



# FOSTER MANUAL

Thank you for participating in the Foster Program for SOCA-FBC! Fostering is a great way to contribute to the organization's mission by providing a loving foster home to the animals in Fort Bend County. Fostering is an immensely rewarding experience, and it changes animals' lives in a very direct way. Plus, animals in foster care create much needed space in the shelter to accommodate other homeless animals.

This manual is meant to serve as a general guide of helpful information about taking care of your foster dog. If you have questions, please reach out to your Foster Mentor for help. Many answers can also be found at [www.SOCA-FBC.org](http://www.SOCA-FBC.org). We are here to make this experience as beneficial and enjoyable as possible. We appreciate your commitment & willingness to take on this responsibility. Welcome to the SOCA-FBC family!!

## **IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

**SOCA – FBC website is:** [www.SOCA-FBC.org](http://www.SOCA-FBC.org)

**Facebook page is:** SOCA-FBC (Be sure to “like” us on Facebook and invite your friends) We also have a group chat for foster families as well as a dog foster Facebook page. Check in for pertinent information, updates, and just to chat with some like-minded individuals.

**Your foster's bio, information and photos can be uploaded here:**

**[manage.rescuegroups.org](http://manage.rescuegroups.org). Our group is 8195.** You will receive an email with the username and password so you can fill-out and maintain your foster dog's information. Please be sure to update frequently. Add new photos and information as you get to know your foster dog. Updating the site will “push” your foster dog to the top of the search results when potential adopters search for a new family member.

**Wednesday is the day each week you will be reminded to update at least one thing about your foster's profile.**

## **BEFORE YOUR FOSTER DOG ARRIVES:**

Here's what you'll need to help your foster dog make a smooth transition to living in your home:

- One bowl for food and one bowl for water
- Dry dog food – if we have donated food, we can offer it to you. Or if your pet needs a special diet, we can provide it. Otherwise please buy dry dog food such as Purina Pro Plan.
- A crate to keep your foster in when you are not home. One can be loaned to you if you do not have one, but please return to us when your foster is adopted. If you need tips on how to crate train your foster, please speak with the foster mentor. Dogs who are crate trained are easier to be adopted.
- A collar and a leash. We often have donated collars and leashes. Just ask.

## **DOG PROOFING YOUR HOME:**

Foster dogs often come from a shelter environment, and even if they have previously lived in a home, we don't always know how they will react in a new home. So, before bringing home a new foster dog, you'll want to

survey the area where you are going to keep your foster dog. Remove anything that would be unsafe or undesirable for the dog to chew on, and latch securely any cupboards and doors that the foster dog could get into. Please crate your foster when unsupervised to avoid any potential injury to your foster or damage to your home.

### **CHOOSING A FOSTER DOG:**

The SOCA-FBC Admin will work with you to select a foster dog who meets your specific requirements. We will always do our best to match you with a dog who fits with your lifestyle and schedule.

When you and the SOCA-FBC Admin have decided on a foster dog, an appointment will be scheduled for the meet and greet session.

If the pet is being selected from the shelter, the SOCA-FBC Admin will meet you at the shelter and introduce you to the dog along with your animal(s) (if applicable). Together, you and the SOCA-FBC Admin will decide if the dog is the right fit for you. **If you aren't comfortable with anything about the animal you may be fostering, please tell the SOCA-FBC Admin before you take the animal home. Before we pull a dog, we ask that you commit to keeping the foster until it is adopted.**

**Please note: Once the animal is placed in a foster home from a shelter, the dog cannot be returned to the shelter if the person fostering the dog decides it's not working out. If you feel you can no longer foster a dog, a new foster home must be found. This could take anywhere from a few hours to weeks depending on the availability of other fosters and the reason it cannot be kept. It can take 2 weeks or longer for a pet to settle in so please be patient with your new foster dog.**

### **DOG INTRODUCTIONS**

Once you are home on your own turf, if you have personal pets who are dogs, you'll want to introduce them to your foster dog one at a time and supervise their interactions at first. It's a good idea to introduce them outside in a large yard or on a walk, keeping all the dogs on leash and allowing them enough space to get adjusted to one another. If you would like, a Foster Mentor could accompany you home to supervise the introductions. If this is required, please make arrangements before your meet & greet to allow us to accommodate your request. In addition, make sure that any items (food, chew toys, plush toys, Kongs, rawhides or anything else that your dog's hold in high regard) are put away whenever the dogs are interacting. You don't want to allow the possibility of a fight. Those items are best placed in the dogs' personal areas. Give your foster dog a quiet crate to be away from other dogs or people if showing signs of nervousness, such as panting, pacing or drooling, as it takes time for them to adjust. Finally, never feed your dogs uncrated in the same room as the foster dog; always separate them at feeding time. Feeding in the crates is best.

