

FOSTER CARE FAQ



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 team by phone at 804-521-1313 or by e-mail at fostercare@richmondspca.org.

What are the hours of operation for the Foster Care Department?

Our team is in-office Monday – Friday from 8:30am-5:00pm. At this time, we do not have weekend staffing.

What are the requirements for a foster care volunteer?

- Foster providers must be at least 18 years old and reside in Richmond or surrounding cities.
- You must have reliable transportation to bring your foster pet to and from the shelter as needed.
- Fostering requires a time commitment, as many foster pets have little to no experience in a home environment.
- All foster providers must register through Better Impact. The sign-up link can be found on our website: www.richmondspca.org/foster.

How do I become a foster volunteer?

- All foster providers must register through Better Impact. The sign-up link can be found on our website: www.richmondspca.org/foster.
- Set up your account and complete the Foster Care Registration.
- Once this is completed you will get a welcome message and an email that will provide you with how to complete our Foster Care Trainings. You only need to complete the trainings relating to the pets you would like to foster.
- You will not be able to begin fostering until you have completed at least one training.

What type of pets does the Richmond SPCA place into foster care?

- Neonatal kittens and puppies requiring round-the-clock care.
- Nursing moms with litters who need a quiet, safe space to care for their young.
- Pets undergoing medical treatment or recovery, including those needing short-term medical care or post-surgical rest.
- Pets requiring behavioral observation to help assess their needs in a home environment.
- Temporary housing for pets enrolled in our Temporary Boarding or SAAF programs.
- Vacation Fostering for long-term resident pets who need a shelter break.

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. Temporary Boarding and SAAF placements tend to be up to two months.

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?

- Available foster pets are listed on the Opportunities Page in Better Impact.
- Each pet's listing includes a photo, personality details, reason for foster care, required care, and the expected foster duration.
- To claim a foster pet, simply click the "Sign Up" button on their listing.
- After signing up, you'll receive a link to our appointment scheduler, where you can choose a pick-up time and request any needed supplies. Please note that pets must be picked up within two business days to ensure they get into a home as quickly as possible.
- Bottle-feeding kittens and puppies are urgent placements. When available, they will be announced via an email blast, and placement will be determined by experience level or on a first-come, first-served basis, depending on the kittens' needs.
- Pick ups and drop offs are appointment based.

Can I visit the shelter and pick out a pet to foster?

Pets that are available for both adoption and fostering will have a note on their kennel indicating this. While the foster team can assist you in finding a suitable placement, not all pets in the shelter are eligible for foster care. In most cases, adoptable pets do not qualify for foster, as we prioritize keeping them available to meet potential adopters and find their forever homes as quickly as possible.

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! If a pet is not a good fit to live with children, it will be indicated on their listing.

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. We do not offer cat introductions in our shelter. If you are not sure if your resident dog likes cats, please do not introduce them.

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 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 the foster team.

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 team. We will place reservations on the file and they will be considered by our adoptions team.

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 and we will discuss a treatment or behavioral plan. If you need to return your foster pet, please notify the foster team ahead of time.

What if there is an emergency?

- Our shelter provides an Emergency Hotline for life-threatening emergencies involving your foster pet. Details on when and how to use this resource will be covered in the foster trainings and at your pick-up appointment.
- Non-life-threatening medical concerns will be addressed by our Internal Veterinary Team—please contact the foster team through fostercare@richmondspca.org for guidance.
- Do not administer any medication that has not been prescribed by our veterinary team, and do not take your foster pet to your personal veterinarian under any circumstances. All medical care must be coordinated through the Richmond SPCA.

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 via appointment. A fill-in foster placement can be arranged with another foster care volunteer of the Richmond SPCA.

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!