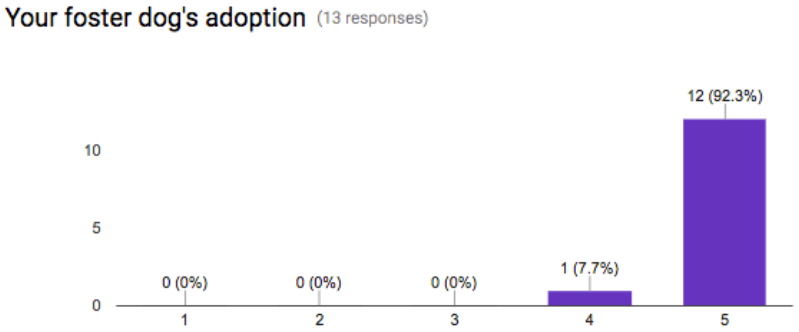
Appendix C: Survey of Fairfax County's Behavioral Fosters

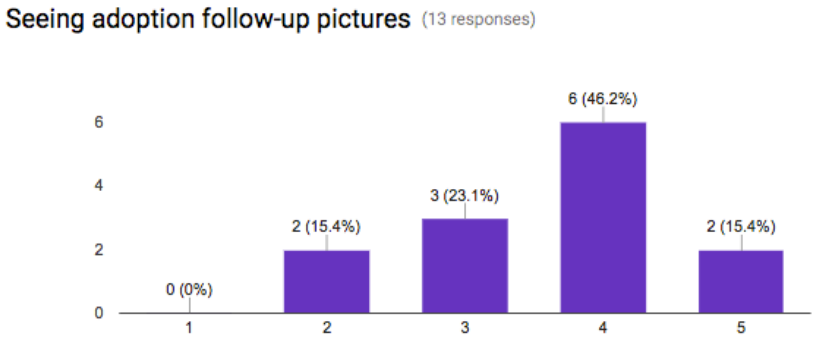
What is the main reason you foster dogs with behavioral issues?

- To give them a second chance they might not otherwise have, due to no fault of their own.
- To help prepare them for life in a home.
- I know shelter behavior almost never reflects a true dogs personality. Every dog deserves the chance to be judged on who they truly are.
- To help those dogs that would be most difficult to adopt out without proper training and to prevent possible euthanasia.
- We've noticed an appreciable change in behavior in dogs who are not adjusting well to the shelter. A foster setting helps ease anxiety and helps us pinpoint specific behavioral needs. That way, not only can we begin training and reconditioning, but we can also market the dog more appropriately to find the most suitable family.
- We enjoy helping the dogs and as empty-nesters, we have a quiet, calm home that the dogs seem to respond well to.
- The dogs I foster with behavioral issues I sense is either from the stress of the shelter environment and are a completely different dog outside of the shelter or assume they have had some abuse in the past and just need to learn to trust
- I know I can save the life of a dog who might otherwise be euthanized for shelter stress if I just get them out of the shelter.
- to save their lives..
- To possibly save their lives and give them a break from the shelter. A lot of their behaviors may be related to kennel stress so just getting them in a home environment can make all the difference!
- They all deserve a chance. Some dogs just don't do well in the shelter
- Giving dogs a chance (who might not otherwise have one); saving a life! Always great to see how different dogs are outside of the shelter environment.
- Because they are the last 10%, the dogs most in jeopardy at kill shelters.

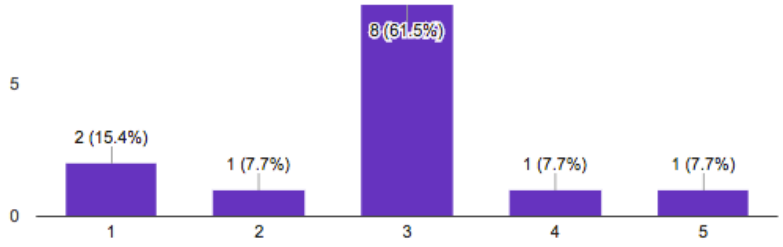
Intangible Rewards

On a scale of 1 (Not Important) to 5 (Very Important), how important are the following intangible rewards to you?

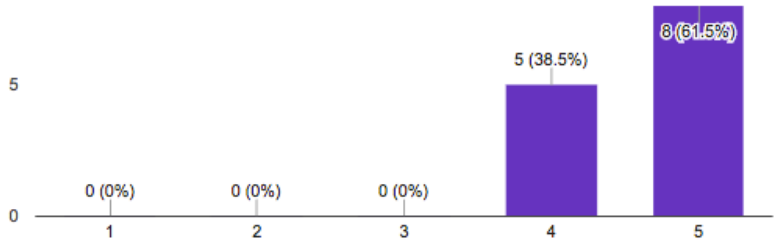




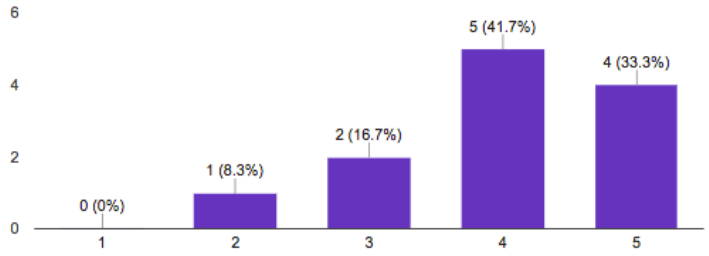
Hearing a heartfelt "thank you" from shelter staff (13 responses)



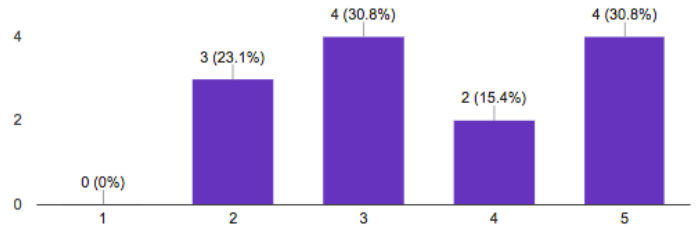
Feeling like a trusted member of the shelter's team of fosters (13 responses)



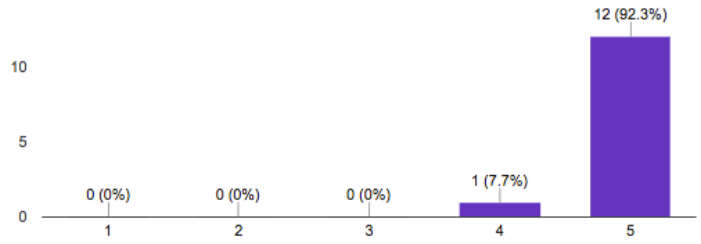
Seeing the marketing material on your foster that you created (video, photos, text, etc.) posted on the shelter's social media page(s)
(12 responses)



