

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

All foster parents are required to adhere to the policies and procedures outlined in this document. Failure to do so may result in the animal needing to be returned/confiscated, the inability to foster with SPCA of Texas in the future, or other courses of action. These policies are in place to keep you and your foster pets safe and set you up for success. The most updated Policies & Procedures can always be found on the website at: <https://spca.org/adopt/foster/foster-resources/policies-procedures/>.

Eligibility to Foster

All fosters need to have a foster-specific application on file, which can be found at this link: <https://spca.org/adopt/foster/apply-to-foster/>. This form makes up your foster profile in our system and ensures you are matched with animals that best suit your home and lifestyle.

If there are changes to your foster profile, please notify foster@spca.org so we can update your record.

Foster parents are not permitted to foster for another organization while fostering for the SPCA of Texas without prior approval.

SPCA staff members must be employed by the SPCA for 3 months and have their direct manager's approval in order to foster.

Communication

Urgent or not, e-mailing the foster team is the preferred form of communication and the best way to ensure your message is read and responded to as quickly as possible. Having an electronic paper trail helps us keep track of all foster animals, foster parents and actionable items that need completing. Medical related e-mails can be sent to fostermed@spca.org while all other communications can be sent to foster@spca.org.

Foster Requests

Responding to Foster Requests

When responding to foster requests, please respond and inform us which animal you are able to help, the supplies you will need and how soon you are able to pick up. **Priority will be given to fosters who respond and/or can pick up the earliest.**

Supplies

The foster team will provide you with all necessary supplies. However, we ask that you please use your own supplies if you have them so that we can save our inventory for other fosters who don't. Please return all equipment and supplies when you return your foster pet.

For animals in Fospice care (Foster Hospice), we will provide all supplies and initial supply of food, but ask that you please take on the ongoing cost of food if the animal is not on a prescription diet. Prescription food will always be ordered and supplied by the SPCA of Texas.

Scheduling

Please treat all appointments as you would any other professional appointment and arrive on time. Arriving earlier or later than scheduled may result in significant delays in our ability to assist you. Appointments should be made for a specific date and time. We cannot easily accommodate time ranges (i.e. between 3 and 5).

Foster Pick Up

Foster animals can be scheduled for pick up any day of the week. Appointments are required for all foster pick ups or meet & greets.

Foster Returns

All returns must be scheduled at least 24 hours in advance. **No unexpected same-day returns unless it is urgent.** Please note that the due date on your contract is estimated and is not considered an actual appointment. If taking a long-term animal, please notify staff of any upcoming scheduling conflicts at time of pick up or as soon as you are aware of them.

Vet Appointments

(For when your foster pet has medical concerns or is due for a re-check)

Appointments with our shelter veterinarians require at least 24 hour notice unless it is an emergency. The available hours at each shelter location varies. If you are unable to bring your foster pet during the available times, you may drop the animal off earlier in the day and pick up before closing, or the next day if that is more convenient.

Routine Care

(For vaccinations, boosters and tests)

Please help us ensure all foster animals remain up-to-date on routine and preventative care. **These appointments require 24 hour notice.** The available hours at each shelter location varies.

Grooming

(For nail trims, baths, shaves, etc)

Shelter appointments can be made for grooming when necessary for medical, behavioral or safety reasons. Elective grooming may not always be accommodated and will depend on the animal and staff bandwidth. Foster animals are prohibited from going to 3rd party grooming facilities without prior approval.

Health & Wellness

All foster animals shall be provided with proper food, fresh water and proper shelter. The foster animal will stay indoors except for potty breaks. Under no circumstances will your foster be left outside unleashed, on a chain, or in a dog house. The animal will be treated humanely by all members of the foster household.

As a foster parent, you agree to not dispose of the animal in any way. You cannot give the animal away to another person or organization and you will not abandon it. In the event that the foster parent is unable or unwilling to continue to care for the animal, the animal should be promptly returned to the SPCA of Texas. If a representative of the SPCA of Texas determines that the animal is not being cared for properly by the foster parent, the SPCA of Texas has the right to take possession of the animal and cancel the foster agreement.

Medications

Foster parents are required to administer all meds given *exactly as prescribed* by the shelter veterinarian. Behavior medications are not to be discontinued without the consent and instruction from our behavior department and veterinarians, even if you think the animal no longer needs them.

If your foster pet is sent home with long-term or indefinite medications or prescription foods, please provide 1 week notice for refills. We don't always have their medications in stock and often have to order them.

Heartworm/Flea Preventative

All cats and dogs, who weigh 3 lbs. or more, are on a monthly heartworm preventative. It's extremely important that foster pets don't miss any doses while in your care. The foster team will provide you with the number of anticipated doses you'll need to administer at home.

