

Cat Matchers - Foster Care Program Overview

Thank you for your interest in our Foster Care Program. We appreciate your willingness to open your heart and home to homeless cats and kittens. Your dedication allows our organization to rescue cats that we would otherwise have to turn away due to limited space in our volunteer foster homes.

Importance: The foster care program is vital. The guiding mission of the Foster Care Program is to give cats individualized care and socialization to prepare them for adoption. Information gathered during the foster process helps us place cats in homes and with families who are the best match for their personality and temperament.

Specific goals of the program include:

- Providing a safe, healthy, nurturing environment for mother cats to raise their kittens.
- Socializing shy or timid cats and kittens.
- Allowing sick or injured cats to heal in a relaxing, uplifting environment.
- Nursing and bottle-feeding orphaned or abandoned kittens.

Time involved: This will depend on the needs of each animal. Time required depends on:

- The number of animals in foster care.
- The age of the foster cat/kitten(s).
- The health of the cat(s). Many foster pets are healthy and adoptable so time expended is minimal.
- A minimum 10 day quarantine from time of intake to eligibility for adoption.
- Transporting cats to veterinarian appointments as needed.
- Transporting cats to mobile adoptions at least once a month.

Qualifications:

- Most important is love and concern for pets.
- Time and desire to socialize pets.
- Willingness to provide food, water and medication, if necessary.
- Provide a clean living environment and daily care.
- Other animals in the home must be current on all vaccinations, and neutered as age appropriate.
- Have a place in the home where the foster cat(s)/kitten(s) can be separated from animals currently living in the home.

Where we get our cats/kittens:

First and foremost we rescue from local animal shelters as their space and time constraints are limited. We also work with strays and owner surrendered animals at times. Cats/kittens entering our system from any person/group must be first approved by the foster coordinator or President

Types of cats needing foster homes

- Kittens too young and/or immature to be adopted.
- Kittens and young cats that require more socialization than available at the shelter.
- Older or senior cats that will be more comfortable in a home environment.
- Injured cats and/or those recovering from surgery.
- Neglected or abused cats that need tender loving care.
- Cats suffering from "shelter stress" in need of a calming home environment.
- Cats with colds or with special medical needs.
- Abandoned mothers with litters of kittens.
- Any cat when the shelter becomes overcrowded.

Categories of fosters

- Bottle feeding (under 5 weeks old)
- Young kittens– but can eat on their own (5 weeks to 4 months)
- Adolescents (4 months – 8 months)
- Pregnant cat or Moms with their litter
- Adults (8 months old and older)
- Injured and/or ill cats/kittens
- Semi feral and shy cats/kittens

How we adopt:

- We post our adoptable animals on our website as well as petfinder.com and other adoption websites.
- We run mobile adoptions and attend special events.

Expense: Many foster volunteers provide their own food, litter and other necessities for the animal - as this can be considered an “in-kind” donation for tax purposes, however, Cat Matchers will provide everything, if necessary. Cat Matchers will arrange for and pay for all approved medical care.

Training: Much of the foster care program is a “learn on the job” type atmosphere. You will be assigned a mentor to help you with any questions. There is a handbook to cover many topics. We try to start new foster volunteers with an easier “assignment” to make the first time foster experience positive.

Duties:

- Aid in the care of healthy adults and young animals.
- Aid in the care of sick, injured or very young animals.
- Provide food, water, litter and other necessities.
- Medicate the animal, if necessary; take to the veterinarian, if necessary.
- Bring the animal to at least one adoption event a month.
- Communicate with foster coordinator and marketing team about the foster to facilitate adoption.

More detailed information can be found in the Foster Manual

Things to consider about Foster Care for Cats and Kittens

Thank you for your interest in joining our team of Foster Parents! If you have never had the opportunity to foster before, you are now being given the chance to experience all the joys of pet parenting without the lifetime of responsibility. We want this experience to be a positive and rewarding one for you.

You will be giving your foster cat(s) a chance to adapt to a normal, warm and loving foster home environment while it waits for a permanent one. Because some of you may be unfamiliar with cat/kitten care, you will be assigned a Cat Matchers member to be your mentor throughout the foster period. You are encouraged to call them with any questions that may arise.

Please know that if not for caring people like you, hundreds of wonderful cats and kittens will be euthanized or die living as strays where they are susceptible to many unhealthy and unsafe conditions. While there are many positive reasons to open your home to a homeless animal there are numerous practical factors to be considered as well.

Prior to making this commitment, please consider the following questions.

1. **Are you able to separate the foster pet from your own pets?** This is for the safety and well-being of all involved. The minimum time to keep the foster animals separated from other animals is 14 days. The incubation period for most common viral/bacterial diseases that the animal(s) may have come in contact with during a time at animal control or as a stray is 10-14 days. This is a “quarantine” period to gauge health and behavior.
2. **Will you be able to spend quality time with the foster animal(s)?** On average it is best to spend **at least** 20 minutes a day with each foster animal. Socialization is as important as feeding them and keeping them clean.
3. **Are you willing to work with our vet care system?** Please understand that only our vets can treat our foster cats/kittens at selected facilities. Some procedures are done for a substantial savings to our organization. Additionally, all medications must come from our sources only. If you choose to go to a vet outside our system without our prior consent (other than life-threatening emergencies) or get medications from outside our system, then any cost incurred will be the foster volunteer’s responsibility. We will help with transport if needed.
4. **Do you feel comfortable explaining to friends that these animals are not yours to adopt out and that they must go through the regular adoption process at Cat Matchers?** You may not promise adoption of any of the foster cats, as there is an adoption process and screening for each potential owner. You can recommend someone to the adoptions team to start the process.
5. **Are you willing to transport the foster pet to at least 1 mobile adoption per month?** We have adoption events almost every weekend and occasionally attend special events. We also post all of our adoptable pets online. We will help with transport if needed.
6. **Can you commit to spend the entire foster period with the animal?** If something unexpected happens and you need to have someone else care for your foster animal(s), we need to be informed and have a chance to talk to the sub-foster parents. Do not take this animal to a shelter or animal control facility or “dump” it outside. We will move this cat to another foster home if necessary.

7. **Are you aware that there is a chance of the foster animal causing damage to your home?**
For example, cats and kittens can be destructive towards your furniture and curtains if allowed in areas where they are present. Not all cats will climb and scratch destructively. However, it is a risk if you choose not to isolate the animals in a safer, more restricted area of your home.
8. **Do you understand that there is a risk of being scratched or bitten?** As with anything else that involves change, there may be an adjustment period for you and your foster cat/kitten. Please be patient — some of our animals have come from rough situations and are frightened. Others may get a little rough when playing, and kittens don't always have the best manners when playing.
9. **Are you willing to communicate with the foster coordinator and marketing team in order to facilitate the adoption process?** We have pet personality/biography questionnaires to fill out on every foster animal as well as needing good pictures to post online.
10. **Are you willing to keep up with the veterinary paperwork/medical records for the foster cat(s)?** We can assist you with this, but we have found over time that a foster volunteer that keeps track of their cats' records has a better grasp of the cats overall health.
11. **Do you or any member of your household have any allergies or limitations that might hinder you from safely participating in any area of the foster program?**
12. **Is everyone in your household in agreement about fostering a cat or cats?**
13. **Are you comfortable following veterinarian's instructions if the cat(s) you are fostering becomes sick or injured?**