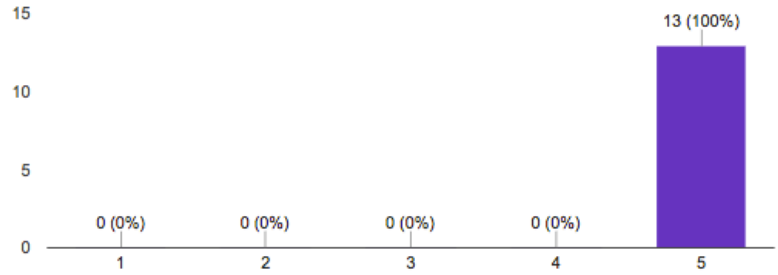
Seeing the 'likes' and comments generated by the marketing material you created on your foster from others in the shelter's Volunteer & Foster group
(13 responses)



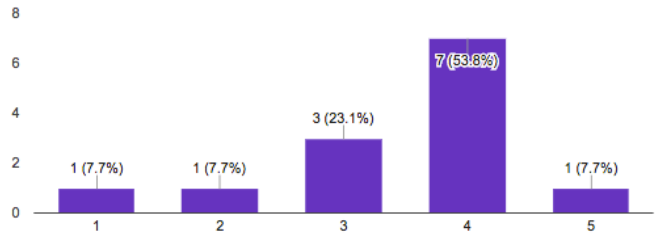
The moment when post-shelter decompression is finally over and you start to see the dog they really are
(13 responses)



Getting to know your foster dog's personality and funny quirks (13 responses)



Having the opportunity to stay involved in your foster's life post-adoption (for example, the ability to offer pet-sitting or invite the dog and their family on group walks)
(13 responses)



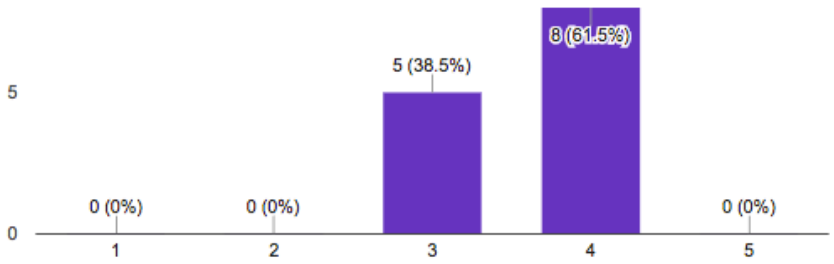
Please add any other intangible rewards you can think of that are important to you as a foster:

- Just knowing that I prepared a dog for a happy ever after is what truly motivates me.
- Being able to share the dogs successes with fellow volunteers and fosters that have formed a relationship with that dog while he/she was at the shelter.
- Seeing my dog interact with our shelter dog!
- The most important and rewarding aspect is helping the dog find a loving forever home. Knowing the dog and the new family are enjoying each other is everything!
- Being a support system for the adopter should they have questions or issues after the adoption.
- Learning more about my own dog as she interacts with a foster.

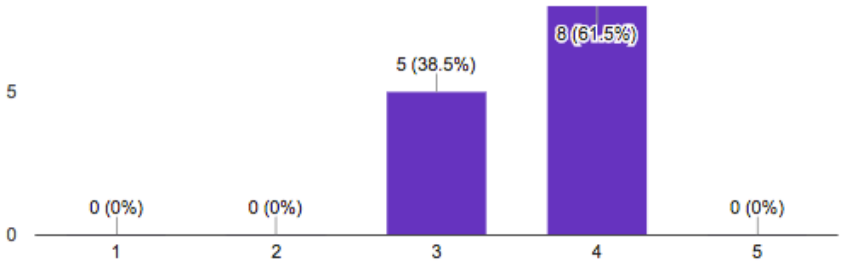
Getting Fosters Involved

On a scale of 1 (Not Important) to 5 (Very Important), how likely would you be to take a dog home based on the following:

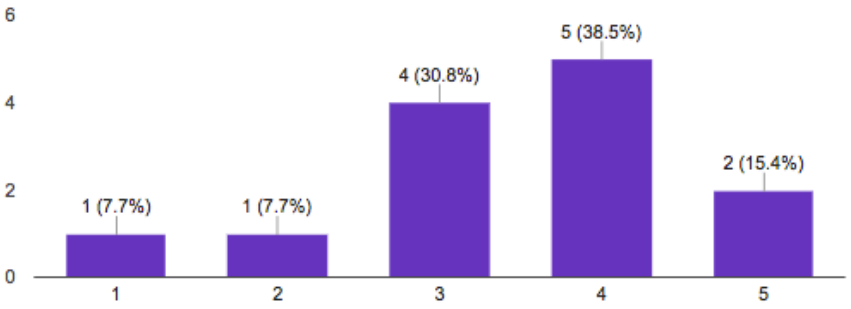
Reading a biography of the dog (13 responses)



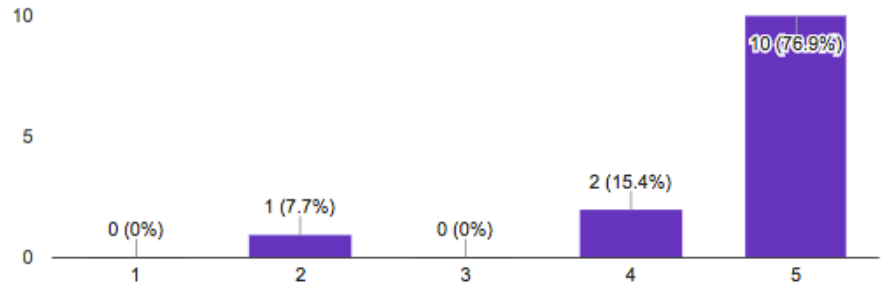
Seeing a post on social media about the dog (13 responses)



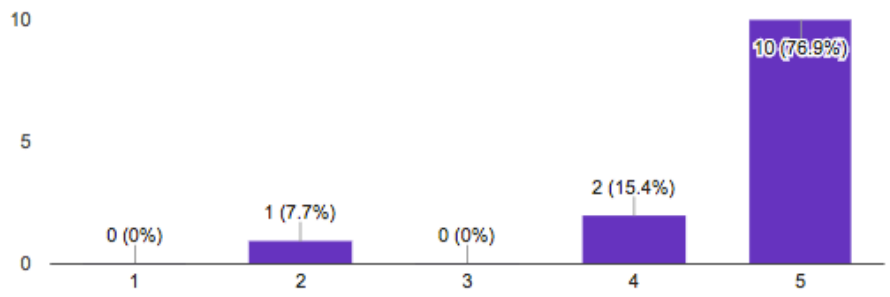
Seeing a photograph of the dog (13 responses)



