Foster Care Program Expansion

Realistic Program Preview

These are some of the thing you may want to put in place or update if you're expanding a foster program.

Action Item	Approximate Time Required	Templates & Resources	Impact
Planning Tasks			
Collect and analyze your organization's data on outcomes for different types of pets and those served by your current program	45 minutes or more	See this overview of foster data	This will enable your organization to determine programmatic goals and next steps.
Need to get others on board with expanding your program? Learn what the research says about foster care for dogs and cats.	15 min. or more	This document lists research: Evidence Supporting a Home-Based Approach to Pet Sheltering	
Create goals and parameters for pilot program for increasing current program placements or placing a new population of foster pets (species, goal number of pets, expected length of time in foster, etc.)	45 minutes or more	Learn how to pilot a program in this MU course and this document.	This will help give your organization a strategy for expanding and improving your program. It will also help you to break up tasks into meaningful goals that can be achieved easily.

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Update your foster organizational structure, including job descriptions for your foster coordinator, other staff and/or volunteers assisting with the foster program	45 minutes or more	Check out this document on options for managing foster care. Here are several job descriptions for foster assistants and teams.	This will help you build a strong foster management structure and will enable the foster coordinator and your organization to be clear on the responsibilities for each of these jobs.
Update Standard Operating Procedures for the foster program	20 minutes or more	See resources in the Foster Program Management Collection.	This will enable your shelter or rescue organization to run the foster program safely and efficiently.
If needed, increase funding for medical care for pets in foster -Grants -Possibly increase medical budget -Possibly update process for transferring pets with medical needs to rescue	1 hour or more	See more medical resources in our Foster Medical Support Collection.	This will ensure that your organization is prepared with the funding to provide medical care for pets in foster homes.
Update foster training and ensure it is easy to access	20 minutes or more	Using something like Google Forms or Thinkific to put training online is the most efficient way to do this (see example). Other ideas include doing orientations on-the-spot or scheduling in-person group orientations.	Research shows that being provided with adequate training is critical for foster retention.
Audit your foster onboarding process by asking at least one person to complete it from beginning to end and provide feedback on each step.	1 hour or more	Check out this short-form video for why this is important. Use this document to put best practices into use on your website.	You need to know things like: is your website welcoming to fosters? Is it easy for them to sign up? Is the onboarding process quick, or is there lag time?

			Your goal is to make the foster onboarding experience as welcoming, quick and easy for fosters as you can.
Update foster sign-up form, manual and/or agreement; get approval on updated documents if needed	30 minutes or more	You can use this sign-up form (foster is on pg. 3), manual and agreement as templates. See more resources in our Foster Caregiver Onboarding Collection	The application and agreement will provide information on potential foster applicants and a legal framework for the responsibilities and requirements of foster caregiver and your organization. The manual will provide foster caregivers with an understanding of program basics, what to expect, their roles and their responsibilities.
Make all your volunteers and staff fosters automatically (at least for easily handleable pets and any types of pets they are already trained to handle at the shelter).	No time to several hours	See more resources in our Foster Caregiver Onboarding Collection	This will remove a barrier for the people who already know and love your organization's pets to taking them home. It will enable your foster program to grow more quickly, with people you're already familiar with. You may need to alter volunteer orientations, send out the foster manual or post foster information and manual in your internal group, etc.
Update process for potential fosters to see pets in need of foster.	15 minutes or more, as often as every day	Some shelter software can be automated to send email requests out; we recommend including pet photos with every request.	This can include having a webpage, Trello board or other online space where pets in need of foster are listed. Individual or groups of pets can be posted to a social media group or page, emailed out, and more. Texting caregivers individually about pets who need fosters can be very effective. The largest programs are getting the word out about pets needing foster in the most different ways, most often.
Update process for scheduling and tracking medical vaccines and appointments	15 minutes or more, daily or weekly	Scheduling apps like Acuity and Fullslate may be helpful.	This ensures that all of the pets in your organization are vaccinated on time and help prevent outbreaks. The time this will take depends on your process for medical scheduling and appointments, the number of current fosters and how much of the medical process (giving