### **CAT INTRODUCTIONS**

We can't ensure that a foster dog has been "cat-tested," so if you have personal pets who are cats, you'll need to make the introduction to the foster dog carefully and safely. Start by keeping them separated at first. You can either keep your cats in a separate room or confine your foster dog to a room. Over a one- to two-week period, let the dog and cats smell each other through the door, but don't allow them contact with one another. Exchanging blankets or towels between the dog's area and the cats' area will help them get used to each other's smells.

After a week or two, do the face-to-face introduction. Keeping your foster dog on leash, allow your cat out in the same area. (If you have more than one cat, introduce one cat at a time.) Do not allow the foster dog to charge or run directly up to the cat. Try to distract the dog as best you can so that the cat has the chance to approach without fear. Watch the body language of each animal closely and don't continue the interaction if either pet becomes over-stimulated or aggressive. The idea is to keep the interactions positive, safe and controlled. **Finally, never leave your foster dog unsupervised & uncrated with any cats in your home.**

## **CHILDREN AND DOGS**

Since we don't always know a foster dog's history or tolerance level for different types of people and activities, please teach your children how to act responsibly and respectfully around your foster dog. We will do our best to place you with an appropriate animal for your home situation, but you should still supervise all interactions between children and your foster dog. Key things to remind your children:

- Always leave the foster dog alone when he/she is eating, chewing or sleeping. Some dogs may nip or bite if bothered while eating or startled while sleeping.
- Do not take away a toy or prized possession from the foster dog.
- Do not tease the foster dog.
- Don't chase the foster dog around the house or run quickly around the foster dog.
- Pick up all your toys. Some dogs may not be able to tell the difference between what is theirs and what belongs to the kids.

Do not allow young children to walk the foster dog because they may not be strong enough or experienced enough to handle encounters with other dogs or cats who cross their path.

## **FEEDING**

All foster dogs should be fed a diet of dry dog food, unless otherwise specified by the SOCA-FBC Admin. We ask that you use Purina Pro Plan (or consult with Foster Mentor). If we have donated food, we will make it available to you. Otherwise please purchase some for your foster. Feed your foster dog twice daily (puppies require 3-4 feedings per day) and remove any unfinished kibble from the area. The amount to feed them will be on the dry dog food packaging. Make sure the dog always has access to fresh, clean water.

## **HOUSE TRAINING**

It's unlikely that your foster dog will be perfectly house-trained when you take him or her home. Most of the dogs in the foster program have lived in a shelter for a while, often with minimal walks or chances to relieve themselves outside. At the very least, be prepared for an adjustment period until your foster dog gets used to your schedule.

Because a dog has a better chance of being adopted if she is house-trained, please help your foster dog to perfect this skill. Take your foster dog outside to go potty multiple times per day (3-6 times daily, depending on age). Initially, you may need to take him or her out more frequently to remind him/her where the door to the outside is and to reassure him/her that you will take them out for potty breaks. Most dogs will give cues — such as standing near the door or sniffing the ground and walking in small circles — to indicate that they need to go out. Keep the dog in a crate when you are not available to supervise them indoors.

If your foster dog has an accident inside the house, don't discipline or punish them. It will only teach them to fear and mistrust you. When they potty outside be sure to praise them. You can reward good behavior with a small treat. They will eventually catch on and not require a treat every time. Watch for and learn their cue that they need to go out. It can be as subtle as sitting by the door looking at you, to pawing you for attention, or even pawing at the door. Very often we misread the cue or aren't paying attention and then suddenly there is a puddle.

## **CRATE TRAINING**

Crate training, done in a positive way, can be an effective component of house-training. A crate can be a safe place for your foster dog to have "down time" and can also limit his/her access to the entire house until they knows the rules. A crate should never be used as a form of punishment and a dog should never be left in a crate for an extended period of time.

You can prevent problems with crate training by setting your foster dog up for success. He/she should only associate good things with the crate, so start by putting treats and/or toys in the crate and encouraging him/her to go in. Some dogs warm up to the crate slowly. If he is afraid to go in, place a treat in the crate as far as he is willing to go. After he takes the treat, place another treat a little farther back in the crate. Keep going until he is eating treats at the very back, then feed him his next meal in the crate with the door open, so that he can walk in and out at will.

