



Pet Foster Care Manual

PET FOSTER CARE MANUAL TABLE OF CONTENTS

ANIMAL CARE MISSION AND INFORMATION	3
About Us	3
Animal Care Mission	3
Pet Foster Program Mission	3
Animal Care Services.....	3
PET FOSTER PARENTS	4
Pet Foster Parent	4
Role of Pet Foster Parent	4
ANIMAL CARE PROGRAM CONTACTS AND LOCATIONS	5
Foster Liaison	5
Shelter Locations.....	5
PET FOSTER PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS	6
Pet Foster Parent Code of Ethics	6
Pet Foster Parent Service Requirements	6
Orientation and Training	6
Updating Personal and/or Contact Information	6
Eligible Foster Pets	7
Animal Care Program Provisions.....	7
FOSTER HOME PREPARATION AND REQUIREMENTS.....	8
Foster Home Preparation.....	8
Quarantine and Meeting Existing Pets	8
Caring for Foster Pets	9
Cleaning and Sanitizing	10
Establishing Good Habits.....	11
FOSTER PET HEALTH AND WELLNESS	15
Common Ailments and Symptoms	15
Zoonotic Diseases.....	15
Medical Emergency.....	15
Deceased Foster Pet	15
After-Hours Emergency Veterinarian Care.....	16

PET FOSTER CARE MANUAL TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOSTER PET ADOPTIONS	17
Advertising Foster Pets	17
Returning a Foster Pet to Animal Care	17
Adoption of a Foster Pet	17
TERMINATION OF FOSTER PROGRAM	18
Resignation from Program	18
Dismissal from Program.....	18
FOSTER PROGRAM FAQs	19
Questions 1- 6	19
Next steps for Potential Adopters	19
Additional Information	20

ANIMAL CARE MISSION AND INFORMATION

About Us

San Bernardino County Animal Care (SBCAC) is a program managed by San Bernardino County Department of Public Health (DPH). In addition to animal care, the dedicated staff of DPH works to prevent epidemics and the spread of disease, protect against environmental hazards, prevent injuries, promote healthy behaviors, respond to disasters and deliver equitable, quality health services.

Animal Care Mission

The mission of SBCAC is to prevent rabies in humans and pets; educate the public about responsible pet ownership, including the importance of spaying and neutering; protect and serve the public and pets by enforcing all laws and ordinances pertaining to animal care; care for all animals domestic and wild; reunite lost pets with their owners; place unwanted pets into new homes and to maintain a high quality of service.

Animal Care Services

The SBCAC program provides an array of services, including:

- Animal adoptions
- Education on responsible animal caretaking
- Dog licensing
- Spay/neutering resources
- Information on animal laws and regulations
- Wildlife relocations
- Investigative reports of animal endangerment or animal-related threats to the public



Pet Foster Program Mission

To create a network of dedicated foster homes that provide temporary care and shelter for animals in need. SBCAC is committed to offering a safe and loving environment where animals can heal, grow, and thrive while awaiting adoption into forever homes. Through education, support, and collaboration, staff strive to make a positive impact on the lives of animals and the community by reducing shelter overcrowding, saving lives and promoting responsible pet ownership.

PET FOSTER PARENTS

Pet Foster Parent

A pet foster parent temporarily cares for animals in need, including those under the adoption age or recovering from medical treatments.

Role of Pet Foster Parent

The role of the pet foster parent is vital as it provides shelter pets with the necessary care and gives pets an opportunity to be adopted. The foster parent's primary responsibilities will include:

- Providing Daily Care:
 - Feeding
 - Grooming
 - Administering prescribed medications
 - Attending veterinary appointments when necessary
- Training and Socialization:
 - Helping animals adjust to home life
 - Providing basic training
 - Developing socialization behaviors
- Monitoring and Reporting:
 - Monitoring the pet's health and behavior
 - Reporting any concerns or progress to the foster liaison via telephone or email (refer to Foster Liaison for contact information)
- Preparing Pets for Adoption: Foster parents help animals become more comfortable in a home environment, making it easier for pets to transition to a permanent home.
- Advocating and Promotion: Foster parents help promote foster pets for adoption by taking photos, writing bios, and telling stories about the foster pet's journey to adoption. With the approval of the foster liaison, foster parents may also post to social media accounts to further promote the pet for adoption.



