

Humane Society of West Michigan Foster Program

General Policy Manual



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Contacts

******All business hours are subject to change. Please allow 24-48 business hours for a response from all staff members below.******

Foster Coordinator

Lydia Mehlhose

foster@hswestmi.org or lmehlhose@hswestmi.org

Business hours: Monday-Tuesday, Thursday-Friday

Contact for: Foster animal pickups/dropoffs, general foster questions, special supply requests.

Foster Veterinary Technician

Jessica Borgeld

fostermedical@hswestmi.org

Business days: Monday-Friday

Contact for: Medical questions/concerns, surgery scheduling, vaccine/medical appointment scheduling, medical supplies, medication refills.

Adoptions Team

adoptions@hswestmi.org

Business days: Tuesday-Saturday,

Contact for: Foster adoption process questions, adoption inquiries, coordinating adoption meetings/transfer of care meetings, anything related to the adoption of a foster animal.

Foster Facebook Group

[Facebook.com/groups/HSWMFoster](https://www.facebook.com/groups/HSWMFoster)

Please join our community of fellow fosters for a network of support, as well as a place to share your new foster pet and your fostering experience with other fosters!

Locations

Foster Doors

Located at the back of the HSWM facility. There is a sign labeled "Foster Program" and a set of double doors with a doorbell. There is a designated parking space for fosters, and a supply pickup shed to the right of the doors as well as a supply dropoff shed to the left of the doors.

Use these doors for: Appointments with the Foster Vet Tech, foster animal pickup/dropoff, foster supply pickup/dropoff.

Admitting Doors

Located on the side of the building prior to driving into the back parking lot. Use these doors for: Surgery dropoff/pickup, medical appointments with Vet staff.

Foster Agreement

1. I understand that I am the primary caretaker of my foster animal. I will provide adequate daily care and social interaction.
2. I agree that I will not relinquish custody of the foster pet to anyone except HSWM, even temporarily.
3. I understand that my foster animal may exhibit undesirable behavior, may scratch/chew belongings, may not be potty trained/crate trained, etc.
4. I understand foster pets are only temporarily in my care, remain the property of HSWM, and are subject to relinquishment at any time. Failure to return a foster pet will result in removal from HSWM's foster program.
5. I agree to follow the HSWM "Foster Medical Concerns and Emergency Guidelines" immediately, when a foster pet is experiencing a medical concern/emergency.
6. I understand that my foster pet is to only see HSWM's veterinarian. I understand any private veterinary costs incurred by the foster parent will not be reimbursed by HSWM.
7. I understand that HSWM will not reimburse me for any expenses I use related to food, toys, litter, medication, and daily care items associated with my foster pet.
8. If my foster pet escapes my home or becomes lost, I will immediately notify the HSWM Foster Coordinator or submit a medical JotForm during non-business hours.
9. I will not take my foster pet to a groomer without permission from the HSWM Foster Coordinator.
10. I will not take my foster dog to a dog park/beach without prior permission from the HSWM Foster Coordinator.
11. I agree to keep my foster dog on a 6ft. non-retractable leash when outside.
12. I agree that I will not allow my foster cat outdoors.
13. I will not give my foster cat or kitten a bath before speaking to HSWM Foster staff.
14. I will notify the HSWM Foster Coordinator immediately if my foster pet exhibits aggressive behavior.
15. I understand that my foster animal's health is not guaranteed and may break with illness while in my care.
16. I understand my personal companion animals could be exposed to illness and I understand that it is highly recommended to quarantine my foster animal for at least 10 days to prevent exposure to my household as well as have my personal pets up to date on core vaccines.
17. I understand that I am not allowed to administer ANY medication to my foster animal without permission from HSWM Foster staff. I also understand that I am not allowed to stop a medication or adjust the dose of a medication without permission from HSWM Foster staff.
18. I understand that it may be necessary for HSWM's veterinary team to make a decision of euthanasia based on severe illness or behavior.
19. I understand HSWM is not responsible for damage to personal property, and I waive my rights to make any claim of liability for any injury or damages.
20. I agree to return my foster kit containing supplies provided by HSWM. If I fail to return my supply kit, I may be charged a fee of \$25. I understand when I return my supply kit, this allows another shelter pet the opportunity for foster care.
21. I understand that I must communicate with HSWM's Foster staff in a timely manner and keep my contact information up to date.
22. I agree to help build my foster's adoption profile by taking frequent pictures and sending them to the HSWM Foster Coordinator.

