



Adult Dog Foster Care Manual

1640 Hanshaw Road

Ithaca, NY 14850

(607) 257-1822 (main number)

(607) 257-1874 (answered by staff during business hours)

(607) 592-6773 (after hours)

Medical contact:

(607) 257-1874 ext. 240, medical@spcaonline.com

Volunteer Coordinator

(607) 257-1874 ext. 247 or 246, volunteer@spcaonline.com

Emme Hones, Dog Behavior

(607) 257-1874 ext. 230, behavior@spcaonline.com

www.spcaonline.com

Welcome to the Canine Foster Program of the SPCA of Tompkins County!

Expectations

The goal of the SPCA of Tompkins County is to find homes for as many shelter animals as possible. Some animals require more specialized care before adoption than we can provide at the shelter. These include dogs who require quiet spaces to recover from illness or injury, dogs who are highly stressed in the shelter environment, and dogs who need intensive socialization or training. These pets benefit greatly from our foster parents' love and attention. We are grateful to each and every one of our foster parents for the vital role you play in providing the individual care required by some of our animals.

Foster parents will receive training and full support in order to make fostering the rewarding and wonderful experience it should be.

Fostering adult dogs sometimes requires a significant time commitment. The time commitment required for an adult dog varies significantly according to the needs of the animal. Some adult dogs may need care for several weeks at a time, though some fostering commitments may be longer. We understand that you may have certain months or times of year that you are unavailable.

If you offer foster services to other shelters, do not allow our dogs to mingle with any other dogs while they are in your care.

How do I get foster dogs?

When dogs are in need of foster homes, foster parents will be notified by phone or e-mail. Please check your email regularly in order to be kept informed of fostering needs and respond promptly as possible. We also have a listserv that foster parents can use to communicate with each other and other volunteers, offer support or advice, and get adoption updates. Full details and instructions on how to join the listserv are included in this manual. You can also request to join the 'SPCA of Tompkins County Volunteers' private Facebook page, which is another great place to interact with your fellow volunteers. Any foster parents who do not wish to join the listserv/Facebook page, or who do not have access to email, may speak with the foster coordinator to establish an alternative means of communication.

What kind of supplies do I need?

The shelter will provide all the supplies you need to care for the dog: food, blankets, toys, Kongs, crates, harnesses, etc. You will be given a basic set of supplies when you pick up your new foster. If you need replacements (ex. if your dog shreds his toys) or a different tool (ex. the dog hates crates and you want to try a playpen instead) call or e-mail the shelter and we can set up a time for you to pick up the supplies you need to make your foster a success.

Preparing to become a foster

There are a number of different reasons why we seek foster care for our animals. Different skill sets may be needed for different dogs and some fostering experiences are quite different depending on individual circumstances.

Home Visits

Home visits are not currently required, but can be performed if requested by the foster family. They are a great way to ensure your home is set up for success before taking a dog. A volunteer or staff

member will come to your home and provide information on-site about getting your home ready and make suggestions on what type of dog may be best for you to foster. They will also go over the manual with you and be available to answer any questions.

Medical Appointments

Dogs will receive basic medical care (deworming, vaccines, flea treatment) before going into foster care. Medical staff will inform you of any upcoming appointments for additional care (spay/neuter, additional deworming, etc.) that your individual foster pet will need, and provide you with a copy of all relevant medical records at the time of pick up. Dogs in extended foster may need repeat flea/tick treatment or deworming, which will be provided by the shelter.

Emergency Information

If one of your foster pets becomes seriously ill or injured, contact the shelter immediately.

During business hours (every day of the week and weekend, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00p.m.), please call the shelter at (607) 257-1874. A member of the foster program or medical staff will assist you.