Please notify the foster department when your animal's monthly dose is administered so we can update the animal's medical records. It is your responsibility to pick up more doses when you run out and your animal is due.

Safe Separation

Since an animal being sent to foster may have an undetected contagious medical condition, the safest method to prevent the spread of disease is to ensure your resident pets are up to date on vaccinations and keep them separate from foster animals for 7-10 days as a precaution. **The SPCA of Texas will not cover the cost of medical treatment for resident animals.**

Unaltered Animals

If you receive an unaltered animal for foster, all resident animals in the home are required to be fixed and you are strictly prohibited from using the foster animal for any type of breeding purpose.

Medical Emergencies

Please call 214-608-8073 if your foster pet is having a medical emergency. If you have an emergency between the hours of **8:30am and 6pm**, you may immediately bring your foster pet to the shelter regardless of whether you are able to reach someone beforehand.

We DO NOT have 24 hour services available. If the emergency is after-hours, you may take your foster pet to a 24 hour animal hospital if:

- You have attempted to contact SPCA of Texas staff via e-mail (fostermed@spca.org) and phone with no response, AND
- You feel that urgent and immediate care may be necessary for the animal's survival.

Follow this chart to determine whether an issue is urgent or needs monitoring:

Urgent	Monitor Until Business Hours
Excessive vomiting + lethargy/not drinking/not eating	Vomits once or several times but still behaving normally
Dehydration-not eating or drinking at all, gums white, skin sags when pinched	Eating or drinking very little
Extreme lethargy – not getting up when roused	Sleeping a lot
Serious Injury or Pain	Cuts, scratches, minor limping
Difficulty breathing, open mouth breathing, gasping when no strenuous activity has occurred.	Fecal issues – Diarrhea, blood in stool, worms

Exception: *For the safety of neonates (8wks and under) please refer to the Fading Kitten/Puppy Protocol provided at pick up instead of bringing the animal to the shelter or urgent care.*

Failure to follow these guidelines may result in you being responsible for the cost of urgent care. However, we are able to reimburse you if all required protocols are followed.

Safety

Preventing Escape

Under no circumstances should your foster pet be outdoors unsupervised, even in a backyard. When out in public, your foster pet should be on leash at all times.

Dog parks are strictly prohibited.

Please make sure your foster pet is safely contained (on a leash, in a crate, behind a barrier) when entering or exiting the home, as many pets will dart out when given the chance. For dogs, please ensure side gates are closed, and that there are no gaps or loose boards in your fencing before letting them loose in the yard. Do not open side gates while your pet is in the yard.

If your foster pet manages to escape, you must notify the foster department **IMMEDIATELY**. The foster team will report the animal lost with the microchip company. After notifying the foster team, proceed with the following steps:

1. Put food out in your front and back yard, and some bedding that smells familiar. Leave your back gate open in case the animal returns.
2. Post the lost animal on NextDoor. If you don't have an account, create one and make this post immediately.
3. Call your local animal shelters and vet offices to report the animal missing. Also be sure to browse the shelter websites regularly to see what animals have come in.
4. Post the animal on local Lost and Found Facebook groups and other social media platforms.
5. Print and post flyers around your community. Ask neighbors for assistance.

Animal Gear

Any harnesses, collars or leashes provided for your foster animal should continue to be used exactly as instructed. If the gear you are provided does not work effectively or gets destroyed, please notify the foster team and arrange to pick up replacements. In general, dogs should never be walked with a standard collar and leash, and will usually require a harness, martingale collar and/or Weiss walkie. **Retractable leashes are dangerous to use and strictly prohibited.**

Other Animals

If you have dogs at home, we often recommend bringing them to the shelter for meet & greets with potential foster dogs. In many cases, meet & greets are required. Nonetheless, it's still very important to use caution and follow recommended procedures when introducing a foster animal to your resident pets. Also, please follow guidelines below when introducing your foster dog to other dogs out in public. All interactions must be on leash and supervised. **Dog parks are strictly prohibited.**

<https://spca.org/file/Dog-to-Dog-Introductions.pdf>.

<https://spca.org/file/Introducing-Cats-and-Dogs.pdf>.

Child Safety

Animals and children should never be alone together unsupervised. It is important to observe animals' body language for signs of distress and ensure children give them plenty of space when displaying these signs (ears pulled back, tight mouth, panting, pacing, cowering, hiding, barking etc). In general, animals should not be pet unless they solicit the interaction themselves. Regardless of an animal's temperament or body language, children should not be allowed to hug, lay on, or kiss animals on the face.

