

**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 (FC)**

Lydia Mehlhose

[foster@hswestmi.org](mailto:foster@hswestmi.org) or [lmehlhose@hswestmi.org](mailto:lmehlhose@hswestmi.org)\*

Business hours: Monday-Friday

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

*\*The foster email links to the FC's personal work email – you may receive responses from this email as well so make sure both are in your contacts list to avoid going to spam.*

## **Foster Veterinary Technician (FVT)**

Sabrina Anderson

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

Business days: Tuesday-Friday

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

## **Adoptions Team**

[adoptions@hswestmi.org](mailto: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 Sheds**

These are on the far left side of the building where staff parks. There are two labeled sheds on either side of a “Foster Program” sign. You’ll go here to pick up foster supplies, drop off foster supplies, and pick up medications. There are more supplies inside by the foster office.

## **Foster Office**

You will enter through the staff doors, which is the set of black doors to the right of the Foster Supply Pick Up shed. These doors are unlocked typically 9am-6pm during the week, and 9am-4pm on the weekend. If you need to come inside outside of these hours, you will need to be let in. You’ll pull open the left door (the right does not open from the outside) and come to the second door on the right hand side that leads into the Foster Office. You will come here (unless otherwise directed) for medical appointments, foster animal pickup/drop offs, to ask questions in person if foster staff is available.

## **Admitting doors**

Located on the left side of the building prior to driving into the staff parking area. You’ll use these doors for surgery dropoff/pickup and sometimes medical appointments if you directed to these doors.

# **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 Foster Vet Tech business hours: Tuesday-Friday, 8am-4pm**

- Green and yellow sections: Email [fostermedical@hswestmi.org](mailto:fostermedical@hswestmi.org)
- Red Section: Fill out a JotForm and seek immediate medical attention for stabilization at HSWM

## **Weekends and holidays:**

- Green section: Email [fostermedical@hswestmi.org](mailto: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>. These will be answered in matter of urgency as we are able.
- 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 to no 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

# **What to expect when you go to the Animal Emergency Hospital (AEH)**

As a foster of the Humane Society of West Michigan (HSWM), you are expected to drop them off and pick them up when they are discharged. You are not authorized to make medical or financial decisions – only a HSWM staff member is as we are the legal owner. AEH is authorized up to \$250 for stabilization before they need to contact HSWM for further approval. You are not responsible for the financial costs incurred – if they ask you to pay, politely tell them you are a foster and not responsible for this, and it is HSWM they need to invoice.

If able, call ahead of time to alert the hospital that you are coming in so they can prepare. When you drop off, let the hospital know what the presenting issue(s) is(are), and they will take the animal to be examined and stabilized. They will reach out to a staff member on the HSWM file to discuss the situation and recommendations. Communication will happen between the HSWM staff member and AEH staff member. If you wish to be updated, you can call and inquire for an update with the hospital as HSWM will not readily update you with each decision made. We will update you via email as we are able. If you are unsure if you should wait in the lobby or go home after you've dropped off, you are welcome to ask a staff member there.

If they can be discharged back into the foster home, either the hospital by phone or a HSWM staff member by email will contact you about pick up. When you arrive, the hospital will go over any discharge instructions and medications with you.

## Foster Supply Pickup

If you are running low on supplies, our foster pickup shed is stocked with common items needed for all animals, aside from small critters. The code for the lock is TREAT. Please do not share the shed code with anyone outside of the HSWM Foster Program. **Please note that during summer months (May-October), 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 the staff door's open hours and instead of going into the foster office, turn to the left and go down the hallway. There are shelves in this hallway split between feline and canine supplies for fosters.

Items stocked in the foster pick up shed for both felines and canines include but not limited to: Wet food, dry food, treats, toys, puppy/pee pads, litter.

If you are in need of small critter supplies or specialty supplies (neonatal kitten/puppy supplies, ect.), please email the Foster Coordinator. Special supply requests must be emailed to the Foster Coordinator one week in advance. Medication refills or prescription/specialty diet food requests must be emailed to the Foster Vet Tech one week in advance as well. Special supply/chronic medication requests cannot 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 Supply Dropoff". This is located to the left of the "Foster Program" sign on the left side of the building where staff parks. There is no code for this shed, and you can put supplies in it anytime. You do not need to notify staff that you've dropped off items, as we check it every day! If your animal is on medications, please bring these inside at drop off.

# **Vaccines and Monthly Prevention**

In order to avoid foster animals becoming overdue for vaccines and monthly prevention, HSWM's Foster staff may schedule vaccine appointment if needed before 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 unless there is not a time/day available that works for you):  
<https://outlook.office365.com/owa/calendar/FosterMedicalAppointments@hswestmi.org/bookings/s/NZSftvHrHOWoFtR4KCcfYw2>
- Prevention pickups are coordinated via email with Foster staff. We will reach out to you when your animal is coming up due!

## **Foster Adoptions**

Foster adoptions are handled by our Adoptions Department. All adoption-related 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 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 adoption your foster animal, please email the 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, the FC 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 on a first-come, first-serve basis. Medical and behavior cases may differ, and are up to the discretion of our FC and/or FVT

# Foster Animal Quarantine

We know it is super exciting to have a new animal in your home, and we are 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 better 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 the guests. **Your animal will not be euthanized for a bite, but may need to be returned to our care.** Level 5 and 6 bites, however, are non-negotiable as an organization and result in euthanasia. These situations are very rare.

It is always recommended to seek medical attention if you are bitten, as well as starting antibiotics under your 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 receiving approval from the FC.

If at any time you are leaving town for an extended period of time, you must contact the FC. This should not be done last minute. The FC 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 sooner than expected due to an emergency, or if things aren't working out as expected (i.e. animals are not getting along and you are unable to keep them separate), please contact or FC 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 10 or more minutes late for a scheduled appointment, we reserve the right to 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), ect.. 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 on-boarded 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 FC or FVT 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 FC 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 FC 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 FC will discuss the incident via email and you will be removed from the HSWM foster database 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.

# **Common 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