**PLEASE DO NOT HAVE YOUR FOSTER SLEEP IN BED WITH YOU!!!** Remember you are not their forever family and many families do not allow pets in their beds. Some do not even allow the pet on furniture. By allowing your foster to do these things, you make it more difficult for them to transition into a forever home. Moving to a forever home is already stressful for the pet. If the adopter decides to allow those things it is easy to teach. It is VERY difficult if you have allowed it, for them to UNTEACH it.

## **GROOMING**

A clean and well-groomed dog has a better chance of getting adopted, so bathe your foster dog as needed and brush him/her regularly if they have longer hair or requires more frequent grooming. If you are comfortable with it, you can trim his nails. But please be careful because you can cause pain and bleeding if you trim the nails too short. If your pet requires professional grooming, please check with us before you do so.

## **SAFETY REQUIREMENTS**

**Foster dogs must live indoors.** Please do not leave your foster dog outside unsupervised, even if you have a fenced yard. We ask that you supervise your foster dog when he is outside at all times to ensure that he doesn't escape or have any negative interactions with other people or animals. Your foster dog is only allowed to be off-leash in an enclosed backyard that is completely fenced in.

When walking or hiking with your foster dog, please keep him/ her on leash at all times. This means that your foster dog is not allowed to go to off-leash dog parks or other off-leash dog areas. We do not know how your foster dog will act in these situations, or how other dogs will react, and we need to ensure that all animals are safe at all times. In addition, we don't know if the other dogs they encounter are vaccinated appropriately or carry diseases, so it is best if your foster dog does not meet any unknown dogs. Having recently come from a shelter setting or off the street, foster dogs can be vulnerable health-wise.

Also, your foster dog cannot ride in the bed of an open pickup truck. When you're transporting foster dogs, please keep them inside the vehicle at all times.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

Will I need to take my foster dog to adoption events?

**Please make arrangements to attend at minimum two (2) adoption events per month with your foster.** You are welcome to stay with your foster and help answer questions from potential adopters. If you cannot stay, please make arrangements to drop off and pick up your foster.

Adoption events are great opportunities for your foster pet to learn to socialize with other people and pets in a controlled environment. Please keep control of your foster while on leash at the event. The pet needs to stay at your side and not out at the end of the leash. Do not let them run up to or jump on other pets or stick their noses into other dogs' crates. Do not hold them in your lap at the event. Let others walk and handle your foster; and walk others in turn. If someone has interest in your pet, bring him/her out on leash to meet the person. Avoid fingers/hands into crates (especially children).

## **ITEMS TO BRING TO AN ADOPTION EVENT:**

1. **Crate** – we cannot bring extra crates so please bring your crate

2. **Kennel Card** – you will find this under your foster’s name on [www.rescuegroups.org](http://www.rescuegroups.org). It has the pet’s bio, photos and other information. Please print this out so potential adopters and SOCA volunteers can get to know your foster dog.
3. **Collar and leash**

### **PLEASE DO NOT BRING ANY TOYS OR CHEWS TO HAVE IN THE CRATE**

You will receive an invitation to events from the Event Coordinator through Signup Genius. Please respond by Wednesday, so we know who is going to the events that weekend and can plan accordingly. The calendar of all events is located on the SOCA website – [www.SOCA-FBC.org](http://www.SOCA-FBC.org). This calendar is the best place for you to find the most up to date event information. The more events your foster attends, the greater the chance of him/her finding their FUREVER home.

### **How can I help my foster dog find a great home?**

- ❖ As you get to know your foster dog, we ask that you update the foster dog’s biography online at [www.rescuegroups.org](http://www.rescuegroups.org) to reflect accurate information about the dog’s preferences and quirks. We also suggest any photos or videos that you take of your foster - those can be uploaded to [www.rescuegroups.org](http://www.rescuegroups.org). By uploading pictures and bio information, your foster’s information is immediately sent to **OVER 70** pet adoptions websites such as [www.adoptapet.com](http://www.adoptapet.com) and [www.petfinder.com](http://www.petfinder.com) for potential adopters to review. There is also a link to our adoptables on our Facebook page SOCA – FBC. Every time you update the information for your foster dog at [www.rescuegroups.org](http://www.rescuegroups.org), their listing gets “pushed” to the top of the search results.
- ❖ You can also promote your foster on your personal Facebook page, Twitter or other social media. Be sure to tell people the basics about your foster dog: age, weight, dog friendly? Cat friendly? Child friendly? House trained? Crate trained? Quirks? Try to keep it positive while still telling the truth. Always refer them to [www.soca-fbc.org](http://www.soca-fbc.org) for more information or an application.
- ❖ Put up a flyer or some info with a photo of your foster in the break room at your office or church.
- ❖ Be sure to mention SOCA-FBC and where someone can find an adoption application when you post your foster dog – [www.SOCA-FBC.org](http://www.SOCA-FBC.org)
- ❖ Please do not post your foster dog on Craig’s List or any similar site.

