

Friends of Strays Adoption thru Foster Program

Purpose: In order to prepare for the potential impact that COVID-19 could have on shelters due to an increase of intake or a decrease in rescue pulls, foster parents must be empowered to complete adoptions without requiring a staff member to be present. This will minimize human contact and expedite live outcomes.

Why this program is important?

- **Their Lives Matter-** The more pets we can get into foster the more lives we are able to save.
- **High Demand for Kittens/Puppies-** Kittens and puppies allow the shelter to have a steady stream of income to help care for the longer-term residents.
- **Community Support-** The more desirable animals we have the more traffic we will see at the shelter and the more animals we will be able to adopt out.
- **It's Inexpensive!** – Foster homes do not cost the shelter anything unless medical treatment is required. Food and supplies for the fostered animals are donated to the shelter on a regular basis and provided to foster families.

Foster Capacity: 100+ cats and kittens, 25+ dogs or puppies depending on foster availability.

Supplies needed:

- Copies of important adoption information. (URI, FIV, FeLV, New cat, new dog, training information, adoption contracts)
- Adoption folders
- Medical history, Rabies certificates, tags
- Sample of dry food for each foster pet.
- For foster parents to care for the pets they may need food (can and dry), litter, litterbox, bowls, crates or pens, toys

Process

- Once foster animals are cleared for adoption, staff will provide the foster parent with all medical and behavioral information when they pick up a pet after surgery or last medical checkup. The foster parent may also use the dedicated contact method if they need information sent to them. (email- foster@friendsofstrays.org or call shelter extension 103)
- Foster parents can opt to receive direct contact from potential adopters. The adoption counselor includes this information with any PetFinder or website listing.

- Foster parents can opt not to receive direct contact from potential adopters. In this case an adoption counselor will communicate between approved adopters and the foster parent. The counselor will be notified when the foster parent is available to set up appointments or have the foster parent drop off fosters to the shelter.
- Foster parents may opt to have their own personal adoption email address to communicate with potential adopters.
- Foster parents act as a representative of the organization and follow the same open adoption guidelines. See Foster terms and agreement. Each foster parent will be provided an adoptions guide. It is important that the foster parent provide good customer service to the potential adopter. If at any time during a meet and greet, a potential adopter has a question that a foster parent is unable to answer, they should contact the dedicated team member for an answer.
- Foster parents will follow the checklist to ensure that they review with a potential adopter all medical and behavioral records, paperwork, post adoption support and other organization documents.
- We will remind foster parents to minimize contact with groups, other humans, and public surfaces. Encourage hand washing and sanitizing between adopters.
- Foster parents must notify adoption counselors immediately if an adoption has gone thru. Within 5 days of adoption foster parents are required to bring in adoption paperwork and any fees or donations collected. To help this we may consider a complete online adoption process.

Marketing fosters: See the Foster Caregiver Marketing Guide: Getting Pets Adopted Directly from Foster Homes from Maddie Fund. Given to all foster parents.

Adoption Counseling

At Friends of Strays we believe that open, progressive adoption policies save lives. Our goal is to match animals to homes which are good fits while providing exemplary customer service that creates community support and turns visitors into animal advocates and lifelong Adopters. Open adoptions address this reality by doing away with rigid policies and adoption applications and instead focusing on conversations designed to help anyone walking into a shelter feel respected, and anyone walking out to be more educated, and hopefully, with a pet to love.

Our goal is to have an open, honest conversation with potential adopters that is both more encompassing than relying on an adoption application alone, but also less confrontational and judgmental to the potential adopter. Open also means we, the

organization, are open and honest with the adopter about our process and the pets within our care.

The adoption process begins the moment a visitor arrives and is greeted by an adoption counselor or in this case foster parent. FOS has already pre-screened the potential adopter. It is the foster parent's job to ensure it's a good match. If the adopter is focused on an animal we believe would be a poor match, we strive to disclose why this may be a poor match before the adopter has spent a long time with the animal and would then be disappointed after falling in love with the animal. Our areas of concern lie in the home being a good fit for the individual animal and the adopter's ability and desire to provide a safe, loving home. To that end, we only ask questions which address these major areas.

Our philosophy from the arrival of a visitor is that the visitor is a good person who came to or contacted an animal shelter to do the right thing: adopt a shelter pet or support the organization. When the adoption process starts, we come from a place of "yes". This means we believe that when you apply to adopt an animal, we start from the position that the visitor is going home with that pet today unless the adopter presents a reason otherwise that cannot be overcome.

Even if the adopter presents a potential barrier to adoption, we will come from a place of education versus denial or judgement. Not everyone has all the experience and knowledge we do from working in animal rescue our entire lives. We try to educate versus assume the worst in a person if a concern occurs. When discussing a concern, we also believe in being honest - while sensitive and professional - when expressing those concerns to an adopter. If we are judging someone to be an unfit adopter, we believe that person has the right to respond and maybe even change our minds!

We perform same-day adoptions, meaning the day you adopt a pet, the pet will go home with you. Again, waiting periods have proven to do nothing more than be a barrier to adoption. We do not contact landlords to ensure pet deposits have been paid or that you can have pets. In this case, the adopter is the one taking all the risk while there is no risk to the pet. (In the worst case, the pet is returned to FOS, which is not such a bad thing.)

Data Driven Policies

These policies on open and progressive adoption policies are not just anecdotal; multiple studies exist that dispel long held myths surrounding adoptions:

- Do free adoptions increase the risk of poor care and abandonment? Results from a recent study conducted by researchers at Maddies Shelter Medicine Program at the University of Florida say no.

<http://www.maddiesfund.org/free-pet-adoptions-study-results.htm>

- Black cats at Halloween? No problem! There is no evidence that adopting black cats

around Halloween poses any greater risk to the pets than adopting them at any other time of the year.

<http://blogs.bestfriends.org/index.php/2011/10/27/myth-buster-adopting-black-cats-at-halloween/>

- Shelter adoption lore once held that pets acquired around holidays were more likely to be returned after the glow of the holidays passed. This myth has been solidly debunked.

<https://millioncatchallenge.org/resources/removing-barriers-to-adoption>

Reasons to Deny an Adopter: (A staff member can handle the denials)

- Plans to have animal live solely outdoors.
- Plans to declaw or will not abandon declawing as a possible option in the future.
- Has previously had an animal die in their care due to suspect situations (poisoned, died of untreated heartworm, was lost/stolen under avoidable circumstances)
- Plans to use the animal solely as a guard animal
- Changes story of living circumstances, history, etc.
- Wants to adopt an FeLV positive cat but has cats who test FeLV negative at home.
- Intends to give FeLV+ cat loose outdoor access.
- Verbally abusive to counselors/staff/volunteers
- Under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Plans to dock tail, crop ears, declaw, etc.
- Has unvaccinated animals in their home (unless unvaccinated for immunocompromised reasoning)
- Has been a part of a cruelty case, animal fighting, other suspicious activity based in animal cruelty in the future
- Is homeless and cannot provide proof of residence if asked
- Is under the age of 18
- Refuses to give heartworm preventative for life

Adoption Fees

Kittens under 1 year- \$90.

Cats 1+ years- \$60.

Puppies under 1 year - \$300

Dogs 1+ years- \$150