23. I understand that if I want to adopt my foster animal, I need to let the Adoptions Team know ASAP, or before they have surgery and therefore become available for adoption to the public.

Medical Concerns and Emergency Protocol

During business hours: Monday-Friday, 7am-5:30pm

- Green and Yellow sections: Email fostermedical@hswestmi.org
- Red Section: Fill out a JotForm and seek immediate medical attention for stabilization at HSWM.

After business hours, and/or weekends and holidays:

- Green section: Email fostermedical@hswestmi.org and you will be responded to during business hours.
- Yellow section: Submit a request through <https://form.jotform.com/HSWM/foster-emergencies>. Inquiries submitted will be monitored throughout the day from 8am-8pm. It may take a few hours for you to receive a response, so please be patient!
- Red section: Fill out a JotForm and seek immediate medical attention for stabilization at one of the animal hospitals listed below.

Emergency

Seek immediate medical attention for **stabilization** at:

Animal Emergency Hospital: 3620 Plainfield Ave NE, Grand Rapids MI 49525

Or

Animal Emergency and Specialty Hospital: 6820 Edgeview Ave SW, Byron Center MI 49315

Unresponsive/unable to wake – Crashing Kitten – Respiratory distress – Repetitive seizures – Severe laceration/life-threatening wound – Toxin ingestion – Hit by car – Bloating abdomen and vomiting in large breed dog

Urgent

Medical staff will respond to your JotForm request in a timely manner.

Persistent/bloody vomiting – Fever – Minor wounds – Limping – Severe diarrhea – Decreased appetite – Male cats straining to urinate – Lost animal – Ingestion of foreign body – Worsening Green Section conditions

Monitor

The Foster Vet Tech will respond during regular business hours.

Congestion – Nasal/Ocular discharge – Mild diarrhea – Infrequent vomiting – Coughing – Hair loss – Fleas

If you must go to Animal Emergency Hospital

Let them know you are fostering through Humane Society of West Michigan and to put the animal under HSWM's profile. If there is any confusion, let an AEH staff member know to call someone at HSWM before any treatment charges are authorized. They can take the animal back for stabilization only, but any other tests/treatments need to be authorized by HSWM staff. Please do not sign any paperwork that authorizes treatment charges.

Fosters **cannot** do the following:

- Make medical decisions (i.e. diagnostic testing or euthanasia) regarding the foster animal or authorize a treatment plan/charges.
- Claim the animal as their own, unless the foster is adopting them.

Please Note: If you are bringing an animal to the emergency hospital, it is for **stabilization only** or immediate care for the medical emergencies in the Red Section. Most diagnostic testing and or/medication dispensing can be done in-house at HSWM, alleviating work on the hospital staff as well as helping alleviate the cost of a hospital bill for HSWM.

Any diagnostic medical testing or other medical decisions at the hospital must be approved by a staff member at HSWM. We don't want our fosters burdened with hard decisions that may need to be made, so we ask that you just bring them to the emergency hospital and let us handle the rest for you. If you decide to go home instead of waiting at the emergency hospital, we can update you on their care if desired.

Most emergency hospitals require a deposit of a certain percentage of the estimated bill for hospitalization. **You do not have to pay anything** unless prior arrangements were made. The hospital should invoice HSWM directly.

If you receive hospital medical records for your foster animal and/or an itemized invoice, please forward this to HSWM or bring it in to HSWM when you are able. If you aren't able to bring them in or forward them, just let us know. We can call and have the file emailed to us.

Foster Supply Pickup

If you are running low on supplies, our foster pickup shed (located near the foster doors) is stocked with common items needed for all animals, aside from small critters. The code for the lock is TREAT, and please make sure when putting the lock back on that it is not upside down. Please do not share the shed code with anyone outside of the HSWM Foster Program. **Please note that during summer months (May-November), food items are stocked inside the building. Non-food items are still stocked in the shed during this timeframe.** Fosters can come in anytime during HSWM's open hours and let the front desk know they are there to pick up food for their foster animal. The front desk will direct you to an area where you can pick out the food you need!

Items stocked in the foster pickup shed: Wet and dry dog/puppy/cat/kitten food (during non-summer months), canine and feline treats (during non-summer months), canine toys, feline toys, puppy pads, kitty litter.