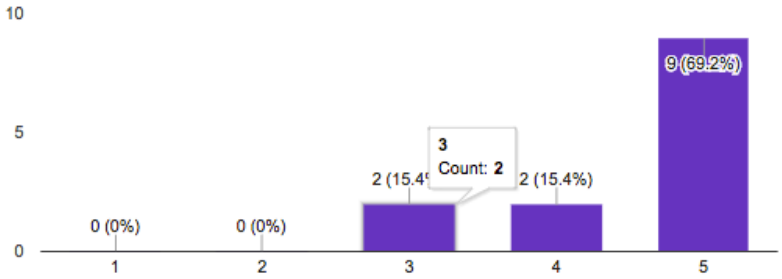
Having some type of emotional connection to the dog (13 responses)



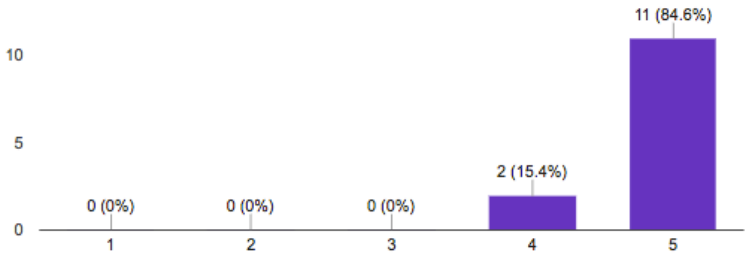
Meeting the dog (13 responses)



Being asked personally to foster the dog (13 responses)



Knowing that the dog is at risk of euthanasia, that a foster family could save its life, and having the assurance that the shelter fully supports the outcome (13 responses)

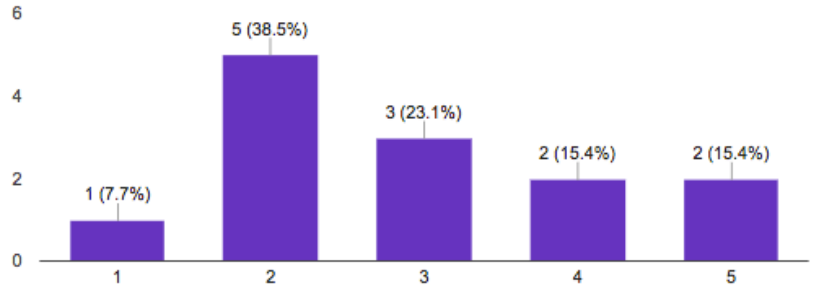


Foster Care Logistics

On a scale of 1 (Not Important) to 5 (Very Important), how important are these things to you?

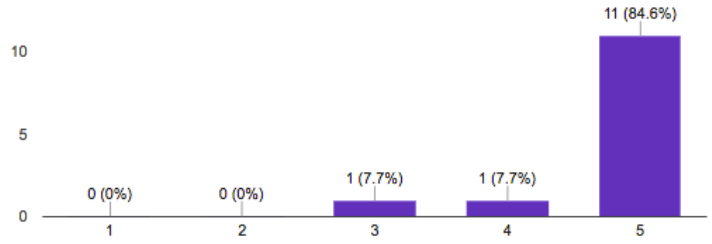
The shelter supplying the items you need, as opposed to you needing to purchase or provide them yourself

(13 responses)



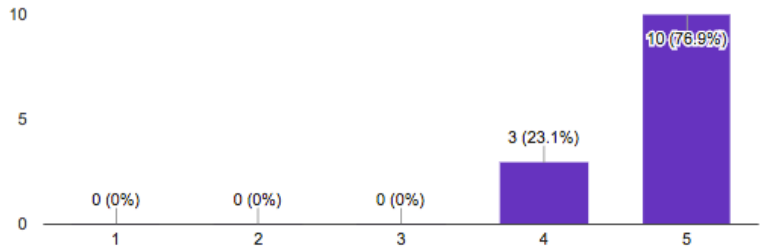
Access to the support you need to help your foster when you need it (ex: having a trainer work with you and your foster on specific behaviors, having a support network of other fosters, etc.)

(13 responses)

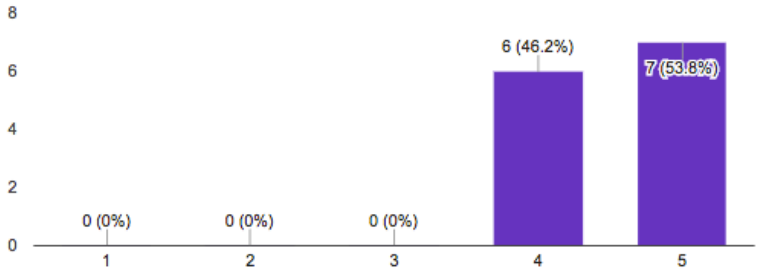


Receiving responses to your questions or concerns in a timely manner

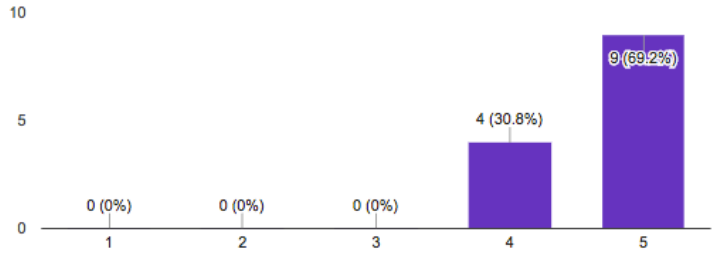
(13 responses)



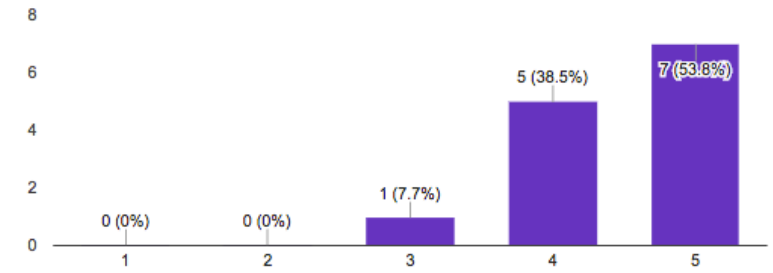
Receiving inquiries from potential adopters in a timely manner (13 responses)



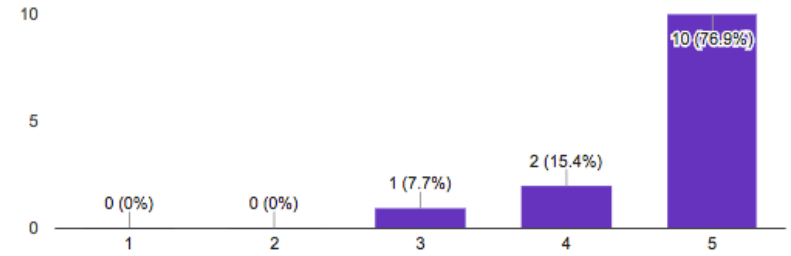
Having the ability to make arrangements for your foster dog's temporary care with another foster directly (when you go on vacation, for example)
(13 responses)



Seeing your foster marketed by the shelter consistently throughout its stay in foster care
(13 responses)



Having the ability to make the final decision on the placement of your foster dog into the adoptive home you think is best
(13 responses)



Suggestions for Shelters Creating Similar Programs

Based on your experience, what would be the best way(s) for a shelter to recruit more behavioral and/or long-stay dog fosters?

