

# Foster Care

Thanks for your interest in foster care for the animals of The Washington County Humane Society. This guide will give you insight to the program and how WCHS uses foster care to help the dogs and cats at WCHS.

## **What is foster care?**

Foster care is a way to help animals currently residing at the shelter by caring for them temporarily in your own home until they are ready to come back to the shelter to be placed up for adoption.

## **Why is foster care needed?**

When an animal arrives at WCHS that is not quite ready for adoption, we rely heavily on our foster care volunteers. The special group of individuals opens not only their hearts, but also their homes, providing animals with the care and attention they need. Our ability to place animals in foster care is essential to our goal of providing a second chance to as many companion animals as possible.

## **What types of animals benefit from foster care?**

Here are a few reasons animals require fostering:

- Animals recovering from an illness or injury in need of a calm, quiet place to recuperate.
- Animals in need of socialization or extra attention.
- Animals that are pregnant or nursing.
- Animals that are too young to be adopted.
- Animals needing to put on weight.
- Animals that are depressed and need a change of scenery.
- Animals that are stressed by the recent change in their lives and in need of extra attention to adapt.

No matter what the reason, all the animals in foster care are in need of love and affection to help them get to a point where they can be adopted by their forever family. Foster families make a world of difference to shelter animals every day.

## **What is involved in fostering?**

Foster parents provide a temporary home for the animals that need a little extra TLC. Fostering involves some time, lots of love, and loads of cuddling and petting! You can expect to spend a minimum of at least 3-4 hours daily with your foster, depending on their special needs. Some animals will need 4 or more hours of your time every day. All foster animals require a separate quarantine area to reduce the spread of disease and where the animal can find solace.

**What does fostering cost?**

WCHS provides our foster families with food, bowls, bedding, crates, litter pans, litter and any other needs the animal may have during their stay. If the animal is in need of medication, we provide that as well, so all fostering costs you is some of your love and time!

**Can we foster if we own pets?**

Yes, you can foster if you have companion animals of your own that are willing to share their home with an unfamiliar animal. Foster animals will need to remain in a separate quarantine area to reduce the spread of disease. Also, please make sure your dogs/cats are current with their immunizations to help keep everyone healthy.

**We're ready to foster! What's next?**

If you feel you have the room in your heart and home to become a foster parent, complete an application today! All foster families must first submit an application and meet in person with the volunteer coordinator for an individual assessment and orientation. Next, a home visit is required. After that process is complete, and you are approved, you can begin fostering!

**What happens during the meeting with the Volunteer Coordinator?**

The Volunteer Coordinator thoroughly explains the foster care program and reviews the expectations of foster parents. She asks questions to ensure the proper matches based on what would best suit your experience, environment and circumstances. She also answers any questions you may have.

**What happens during the home visit?**

The home visit allows the Volunteer Coordinator to assess the space you plan to house your foster animal in during their stay, as well as offer recommendations and advice. If you own companion animals, they will discuss ways with you to help keep them separate and healthy.

**Can we pick the specific animal(s) we foster?**

During the initial meeting, you and the Volunteer Coordinator will discuss the type of animal you feel would be your best match. We don't allow foster families to choose the specific animals they will foster from our list of those who need fostering; however, after our assessment and home visit, we match them accordingly. Just as we take a great deal of consideration when placing our animals with their adoptive families, we also take great care when placing them with their foster families. Foster families always have the option to turn down a foster care opportunity if they do not feel comfortable with the match.

**How long will our foster stay with us?**

The length of stay in foster care can vary from a week or two, up to two months or longer, depending on the animal's specific needs. The average length of stay is about 2-3 weeks.

**How often can we foster?**

How often you foster is largely dependent on your desire and availability. We are always in need of foster families, especially for kittens. Whether you can foster on a consistent basis, or a few times a year, it's a huge help for our special needs animals and shelter staff.

**How should we prepare our home for the arrival of our foster?**

Foster animals require a quarantine area to call their own during their stay. It should be a quiet, comfortable, safe place for them to reside with easy access to their food and water, and if they are a cat, their litter box.

**What should we do if we have questions about caring for the animal during its stay?**

If foster parents have questions while an animal is in their care during normal business hours, they can call WCHS at 262-677-4388. Please ask for Tina Duris, Operations Manager. If foster families have an emergency during non-business hours, they may call Tina on her cell 262-305-5292.

\*Please note that you must speak with Tina prior to taking the animal to a vet. Foster families who take an animal to the vet without prior approval will be responsible for those costs.

**Won't it be hard to give our foster animal back to WCHS after its stay?**

Becoming a foster parent or family is a great way to make a difference in an animal's life. It gives you the opportunity to help animals who otherwise may not have a chance. Anyone who has fostered will tell you that fostering an animal until he or she is ready for adoption is an extremely unique and rewarding experience. They will share with you that, while each foster animal they care for will hold a special place in their heart, they know there is another one out there who desperately needs their love and care. Part of the joy of fostering is knowing that the animal you help rehabilitate, socialize etc. will get the chance they deserve for a loving forever family because of you. Both will benefit from your unselfish efforts.