ANIMAL CARE PROGRAM CONTACTS AND LOCATIONS

Foster Liaison

The DPH program coordinator serves as the foster liaison and is the primary person responsible for the orientation and training of the program's foster parents. In addition, the liaison's role is to ensure foster parents adhere to the policies and procedures written in this foster manual. When the program coordinator is not available, the health education assistant will assume foster liaison responsibilities. The following SBCAC program staff serve as the program coordinator and health education assistant.

Role	Name	Contact
Program Coordinator	Kacie Roe	Phone: (909) 386-9820 Email: ACFosterProgram@dph.sbcounty.gov
Health Education Assistant	Jessie Velasquez	Phone: (909) 386-9820 Email: ACFosterProgram@dph.sbcounty.gov

Shelter Locations

The SBCAC program sites include the Devore and Big Bear Animal Shelters. Pet foster parents may be asked to report to and foster pets from either of these shelters. The table below provides information on each shelter.

Site	Address	Phone	Hours
Devore Shelter	19777 Shelter Way Devore, CA 92407	(909) 386-9820	Monday–Friday 10 a.m. – 6:30 p.m. (Wednesday open until 7 p.m.) Saturday and Sunday 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Big Bear Shelter	42080 North Shore Rd. Stanfield Cutoff Big Bear Lake, CA 92314	(909) 866-4943	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday–Saturday 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Closed: 1 – 2 p.m.) Wednesday Noon – 7 p.m. (Closed: 2 – 3 p.m.)

PET FOSTER PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Pet Foster Parent Code of Ethics

Pet foster parents will comply with the following code of ethics:

1. Always demonstrate commitment to your foster service.
 2. Respect the confidentiality of sensitive information.
 3. Be familiar with policies and procedures to care for the foster pet population properly.
 4. Support the mission of the SBCAC program for the greater good of the pets and community.
 5. Maintain appropriate communication with the Foster Program Team.
-

Pet Foster Parent Service Requirements

SBCAC will collaborate with members of the public to provide foster care for shelter pets. To meet the basic program requirements, a pet foster parent must:

- Have a current form of identification (i.e. driver's license, passport, etc.)
 - Be at least 18 years old
 - Complete the required application and forms
 - Attend and complete foster orientation and training
 - Reside within San Bernardino County
 - Have reliable transportation to pick up and return the pet to shelter services or for veterinarian care
-

Orientation and Training

Pet foster parents are required to attend orientation and training before fostering a shelter pet.

- Orientations are held at the Devore Animal Shelter or online.
- It is strongly encouraged to ask questions during orientation, training, or volunteer service.
- Once orientation and training are completed, foster parents will be ready to foster a pet.
- A list of pets requiring fostering will be sent to the foster parent's email address, which is provided on the foster parent application.

Note: Foster parents may be required to attend additional training classes as part of ongoing training requirements.

Updating Personal and/or Contact Information

Pet foster parents are required to notify the foster liaison if any personal information changes. This may include the foster parent's address, phone number, email, or emergency contacts. It is important to keep this information current with the foster program to receive vital communications and other updates.

PET FOSTER PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS, continued

Eligible Foster Pets

Eligible foster pets include any animal under the adoption age (under eight weeks old), or any animal determined by shelter staff to need extra or special medical attention, or others as determined by SBCAC staff. This includes long stay pets, injured, sick, pregnant, nursing, etc.

Animal Care Program Provisions

The SBCAC program covers all medical expenses for foster pets if performed at clinics approved by SBCAC. The program will not reimburse any personal expenses incurred by foster parents for unauthorized veterinary care. Seeking veterinary care for a foster pet at a clinic that SBCAC has not preapproved is not permitted unless explicitly approved by an SBCAC supervisor.