Animal Restrictions

You will notice that many animals have restrictions on their foster request or adoption profiles that indicate what criteria is needed in their homes. Most commonly, restrictions are focused around housing type, children, and other pets. Please pay close attention to your foster pet's restrictions, it is required they are adhered to throughout the duration of the foster period. Any requests to waive or alter restrictions, even temporarily, needs to be approved by SPCA of Texas management.

Liability

You are liable for any damage or injury caused by the foster animal while in your care. The SPCA of Texas will not cover the cost of damage to your property, public property, or the property of others, nor the cost of medical care sought out for injuries.

Transportation

Foster parents must have reliable transportation that does not involve public transport or ride sharing services. Please make sure animals are kept secure during transport. Dogs should either be crated in the back seat or confined using a seat belt clip or other safe means. Cats and other small mammals are required to be crated. It is strictly prohibited to transport animals in the bed of a truck or in an open-air vehicle.

SPCA of Texas is not to be held responsible for any and all claims related to traffic violations and/or vehicular law violations, any personal property damages including but not limited to the interior/exterior of your vehicle, injuries, disabilities, or death while transporting SPCA of Texas animals.

Training and Behavior Concerns

Training

Any behavior concerns or requests for training must be brought to the attention of SPCA of Texas staff by e-mailing the foster team. Foster parents are prohibited from enrolling their foster pets in any third party training sessions without prior approval. Any training done at home must be done using our approved methods found at this link: <https://spca.org/resources/pet-needs/pet-tips-training/>.

The SPCA of Texas practices positive reinforcement training only. As such, your foster pets should **NEVER** be punished, scolded, or physically reprimanded for unwanted behavior, nor should they witness these types of corrections with resident pets.

Behavior Concerns

If there are any behavior concerns observed with your foster animal, it is crucial that you notify the foster team right away so that assistance can be provided before the issue escalates. Examples of concerning behavior are:

- Barking/Growling/Hissing at known people or strangers
- Cowering or hiding from people
- Aggression toward people or other animals (lunging, snapping, baring teeth, biting)
- Destructive when left alone or in your presence
- Pacing or whining
- Crate/Separation anxiety
- Urinating or defecating when being pet or when scared
- Easily overstimulated (overly jumpy/mouthy or swatty during play or interaction)
- Hiding all the time
- Won't go outside or come inside
- Inappropriate urination or litter box issues
- Guard resources from other pets or people (i.e. food, toys or guards people)

Bites/Scratches

If your foster animal bites or scratches a person and breaks skin, it must be reported to the foster team **IMMEDIATELY**. Texas law requires that the animal be quarantined for 10 days post-incident. You will be asked to bring the animal to either the Dallas SPCA location or to a shelter within the city that the bite or scratch occurred. If unable to bring the animal due to schedule or safety concerns, an animal control officer or staff member may need to retrieve the animal. The victim of the bite or scratch will need to provide details of the injury, what led to it, and be willing to provide photos.

Traveling & Third-Party Care

Third-Party Care

All foster rules, policies, and protocols apply to all members of your household, with the official foster parent being the primary caregiver. No individuals outside your household are permitted to care for your foster animal without prior approval. **Day cares and boarding facilities are strictly prohibited.**

Traveling

Foster animals must remain within 1 hour of SPCA of Texas facilities at all times. If leaving town, you may not take foster pets with you without receiving prior approval from the foster manager. If approval is given, you agree to take full responsibility for the animal's actions and medical needs while away.

Please provide the foster team as much notice as possible if you have a trip planned, so that a foster sitter can be arranged or space made available in the shelter.

House Training

Due to the situations the majority of our animals come from, it is not likely for them to be housetrained when they get here, nor is the shelter environment conducive to house training-that is what a home is for. We generally don't know whether certain dogs are housebroken and that is why we rely on fosters to find out and to house train the animals to help make them more adoptable. With frequent potty breaks and positive reinforcement, most adult dogs take to housetraining much more quickly and easily than puppies.

Adoption Interest

Adoption Interest For Available Animals

As you share pics of your foster fur babies to friends and family, you may get people interested in adopting them. If you are fostering an animal that is available for adoption, then you are considered their Adoption Ambassador. As an Adoption Ambassador, you get to select the perfect family for your foster pet as long as the adopters meet the animal's required criteria.

Your foster pet must remain in your care until an adopter has completed the adoption paperwork!

Adoption Interest For Animals Not Yet Available

If you receive interest for animals not yet ready for adoption, then please let us know right away so we can add a note to the animal's record. Once cleared for adoption, the adopter you have secured will have 24 hours to sign the adoption contract. All adopters must meet the animals prior to adoption and sign the contracts in person. Your foster pets cannot be adopted and given as gifts or held for out-of-area friends/family.

Adopting Your Foster Pet

As a foster parent, you always get first priority in adopting your foster pet! Just let us know your decision and you can adopt as soon as the animal is cleared.