

# **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**

Aurora Lesert-Lewis

[alewis@hswestmi.org](mailto:alewis@hswestmi.org)

Business hours: Monday-Friday, 10am-6pm

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

### **Foster Veterinary Technician**

Sabrina Anderson

[sanderson@hswestmi.org](mailto:sanderson@hswestmi.org)

Business hours: Wednesday-Friday, 8am-4pm, Saturday 8am-2pm

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

### **Adoptions Team**

[adoptions@hswestmi.org](mailto:adoptions@hswestmi.org)

Business hours: Tuesday-Friday, 12pm-7pm, Saturday 12pm-3pm

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

### **Foster Facebook Group**

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

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 like-minded people!

## Locations

### **Foster Doors**

When you arrive, please pull all the way around to the back of the HSWM facility. You will see a set of double doors labeled “Foster Program” to the right of our garage. There is a designated parking space for fosters! You will also see our supply pickup shed and supply dropoff shed on either side of these doors. Use these doors for medical appointments with the Foster Veterinary Technician, foster animal pickup/dropoff, and foster supply pickup/dropoff.

### **Admitting Doors**

These doors are to the left of our Main Entrance, on the side of the building prior to driving into the back parking lot. Use these doors for surgery dropoff/pickup or medical appointments with Vet Staff.

## Foster Supply Pickup

If you are running low on supplies, our pickup shed is stocked with common items needed for all animals aside from small critters. The code for the lock is TREAT, and fosters can pick up items when needed. Please do not share the shed code with anyone outside of the HSWM Foster Program. When you take items from the shed, use the sign out log on the clipboard in the shed to note what you have taken and for what animal. Please note that during summer months (May-September), food items are stocked inside the building. 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. If you are in need of small critter items or specialty supplies, please email our Foster Coordinator. Supply requests must be emailed one week in advance, and medication refills or prescription food refill requests must be emailed to our Vet Tech one week in advance (this includes prescription diet food). 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 and it will be treated like a donation.\*\*\**

## **Foster Agreement**

1. I understand that I am the primary caretaker. I will provide adequate food, water, social interaction, potty breaks, litter cleaning, and essential daily needs.
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 pet may cry, whine, be fearful, shy, sick, depressed, have had past trauma or abuse, not know commands, may chew or scratch my belongings, and needs my love and compassion.
4. I understand foster pets are only temporarily in my care and remain the property of HSWM and are subject to relinquishment at any time. Failure to return a Foster Pet will result in termination as a foster and a “do not adopt” status and/or legal action.
5. I agree to follow the HSWM “Foster Medical Concerns and Emergency Guidelines” immediately, when a foster pet is experiencing a medical/health emergency. I understand that my foster pet may need to be brought to HSWM for medical evaluation as soon as possible. I understand a decision will then be made by HSWM if the animal must stay at the shelter or return to the foster home.
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 and submit a “Foster Medical Concerns and Emergency Guidelines” Jotform if the coordinator is not in office.
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 the HSWM Foster Coordinator or Vet Tech.
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 the HSWM Foster Veterinary Technician or HSWM Veterinarian. I also understand that I am not allowed to STOP OR ADJUST THE DOSING ANY medication without permission from the HSWM Foster Veterinary technician or HSWM Veterinarian.
18. I understand that it may be necessary for HSWM’s Medical 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 the HSWM Foster Coordinator and Foster Veterinary Technician 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 Foster Vet Tech's business hours, (Wednesday-Friday 8am-4pm, Saturday 8am-2pm):**

- Green section (Monitor) and Yellow section (urgent): Email [fostervettech@hswestmi.org](mailto:fostervettech@hswestmi.org).
- Red section (Emergency): Seek immediate medical attention for stabilization at HSWM during business hours, ER during non-business hours.