SBCAC will provide food, litter, litter pans, and any supplies determined necessary to properly care for the pet(s) being fostered. It is recommended that the foster pet(s) be fed the same food that is used at the shelter to avoid digestive upset when the pet is returned to the shelter or moved to its forever home.



FOSTER HOME PREPARATION AND REQUIREMENTS

Foster Home Preparation

Pet foster parents will need to prepare for the foster pet's arrival by establishing a separate location in the house for the pet. Additionally, the area should be easy to maintain and sanitize, such as an enclosed playpen or bathroom. It is recommended to hazard-proof the home, which includes, but is not limited to, removing toxic plants, blocking off any areas where the foster pet may get lost, and blocking electrical sockets.

Quarantine and Meeting Existing Pets

It is important to quarantine the foster pet for at least two weeks before meeting any personal pet(s) in the foster home. Isolating the foster pet helps to reduce the chance of spreading contagious illnesses.

Contact SBCAC if the foster pet becomes ill so that treatment can be provided. If personal pets become ill, it is not SBCAC's responsibility to provide care, and the foster parent will need to seek veterinary care separately. It is recommended that personal pets be up to date on all vaccinations prior to taking on the responsibility of a foster pet.

Decompression Period

Foster pets may take days or even months to adjust to your routine and become comfortable in your home. Be patient and give your foster pet time to decompress. The foster pet will have a smoother transition by:

- Creating a safe, quiet space with a comfortable crate setup or an unoccupied room.
- Giving your foster pet time to relax before subjecting it to social situations.
- Monitoring and assessing the animal's behavior to intercept any potential problems.

Dogs and cats have different methods that can assist them during their decompression period. Refer to the table below.

If the foster animal is a...	Then make it comfortable by...
Cat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing a small space away from other pets, and• Allowing it time to roam freely around the house.
Dog	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Taking it outdoors for a walk on a leash, and• Allowing it ample time to relieve itself.

Continued on next page

FOSTER HOME PREPARATION AND REQUIREMENTS,

Continued

Decompression Period, Continued

Keeping a dog on a leash when first entering a new environment will be helpful during their decompression period.

New environments have a multitude of smells and potentially scary sounds. A leash will prevent the dog from both running away from you and/or chasing objects that could be potentially harmful.

Note: It is important to remember that all animals are not the same. Some may have different adjustment and decompression periods.

Feeding Your Foster Pet

For appropriate feeding quantities, refer to the weight chart on your foster pet's bag of food. For safety reasons, it is best to feed the foster pet away from other animals and people. Animals may become protective of their food.

If you have been instructed to change the diet of your foster pet, it is best to do so gradually over several days to avoid digestive upset.

- Start by mixing a small amount of the foster pet's new food with their old food.
- Gradually increase the portion of new food, while decreasing the portion of the old food over a period of 7 to 10 days.
- Monitor your foster pet for any signs of stomach upset or change in bowel movements.

To prevent the spread of disease, viruses, bacteria and parasites, it is important to properly clean and disinfect the foster pet's bedding, toys and living areas regularly.

Note: Fresh water must always be available for your foster pets to drink.

FOSTER HOME PREPARATION AND REQUIREMENTS, continued

Cleaning and Sanitizing

Maintaining a healthy environment for foster pets is important for the foster, personal pets, and future foster pets living in the foster home. The following guidelines will be used to reduce the risk of illness and the spread of disease.

- Vacuum area rugs and carpets thoroughly.
- Clean living areas with soap and water.
- Wash bedding, blankets, and toys in a washing machine using regular detergent after removing soiled objects. Small toys should be left to air dry rather than placed in the dryer.
- Use diluted bleach to disinfect any non-porous surfaces that are safe to clean with bleach:
 - Mix one part bleach to 32 parts water or ¼ cup bleach to one gallon water.
 - Place the bleach mixture in a spray bottle.
 - Spray surfaces with bleach and let sit for 10 minutes.
 - Rinse the surface thoroughly and dry.
 - Air out the items and living area before putting pets back in the area, as bleach is a respiratory irritant.
- Use any preferred pet-safe cleaner, such as Rescue Disinfectant. Refer to the link for more information on [Rescue Disinfectants](#).
- Ensure pets are not present during the disinfection process. Allow all surfaces to fully dry before reintroducing the pets.
- Discard toys, blankets, and towels by placing them in a bag to dispose of in the trash for extremely contagious diseases such as feline panleukopenia (FPV), canine parvovirus (CPV), and ringworm.
- Follow the guidelines below for ringworm:
 - Launder blankets and towels separately from regular laundry.
 - When washing and drying ringworm laundry, do not overload the machines, as this will decrease effectiveness in removing spores from the laundry.
 - Items that cannot be easily disinfected can be taken outside and placed in direct sunlight for several hours or days to inactivate ringworm spores.
 - Vacuum items to remove surface dirt, such as hair or fur, prior to placement in the sun.