Outside of normal business hours, please call **our emergency number at (607) 592-6773. This is Tompkins County Animal Control**. This number will allow you to reach a member of the staff at all hours. Based on the information you provide, we will assess whether your foster can wait to be seen by a shelter veterinarian at the first opportunity or whether we need to seek emergency care at the Cornell Companion Animal Hospital. Please note that the Cornell Companion Animal Hospital is the only location where medical treatment outside of the shelter is permitted, and **only with prior approval** by authorized SPCA staff. The shelter vet on call will be the one to make all of the decisions on the animal's care in the case of an emergency. Foster parents are not allowed to authorize treatment.

If you are uncertain whether your foster dog is in danger or needs medical treatment, **please do not hesitate to contact the shelter**. We welcome and encourage all calls and questions about the health and safety of foster pets.

Emotional Support

We are aware of the difficulties foster parents face when returning now-beloved pets to the shelter for adoption. We are also aware of how fragile some dogs are and how, despite your best efforts and excellent care, a foster pet may fail to thrive. We are committed to helping you with your foster experience. Providing foster care is a rewarding but sometimes difficult experience and we will provide as much help to our foster families as possible. Please reach out to other volunteers for support as well. Use the listserv and Facebook page to reach people and to hear call-back updates from your foster's adopters.

For Your Safety

Shelter animals may, on occasion, carry diseases or parasites that may be transmissible to humans or other pets. Our animals are medically assessed, treated and vaccinated against common ailments and serious illnesses (rabies, intestinal parasites, fleas, etc.) before they enter foster care. This eliminates some if not all of the risk posed to humans. However, it is still possible that shelter animals entering your home could potentially carry an illness that could affect your health or the health of your animals. You will be provided with a copy of all relevant medical records at the time of pick up.

To reduce this risk, keep shelter pets apart from your own pets. Infections or illnesses carried by shelter pets are often common and highly treatable (like upper respiratory infections). Animals can remain contagious for some time after being exposed to these infections. Keeping your pets separate from shelter pets, especially for the first week or two in your home, will help keep your pets healthy.

Washing hands regularly after handling shelter animals is essential. Washing with plenty of soap and water for 30 seconds each time is the recommended method. Hand sanitizer is helpful but does not eliminate all viruses and bacteria. Limit exposure of foster pets to very young children.

After your foster pet has been returned to the shelter, be sure to carefully clean and disinfect the area(s) they have inhabited in your home before bringing in new foster animals.

Bite Holds

If you or anyone else are bitten by your foster dog or puppy, and the bite breaks the skin (bleeds), **you must report the bite to the SPCA immediately!** A MANDATORY Tompkins County Health Department 10-day bite quarantine is required at the shelter to rule out the possibility of rabies. While rabies is very rare in domesticated animals, it is a very serious disease and so we err on the side of caution, by following the NYS Health Dept regulations. At that time, we will ask that you fill out a form to be submitted to the health department describing the incident. Bites must be reported even if they are non-aggressive, like an over-excited puppy playing or a dog grabbing a finger alongside her toy. Scratches done with claws, even if they break the skin, do not need to be reported, but you should immediately wash the area well with soap and water.

Adult Dogs in Foster Care

Adult dogs are typically placed in foster care when they have medical or behavioral issues that are hard to address in the shelter, or to gather more information about how the dog may be in a home environment. Medically, this can include things like recovering from surgery, or undergoing a treatment that may take a couple weeks. Behaviorally, we most commonly see fearful dogs who can't handle the high stress levels of being in a busy, noisy place full of strangers and young, exuberant dogs who require more consistent handling and training than can be provided by an ever-changing group of volunteers.

Because these dogs tend to have very individualized needs, staff will send out details on what kind of household is needed for a particular dog to our foster families. If you think you are a good fit, the behavior and/or medical staff will discuss the details of living with and caring for this dog.

We perform weekly check-ins with our behavior foster families. This lets staff know how the dog is progressing and gives the foster family a chance to look for advice in handling any new issues that may have come up. Behavior staff can also be contacted at any time by foster families who have questions about their foster pet, even if they were not in foster for behavioral reasons. (For example, a dog recovering from surgery who is bored and chewing on furniture.)

