VE-07 FOSTER PROGRAM

**Purpose**

This is to outline the process of identifying needs and protocol for placing animals into foster homes. Included is recruitment of and communication to Foster Parents

**Staff /Areas Affected**

• Foster Coordinator

* Director of Animal Logistics

• Director of Animal Care

* Admitting Coordinator
* Admitting Animal Care Staff
* Canine Behavior Coordinator
* Canine Enrichment Coordinator
* Feline Behavior Coordinator
* Customer Service Staff

**Responsibilities**

* Director of Animal Care is responsible for any animal care related process. Executive Director is responsible for any direct foster related activities.
* The Foster Coordinator is responsible for the day to day foster activities

**Definitions**

**FC** – Foster Coordinator

**ShelterLuv** – Database used by HSWM for all tracking of customers, animals and associated service

**Policy**

Reasons for foster requests can vary between cats and dogs.

Foster requests for dogs often are behavior/stress related, and getting the animal out of the shelter significantly improves the situation. Occasionally foster homes are needed for animals who have need medical care, need physical therapy, or a reduced stress situation.

Cats generally need foster homes due to illness, and and/or stress. Cats frequently get sick in the shelter due to the stress of the environment. Upper Respiratory Infection (URI) occurs due to the stress, which can progress and become more serious and is easily spread in the small confines of the shelter. Placing in a Foster Home often is all that is needed to get them on the road to recovery. Most feline fosters are kittens. Kittens are sent to foster until they are old/big enough (2 lbs) for spay/neuter surgery. Some kittens require being syringe/bottle fed if the mother is not present. More often, kittens can eat pate’ food on their own, and just need to gain weight.

**Preface**

* All animals, including neonate kittens, must be created in ShelterLuv prior to going to a foster home. This process is done by the Admitting Coordinator/Admitting staff. Each animal is given a unique id number by ShelterLuv.

**Procedures**

Quantitatively, most fosters are kittens. For the purpose of detail, the below processes focus primarily on kittens & puppies. Processes may be simplified if the foster is a cat or dog. Vaccines and weight checks are significantly fewer for those animals.

**Foster Parent Qualifications, Recruiting, Training and ongoing Support**

Recruitment of Foster Parents is conducted by various means, including but not limited to: Social Media, flyers, word of mouth, staff, news media, orientations, open houses, etc.

FC should consider the number of foster animals any given Foster Parent has recently taken on, the number of fosters currently in the home before placing additional fosters with them. Depending on the time of year (kitten season, Spring through Fall) some Foster Parents are called upon multiple times or simultaneously for litters of special needs kittens. Serious consideration should be taken into account to minimize ‘burn out’ of highly skilled foster parents. Ongoing recruitment and additional skill training should be utilized to spread out the hard to place animals.

* Potential Foster Parents must complete a Foster Application to be considered.
* All Foster Applications are reviewed by the FC.
* The FC will contact potential Foster Parents for clarification and to obtain details on their experience/skill level for specific species.
* The level of experience and knowledge a particular Foster Parent has will be evaluated and noted for placement of species/age/medical or behavior issues.
* A spreadsheet of Approved Foster Parents and skill level is maintained for reference when looking for Foster Parent for animal(s).
* Once someone is approved to foster animals, they will need to sign the Foster Contract. The signed contract is then scanned and attached to the Person file, once created in ShelterLuv
* The FC will only place animals with specific needs with Foster Parents who have a skill level that is appropriate for the care needed.
* Additional skill training is conducted as needed by the FC and/or vet staff to enhance a Foster Parents’ knowledge base as needed.
* The more advanced skills a Foster Parent has, the higher the level of care they can provide. Examples of hard to place animals may include, but are not limited to:
  + Neonatal kittens (syringe or bottle fed)
  + Ringworm cats/kittens
  + URI cats
  + Puppies
  + Behavior dogs (fearful, reactive, (single pet, no kids), separation anxiety, high energy, etc.)
  + IV fluids needed
  + Obese
  + Stress
  + Hospice care

These animals may require a bit longer to place in a foster home.