If you are in need of small critter supplies or specialty supplies (neonate kitten/puppy supplies, etc.), please email our Foster Coordinator. Special supply requests must be emailed to our Foster Coordinator one week in advance. Medication refills or prescription food

requests must be emailed to fostermedical@hswestmi.org one week in advance as well. Special supply/medication requests are not able to be filled on demand.

If you buy your own supplies, please understand that we will not be able to reimburse you for your purchase

Foster Supply Dropoff

When you are done fostering an animal, please return all supplies given to you by HSWM's Foster Program so we can sanitize them and take inventory. To return supplies, please use the tan shed labeled "Foster Dropoff." This is located to the left of the foster doors in the back of the building. There is no code for this shed, and you can put supplies in it anytime (even after hours). You do not need to notify staff that you've dropped off items, as we check it every day!

Vaccines and Monthly Prevention

In order to avoid foster animals becoming overdue for vaccines and monthly prevention, HSWM's Foster staff will schedule a vaccine/monthly prevention appointment (if needed) with you when you leave the building with your foster animal. After that, you will receive reminder emails when vaccines/preventions are due.

- You can schedule vaccine appointments with our Foster Vet Tech calendar here (no need to email!):
<https://outlook.office365.com/owa/calendar/FosterMedicalAppointments@hswestmi.org/bookings/s/NZSftvHrH0WoFtR4KCcfYw2>.
- Prevention pick-ups are coordinated via email with Foster staff. We will reach out to you when your animal is due!

Foster Adoptions

Foster adoptions are handled by our Adoptions Department. All adoption-related questions can be emailed to adoptions@hswestmi.org. If an adopter is interested in the animal you are fostering and they want to set up an adoption meeting, our Adoptions Department will get in touch with you to coordinate a meeting between your animal and the potential adopter.

If you are interested in adopting your foster animal, please email our Foster Coordinator and Adoptions Department. HSWM's Foster Program allows fosters 14 days since the time of expressing interest in adopting to make a decision regarding adopting their foster animal. After 14 days have elapsed, our Foster Coordinator will check in regarding a decision. If no decision is made or no response is received, the animal will be made available to other adopters. Medical and behavior cases may differ, and are up to the discretion of our Foster Coordinator.

Foster Animal Quarantine

We know it is super exciting to have a new animal in your home, and we're excited for you! However, it is important for both their mental and physical health, as well as any other

animals in the home, that they are kept separate from other animals for at least 10 days. Ideal quarantine time is 14 days.

We cannot guarantee that the animals going home with you won't become sick. It is not uncommon for the stress of environmental change to cause your foster pet to break with an illness like diarrhea or upper respiratory infection. Keeping them in quarantine will make cleaning and disinfecting easier and will keep your personal pets safe.

Even while they are quarantined, it is recommended that your personal pets of the same species are up to date on core vaccines. If your foster animal breaks with an illness in your home, your pets are protected against the illness or disease. If they do happen to come down with the illness, it will not be as severe as if they weren't vaccinated.

Bites

If you or another person is bitten by your foster animal, you must report it to us. By law, we have to report every bite to Kent County Animal Shelter. A bite is defined by an animal's teeth breaking skin and drawing blood. When a bite is reported, your foster animal will be on bite hold for 10 days. Your animal cannot see anyone outside of your household during this time. If you have guests over, they must be quarantined away from guests. **Your animal will not be euthanized for a bite.** Level 5 and 6 bites are, however, non-negotiable as an organization and result in euthanasia. These situations are extremely rare.

It is always recommended to seek medical attention if you are bitten, as well as starting antibiotics under a doctor's recommendation. If you are unable to seek professional medical attention, clean your bite thoroughly with soap and warm water before covering with an antibiotic ointment.

****HSWM cannot provide medical coverage or treatment for bites received from foster pets. Please seek medical attention from your personal practitioner.****

Vacation/Going out of Town

When you have a trip planned or are going out of town, your HSWM foster animal cannot be left alone, travel with you, or be left with a different caregiver without first receiving approval from the Foster Coordinator.

If at any time you are leaving town for an extended period of time, you must contact the Foster Coordinator. This should not be done last minute. The Foster Coordinator will schedule your foster pet's return or transfer of care to another foster home while you are away.

Short Notice Animal Returns

If you need to return your foster animal(s) sooner than expected due to an emergency, or if things aren't working out as expected (i.e. animals not getting along), please contact our Foster Coordinator or submit a form found [here](#). Please note that response times will vary, especially during holidays, but we will accommodate your request the best we can.