Medical fosters will have a schedule of appointments to ensure that they are recovering properly. Please be prompt and reliable about coming to these, as our medical staff are often very busy and it can be vital that a dog gets treatments at the correct time. If you have questions or concerns about your foster's recovery process, please call or e-mail medical staff.

General guidelines for handling adult foster dogs:

- Don't allow interactions with other people's dogs, such as going to a dog park.
- Always walk on a harness or martingale collar with a flat leash, not a Flexi.
- Leave the shelter ID tag on the dog. You can add a tag with your info as well, but we need that ID number to stay with the animal.
- Supervise your foster dog when s/he is in your yard. We often don't know how good at escaping yards s/he may be and shelter dogs may not feel that this is home, giving them no reason not to leave the yard.
- Use any additional equipment the staff provides, such as slings, Elizabethan collars, Gentle Leaders or muzzles. If you aren't familiar with how something works, just ask and we'll happily teach you.
- Know your foster's medical status. We will provide this information to you at pick-up. Has s/he had all the needed vaccines? When was the last time s/he was dewormed? Has s/he been altered, or will you need to come in for a spay/neuter? Knowing this info can help keep you, your foster and your own pets safe. Dogs who are in foster for longer periods may need flea treatment or de-wormer again.
- Follow the shelter's training cues and policies, unless behavior staff approves another method. This cuts down on confusion for the dog, handlers and adopters.
- Don't change the dog's diet unless approved by medical staff.
- Give the dog some downtime when s/he first arrives. Keep the first few days as calm and stress-free as possible.
- Limit guest interactions. Most foster dogs don't want to be flooded with visitors.
- Try to accustom them to a normal household and typical activities in a positive way. For example, conditioning them to vacuuming the carpet by providing positive reinforcement such as treats.
- Move forward with training/socialization/exercise only as quickly as the dog is comfortable. Remember that they have just gone through the frightening experience of being in a shelter and may not act like a "normal" dog.
- Crate training is great! It would be wonderful if every foster dog was introduced to the crate in a positive way. It makes managing these dogs, whether they need long-term recovery or just a quiet place to hide, much more feasible for adopters.
- You may be asked to show the dog to adopters in your home. Particularly for fearful dogs; coming back to the shelter to meet possible adopters can be stressful.
- Help us promote their adoption! When the dog isn't on the adoption floor, it can be harder for adopters to hear about them. Sending staff pictures, videos, silly stories, updates about their new skills and anything else that will help them catch an adopter's eye gives us more information to use when marketing them and talking with them to possible adopters.

Individual dogs may have different rules for safe handling. Please follow personalized instructions and check with behavior and medical staff if you are uncertain about what to do.

Policies/Expectations

The policies in this manual have been developed in coordination with the SPCA of Tompkins County and the Maddie's® Shelter Medicine Program at Cornell University, using both shelter and veterinarian expertise. Please adhere to the guidelines in this manual and follow our rules of conduct. We are unable to assign foster pets to individuals who do not comply with our guidelines.

Thank you!

We are grateful to our foster parents for your time and devotion to our shelter animals. Thank you for being willing to embrace the responsibility that goes with fostering pets.

Connect with Fellow Volunteers

Volunteers are encouraged to join the listserv and 'SPCA of Tompkins County Volunteers' Facebook Group. These groups are for ALL volunteers, not only foster families. They are a great place to seek advice and view adoption updates on your previous fosters. You will also get shelter updates and learn of events hosted by the shelter for volunteers, such as monthly tea time and potluck suppers (often include an educational component).

Joining the Groups.io Listserv

Point your browser to <https://groups.io/g/SPCA-of-TC-Volunteers>

Once you see the group, you will need to scroll down and click the blue button that says '+Apply For Membership In This Group.'

It will then ask for your email. You should receive an email from Groups.io that requires you to "Confirm account" and create a password. You will then need to wait for approval before you are able to participate.