**A - Identifying Foster Animals and Placement**

Need for a foster home for animals can have varying reasons, including but not limited to:

* + Young age / low weight (kittens)
  + Illness / Medical condition
  + Behavior / Stress

* Any staff member can request foster placement for an animal. Typically, foster requests come from Animal Care or Behavior Staff.
* Requests are put on the Foster Request spreadsheet (on the HSWM Drive). This document is reviewed several times per day by the FC.
* Fields required by the requester are:
  + Animal name
  + ShelterLuv ID #
  + Species
  + Request Date
  + Reason
  + Submitted by
  + Behavior Notes (optional, unless the reason for foster is Behavior related)
  + Vaccine Status
  + Spay/Neuter Status
* Once the FC reviews the new submission, they may contact the requester for additional information.
* The FC will update the spreadsheet continuously with any new data/status info as it is obtained
* The FC will reach out to a select group of Foster Parents who meet the qualifications for care of the animal. (Phase 1 Plea- P1P)
* If no Foster Parent is confirmed from the P1P within 24-48 hours, the FC proceeds to the Phase 2 Plea (P2P), which is to post on the Facebook group page, designated specifically for approved HSWM Foster Parents.
* Feedback on the post is monitored by the FC continuously for a willing Foster Parent.
* If no Foster Parent is confirmed from the P2P within 24-48 hours, the FC contacts Supervisor as well as bringing up the need for a Foster Parent at daily Huddle. Staff/Staff family member may be considered as a Foster Parent
* The Foster Request spreadsheet is updated with confirmed foster placement information as it becomes available by the FC.

Once a Foster Parent is identified:

* ShelterLuv is reviewed for any needed vaccines, tests, etc. Note should be made to advise the Foster Parent of the revax, weight check, procedures that may be needed, etc.
* Once the animal leaves for the Foster Home, the animal is moved to the ‘Currently in Foster’ tab of the spreadsheet is updated.

ShelterLuv Process

1. Create the Person (Foster Parent) in ShelterLuv
2. Add an Attribute ‘Willing Foster”
3. Under the Person profile, click the ‘Animals’ tab
4. Click on the blue ‘Add Animal’ button, and select “Foster”
5. Find the animal that is going to this Foster Parent, on the green ‘Foster’ button on the right, select if the animal will be ‘Available’ or ‘Unavailable’ while in foster.
   1. Unavailable would include: Foster to Adopt, Medical issues, too young to adopt
   2. Available would include: Behavior, minor health concerns
6. Add the name of the Foster Parent when prompted
7. Go the Animal profile and edit the name to include ‘In Foster’.

**Foster Placement and Pick up of Animal(s)**

* Information on Foster Parents, skill level, experience and information provided (handouts, reference materials, medical care info, etc.) is compiled on a spreadsheet by the FC.
* Once a Foster Parent had been confirmed to have the skill level required and the availability, pick up arrangements are made.
* The FC schedules a mutually agreeable time for the pick-up. The FC makes every attempt to schedule the appointment directly with the Foster Parent. The FC is the only person how can hand off the animal(s) if it is a ‘First Time’ Foster Parent.
* If the FC cannot be available for the pick-up of the animal, Admitting Animal Care Staff or the Director of Animal Care is contacted to confirm they can hand off the animal(s). If Animal Care is available to hand off the animal, the appointment is put on Admitting Coordinator’s Google calendar by the FC.
* The FC collects all the needed supplies. (The location of the supplies is communicated to the Admitting staff if they are doing the handoff.)
* Supplies include but are not limited to:
  + food (dry, canned, formula, etc.)
  + bowls
  + litter/Litter box/scoop
  + crates/cages
  + toys
  + linens
  + if needed medicine, formula, medical supplies special items
* When the Foster Parent arrives, the FC (or designate) reviews the details of the animals’ situation, health, care requirements, general foster information and clearly confirms the next step for return for revaccinations, weight checks, follow up and return specifics. If not done previously, a Foster Contract must be signed and attached to the Person file in ShelterLuv.
* Feeding amounts and frequency are discussed to aid in weight gain. Health concerns, and ‘what to look for’, as well as what would be considered an ‘emergency’ are discussed.
* Handouts specific to the animal and its health/behavior are provided to the Foster Parent. Topic specific handouts/materials are maintained by the FC and these resources are provided based on the concerns of the animal and the skill level of the Foster Parent. Information provided is logged on the Approved Foster Parent spreadsheet.
* The Foster Pick Up form details the revax/weight check next date for kittens and signed by the Foster Parent at the time of pick up.
* FC Contact information as well as Emergency Contact information is provided. The Foster Pick Up form will be signed and will provide next revax date, if applicable. The FC takes a copy of the signed portion of the Foster Pick Up form and scans and attaches to the person in ShelterLuv. Whenever subsequent appointments are scheduled and noted on the form, copies are made, scanned and attached in ShelterLuv.
* Revax/weight checks are all noted on the Admitting Coordinators calendar. The FC is responsible for these appointments, and communicating to the Foster Parent the process that takes place at these appointments, as well as next steps in the event the animal stays with HSWM, or returns home with them. Any subsequent appointments are scheduled and communicated on the Admitting Coordinators calendar.
* ShelterLuv should be updated to show the location of the animal is now ‘Foster’. The status of the animal should also be reviewed and updated if needed.
* A stock of typical supplies (food, litter, etc.) is kept in a designated location where Admitting Staff can easily access, should a Foster Parent stop in requesting more. Supplies in this area should not be used for animals in the HSWM shelter, without permission from the FC. Inventory held for Foster use is the responsibility of the FC to keep stocked. If supplies run low, a request for donations or to purchase more.

