



Foster Care Handbook

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Welcome to Elmbrook Humane Society's Foster Program!

Foster families help us fulfill our mission by providing temporary care for cats, kittens, dogs, puppies, and small animals that may not be ready for adoption due to a medical and/or behavioral reason, or may be available for adoption, but not settling well to the shelter environment, thus having them available for adoption through a foster home is best.

Fostering should be an enriching and enjoyable experience for you and your family. This handbook is designed to guide you through the foster process, but we are here to help and available to answer any questions as they arise.

Thank you for joining our wonderful team of foster families! Your help will allow us to care for and find loving homes for more animals in the years to come.

About

The **mission** of Elmbrook Humane Society (EBHS) is to provide shelter for homeless animals, promote the human-animal bond, and to prevent animal cruelty and neglect.

Our **vision** is to be the most personal, compassionate, and preferred resource for your animal needs.

EBHS' core values include:

- **Balance and Compassion.** Uniting our heads and our hearts to impact relationships and make mindful decisions.
- **Ingenuity.** Being innovative, resourceful, and thoughtful in caring for animals and people.
- **Collaboration.** Working together to accomplish more.
- **Integrity.** Doing what is right even when no one is watching and setting the best example when they are.
- **Respect.** Recognizing the differences of and being kind to all animals and people.

Qualifications to Foster

- Be at least 18 years of age and have consent from all adults living in the home
- Have formal identification
- Have an email address that is checked regularly
- Must own home or have landlord approval
- Have enough time to dedicate to a foster animal
- Have a safe place to house the foster animal, including a spare/empty room
- Experience in handling animals is preferred
- All animals in the home must be fixed and up to date on age appropriate vaccinations
- Must foster at least one animal each year to remain an active foster volunteer

Responsibilities & Requirements of Foster Families

- Provide care and treatment of fosters as instructed by EBHS
- Ensure the safety of all foster animals under their care
- Transport the foster animal to and from EBHS as needed
- Isolate fosters from the household pets, if instructed
- Practice Force Free handling and training
 - Force Free is a type of training that takes into account the emotions and feelings of animals along with the science of how animals learn. Force Free training does not employ pain, startling techniques, fear, or anything the animal perceives as negative tools for care and training.
- Promptly report any concerns, incidents or problems to the Foster Coordinator in a timely manner
- Ensure all owned pets are up-to-date on vaccines and are sterilized
- Have an active email account that is checked regularly

Foster Care Onboarding

Application

The first step in becoming a Foster parent is completing a Foster application that provides us with more information about you and your home and the types of animals you wish to foster. You can obtain the application on the EBHS website or at the shelter and submit it in person, via email or via fax.

Orientation & Training

Upon receiving your foster application, the Foster Coordinator will verify homeownership or obtain landlord approval and ask for a copy or photo of your driver's license for our records.

With an approved application, the Foster Coordinator will follow up via email and share the link for EBHS' Foster Care Orientation and a review questionnaire that must be submitted after watching the orientation. Our Foster Care Handbook will also be emailed for your review. The Foster Handbook Acknowledgement & Consent Form must be signed (handwritten or digitally) and returned to the Foster Coordinator. The Foster Coordinator must receive the orientation review questionnaire and Foster Handbook Acknowledgement & Consent Form within 2 weeks from the date it was sent. Failure to get these items back to the Foster Coordinator in a timely fashion will result in your application being denied.

The final step in the Foster Care onboarding and training process is to virtually attend the 'Top 10' training for the specie/s you will be fostering. This short video covers the basic, yet most important things we want you to know about fostering a shelter cat or dog and rules to follow. To ensure you retained the topics discussed, a review questionnaire must be completed and sent back to the Foster Coordinator within 2 weeks from the date it was sent.

Once you complete the above steps you will be added to the email distribution groups for your preferred specie!

Getting the Ask

Once you are fully onboard Our Foster Care Coordinator will email you to inform you and other foster families of an animal that is in need of a foster home and that fits within the preferences on your application. Should there be an urgent need, you may occasionally receive asks to foster an animal outside of your preferences.

Preparing your Home

Once you commit to fostering an animal, it is time to prepare the area where the animal will be kept.

- Choose a well-ventilated area that is out of the main flow of traffic. A spare bedroom or a lesser-used bathroom is a good option. Remember that while the space you provide may seem small compared to what your own animal is used to, even a bathroom will provide your foster with more space than a kennel at the shelter. A smaller space will actually help them to initially feel more comfortable in their new environment.
- The floors in your chosen room should be able to be easily cleaned. Hardwood floors, tile and linoleum are all easily sanitized. If the room that you plan on using is carpeted, it may be a good idea to cover the carpet with throw rugs or some other protective covering in case of accidents.
- Keep your own animal away from the foster to reduce stress and to ensure that your own animals remain free of contagious diseases. Even if your foster animal is not symptomatic of disease, it may be harboring an illness that could be contagious to other pets.
- Remember to pick up/remove anything of value from the room where your foster will be kept.
- Inventory your current supplies and identify any needs that you may have. EBHS will supply foster homes with all essential items.