Late Arrivals/Unconfirmed Appointments

Late arrival policy: If you are 15 or more minutes late for a scheduled appointment, we must reschedule.

Unconfirmed appointment policy: We do not have the ability to take walk-ins or accommodate fosters who show up without an appointment. You must have a confirmed appointment to be able to take any animals home, bring them back, address medical concerns (unless in the Red/Emergency section), etc. If you arrive without a confirmed appointment, you will be asked to return once an appointment is scheduled.

These policies do not apply to fosters following Red Section medical protocol, who are coming in without an appointment during Foster staff's business hours.

Inactivity

New foster inactivity: For new fosters who are onboarded and do not inquire about taking home a foster animal, or do not take home a foster animal, for a period of three months since their onboarding date will be automatically removed from our foster database. If they wish to become a part of our foster program again, they can re-apply on our website and repeat the onboarding process.

Established foster inactivity: For established fosters who do not inquire about taking home a foster animal, or do not take home a foster animal, for a period of six months since last fostering will be automatically removed from our foster database. If they wish to become a part of our foster program again, they can re-apply on our website and repeat the onboarding process.

Foster Disciplinary Policy

If a foster is found in disagreement with the HSWM Foster Agreement or protocol listed in our manuals, a four-step procedure will be followed. Examples of not following protocol are, but are not limited to: failure to follow medical concern/emergency protocol, not showing up to appointments/a pattern of being late to appointments, hostile communication toward HSWM staff/other fosters, agreeing to pick up/drop off an animal and not showing up, etc.

- First incident:
 - Written warning. Our Foster Coordinator or Foster Vet Tech will email you directly to explain the protocol that was not followed and will discuss how to prevent this from happening in the future.
- Second incident:
 - Re-do orientation. Our Foster Coordinator will discuss the incident with you via email and provide you the link to our foster orientation to review and complete.
- Third incident:
 - Meeting. Our Foster Coordinator will discuss the incident with you via email and schedule an in-person meeting to go over policies to prevent further incidents.

- Fourth incident:
 - Termination. Our Foster Coordinator will discuss the incident via email and you will be removed from the HSWM foster email lists and Facebook group.

Non-negotiables: Some incidents warrant immediate termination rather than following our four-step procedure. These incidents will be addressed at the discretion of the Foster Coordinator and may include, but are not limited to: abuse/neglect of a foster animal, unsanitary animal housing/living areas, purposefully allowing an animal-reactive animal to meet other animals, refusal to return a foster animal, etc.

Foster FAQ's

When I foster an animal, how long will I foster them for?

That depends! Some animals are fostered until they are adopted (i.e. adult animals who don't do well in the shelter and need a cozy home to be adopted from), some animals only need to be fostered until they are old enough to be adopted out from HSWM (i.e. kittens/puppies), and some animals just need short-term break from the shelter (i.e. animals who just had surgery and need a safe place to recover, animals who have been here a long time and need a break for the weekend or a holiday).

What should I do if I have a foster animal, and I'm unable to continue fostering them?

We understand that things change and sometimes foster animals need to come back to us. Email our Foster Coordinator to make a dropoff appointment and we can either house them at HSWM or find a new foster. You must make an appointment before dropping off a foster animal.

What if I have a question, but no one is in the office or it's after hours?

Your foster manuals are your BEST FRIENDS – seriously! You can find all of our manuals on our website under the “Foster” tab. These manuals are so important and will make you feel confident that you have the resources needed while you foster! Oftentimes, answers can be found in our manuals and you won't need to wait for an answer from a staff member.

I'm not getting foster-related emails. What's going on?

Make sure to add our Foster Coordinator and Foster Vet Tech to your email contacts, otherwise our emails may go to your spam folder. If you've done this and still aren't getting correspondence from us, reach out to our Foster Coordinator and we can figure out how to solve the issue!

I can no longer be a foster for HSWM. What should I do?

Let our Foster Coordinator know! We can remove you from our email list and foster database so that you will not receive requests anymore. We will miss you, but we understand that circumstances change. We strive to keep our email lists and Facebook group up to date, so please make sure to contact us so you aren't getting unwanted communications.

Do I have to pay for supplies that I need for fostering?

No! Supplies are always provided by HSWM. Occasionally, we run out of uncommon supplies, but we can find solutions for you regardless!