**B - Ongoing Care for Animals in Foster Homes**

All First Time Foster Parents should be given information for care, including, but not limited to:

* Housing and location for your new foster cat/kittens/dog/puppy
* Socialization information
* Stress
* Feeding and water
* Cleaning (linens, replacement, washing, etc.)
* Bottle / syringe feeding (kittens)
* Growth / weight gain (puppies/kittens, sick/medical foster)
* Medical needs
* Return for vaccines / weight checks (puppies/kittens)
* Litter box / housebreak training
* Behavior Information, specific to the issues/type of animal

If a Foster Parent has previous foster experience, but is taking more advanced needs animals, additional handout information and additional resource handouts will be provided, specific to the care of the animal(s).

* The FC advises at the time of pick up, the plan for follow up care, evaluation and dates of next steps.
* The Foster Parent is responsible (based on the Foster Contract details) to make scheduled appointments for follow up vaccines and rechecks for weight.
* If a Foster Parent cannot make a schedule appointment, the FC will work with them to make a mutually agreed upon time to reschedule. Drop in or unscheduled visits by Foster Parents cannot be accommodated by the Admitting Animal Care staff.
* Kittens/Puppies are brought in (approximately every 2-4 weeks, depending on age) for vaccine boosters (revax). The FC will weigh, administer the vaccines, update ShelterLuv and advise the Foster Parent the next steps, next revax date will be updated on the Foster Pick Up form.
* Kittens who reach the weight of 2 lbs, may be kept at the shelter when they come in for
* The FC is the main point of contact during business hours. The Director of Animal Care is the emergency contact during non-business hours.
* Customer Service is responsible for contacting Foster Parents for any potential adopter who is interested in meeting any animal in a ‘Available Foster’ status. Contact information for the Foster Parent is in the folder, which is located at the front desk.

In the event of any foster births or deaths in the foster home. The FC is responsible for

* Creating new animal records in ShelterLuv (births)
* Updating the SL record as an out come (death)
* Making arrangements for newborns in care or DOA remains to be returned and disposed of.