- Provide success stories from other organizations with this program. Work on having a large network of potential fosters so as not to overwhelm those who are called on frequently. If the organization already has a group of dedicated volunteers, perhaps begin by recruiting from this group.
- I think you have to "grow" into fostering, so having new fosters have wonderful experiences with lots of support with relatively easy dogs first...then helping them accept more and more challenging dogs as they grow and their skills increase.
- I think recruiting volunteers to become fosters is essential. You already know they care about animals and if they see the success of other fosters they will trust the process. Then there's word of mouth. If you treat your fosters well and they're happy they will likely recruit for you.

- Education and training. I think it would be important to break down the foster into levels of need and levels of danger. The foster families ability should match or exceed that of the dog/s being fostered. Making safety the priority.
- Group training with a needy dog. Build a community.
- The shelter could target recently retired people or empty-nesters. (After our kids left home, the house was so quiet. That is when we decided to start fostering dogs.) Also, seek referrals from exiting fosters and volunteers.
- Create leads who actively touch base with the fosters
- Look to your blue dot dog volunteers and other types of fosters (medical, puppy, etc.) who are particularly skilled.
- Highlight the program on social media and other media outlets.
- Weekend fostering is what got me hooked! Start sharing weekend fostering adventures and stories again to encourage more fosters to sign up! Target "dog people" with common sense. Most of these dogs don't need special fosters, just fosters with patience who get it. Market it as long term fostering and progressively give fosters more challenging dogs as they master handling easier issues. Build confidence in the fosters. Labeling dogs turns people off who might otherwise be able to perfectly handle that dog. Get to know your fosters an their abilities
- Ask existing volunteers/fosters for referrals-- in particular people with no dogs/children in the home (fewer variables tends to make it easier!).
- Recruit from your volunteer pool first! I started fostering behavior dogs because I saw them at the shelter when I went in to volunteer every week. Getting to know the dogs and then also knowing that their lives were in danger because of behavior issues, made me want to do something more to help them. When people form a connection to an animal it's very difficult to then walk away from them and not help. And the second thing is to be transparent. Let people know WHY behavior fostering is so important. Don't sugar coat it - explain that these are the dogs most in danger and often times if they aren't fostered, they won't make it out of the shelter. It's a sad fact but it IS a fact so don't hide it.

What are the most important things for a shelter to know or do if they're planning to create a behavioral and/or long-stay dog foster program?

- Timely communication with fosters is key, as well as ongoing support for those with animals in their care.
- That it will not ALWAYS be successful and they have to accept that without making the foster feel like a failure. Fosters feeling like they are valued and supported is important to keep them coming back for more.
- They need to be 100% committed. If they bring on fosters and don't support them fully they will not be able to keep them. Lots of training opportunities and communication is essential!
- I think what you are doing is it. Promote it, support it, share success stories.
- They need a person or 2 dedicated only to foster placement and recruitment.
- Make sure the fosters understand how to get help if they need it. The shelter also needs to have an evaluation mechanism to make sure that a dog can safety go to foster, and to match dogs with appropriate fosters. The foster should be fully informed of all behavior issues. Some dog fosters have much more experience in handling difficult dogs than others.
- To me it's a plan to recovery/improvement or at least a high level outlined to be reviewed with the foster. This keeps everyone involved and attempts a high level understanding to avoid confusion
- Keep your fosters' trust. Promote the dogs a lot so they get adopted and new ones can go into foster.
- Have training and support programs in place
- Make sure your fosters have common sense. Set the dogs up for success in their placement
- Have mentors/advisors available to help answer questions fosters may have-- it can be frustrating to fosters when they feel like they can't reach shelter staff about a question or concern (from personal experience). Have a large enough network of fosters so there may be an alternative placement for a dog if the first foster doesn't work out (esp. dogs who are doing very poorly in the shelter environment).
- The big thing for me is to understand that your behavior fosters will need more support then the average foster, so be prepared that it will require a dedicated person or persons to oversee them. For the most part your behavior fosters are not going to be trainers or dog behaviorists, and while they will likely be more of an experienced dog person, they will still need support. The worst thing you can do to a foster is give them a dog with issues but give them NO tools or training support so they actually know how to work on the issues. Also, showcase your fosters and their animals, and celebrate their successes. Everyone likes a thank you, but it's especially gratifying when you are recognized for helping a behavior dog. A post on social media that Fluffy was adopted after being fostered by Jane goes along way to make fosters feel appreciated and valued.

What should a shelter do in order to retain the behavioral/long-stay fosters they already have?

- Be responsive to and supportive of fosters. Build a strong network of fosters to help create a sense of teamwork. Never forget that fosters open their homes and care deeply for these animals, and are very invested in their outcomes.
- Again, support, support, support! That means being there with answers immediately if there is a problem and keeping the lines of communication open. I think if shelters are honest and open with fosters they create trust which is crucial.
- Communicate! Show your fosters that they're appreciated and that their opinions matter. They are saving lives and that should be acknowledged.
- Same as above. Though I personally do not seek out recognition for what they do, I feel many do. Acknowledging what they do and reporting on how they help the overall cause of saving lives can have a big impact on how people feel about a program.
- Create a positive community with open and non-judgmental dialogue.
- The shelter should listen to the fosters when the dog is put up for adoption. For example, if the fosters say "no small kids" then the shelter should not adopt the dog out to a family with young kids. This just sets the dog up to fail and frustrates the foster. Also, the longer the foster has the dog, the higher the risk of a "foster fail" situation. While this gives the dog a good home, it often prevents the family from continuing to foster, especially if the dog is selective with other dogs.
- Recruit more trainers and create an opportunity for high energy dogs to have an opportunity outside of shelter runs. I know many times the dogs are just losing it being cooped up which I cannot blame them. Full transparency on roles and responsibilities and various participants leverage or say.
- If a dog goes into foster that the shelter ultimately is not comfortable adopting out (yet the dog is safe for the community in its foster placement), work with the foster to determine a safe placement if at all possible. If a dog can be sent to a good sanctuary or a rehabilitative rescue, a good foster will find a way to make it happen.
- Provide continued and consistent support and training.
- Thank them! Follow their suggestions, they know the dog best. Market those dogs in foster a LOT! You don't want your long term fosters getting burnt out
- Maybe have regular, casual meetings/get togethers at the shelter or have a regular newsletter to keep everyone engaged/in the loop. Or maybe even having a separate Facebook group for these fosters to communicate. For me, feeling like I am parting of something "bigger" is important so this kind of things would interest me.
- Provide them the support they need in a timely fashion. Empower them to have control over the outcome for the dog. It's tough to be a behavior foster knowing that the ultimate decision on the animal's fate is not your own. If a dog is being sent to foster, then it should be with the assumption that it's to get the dog ready for adoption. NOT to see if the dog 'fails' and to justify euthanasia. Unless a dog is determined to be dangerous or unsafe while in foster, they should be made available for adoption. And the foster should be the critical party in making that determination. Also, encourage your behavior fosters to take breaks in between fosters so they don't burn out. But to do that you need to have enough fosters to take in the behavior dogs so that one or two fosters aren't left feeling like if they don't take the dog (because there is no one else who will), the dog may die.