Picking up your foster from the shelter

A prolonged shelter stay may compromise the animal's health and the health of other animals in the shelter, so we ask that you pick up your foster as soon as possible once a commitment has been made.

- An appointment to pick up your foster from the shelter will be scheduled with the Foster Coordinator.
- Pick up appointments may take 30 minutes or more depending on the specific foster reason and the care plan. During your appointment you will meet with a staff member who will provide you with more information about your foster and any specific instructions.

Your Point of Contact & Foster Check In's

While you have your foster animal, questions are sure to arise. The Foster Coordinator should be

the first resource you reach out to with any questions you have about your foster. In the event of an emergency, you must call EBHS first. If after hours, you will be directed to our after hour's number which will be answered by an EBHS Animal Care Staff Member.

The Foster Coordinator will reach out to you 48 hours after bringing a foster animal home and every week thereafter or as needed. Our goal in frequent check in's is to answer questions, receive animal updates, offer advice and help as needed and communicate upcoming appointments or other matters. You are welcome to contact the Foster Coordinator outside of their regular check in's.

In addition to this, EBHS utilizes a 1 day, 3 day and 1 week foster check in survey via Maddie's Pet Assist and ask that you complete these surveys about your foster animal. Not only does this provide valuable information about your foster animal and how they are adjusting, it also offers suggestions and tips applicable to your foster animal based on your survey answers.

Appointments

During the time you have a foster animal, they may need an appointment to see a veterinarian, get groomed, meet with our Behavior Team for some additional training, meet potential adopters, return to EBHS for surgery, adoption, or at the request of EBHS.

- EBHS will schedule all appointments unless otherwise instructed.
- Foster homes are expected to transport animals to and from appointments. If you are unable to transport the animal to the appointment, EBHS will need to be notified so transport arrangements can be made.

Returning

When it is time to return your foster you may feel a sense of sadness, loss, and even guilt. Often this is the most challenging time for a foster parent. Take comfort in knowing that you are able to help save more lives by opening up your home to more animals in need and that you did a great service to your foster pet. Because of you, they are able to move on to their happily ever after!

- A foster profile should be completed when you return your foster or when they are ready to find their forever home. This profile provides important information about how that animal is in a home and will increase its chances of being adopted more quickly. You may include photos and stories with the foster history sheet to further describe your experience with your foster.
- All supplies should be brought back when returning your foster to EBHS. This includes but is not limited to unused food, medications, crates, bowls, bedding, toys, or other items provided to you by EBHS.

Adoptions

Adoption is the ultimate goal for all animals in our care and as a foster parent, you become the best advocate for finding your foster its forever home. Each animal may have different

restrictions and requirements for adoption. EBHS has a policy and procedure in place for adopting out animals in our care.

- All potential adopters must have an adoption application filled out prior to meeting with an animal. The application can be found on our website by clicking on the word *Adopt* or a hard copy can be filled out or picked up at the shelter. Applications are completed and processed the same day.
- Home ownership or landlord approval is needed as part of the adoption process.
- Ideally, all family members should meet the animal prior to the adoption being approved but this is specifically required for dog adoptions. We do require speaking to all of the adults in the household for cat adoptions.
- In the event you are fostering a shy or fearful cat, we may ask foster homes to do a virtual meet and greet with a potential adopter versus bringing the cat back to the shelter to meet the adopter. This can be done via Facetime, Zoom or other video calling applications. In this instance, if the adopter wants to pursue the animal, via our Adopted at First Sight Program, they can take the animal home for a 2 week trial before committing to adopt.
- Meet-and-greets with resident dogs are required for all dog adoptions. These meet-and-greets are always done at EBHS unless an exception has been made by an EBHS staff member. We don't suggest resident dogs meet shelter cats as this is very stressful for both animals and will not show an accurate representation of how they may do in a home together.
- Additional information about the adoption process, including fees, is listed on our website.

Health/Medical Basics

Disease Control

By confining your foster, you will help control the spread of potentially contagious diseases. Although confining them may seem cruel, it is imperative to keeping both fosters and your pets healthy. We ask that you practice the following actions while fostering an animal:

- All dishes, towels, blankets, beds, litter boxes, and toys should be washed in a 1:10 solution of bleach to prevent the spread of disease.
- For canines, clean up stool immediately following elimination. Intestinal parasites are common for shelter animals, by picking up stool right away you are helping to prevent reinfection.
- Wash your hands with soap and hot water after handling your foster and change clothes if necessary.