### **For after hours, weekends and holidays:**

- Green section (Monitor): Email HWM's Foster Vet Tech and wait for a response.
- Yellow (Urgent) and Red (Emergency) sections: Submit a request through <https://form.jotform.com/HSWM/foster-emergencies>  
Inquiries submitted via JotForm will be monitored throughout the day from 8am-8pm. It may take a couple of hours for you to receive a response.

### Fosters **cannot** do the following:

- Make medical decisions (i.e diagnostic testing or euthanasia) in regards to the animal.
- Claim the animal as their own even if you are adopting them, until the adoption is processed they are under HSWM.

## Categories of Medical Concerns

### **Emergency - Submit a JotForm and go to ER immediately**

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

Animal Emergency Hospital: 3260 Plainfield Ave NE, Grand Rapids MI 49525

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

**\*\*\*\*If you go to BluePearl, we are unable to reimburse any care\*\*\*\***

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

### **Urgent - Submit a JotForm**

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

Persistent or bloody vomiting - Minor wounds - Limping - Severe diarrhea -  
Decreased appetite - Male cats straining to urinate - Lost animal -  
Ingestion of foreign body

### **Monitor - Email Foster Vet Tech**

The Foster Veterinary Technician will respond during regular business hours

Congestion - Nasal/Ocular discharge - Mild diarrhea - Infrequent vomiting -  
Coughing - Hair loss - Fleas - Medication refills - Eye injuries/issues - Frequent  
urination

## **If You Have to Go to Animal Emergency Hospital**

Please let them know you are fostering through the Humane Society of West Michigan. The animal will be put under our HSWM profile and one of our staff members will be contacted in regards to their care.

### **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 we can do in house, alleviating work on the hospital staff as well as helping alleviate the cost of the hospital bill.

**Any diagnostic testing or other medical decisions at the hospital MUST be approved by a STAFF member of 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 hospital and let us handle the rest for you. If you decide to go home instead of waiting at the 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 should not have to pay anything** unless prior arrangements were made. The hospital should invoice HSWM directly.

If you receive hospital medical records of your foster animal and/or an itemized invoice, please bring this to HSWM when you are able. If you aren't able to bring them in, or don't have them on hand, we can call and have the file emailed to us.



## **Foster Animal Quarantine**

We know it is super exciting to have a new animal in your home and we're excited you took them in! 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.

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 an upper respiratory infection. Keeping them in a quarantine will make cleaning and disinfecting the affected area easier and it 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 vaccines. If your foster animals break with an illness in your home, your pets being up to date on vaccines will decrease the chance of them contracting diseases or illnesses, and if they do come down with the same illness, it will not be as severe as if they weren't vaccinated.

*\*\*\*Please understand that if your personal animal becomes sick, we cannot treat them and you will need to go to your primary veterinarian for treatment.\*\*\**

## **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. If teeth breaks skin and draws blood, it is a bite that must be reported. Your animal will be on bite hold for 10 days. Your animal cannot see anyone outside the household during this time. If you have guests over, they must be quarantined away from your guests. *Your animal will NOT be euthanized for a bite.* Level 5 and 6 bites are non-negotiable as an organization and result in euthanasia. These situations are extremely rare from foster homes.

It is always recommended to seek medical attention if you are bitten as well as starting antibiotics under a doctor's recommendation. If 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.\*\*\**

## **Foster Adoptions**

Foster adoptions are handled by our Adoptions Department/Customer Service team. Foster adoption questions can be emailed to [adoptions@hswestmi.org](mailto:adoptions@hswestmi.org).

If an adopter is interested in the animal you are fostering and they want to set up a meet-and-greet with your foster animal, our Adoptions Department will get you in touch with them to coordinate a meeting between your animal and the potential adopter.

### **Adoption Pending Status:**

If you are interested in adopting the animal you are fostering, just let us know! The HSWM Foster Program will allow a foster 14 days (since the time of expressing interest in adopting) to make a final 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 given, the animal will be made available to other adopters. Medical and behavioral cases may be extended on a case-by-case basis, and are up to the discretion of HSWM foster staff.