What should a shelter avoid when creating and implementing a behavioral and/or long-stay dog foster program?

- Lack of timely responsiveness in communication and support can make a foster feel unappreciated, frustrated and alone. Fosters should always be given a real opportunity to provide input on decisions regarding the outcome for a foster animal.
- Expecting more from a foster than they are capable of giving. Everyone has strengths and weaknesses and they will need to know just who can do what and for how long.
- Never keep information from the foster. Always tell the truth even if it's hard. Transparency is key! You never want to lose someone's trust or put an animal in a bad situation.
- Animosity, small talk, gossip, etc.
- Never lie about known or assumed behavior. Don't put kids or other animals in danger.
- Lack of transparency on next steps or possible outcomes. Not listening or incorporating foster observations/input and assuming staff only knows best. Not working with creative alternatives and empowering for volunteers to creatively expand the programs.
- Shelters should avoid blindsiding fosters with outcomes they don't have input into and/or didn't expect. Always be transparent with fosters.
- Lack of support (or at least perceived)
- More related to general shelter policies/procedures but something should be done about repeated negative, yet unhelpful, notes in pet point about dogs with behavior issues. When potential fosters read them it can be confusing/misleading. Those notes are also shared with potential adopters. Agree that total transparency is needed but notes should be fact-based and useful. Example - Based on Alfred's pet point notes a foster may not have stepped up but after taking him on an all day power

hour and reading the write up Marsha was willing to foster him. [She might have anyway, but know my write up helped balance out his very negative pet point record]

- Lack of support. Sending dogs to foster for the wrong reasons (i.e. to see how they do in order to determine if they should be euthanized). If a behavior dog goes to foster, it should be to ready them for adoption. Not showcasing the dogs and their fosters and helping to push to get them adopting.

Additional Comments*:

- Fostering is very dear to my heart, but I know it is not for everyone. People should feel like they are needed and wanted by staff. Growing good fosters takes time and dedication, but the end results are wonderful. No one person can do it all, but together fosters can do more than you thought possible.
- The shelter should try to be responsive to fosters especially if the animal in foster care is ill. Keeping the lines of communication open is essential to a successful foster program.
- Truly wish I was in a better spot to foster behavioral fosters unfortunately a 1BR condo with another dog already is not the ideal arrangement! I'll continue to do the blue dot power hours/days until we get a bigger house!

Appendix D: Mentor Form for Blue Dot Fosters

Mentor Form for Adult Dog Fosters

Mentee's Name: _____ Date: _____

Mentor: _____

Check each item below to indicate it has been introduced and/or practiced as appropriate. After in-shelter training session, please complete this form and return it to the Foster Coordinator.

Skills/Talking Points

____ Know where in the shelter you can find the essential supplies for your foster dog
- Properly fitted martingale collar (2 finger rule)
- EZ-walk harness
- Toys – especially for high energy dogs (Kong, Nylabone, etc.)
- Crate – always have a crate or somewhere that you can safely leave the dog when not supervised

____ Discuss behaviors observed in the shelter environment vs. home environment

____ Have a plan for introducing the foster dog to current dog(s) in home
- Know your dog's play style
- Slow introduction/monitor body language
- Long walk with current dog(s)
- Leave leash on until comfortable
- Limit free access to toys/bones
- Have plan for keeping separate if need be (crate, separate rooms, etc.)

____ Always keep dog separate from cats or other small animal(s) in the home – cats and small animals should have an escape route and safe place to relax

____ Understand that some dogs take longer to decompress when transitioning from shelter to home
- Have plan to burn off nervous energy
- Give them space and time to relax
- Don't overstimulate

____ Understand separation anxiety and how to manage and/or work on the behavior
- Is aware of the benefits of crate training/use and how to develop a positive relationship
- Protect your personal belongings – don't leave a fearful dog loose in your home alone

____ Understand how to work with jumpy/mouthy/high energy dogs
- Basic training skill set (sit, stay, down, look, touch, recall)
- Have helpful tools (Kongs, laser pointer, metal leash, play nose games)
- Don't overstimulate/use timeouts
- Practice taking at least one jumpy/mouthy/high energy dog out of the kennel for walking/play time

____ Discuss how to work with fearful dogs
- Slow and steady
- Build trust

- Recognize body language
- Work on introducing dog to new people and situations
- Watch exits! Fearful dogs can be flight risks
- Practice taking at least one fearful dog out of the kennel for walking/play time

_____ Knows what to do with a leash reactive dog if out on walks (e.g., get attention/treats, turn and avoid conflicts/engage-disengage game, etc.)
- Practice these skills with at least one shelter dog

_____ Is aware of resource guarding and has skill set to manage and/or work on issue
- Remove the resource (toys, food, etc.) especially if other animals are around
- Trade resource for treats/praise (practice this technique with at least 1 shelter dog)
- Safety first! training vs. provoking (don't 'test' food guarding by sticking hand in dog's food bowl)

_____ Is aware of techniques to separate dogs if involved in conflict (own pets or as on walks)

_____ Know that you're not alone and there are resources to help – don't be afraid to ask!!!
- Foster coordinator
- Behavioral staff or other behavioral support
- Adult dog foster mentor
- The shelter's Facebook volunteer/foster group

_____ Understanding of procedures for adopting from foster care and the proper way to introducing foster dog to potential adopters and other pet(s) in the home
- What to do when more than one adopter wants to meet the dog
- Where to meet (shelter may not be the best place to show the dog)
- How to talk about the foster with potential adopters

_____ Knows what to do in case of emergency and have phone numbers programmed into your phone
- Always have your foster dog's shelter ID # with you!
- Foster coordinator- call _____
- Medical emergency - call _____
- Bite report – call _____
- Lost dog – call _____

Feedback

In your opinion, does this conditional adult dog foster:

1) Listen to input/follow advice and show good independent problem solving skills? ___ Yes ___ No
   If no, why: _____
2) Ask questions when he/she seems confused? ___ Yes ___ No
   If no, why: _____
3) Follow all safety procedures and guidelines? ___ Yes ___ No
   If no, why: _____
4) Understand that he/she needs to observe behavior? ___ Yes ___ No
   If no, why: _____
5) Need another mentoring session? ___ Yes ___ No
   If yes, why: _____
6) Handle walking big, energetic dogs well? ___ Yes ___ No
   Why or why not? _____
7) Other comments or concerns: _____
   _____

Check each item below to indicate it has been introduced and/or practiced as appropriate. After in-shelter training session, please complete this form and return it to the Foster Coordinator.