Note: Do not use Lysol, Pine Sol, or other similar cleaners. Pets are very sensitive to odors, and in some cases, these products can be harmful or toxic.

FOSTER HOME PREPARATION AND REQUIREMENTS, continued

Establishing Good Habits

Foster caregivers can help foster pets become adoptable by reinforcing positive behaviors and discouraging bad ones, such as:

- Chewing on furniture,
- Jumping on people,
- Biting,
- Growling,
- Scratching, and
- Any destructive behaviors.

Positive reinforcement is the **ONLY** method of discipline that is acceptable. Redirect and distract the foster pet from bad behavior with better behavior. For example, when a puppy is chewing on furniture, distract it with a toy to redirect its attention.

Gradually expose the foster pet to touch. This helps prepare it for future clinical visits. Introduce the foster pet to men, women and children. Gradually and safely expose the pet to new noises and environments within the home. These activities will help the foster pet find a forever home and alleviate many of the anxieties that shelter pets may be experiencing.



Continued on next page

FOSTER HOME PREPARATION AND REQUIREMENTS, continued,

What To Do If Bitten or Scratched (broken skin)

During business hours, report to your foster liaison regarding any bites or scratches that break the skin regardless of the animal's age. Refer to the table below for guidance on bite/scratch responses.

If the bite or scratch involved...	Then...
Another animal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure the animals are separated and secure.• Clean and flush the wound immediately with soap and water.• Report to the foster liaison:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– The state of the animals involved, and– The circumstances of the bite.
You or another person	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clean and flush the wound immediately with soap and water, and• Seek medical attention from a medical professional for evaluation and treatment.

Note: SBCAC advises you to keep your foster pets separated from your other pets. SBCAC is not responsible for any claims of injury or damage a foster animal(s) may cause to you, your pets or your property.

Potty Training Cats and Kittens

While most cats and kittens naturally take to using a litter box, some may require a little extra guidance, especially in a new environment. Do not worry if your foster cat is having trouble using a litter box. A calm, structured approach will help it develop good habits.

- Start by setting up a quiet, enclosed area such as a large crate or small room, where your cat can feel safe and learn the routine. When setting up an area, include all of the following:
 - A clean litter box,
 - Cozy bedding,
 - Fresh food,
 - Water, and
 - Toys for comfort and stimulation.

Continued on next page

FOSTER HOME PREPARATION AND REQUIREMENTS, continued,

Potty Training Cats and Kittens, Continued

- Keep the litter box clean by scooping daily and changing litter regularly (e.g. weekly).
- Offer gentle praise and affection when you notice your cat using the litter box correctly. Positive reinforcement, even with cats, helps build trust and encourages repeated behavior.

Once your foster cat is consistently using the litter box, start giving them more freedom around the house. Take things slowly and if setbacks happen, return to a more structured routine until the foster cat is back on track.

Potty Training Dogs and Puppies

Bringing a foster dog into your home requires patience, especially during the decompression period. Adult dogs that have been previously housetrained may have accidents. Especially, if they have been in a shelter environment where they were forced to relieve themselves in a kennel.

If your home carries the scent of other pets, some foster dogs will feel the need to “mark” their territory. If marking happens:

- Interrupt the behavior gently with a calm “Ah-Ah.”
- Take the dog outside to finish urinating immediately.
- Clean the area marked.
- Use an enzymatic odor neutralizer to remove any lingering scent. This helps prevent repeated accidents in the same spot.