Disease Recognition

Please keep a close eye on your foster as health concerns can occur quickly. You will get to know your foster and will know what is and what is not normal for the animal (behavioral patterns, eating habits, elimination routine, etc.). Some things to pay attention to include:

- Change in eating habits (mainly decrease). Please note that it is normal for your foster to not show much interest in their food for the first few days following a move in environments.
- Change in attitude or energy level (lethargy/increased sleep)
- Excessive urination, lack of urination, discolored urine
- Major changes in stool (bloody or runny)
- Nasal/eye discharge
- Coughing/wheezing/sneezing
- Vomiting
- Constant whining/crying
- Rapid weight loss or gain
- Anything out of the ordinary

Administering Medication

Administering medication to your foster may be necessary. Medications come in many different forms. Proper administration of prescribed medication is essential so that the animal receives the maximum benefit. Medications should always be given for the full amount of time prescribed, even if your foster starts to show signs of improvement. Always use caution when medicating an animal and contact the Foster Coordinator right away if you are having difficulty. A Medical Team member will explain and/or show you how to administer the medication when you pick up your foster. Additionally, a handout explaining the techniques will also be provided.

Checking Temperature

In rare instances, we may ask you to take the temperature of your foster if you suspect a fever or as needed to monitor the health of young animals and their mother. If you are uncomfortable with taking your foster's temperature, please contact the Foster Coordinator to set up an appointment to bring in your foster to have this done. We recommend using a digital thermometer, since it provides a clearer reading and is more durable than a glass thermometer. When taking an animal's temperature, it is done rectally and as such, Vaseline should be applied to the tip of the thermometer and only inserted no more than 1 inch, just so that the metal part of the thermometer tip is not visible. When restraining your foster animal for temperature checks, please use force free handling techniques such as wrapping them in a towel, using positive tools like a kong and using 2 people to handle the animal. Please don't ever scruff or lay on or use force when handling your foster animal at any time. This creates a negative association and will make future attempts even harder.

- **Contact us right away if your foster's temperature is out of the normal range.**
 - A cat's normal temperature range is from 100-102.5°F (37.78-39.17°C)
 - A dog's normal temperature range is from 101-102.5°F (38.33-39.17°C)

Behavior Basics

Training should begin as soon as you get your foster home. Teaching your foster good habits and manners increases its chances of adoption and staying in its forever home. Please remember that not all adopters are going to want their pets on the furniture/bed, so keep things like this in mind while training. EBHS is a force-free training facility and we do not support training

methods that employ pain, startling techniques, fear, or anything an animal perceives as negative tools in training and caring for animals. We expect our foster homes to use these same techniques.

Socialization

Having a well socialized foster animal helps increase its chances of being adopted more quickly and sets the animal up for a successful future in the human world. It is important to not overwhelm your foster with too much too soon or you could be doing more harm than good. There is a delicate balance for each individual animal and finding that balance is fundamental in establishing a good socialization plan.

Housetraining/Good litter box habits

One of the most important aspects of fostering will be to develop good habits and that includes housetraining or litter box training. Start with a routine and be consistent. Be prepared for and expect accidents to happen. Never punish an animal for having an accident. A handout explaining how to successfully housetrain or litter train your foster will be provided.

Foster Opportunities

Foster-to-Adopt

Animals that are unavailable to be adopted due to a medical or behavioral concern may be eligible to be fostered by prospective adopters. Foster-to-adopt homes are not required to fill out foster applications as the adoption application is used in its place. This foster opportunity is not a means to try out an animal but rather allows an animal to get into their forever homes more quickly. During this foster term, all medical and behavioral support is provided by EBHS until the animal is ready to be adopted.

Adopted at First Sight

Amid COVID-19, EBHS implemented a program called Adopted at First Sight as the shelter closed for public viewing and shifted to by appointment only showings. This program allows interested adopters to speak with an EBHS staff member via phone to learn more about the animal they are interested in and the needs of the animal. Should they feel they are a good fit, there are 2 options to proceed:

1. An appointment will be made for them to come to the shelter to meet and spend time with their potential new companion. If it is love, the adoption can be completed same day, barring requirements to adopt such as verifying home ownership/landlord approval, etc.
2. If the pet is in foster care, a virtual meet and greet will be scheduled where the potential adopter can see the animal and learn more about them from their foster family. If they seem like the right fit, an appointment is made for the potential new family to pick up the pet for a 2 week, foster to adopt, trial. Our Foster Coordinator does regular check ins throughout the 2 weeks to see how it is going and answer any questions or concerns. If it is a good fit, an adoption appointment is made by the end of 2 weeks.

