



Foster Parent

Value of This Position: Foster parents allow Seattle Humane to care for animals we wouldn't be able to care for on campus and allow us to care for more animals overall. Foster homes offer a low-stress environment that improves medical recovery and allows anxious pets to relax. Foster parent volunteers who participate in our SPOT (Supporting Pet Owners in Transition) program allow us to help community members in need and also act as intake diversion to prevent pets from being surrendered.

Position Goals:

- 1) Provide a safe and nurturing environment to the foster pet until they are able to reach their outcome with Seattle Humane (adoption, return to owner, or transfer).
- 2) Be the animal's advocate by sharing concerns and observations about the pet, and (if adoption is possible) providing content to help the pet get adopted.

Department

Foster Care

Reports To

Foster Manager, Foster Supervisor,
Foster Coordinators

Location

Work from home, with travel
to Seattle Humane for
appointments, pick-ups and
drop-offs.

Volunteer Qualifications

This position may be perfect for you if you...

- Are comfortable caring for animals in your home.
- Are willing to make trips to the shelter to pick up foster pets, supplies, and bring pets to their appointments.
- Work well without direct supervision, but are good at following detailed instructions.
- Have an irregular schedule, but can commit to caring full-time for an animal for a set period of time (a week, a month, etc.).

Prior Experience: None required, however, any prior experience caring for animals is beneficial to this position. Foster parents will be trained on how to care for animals and will only be sent animals that they feel prepared to care for.

Requirements*: Volunteers in this position must possess the following skills and capabilities.

- **Skills:**
 - Basic reading and writing - important information on animal health and behavior is communicated in writing to ensure consistent care.
 - Basic computer skills and ability to learn to use simple software. Email is the primary means of communication between volunteers and staff, and various online applications are used for scheduling, training, and other activities related to fostering.

- **Physical Capabilities:**
 - Physical capabilities needed will vary based on the species, size, and strength of the foster pet. Foster parents are asked to use their best judgement when determining whether they will be able to handle a pet (for example, a large rambunctious dog will require someone with the strength to manage him on walks). Foster parents must be able to care for, contain, and control (using least invasive, minimally aversive techniques) their foster pets at all times. They must be able to safely transport the pet to and from the animal shelter, provide it with needed exercise breaks, and clean up after the pet. If they do not feel able to do this, they will be asked to return the pet to Seattle Humane.

- **Mental/Emotional Capabilities:**
 - Understand and follow written instructions. Many of our animals have specific medical, dietary, and exercise regimens that must be followed precisely for their well-being.

 - Work independently with no supervision, while also recognizing limits in knowledge/abilities and asking for help when needed. Because fostering primarily happens in the foster parent's home, the majority of the time foster parents are caring for an animal, it will be without direct supervision. The foster team is available to offer support and guidance 24/7 through the foster support phone line and via email during working hours.

 - Make detailed and objective observations on animals' health and behavior and communicate these to the foster team.

 - Handle highly emotional and/or stressful situations. Fostering can be very rewarding, but also emotionally draining as animals are often stressed or ill. While rare, there are instances where foster animals pass away while in foster or euthanasia becomes necessary.

 - Remain calm when faced with unexpected animal behaviors or other challenging situations. On occasion, volunteers may encounter an emergency situation involving their foster pet. This could be a pet suddenly becoming very sick, escaping, attacking/being attacked by another animal, etc. Foster parents are given specific training on how to handle each of these situations.

 - Work cooperatively with and take direction and feedback from Foster staff.

*If you or someone you are representing may need some assistance or reasonable accommodation to meet these requirements, please contact volunteers@seattlehumane.org before submitting your application.

Time Commitment

Schedule: Flexible – foster parents decide when and how often they foster.

Duration of Assignment: There are some animals who need short-term foster and others who need long-term foster. When foster parents sign up to take a foster pet home, staff will try to give an estimate of

how long the foster period will last. However, the actual foster period may be shorter or longer depending on adoption interest, health, behavioral issues, or other factors. Foster parents can arrange for a pet to be returned to Seattle Humane if they are no longer able or willing to foster. We ask Foster Parents to remain on our Foster contact list for at least 1 year.

Job Duties

Exact duties will vary depending on the needs of each foster pet. Possible duties include:

- Schedule appointments for foster animals
- Ensure they have necessary supplies and schedule supply pick-ups when needed
- Take care of foster pets, including: feeding, offering water, administering medical treatments, socializing, providing enrichment, cleaning, providing exercise
- Transport foster pets to and from Seattle Humane for appointments
- Behavioral management
- Monitor health and behavior
- Protect pets from threats inside or outside the home
- Send report cards, pictures, and video of the foster pet
- Abide by foster contract
- Maintain prompt, thorough, and objective communication with SH
- Respond to emails and phone calls from Foster team in a timely fashion
- Notify foster team of concerns
- Provide weekly email updates on foster pet
- Schedule and attend behavior hotline calls as needed
- Submit incident reports when necessary
- Maintain a home environment that is secure, safe from hazards to the pet, and clean enough that the hygiene is not negatively affecting the pet's health.

Work Environment:

Location: Foster parents will primarily work in their own homes. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to maintain a foster space that is secure, clean, and free of hazards to the pet. Foster parents are required to come to campus to pick up and drop off foster pets and supplies and for foster pets' appointments.

Animal Interaction: This position requires direct handling of animals and providing all necessary care for those animals while they are in your home. Foster parents can determine the type of animals they would like to have contact with and foster, which may include dogs, cats, or critters (rats, mice, hamsters, gerbils, chinchillas, rabbits, and guinea pigs). Volunteers are never required to take home an animal that they don't feel comfortable handling, and they are encouraged to contact the Foster Care department to arrange the return of pets they no longer wish to foster. Training in animal handling, behavior, and caregiving will be provided prior to taking a pet home.

Human Interaction: Foster parents will work closely with the Foster Care staff to coordinate care for their foster pets. Foster Care staff are the main point of contact for foster parents and all initial communication should go through them. Foster parents may also have contact with staff in the Veterinary, Behavior, and Adoptions departments.

This is not a public-facing position, but on occasion, foster parents may be asked if they are willing to participate in handing off an animal from their care to a Foster-To-Adopt home. Foster parents can decide how much contact they are comfortable having with adopters, including no contact at all.

Health and Safety: Foster parents work directly with foster animals who may be stressed or ill. Whenever a volunteer is working with animals, there is a risk of injury (e.g. bite, scratch, bruise) and risk of zoonotic disease (e.g. ringworm). These risks can be minimized by using appropriate handling techniques and wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) when recommended. Foster parents will receive training in animal handling, animal behavior, and zoonotic diseases to help them better understand and avoid these risks.

Foster parents may be sent home with hazardous chemicals such as Rescue or Lime Dip for cleaning their foster area or medicating their pet. All hazardous chemicals will be properly labelled and foster parents should read the labels and wear appropriate PPE while using.

Many foster pets are on medication, including some that are controlled substances. Medication is prescribed and dispensed by licensed veterinarians on Seattle Humane's staff. If foster parents are concerned about having certain substances in the home, they should inform the Foster Care staff and alternative foster placement may be arranged if the pet requires that medication.