			vaccines, attending appointments, etc.) is the responsibility of the foster coordinator.
Start volunteer & foster group using an app or platform like Facebook, Slack or Band	One hour or more	Here are some sample group guidelines and how others are using their groups.	This will enable your organization to learn more about the animals in your care. It can make providing support more efficient and posting on social easier much less time-intensive, as photos, videos stories and bios can often be copied, edited and posted to your organization's main page.
Purchase or request supplies, if needed: - Food - Litter boxes - Leashes - Crates Etc.	20 minutes or more	Consider creating an Amazon and/or Chewy wish list or asking for donations of specific items. 'Adopt me' vests and supply bags can even be made by members of your community!	Having foster supplies available to foster caregivers can help to increase safety and make it easier for people to foster. Organizing supplies is a great job for a volunteer!
Create foster emergency phone line and decide how it will be staffed	30 minutes or more	Google Voice and using Doobert Connect are options for this.	This will enable your foster coordinator(s) to respond to any foster-related emergencies in a timely manner.
Create or update, and implement your comprehensive foster recruitment plan	20 minutes or more	Use this document as a template.	This will ensure that your organization is recruiting fosters year-round, via multiple channels.
Recruit and train volunteers assisting with foster management	1 hour 30 minutes or more	Here are several job descriptions for foster assistants and teams	Foster mentors and program management volunteers will help the foster program run more efficiently, saving the foster coordinator's time and allowing more pets to be placed into foster homes.

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Create and train fosters on how to use a Foster on Deck system	1 hour or more	Check out this webcast and use Humane Rescue Alliance's template for a Foster on Deck spreadsheet	This will allow you to know at a glance which foster caregivers are ready for which fosters and can help save time.
Create or update the process for getting marketing material from fosters and marketing pets from their foster homes	1 hour or more	You can use this pet bio survey template or create one in Google Forms. Make sure they have access to resources such as The Foster Caregiver Marketing Guide	This will help set the expectation that fosters help with marketing and assist your fosters in creating and post marketing material to get their fosters adopted from their homes. See this video for more information. This will enable foster caregivers to report the information that you need on foster pets' behavior in the home. Collecting information on a timely basis will help to ensure that your organization has accurate behavioral and medical records on every pet.

Ongoing Tasks			
Post calls for foster photos and stories on the internal group page	10 minutes every 1-2 weeks, or as needed	Use this template for text ideas. Make sure your foster caregivers have a copy of The Foster Caregiver Marketing Guide and/or our free course, Marketing a Foster Pet.	Reaching out about this regularly will remind your fosters that you need their help with marketing their foster pets, and that their help can enable pets to be adopted more quickly. Getting marketing material from foster caregivers will help your pets get adopted faster and help your organization save time on social media.

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Monitor and post updates in your staff, volunteer & foster Facebook group	10 minutes or more per day	Examples	This will enable you to give support as soon as it is needed, post relevant marketing material to social media and target any issues as soon as possible.
Update and monitor the data on your program	20 minutes or more per week	You can use this template from Austin Pets Alive!	This will enable you to see if your program is working efficiently enough to meet your needs and will help you to define areas that need improvement.
Create and host foster adoption events	1 hour or more per event		Scheduling offsite adoption events at places throughout the community (pet stores, etc.) can help prevent pets in foster care from ever having to come back to the shelter. Offsite events can also help to expand a shelter's adoption capacity.
Touch base with fosters who email and call with questions or concerns	30 minutes or more per day	Foster mentors and Doobert Connect can be helpful with this.	This will go a long way toward making your foster caregivers feel supported.
Create an online hub for foster resources	1 hour or more	Shelters have created these on their website, on Trello, Linktr.ee and other sites.	This will help your fosters know where to get the information and help they need on their own, saving you time.

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Field Trip Program			
Create SOPs for field trip foster program and begin a pilot	1 hour or more	See our pilot program document template Download a toolkit from Mutual Rescue	This will enable your organization to get buy-in from your organization and run the program efficiently and safely.
Recruit field trip foster caregivers & market the program	30 minutes or more; ongoing		This will enable your organization to begin the pilot program.
Recruit and train field trip program management volunteers	1 hour or more	See foster program job descriptions	Foster volunteers can assist with program management, saving the foster coordinator's time.

Weekend Foster Program			
Create SOPs for overnight/weekend foster program and begin piloting it	15 minutes or more	See our pilot program template	This will enable your organization to run the program efficiently and safely.
Recruit overnight/weekend foster caregivers & market the program	30 minutes or more; ongoing		This will enable your organization to begin the pilot program.

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Recruit and train overnight/weekend foster program management volunteers	1 hour or more	See foster program job descriptions	Foster volunteers can assist with program management, saving the foster coordinator's time.

Miscellaneous			
Create Standard Operating Procedures and other needed documents for an emergency foster program.	30 minutes or more	See our free course, Emergency Foster	This will enable your organization to place pets into temporary foster care and open up new kennels quickly when there is a population surge, population crisis, natural disaster or other type of emergency.
Create Standard Operating Procedures and other needed documents for a 'found foster' program.	30 minutes or more	See this document for more information	This will enable your organization to increase foster capacity because those who find pets (such as underage kittens) can be onboarded as their fosters until the pets are ready for adoption.
Create Standard Operating Procedures and other needed documents for a foster-to-adopt program.	30 minutes or more	See Pima Animal Care Center's Foster-to-Adopt manual here	This may help potential adopters become more comfortable with taking home medium and large dogs.