Even if your foster dog is an adult with previous house training, it is important to start fresh. Follow these steps to help it adapt to your home and routine:

- Choose a potty spot:
 - Decide where you want your dog to relieve itself (e.g. backyard, side yard, etc.), and
 - Stick to it.
-

Continued on next page

FOSTER HOME PREPARATION AND REQUIREMENTS, continued,

Potty Training Dogs and Puppies, Continued

- Maintain a consistent routine:
 - Always take your dog to that same spot, and
 - Use a cue like “go potty” or “do your business.”
 - Take it out first thing in the morning, after meals, after playtime and every couple of hours.
 - Wait with it for up to five minutes, and if the foster:
 - ✓ Uses the restroom, celebrate with treats, praise or a favorite game.
 - ✓ Does not use the restroom, take it back inside and try again in 15 minutes.
- Watch closely indoors:
 - Keep an eye out for signs like sniffing or circling. These signs are indicators that the foster pet needs to relieve itself.
 - Calmly say, “Ah-Ah,” if you catch the foster in the act of relieving itself, and take it outside to finish.
 - Praise it if it goes outdoors.
- Remember accidents happen:
 - Do not punish your dog if it has an accident indoors, and you did not catch it in time.
 - Clean up thoroughly with an odor-neutralizer.
 - Stay consistent with your routine.
 - Never scold or rub its nose in it. This method will not teach it anything except to fear you.

With consistency, kindness and patience, your foster dog will begin to feel safe and understand what is expected in its new environment.

FOSTER PET HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Common Ailments and Symptoms

It may be difficult for a foster pet to indicate that it is unwell. Therefore, it is critical to monitor the foster pet for signs that may be displayed, such as:

- Frequent vomiting
- Diarrhea that persists over 24 hours
- Clear nasal discharge/persistent sneezing/congestion
- Yellow or green eye or nasal discharge
- Difficulty opening eyes
- Loss of appetite
- Lethargy

Note: The pet foster parent must notify the foster liaison immediately if any significant change is observed in the foster pet's health.

Zoonotic Diseases

Good hygiene is essential to preventing zoonotic diseases, which are infectious diseases that can be transmitted between pets and humans. Zoonotic diseases can be severe in the elderly, very young children, pregnant women, immunocompromised people, and those undergoing various medical treatments.

It is important to help prevent the spread of zoonotic diseases by promptly cleaning up pet waste and not allowing it to build up, using proper personal protective equipment (PPE) when cleaning up pet waste, and washing hands before and after handling the pet.

Note: Do not let pets eat feces, raw meat, or water from contaminated sources such as toilets.

Medical Emergency

Alert SBCAC if you believe the foster pet needs immediate emergency medical care. Medical emergencies must be addressed on the same day the emergency occurs.

Deceased Foster Pet

In some cases, sick or weak pets may die in foster care. Contact the foster liaison immediately if the foster pet dies during shelter operating hours. Contact the foster liaison the next morning if the death occurs after shelter hours.

Foster parents will be asked to provide detailed information about the deceased animal's circumstances so that it can be determined if other foster pets in their care or in other foster homes may be at risk. The foster parent will return the deceased animal to the shelter.

FOSTER PET HEALTH AND WELLNESS, continued

After-Hours Emergency Veterinarian Care

In the event of an after-hours veterinary emergency involving your San Bernardino County Animal Care (SBCAC) foster pet, you are required to call SBCAC **immediately**. SBCAC staff will assess the situation carefully and will direct you on how to care for your foster pet. Please remember that after-hour care is limited and humane euthanasia may be the recommended outcome for your foster pet.

Note: It is extremely important to contact the foster liaison during business hours if there is a medical concern about the foster pet.



FOSTER PET ADOPTIONS

Advertising Foster Pets

Pet foster parents are the pets' strongest advocates for finding a loving home once they become available for adoption. Foster parents are strongly encouraged to let others know about the foster program and foster pets. It is recommended to use resources such as friends, family, work colleagues, and social media networks like Facebook and Instagram to advertise the foster pet.