**C - Return of Foster Animals to the Shelter**

* Unless there are extenuating circumstances, kittens should not be in a foster home past 3 months of age. Intake of kittens should be coordinated with the surgery schedule.
* Any intake of animal(s) from a Foster parent will be noted on the Admitting Coordinators calendar. If it is a cat or kittens, the Feline Enrichment Coordinator calendar is also included on the appointment. The number of kittens should also be noted on the appointment. The appointment should include the animal name, ID # and notes if applicable.
* The FC will explain prior to pick up, to the Foster Parent:
  + HSWM can request the return of any animal in their care at any time
  + Revax date and process. Foster Parents must be willing to leave them at that time, without notice
  + If there is not current room at the shelter for the return of kittens weighing 2 lbs, the Foster Parent may be asked to keep them for 1-2 weeks more until we have room. FC schedules the intake and Admitting is notified of the intake in 1-2 weeks.
* Kittens that have reached a weight of 2 lbs at their revax appointment should be brought back into the shelter if:
  + we have available space
  + the Foster Parent is ready to give them up
  + most of the kittens in the litter are 2 lbs or more
  + they are not sick
  + intakes should be told to Admitting for occupancy planning
* SOP’s AC-03 and AC-04 are referred to for required vaccinations and booster/revax requirements based on age.
* If the animal(s) will be returning to the care of HSWM at a revax appointment, Admitting Animal Care staff will take custody of the animal, create kennel card and folders, once the FC has administered needed tests, vaccines and microchips.
* Any kittens that are close to 2 lbs, and will be coming in for revax, are put on the Admitting Coordinators calendar for the scheduled appointments, and MAY be returned at the next appointment. The Feline Enrichment Coordinator is responsible for determining a longer term location for the animal(s).
* The FC will check with the Director of Animal Logistics and confirm a date for surgery. When possible, the FC will discuss the confirmed date with the Foster Parent and see if they can keep the kittens until surgery. This will limit the exposure to disease and decrease stress on the kittens if returned prior to the surgery date. The foster will then bring the kittens in the day of surgery. Post-surgery, the kittens will be moved by the Feline Enrichment Coordinator to an adoption location, and update ShelterLuv with the new location
* If the Foster Parent has found approved adopters for the animal, they may pick them up after surgery, and coordinate delivery to the new Adopter after surgery. The adoption is processed by the Customer Service staff, with assistance from the FC.
* Failure to make scheduled appointments or to return the animal(s) upon request may result in termination of the person as a Foster Parent.
* HSWM may go to the home and retrieve the animal(s)

**Shelter Placement of Returned Foster Animals**

* Admitting Coordinator and the Feline Enrichment Coordinator are copied on appointments for intake of any animals as this could seriously impact occupancy numbers for a given day/week.
* FC administers any needed vaccines at the time of intake.
* When kittens or puppies are brought back into the shelter from a Foster Parent, the Director of Animal Logistics is consulted for surgery schedule dates. If they are returned prior to the day of surgery, locations are identified with input from the species Behavior Coordinator and/or the Director of Animal Care.
* The Feline Enrichment Coordinator is notified by the FC when kittens are planned to return to custody at HSWM. The Feline Enrichment Coordinator identifies a suitable location for all cats/kittens, once notified of the pending return.
* ShelterLuv is updated to show the current location of the animal by the FC. The FC also changes the status of the animal ‘Welfare Assessment’. (In the animal's record, click the green "Edit Record" button. The location of the animal should then display with a dotted black line. Clicking the location will open a pop-up that contains the location fields (1st-level location displayed first, 2nd-level location displayed second, etc.). Simply click on these fields and choose the new location.)
* ShelterLuv should be reviewed for any needed vaccines, tests, etc. Notes/memos should be updated surgery status, procedures that may be needed, etc. in ShelterLuv.
* All procedures, tests or surgery should all be coordinated with vet staff as needed.
* The FC will put away any supplies that are brought back by a Foster Parent.

**Adoption Directly from Foster Home**

There is the possibility that when an animal is in a foster home, either the foster parent or a family member/friend decides to adopt the animal.

* The Foster Parent should notify the FC as soon as an adopter is interested in an animal in their care.
* The potential adopter must complete an Adoption Survey (on line or in person) and submit to HSWM. The Customer Service team will do the adoption consultation either in person or over the phone.
* Once the Adopter is approved to adopt, Customer Service will process the adoption and payment.
* FC also coordinates with Director of Animal Logistics/vet staff to schedule surgery if needed.
* The animal cannot be placed in the Adopters home until the spay/neuter surgery has been completed, an Adoption Contract is completed and payment has been secured.
* The FC coordinate with the Foster Parent and the Adopter the arrangements for transfer of the animal to the care of the Adopter. Customer Service is responsible for getting the folder with the Adoption Contract, all the necessary documents and records to the adopter once the adoption is complete.

**Reference Documents**

Foster Request Spreadsheet

Foster Application

Foster Contract

Foster Pick Up form

Adoption Survey

Adoption Contract

SOP AC-03 – Vaccines Dog

SOP AC-04 – Vaccines Cat

**Revision History**

Created 1-9-20 – V1