Behavioral

You may have a foster with behavior issues or that lacks socialization. The shelter environment is not ideal for behavior modification or the socialization that is needed. The focus for these fosters is to modify unwanted behaviors through socialization and training. Depending on the animal, they may need a few weeks to a few months in foster care. Individualized information will be given prior to you taking your foster which will include what is expected and needed of you.

Puppy Mill

Puppy mill dogs are ones that come from a breeding facility and are typically very under socialized. These dogs often have medical and behavioral needs and concerns and require very specialized plans for recovery. Dogs that are released from mills are flight risks and precautions must be taken to prevent them from escaping your care.

Medical

EBHS will regularly have animals at the shelter that are recovering from surgery, have an injury, or are receiving medical treatment for an infection or disease. These animals recover more quickly in a home environment than at the shelter. Specific care instructions are provided and explained to foster homes prior to taking an animal home. Medications will be provided if necessary, along with instructions for administration. As a reminder, keep the foster in a separate area from your pets to reduce stress and to prevent the potential spread of disease to resident animals. A calm and quiet environment is essential to recovery.

Pregnant

Fostering pregnant animals can be a lot of fun! You get all of the enjoyment and mom does a lot of the work. Fostering an animal through her pregnancy, birthing process, and helping care for her litter is an exhausting and time consuming commitment but is often one of the most rewarding foster experiences you will ever have.

Moms with Babies

Bringing home a mom with her litter requires a patient and hands-off approach. Knowing when to step in and when to let mom do her thing will come with time and experience. Moms with babies are a lot of fun especially since she does most of the work!

Bottle Babies

Bottle babies typically require the most time and commitment of all foster animals. Bottle babies are generally orphaned animals under 4 weeks of age and are dependent on their caregiver for all or most of their needs. Bottle babies may have a mother that is unable or unwilling to meet the nutritional needs of the babies and need a foster caregiver to step in and supplement the babies' needs.

Hospice

Hospice foster animals are those that have a terminal illness or disease and, as a result, are unable to be adopted. The duration can last anywhere from a few days to a few years. Hospice

foster homes are a special group of people that are providing immense comfort and care for animals during the most difficult time of their lives.

Weekend Space/Overflow

A less common foster opportunity includes weekend or overflow fosters. This happens when EBHS gets a bit overcrowded and we have a need to open up some kennel space for the arrival of new animals. At that time, we generally need foster parents for a short duration.

Contact Information

Questions are sure to arise at some point during your time fostering and we welcome any inquiries you might have. General questions or updates that do not require an immediate response can be sent to the Foster Coordinator at becky@ebhs.org. **Our Foster Coordinator will respond within 48 hours.**

For more emergency matters please call:

- Daytime (M-F: 9am-6pm and Weekends: 11am-5pm) 262-782-9261
- After Hours 262-893-8189

Foster Volunteer Acknowledgement and Consent Form

If you have any questions about the policies in this handbook, please do not hesitate to ask questions. Your compliance with our policies will ensure a safe environment and will promote a good relationship. Fostering is very rewarding and we hope that the time you spend fostering for EBHS will be as rewarding to you as it is to the animals you care for.

Please sign this acknowledgement and consent form and return it to the Foster Coordinator at becky@ebhs.org.

I am agreeing to act as a foster for Elmbrook Humane Society, Inc. (EBHS). I acknowledge and agree that activities performed by me as a foster will be performed strictly on a voluntary basis, without any pay, compensation or benefits. I agree to comply with the rules and regulations established by EBHS and failure to do so may result in my immediate removal as a foster. I am aware of the nature of the activities to be performed as a foster and I recognize and understand that there are certain risks inherent in handling animals and I accept those risks. I agree that all foster activities are to be performed at my own risk. I understand that if an accident or injury should occur, no matter how minor, I will complete a Volunteer Injury report form and seek any necessary medical attention utilizing my own medical insurance. On behalf of myself and my respective heirs and personal representative, I agree to indemnify and hold harmless EBHS, its officers, directors, employees, agents and volunteers from and against any and all loss, damage, claims, liability, costs and expenses of any nature whatsoever, including but not limited to attorney's fees and disbursements, arising from or occasioned by my activities as a foster for EBHS. I agree that EBHS may use my name and/or image for EBHS displays, educational programs, public relations and/or for other purposes deemed appropriate by EBHS in its sole discretion, and I hereby release any such images or photographs for use in its programs, publications and purposes. I have received and reviewed the Elmbrook Humane Society Foster Handbook and I agree to abide by all terms and conditions of the Foster Handbook. I have read the above waiver and state that I have understood it and that I am voluntarily signing it without any inducement or representation from any member of the EBHS staff.

Signature

Date

Print Name