



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FOSTER CARE

We have compiled some common questions that prospective foster care volunteers often have, and this page is designed to provide you with information that will be helpful to decide whether foster care is a good match for you! If you have questions not answered here, please contact the foster care team by phone at 804-521-1313 or by email at fostercare@richmondspca.org. Thank you!

What are the requirements for a foster care volunteer?

Foster providers must be at least 18 years of age and fill out a foster care volunteer profile when signing up online for a foster care training session. We ask that all individuals interested in fostering pets for the Richmond SPCA complete a foster care training workshop.

How do I become a foster care volunteer?

The first step in becoming a foster care volunteer at the Richmond SPCA is to sign up for a Meet the Fosters™ training workshop.

What types of pets are placed into foster care?

The majority of dogs and cats in need of foster care at the Richmond SPCA are neonatal and other young puppies and kittens who require around-the-clock care or who are just not yet big enough for sterilization. Additionally, we may have pets who would benefit from time away from the humane center so we can collect some additional information about them observed in the home (this information is very helpful as we look for a great adoptive family for each pet). Other foster care candidates include animals recovering from or awaiting surgery (such as specialty surgeries), animals needing specific behavior training, and nursing moms and their puppies or kittens.

How long will I have my foster pet?

The length of time a pet is in foster care is determined by the foster pet's individual needs. Special needs pets generally spend two to four weeks in foster care. The average length of foster care for underage juveniles and pets recovering from surgery is between four and eight weeks.

How much care is involved in fostering?

The amount of care and time involved is dependent upon each foster pet's needs. Bottle baby foster pets requiring overnight feedings require more involved care than an adult cat. Expectations of time and care will be discussed prior to placement of a foster pet in your home, and we do not expect you to foster any animal that you aren't fully comfortable fostering. Your help in giving love and comfort to our homeless pets as they become ready for adoption is such a gift!

What do I need to provide as a foster parent?

Any items a foster parent wants to provide or donate are greatly appreciated. However, the Richmond SPCA can provide all necessary equipment and supplies (example: food, crate, toys and bedding). All medications, supplements, and vaccinations will be provided by, and must be administered by, Richmond SPCA medical staff.

How will I receive my foster pet?

Active foster care volunteers will receive periodic (weekly to monthly) e-mails with lists of pets in need of foster care. Volunteers who show an interest in any of these pets will be contacted by our foster care coordinator to schedule a pick-up appointment. In cases of urgent needs, active foster care volunteers may be contacted by telephone with a request to provide foster care for a specific dog, cat, puppy or kitten.

Will children in my household affect my ability to provide foster care?

A lot of our foster care volunteers are also parents. Children in the home will be a factor in determining which pets are placed into your home, and for how long, but will not prevent you from volunteering in this capacity. Providing foster care to a pet in need is a wonderful activity for the entire family!

What if I already have pets in my home?

A lot of foster care volunteers are also pet guardians already. This will be a factor in determining which pets are placed into your home, and for how long, but it will not prevent you from volunteering in this capacity. Please note that foster pets must be kept separate from owned animals during the length of the foster stay, unless otherwise specified. If you are interested in fostering a dog and have a dog at home, we will set up a time for the two to meet to make sure everyone gets along. However, no unsupervised time is permitted between foster pets and owned pets for the safety of both animals.

What if I have never had a pet before or lack animal care experience?

Not to worry! The Richmond SPCA will provide all necessary training and information regarding your foster pet's care. Our workshops and pet-specific trainings are designed to create confident foster providers resulting in a comfortable and rewarding foster experience.

Can I adopt my foster pet?

If your foster pet is already available for adoption or will become available for adoption after his or her spay/neuter surgery, then you may adopt your foster pet, and we will discount your adoption fee by 10 percent! If at any point before, during or after a placement, you have questions about your ability to adopt your foster pet, please contact our foster care coordinator.

What if my friends, family or neighbors want to adopt my foster pet?

While you cannot adopt out, transfer or place your foster pets in other homes or with other individuals, let us know of people interested in adoption by contacting the foster care coordinator.

What if my foster placement is not going well due to behavioral or medical reasons?

Please contact the foster care coordinator, who is available by phone. We want for your foster care experience to be a positive one, and we are here to support you throughout the process. If a pet becomes sick, or displays behavior in the home that you are having difficulty managing, please let us know right away.

What if there is an emergency?

Our foster care coordinator is available by phone 24 hours a day. Foster care volunteers are given an emergency cell phone number to call if an emergency occurs after the humane center is closed for the day. Instructions will be given in the event of an after-hours emergency, with guidance from our veterinarian.

What if I am going out of town while I am fostering?

There are several options available if you need to go out of town and are currently fostering. You may bring the pet back to our center and pick him or her up after your return. A fill-in foster placement can be arranged with another foster care volunteer of the Richmond SPCA. Or, local pet sitting services can be arranged to visit your home and care for the foster pet while you are away.

By participating in our foster care program, you help us expand our capacity to care for homeless animals beyond the walls of our Robins-Starr Humane Center, and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts. You're a lifesaver!