Skills/Talking Points

____ Know where in the shelter you can find the essential supplies for your foster dog
- Properly fitted martingale collar (2 finger rule)
- EZ-walk harness
- Toys – especially for high energy dogs (Kong, Nylabone, etc.)
- Crate – always have a crate or somewhere that you can safely leave the dog when not supervised

_____ Discuss behaviors observed in the shelter environment vs. home environment

_____ Have a plan for introducing the foster dog to current dog(s) in home
- Know your dog's play style
- Slow introduction/monitor body language
- Long walk with current dog(s)
- Leave leash on until comfortable
- Limit free access to toys/bones
- Have plan for keeping separate if need be (crate, separate rooms, etc.)

_____ Always keep dog separate from cats or other small animal(s) in the home – cats and small animals should have an escape route and safe place to relax

_____ Understand that some dogs take longer to decompress when transitioning from shelter to home
- Have plan to burn off nervous energy
- Give them space and time to relax
- Don't overstimulate

_____ Understand separation anxiety and how to manage and/or work on the behavior
- Is aware of the benefits of crate training/use and how to develop a positive relationship
- Protect your personal belongings – don't leave a fearful dog loose in your home alone

_____ Understand how to work with jumpy/mouthy/high energy dogs
- Basic training skill set (sit, stay, down, look, touch, recall)
- Have helpful tools (Kongs, laser pointer, metal leash, play nose games)
- Don't overstimulate/use timeouts
- Practice taking at least one jumpy/mouthy/high energy dog out of the kennel for walking/play time

_____ Discuss how to work with fearful dogs
- Slow and steady
- Build trust
- Recognize body language
- Work on introducing dog to new people and situations
- Watch exits! Fearful dogs can be flight risks
- Practice taking at least one fearful dog out of the kennel for walking/play time

_____ Knows what to do with a leash reactive dog if out on walks (e.g., get attention/treats, turn and avoid conflicts/engage-disengage game, etc.)
- Practice these skills with at least one shelter dog

_____ Is aware of resource guarding and has skill set to manage and/or work on issue
- Remove the resource (toys, food, etc.) especially if other animals are around

- Trade resource for treats/praise (practice this technique with at least 1 shelter dog)
- Safety first! training vs. provoking (don't 'test' food guarding by sticking hand in dog's food bowl)

_____ Is aware of techniques to separate dogs if involved in conflict (own pets or as on walks)

_____ Know that you're not alone and there are resources to help – don't be afraid to ask!!!

- Foster coordinator
- Behavioral staff or other behavioral support
- Adult dog foster mentor
- The shelter's Facebook volunteer/foster group

_____ Understanding of procedures for adopting from foster care and the proper way to introducing foster dog to potential adopters and other pet(s) in the home

- What to do when more than one adopter wants to meet the dog
- Where to meet (shelter may not be the best place to show the dog)
- How to talk about the foster with potential adopters

_____ Knows what to do in case of emergency and have phone numbers programmed into your phone

- Always have your foster dog's shelter ID # with you!
- Foster coordinator- call _____
- Medical emergency - call _____
- Bite report – call _____
- Lost dog – call _____

Feedback

In your opinion, does this conditional adult dog foster:

8) Listen to input/follow advice and show good independent problem solving skills? ___ Yes ___ No
   If no, why: _____
9) Ask questions when he/she seems confused? ___ Yes ___ No
   If no, why: _____
10) Follow all safety procedures and guidelines? ___ Yes ___ No
   If no, why: _____
11) Understand that he/she needs to observe behavior? ___ Yes ___ No
   If no, why: _____
12) Need another mentoring session? ___ Yes ___ No
   If yes, why: _____
13) Handle walking big, energetic dogs well? ___ Yes ___ No
   Why or why not? _____
14) Other comments or concerns: _____
   _____

Appendix E: AAC Foster Program Adoption Packet

Austin Animal Center Foster Program Adoption Packet

How can I help my foster animal find a forever home?

When fostering an animal for Austin Animal Center, you can be the animal's number one advocate! By acting as an adoption ambassador, you won't just be a foster care provider. You will be a photographer, videographer, biographer, a marketing specialist, and an adoption counselor!

- Take at least one clear, landscape-oriented (horizontal), photo of the foster animal and email it to the foster coordinator to be added to the shelter's website.
- Take at least one clear, short video of the foster animal and email it to the foster coordinator to be added to the shelter's website.
- Promote the foster animal on social media websites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Nextdoor
- Create and post an ad for the foster animal on www.Craigslist.org.
- Create and put up flyers for the foster animal in appropriate locations.

For additional tips and tricks for marketing foster animals, visit these links:
http://bit.ly/1JR
hvcn
http://bit.ly/1K5
y6dL
http://bit.ly/1PZ7yex

Please be aware that animals in our foster program are not on a first come, first served basis. As the foster parent, you may take several applications and/or meet with different potential adopters before deciding which would be the best fit for the animal(s) in your care. However, foster care providers should check their email inbox, and spam folder daily for inquiries from potential adopters about the animal(s) in their care, and respond to all inquiries within 48 hours.

For tips on effective adoption counseling, visit: http://bit.ly/1FiSBUe

My foster animal has an adopter, now what?

1. The adopter must go through the approval process either at the shelter with shelter staff, via the online application (found at AustinAnimalCenter.org) or by completing an adoption packet (attached to the "Foster Pet Schedule" email and available on GivePulse) and returning it to the foster care provider – that's right, YOU can process and approve their application!

If the interested party chose one of the former options, the foster care provider may email the foster coordinator to request the details of the application and verify that the interested party has been approved.

2. Once you have confirmed that someone will be adopting your foster pet, contact the foster coordinator right away to let us know.

3. After the foster animal has been spayed/neutered and microchipped, it may be transferred to the adopter. Upon transferring the animal, the foster care provider should collect the appropriate adoption fee from the adopter.

4. The foster care providers must submit the adopter's name and other identifying information or the completed adoption packet and the adoption fee to the foster coordinator within 3 business days.