If a foster parent is not able to find an adopter for a pet by the return date, it is strongly encouraged that pictures, videos, and information about the pet are shared with the foster liaison.

Returning a Foster Pet to Animal Care

When a foster pet needs to be returned for any reason before the scheduled return date, the foster parent must contact the foster liaison to arrange the pet's return.

If an adopter is not found for the foster pet by the return date, foster parents are expected to return the foster pet to the shelter during normal business hours on the scheduled return date unless approved by the foster liaison to return on a later date.

Adoption of a Foster Pet



An incentive for fostering a shelter pet is that the foster parent is given priority to adopt it once it meets the adoption requirements.

If the foster parent has found an adopter, it is the foster parent's responsibility to coordinate a meeting with the adopter at the shelter on the pet's return date.

TERMINATION OF FOSTER PROGRAM

Resignation from Program

Foster parents can resign and separate from the foster program at any time. If this is necessary, please email the foster liaison at ACFosterProgram@dph.sbcounty.gov to be removed from the foster contact list.

If being a foster parent is not an option, the program offers other ways to help shelter pets. Public members can volunteer at the shelter or donate to the non-profit Animals aRe First Fund (ARFF).

For more information on how to become a volunteer or to learn more about the non-profit ARFF, please visit the website animalcare.sbcounty.gov.

Dismissal from Program

The SBCAC program reserves the right to dismiss any pet foster parent that does not follow policies and procedures. Foster parents are at will and can be dismissed with or without cause.

Foster parents are valued members of the foster program team. However, there are several reasons foster parents may be released from service. These may include, but are not limited to the following list:

- Excessive absenteeism or lapses in fostering
- Violation of County or DPH policies and procedures
- Failing to adhere to SBCAC program policies and procedures
- Disorderly conduct
- Insubordination/personality conflicts
- Falsifying documents
- Theft or attempting theft of County property
- Disclosing confidential information
- Failing to follow a chain of command
- Conflicts of interest
- Posing a danger or threat to employees, volunteers, the public, or shelter animals
- Committing any acts of malice or gross negligence

Note: Excessive absenteeism applies to ANY aspect of the program that requires the pet foster parent to communicate with SBCAC staff in person, by phone, or email. Excessive absenteeism may also include, but is not limited to, failure to pick up foster pets, attend medical appointments and checkups, or return foster pets to the shelter on the indicated dates.

FOSTER PROGRAM FAQs

Question 1 **How long will a pet be fostered?**

The length of the pet's stay with a foster parent will depend on its age and health. Many foster pets will need a home until they reach the adoptable age of eight weeks or until the veterinary staff provide medical clearance for adoption.

Question 2 **How do pets get adopted from foster homes?**

Foster parents are responsible for announcing the availability of a foster pet by sharing pictures and information about the pet with friends, family, and work colleagues, or through social media networks (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, etc.). It is strongly encouraged for foster parents to find a potential adopter before the return date so that the foster pet has a smooth transition.

Note: The adoption process must be handled by SBCAC program staff.

Question 3 **Can a foster pet share a home with other pets?**

Pet ownership does not disqualify a home from the program. Pet foster parents must follow the rules and guidelines for introducing a foster pet into a home with resident pets. Refer to the Pet Foster Program Requirements section of this manual.

Question 4 **Can children interact with foster pets?**

Children are encouraged to have supervised interaction with foster pets. Caution and direct supervision are required.

Note: Children must not be permitted to handle newborn pets.

Question 5 **Who can I contact for assistance?**

The SBCAC foster program will be the first point of contact for any questions or concerns that foster parents may have about their pets.

Question 6 **Do personal pets need current vaccinations?**

For the protection and safety of everyone, personal pets are required to be up to date on vaccinations.

**Next steps
for Potential
Adopters**

If an interested party would like to adopt one or more foster pets, the foster parent will arrange for the interested party to come to the shelter on the pet's return date to process the adoption.

Continued on next page

FOSTER PROGRAM FAQs, continued

Additional Information

Informational pamphlets and handouts are available at the shelters.