## **Vaccines and Monthly Preventatives**

In order to avoid foster animals becoming overdue for vaccines and monthly preventatives, HSWM will schedule a vaccine appointment/ monthly preventative pickup appointment with you when you leave the building with your foster animal. After the first appointment, it is up to you to schedule recurring vaccine appointments or monthly preventative pickup appointments. You will receive a reminder card with due dates before leaving the building.

Vaccine appointments are scheduled via the [Foster Vet Tech's Outlook booking Calendar linked here](#). Monthly preventative pickup appointments are scheduled by emailing our Foster Coordinator.

## **Vacation/Going Out Of Town**

When you have a trip planned or an out of town stay planned, your HSWM foster pet cannot be left home 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 coordinate a transfer of foster care to another foster home. The Foster Caregiver, whose signature is on the Foster Agreement, is the responsible party and at no time can that responsibility be transferred to another person without prior approval.

## **Short-Notice Animal Returns**

If you need to return your foster animal(s) sooner than expected due to a personal emergency arising 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 time will vary, especially during the holidays, but we will accommodate your request to return your foster on short notice the best we can!

## **Foster Disciplinary Actions**

If a foster is found in disagreement of the HSWM Foster Agreement or protocol listed in the HSWM foster manual, 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 or behavior toward staff members/other fosters, agreeing to pick up/drop off a foster animal and not showing up, etc. HSWM may, at its discretion, utilize whatever form of discipline it deems appropriate under the circumstances up to and including immediate termination of fostering.

### **First incident:**

Written warning. Our Foster Coordinator 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 via email and schedule an in-person meeting to go over policies and procedures to prevent further incidents.

### **Fourth incident:**

Termination. Our Foster Coordinator will discuss the incident via email and you will be asked not to foster further. You will be removed from the HSWM Foster Facebook group and HSWM Foster email lists.

## **Non-negotiables:**

Some incidents warrant immediate termination rather than our three-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 living conditions, purposefully allowing an animal-reactive foster 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 fosters will need to be fostered until they are adopted (example: adult animals who don't do well in the shelter and need a cozy home), some fosters only need to be fostered until they're old enough to get surgery and be adopted out from HSWM (example: kittens, puppies), and some fosters just need a short-term break from the shelter (example: animals who had a surgery and need a home to recovery in, animals who have been here a long time and need a break for the holidays or for a weekend).

### **What happens if I have a foster animal in my home and I am 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 dropoff plans, and we can either house your foster at HSWM or find a different foster for them. You must make an appointment before dropping off a foster animal.

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

Your Foster Manual is your BEST FRIEND, we promise! Every foster will receive species-specific foster manuals, and you can also find them on our website. These manuals are so important and will make you feel more confident about fostering, knowing protocol and procedures, and knowing where to look for any questions you may have!

### **I've fallen in love with my foster animal and I want to adopt them. What's next?**

Let us know as soon as possible! If they're available for adoption, apply for them on our website. If they aren't quite available yet, still let us know you'd like to keep them. Applications are processed on a first-come, first-serve basis at HSWM, and we wouldn't want you to miss out on giving your foster a forever home!

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

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

**My circumstances have changed and I can no longer be a foster for HSWM. What should I do?**

Let our Foster Coordinator know! We will miss you, but we understand. We strive to keep our email lists and Facebook group up to date, so we can make sure we take you off our email lists and such so you aren't getting unwanted communications.

**Do I have to pay for the supplies I need for fostering?**

No! All supplies are always provided by HSWM. Occasionally, we run out of certain supplies that are less common, but we can find solutions for you regardless!

**I have more questions that aren't on this list. Who should I talk to?**

Email our Foster Coordinator with any questions! She is in the office Monday through Friday, 10am-6pm. Please allow 24-48 business hours for a response.