5. After adopter's information and adoption fee have been received by the foster coordinator, all of the animal's paperwork and microchip information will be emailed to the adopter.

Adoption fees for animals that are adopted from foster care are as follows:

Kittens/Cats: $35
Bonded Pair of Kittens or Cats: $40
Puppies/Dogs under one year of age: $75
Dogs over one year of age: $35
Animals with medical issues (FIV Positive, Heartworm Positive, Skin Condition, etc.): Waived fee
Animals seven years of age and older: Waived fee

Please note:

- All animals must be spayed/neutered and microchipped prior to being transferred to an adopter.
- The adoption fees listed above should be collected regardless of current fees at the shelter.
- The foster pet's Identification Number must be written on the Adoption Packet.

AUSTIN ANIMAL

Animal ID# _____

Dog Adoption Questionnaire

Name _____ Date _____

Home#_____ Cell#_____

E-mail Address _____

Address _____ Apt/Unit #_____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

DOB: _____ Driver License # _____

Circle the option on each line that you feel best suits you and your home:

I consider my home to be most like:	A library (calm and quiet)	Middle of the road (sometimes quiet, sometimes a lot going on)	Grand Central Station (We have lots of people coming and going and a lot going on most of the time)
I have owned a dog before:	No	Yes: ☐ 2-10 yrs ago ☐ 10+ yrs ☐ Within the past year	I currently own a dog
When I'm home, I want my dog to be by my side:	Little of the time	Some of the time	Most of the time
When I'm not home, my dog will spend his time:	In the garage In a crate in the house	In the yard	Loose in the house Confined to one room
My dog will be mostly an:	Inside dog	Outside dog	
My dog needs to be able to be alone for:	Less than 4 hours a day	4-8 hours a day	More than 8 hours a day
I want my dog to be:	Not very Active	Middle of the road	Very active
I want a dog for:	Guard Dog	Companionship	Other
I am comfortable doing:	No training	Some training	A lot of training

My dog needs to be good with: (circle all that apply) Dogs Cats Birds Other Animals Kids under 8 Kids over 8 Seniors Other: _____

It is most important to me that my dog: _____

_____

Fill in the blank

How did you hear about AAC?

☐ Friends/Family ☐ Social Media (Facebook/Twitter) ☐ Adoption Event
☐ Past Connection with AAC ☐ Television/Radio ☐ Other_____

Do you: ☐ Own ☐ Rent ☐ Sublet ☐ Other

If you rent or sublet, please list the landlord or rental agency's contact information.

Name: _____ Phone number: _____

Number of People in the Household: Adults _____ Children _____ Ages of Children _____

Names of Adults Living in the Household (18 and over):

_____ _____ _____

Have you applied to adopt a pet from AAC before? ☐ Yes ☐ No If so, how long ago? _____

What kind of pet? ☐ Cat ☐ Dog ☐ Other

If you have previously adopted from us, what happened with that pet? _____

Please list all of the companion animals you have had in the last 3 years, including the ones that are still with you.						
Name	Type/Breed	Age	Neutered /Spayed	If cat, declawed?	Owned for how long?	Why is this animal no longer with you? (If applicable?)

Do you have a veterinarian? ☐ Yes ☐ No Vet Clinic Name and Phone Number: _____

Please check any topics you'd like to discuss with an adoption counselor:

☐ Feeding your pet
☐ Introducing your new pet to other pets
☐ Where to keep your pet during the day, at night, or while at work
☐ House training
☐ Challenging behaviors
☐ What to do if your pet is lost
☐ Grooming/Training
☐ Behavior issues
☐ Other: _____

I certify that all information provided is true and understand that false information may nullify this application and authorize Austin Animal Center to verify the above information.

Applicant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Person ID_____

Adoption Agreement – Austin Animal Center

The adopter agrees to comply with the following requirements:

____ I (we) declare that I (we) have not been convicted of a charge related to cruelty, neglect, or abandonment to animals and that no such charge against me is currently pending.

____ I understand shelter may refuse an adoption at any time for any reason.

____ I understand that I am assuming all financial responsibility and I will not expect financial reimbursement for any expenses incurred, including veterinary services.

____ I agree all pets adopted from the shelter will be spayed or neutered.

____ I understand that Texas state law requires all animals adopted from a shelter be altered (Chapter 828, Texas Health and Safety Code). I understand that violation of this article subjects me to a civil penalty and that I may be compelled to comply with the provisions of the article above. If my animal cannot be altered in the shelter due to medical reasons, I agree to have my animal sterilized by _____.

____ I agree to take my new pet to my own veterinarian within 10 days of adoption.

____ I understand the shelter does not know the medical, vaccination, or genetic history of the animals. A pet may have been exposed to disease or have genetic problems that the shelter is unable to detect. A pet adopted here may or may not have been seen by one of our veterinarians. The shelter makes no guarantees about the health of adopted pets.

____ I understand that although the shelter records behavior information on pets while they are at the shelter, the shelter makes no guarantees about the behavior or temperament of any animal.

____ I agree to meet the physical and behavioral needs of this animal daily and to provide preventative veterinary treatment and other medical care as needed.

____ I will make sure my pet is always wearing a collar and identification tags.

____ I agree to abide by all state and local laws regarding pets where I live, including requirements for rabies vaccinations and pet registration or licensing, as well as any leash laws, or tethering, shelter or noise-prevention rules.

____ I agree to bring the pet back to the shelter if I can't keep him or her, or find a responsible, caring new home and to alert the shelter I have found this animal a new home.

____ I understand that while the AAC carefully monitors all animals, the AAC may have limited knowledge of their behavioral and medical backgrounds. Therefore, the AAC makes no warranties or representations regarding the animal's health, behavior, temperament, age or breed. I further understand that environmental changes may effect and change the temperament of the above named animal and that AAC has no liability or responsibility of any

nature regarding defects with the animal, or injuries or damage to any person or property which may be caused by the animal. I, the adopter, agree to indemnify and hold harmless AAC, its members, officers, directors, agents, and their heirs, administrators, executors, successors and representatives against any and all claims, known or unknown, nor or hereafter in connection with this animal.

I, the Adopter, have read the adoption rules and conditions set forth and understand each of them and agree to abide by them.

Print name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

☐ I would like to receive special offers, promotions and event information from Austin Animal Center.

Appendix F: Wearing Out Your Foster Dog

Wearing Out Your Foster Dog

Physical Games

Fetch

We recommend using at least two balls to play fetch; this makes it much easier and safer if the dog doesn't retrieve the ball or doesn't want to give it back to be tossed again. *Never try to pry a ball out of a dog's mouth.* If a dog won't let go of an object, find a high-value treat that the dog will exchange for it.
*This game should not be played with multiple dogs due to the possibility of conflict over the resource

Balloon Bounce

Tie a string or a length of fishing line to something sturdy, such as a ceiling vent. Tie a balloon to the other end and bounce it once so your dog sees it moving. Your dog may enjoy jumping to bounce the balloon into the air.
*This game should not be played with multiple dogs due to the possibility of conflict over the resource
See video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vhDrhO6ltAU

Indoor Agility

Teach a dog to jump through a hula hoop, weave through tall objects, leap over a broom handle, etc. Then put these tricks together into an agility course right in your home.
See video: https://youtu.be/60Toy9hABfc

Kiddie Pool

Some dogs will splash and play for hours in a kiddie pool full of water!

Laser Pointer

Some dogs love to chase the laser pointer just like cats. This can be done indoors or outside in your yard when it's dark.
*This game should not be played with multiple dogs due to the possibility of conflict over the resource. Use sparingly as some dogs can become obsessive about the laser light.
See video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTRaNVdL0Fg

Playing with Other Dogs

Playing with other dogs is a great way for dogs to get needed exercise and socialization. Your shelter may have daily dog playgroups that your foster can attend. Your organization may have a recommendation for another foster or volunteer whose dog is very social and would be a good playmate for your foster dog after a slow introduction. We do not recommend taking fosters to dog parks (most foster programs do not allow them anyway). Always check with your organization before introducing your foster to another dog.

Brain Games

DIY Muffin Tin Game

Super simple and almost free! All you do is put small treats in a muffin tin and place tennis balls or balls of a similar size on top. Your foster needs to figure out how to move the balls in order to get the treats.

Difficulty: Easy

DIY Box Hide and Seek

Box Hide and Seek is a super easy and inexpensive game. Grab some old cardboard boxes, spread them around a room, and hide treats in a few of them. Tell your dog to “find it” and let him or her find the treats. Most dogs outright love this game. Once they’ve gotten the hang of it, increase the difficulty by loosely closing the boxes, requiring your dog to figure out how to get inside. Make it even more difficult by removing the boxes and hiding the treats randomly among standard items in the room.

Difficulty: Adjustable from easy to hard

The Cup Game
This game is simple but challenging. Take two plastic opaque cups and turn them over. Place a treat under a cup while your dog is watching. Give him or her the cue to turn over the cup and get the treat. Do this 8-10 times so that your foster understands the game.

Now begin to alternate the cup you place the treat under. When your dog selects the correct cup, let him have the treat. If he doesn't select the correct cup (and that will happen, even if he sees you placing the treat under the cup), show him the treat under the correct cup but don't let him have it. Keep him watching which cup you place the treat under so he can guess the right cup. It sounds easy to us, but for many dogs, this requires some serious thinking.

When this is mastered, you can make it even more difficult. Put a treat under one cup, then slide the cups to switch places, so that the cup with the treat is now on the opposite side. Release your dog to find the treat. If your dog selects the correct cup, give him the treat. If your dog doesn't select the correct cup, show him the treat but don't let him have it. Keep repeating this and see if your dog can figure out the trick.

Difficulty: Adjustable from moderate to hard

Toys

Kong Classic or Kong Extreme

Fill this with a mix of wet and dry food, peanut butter, or a combination of your own food that is safe for dogs to eat: potatoes, sweet potatoes, banana, meat, peas, etc. Freeze overnight and give it to your dog the next day. Most spend from 20-60 minutes working to get all of the food out. This provides some mental stimulation for them and some quiet for you. Make sure to do it in the kitchen or somewhere contained so that the food doesn’t end up in places it’s not allowed.

Kong Wobbler

Put your foster's dry food in it when feeding, and he or she will need to work by pushing the Wobbler around to get the food back out. Make sure to do it in the kitchen or somewhere contained for easy cleanup if needed.

Goughnuts

Goughnuts are heavy-duty toys similar to Kongs. They have several different versions. They also have a guarantee- if a dog chews down to the red layer, you can send the toy back and they will send you a new one.

Nylabones

The quintessential dog chew toy. For added fun, smear some peanut butter on the outside and freeze!

Training

Learning something new is a great way to stimulate the mind!

Appendix G: Decompression Checklist for Fosters

Decompression Checklist

When a pet suffering from kennel stress leaves the shelter, it can take from several minutes to 48 hours or more for that pet's anxiety to return to normal levels. It takes time to build trust, and trust is the basis for obedience. The more a dog trusts his or her foster, the more likely it is that he or she will follow the rules.

In some cases, the buildup of shelter stress can make a dog difficult to tire out. This will improve with time, but there are several things a foster should do to make this process go smoothly.

____ Prepare needed supplies in order to engage your foster dog mentally. You may want to use food-filled frozen Kongs, puzzle toys, etc.

____ If this is your first time outside of the shelter with your foster dog, take a walk around the shelter grounds for 10-15 minutes before leaving to make sure you are confident in your ability to handle him or her.

____ Continue walking, either at the shelter, a park or in your neighborhood. We recommend at least 1 mile for dogs who have medium to low energy levels, 2 for medium energy levels, and 3-4+ for dogs who appear to have higher energy levels.

____ When you arrive home, ensure that any family members who are meeting the dog for the first time are seated. They should let the dog come to them for attention, as opposed to soliciting attention from the dog.

____ Keep your foster dog separated from your own dogs until all dogs are visibly relaxed.

____ If your foster is unable to settle down (panting, whining, constantly in motion, etc.), channel their energy into a task such as fetch, puzzle toys or any game that engages their brain until they are able to relax.

____ Do only essential meet-and-greets for the first 48 hours to week, depending on the dog's comfort level.

Other Suggestions for Decompression:

- If it's not possible to take the pet into foster right away, it will help if the foster comes to the shelter to bring the dog treats or take it outside several times. Consider leaving something with your scent on it, such as a towel, with the dog while it's there. This may help the dog to feel more comfortable and associate the foster with good things.
- If the dog is anxious, try using a pheromone diffuser or collar, or diffuse some essential oil of lavender into the air.

- Consider only using essential (safety-related) commands during this period. Don't want the dog to jump onto your couch while jumping around the house? Think about saving that lesson for another day when they are more calm and available for learning, and engage your foster in another task that's incompatible with jumping on the couch, like a game of Box Hide and Seek (see 'Wearing Out Your Foster Dog').
- Make sure your activities don't overstimulate the dog.
- If the time of day is flexible, fosters should consider taking a dog right after it's been expending energy in the shelter's play group—just don't skip the long walk!
- If the dog is fearful and you're walking in a place that's not public, consider walking with a longer leash so that the dog doesn't need to be closer to you until it's more comfortable.
- Consider playing soft music. Classical, reggae and ambient electronic work well for helping pets decompress.
- Try to stick it out for the first 24 hours unless you are concerned for your safety.