Please keep in mind that anyone who shows interest in adopting your foster dog will need to go through the adoption screening process – **NO EXCEPTIONS!** **Do not set up meet and greets or home visits until the adopter has passed initial screening and the adoption coordinator has given you the go-ahead.**

**Dogs are not able to be taken home that day from an adoption event or any other event/situation. The potential adopter will need to fill out an application and go through the adoption screening process.**

### **What is a phone interview of a potential family for my foster?**

When our application review team has an application for your pet that has passed initial review and appears to possible be a good match for your pet, you will be given the application to read and asked to make contact with the adopter as soon as possible by phone. This is an opportunity for you to ask lots of questions of the family and for them to ask questions about the pet as well. The goal is to see if the family will be a good home for your foster. If it a good fit, please let the adoption coordinator know you would like to proceed with the next step. If it is not, please give the adoption coordinator feedback so they can re-connect with the family to let

them know, or perhaps offer a pet that is a better fit. Always thank them for their time and let them know someone will contact them.

### **What is a meet and greet/home visit?**

If the family appears to be a good fit for your foster pet and you have let the adoption coordinator know, you will be asked to set up a meet and greet/home visit for the pet with the family. You would bring the pet to the family's home to make sure it is a safe environment for the pet and observe the interactions with the family members and other pets in the household. A checklist will be provided so you know what to look for. If you do not feel comfortable with what you observe, please do not leave the pet for a sleepover. Just thank them for their time and let them know that the adoption team will be in touch.

### **What is a sleepover?**

A sleepover is the next step from the home visit. If you and the pet are comfortable with the family, they may stay for their sleepover or be arranged for a different day. This is a 24-72 hour trial period to make sure the family is comfortable with the pet. Please be aware that it can take up to 2 weeks for a pet to be completely adjusted to their new environment. The sleepover is treated just like the adoption. You should verify with the Adoption Team that the adoption agreement (and addendum if it's a puppy) has been completed and returned as well as a Petco form and microchip registration. You can collect the adoption fee in the form of cash or check. Potential adopters can also pay the adoption fee via our online donate button. Be sure you see confirmation of payment prior to leaving your foster pet. After 24-72 hours, if they feel comfortable finalizing the adoption, the pet stays and we process the paperwork and payment. If not, you pick up the pet and payment is returned. All completed paperwork and payments should be turned in to the adoption coordinator immediately, or mailed to SOCA-FBC, P.O. Box 1595, Rosenberg, TX 77471

Please bring a ziplock bag of what they have been eating, some of their bedding, and favorite toy. Please write out and leave with them a note that lists what their feeding times are, how much to feed, and anything they need to know about care of the pet, likes and dislikes. You can also loan the crate for 24 hours (until they can purchase their own). Anything you think would make transition to their new home easier.

### **How do I get monthly heartworm medication for my foster?**

SOCA-FBC will have heartworm preventative available at each adoption event. You will need to go to an adoption event to pick up the medicine each month for the following month. If you would like to donate \$5 to help defray the cost, it is greatly appreciated. Your foster MUST be given a preventative on the first day of each month. If you wish to provide heartworm preventative medicine for your foster, it is welcomed and appreciated, but must be approved by your Foster Coordinator (no Ivomec or un-prescribed medications). You can receive a donation letter for tax purposes if you provide a receipt for the purchase.

### **How do I get monthly flea/tick medication for my foster?**

SOCA-FBC will have topical flea/tick available at each adoption event. You will need to go to an adoption event to pick up the medicine each month for the following month. If you would like to donate \$5 to help defray the cost, it is greatly appreciated. Your foster MUST be given a preventative on the first day of each month. If you wish to provide flea/tick preventative medicine for your foster, it is welcomed and appreciated, but must be approved by your Foster Coordinator. You can receive a donation letter for tax purposes if you provide a receipt for the purchase.

### **VETERINARY CARE**

SOCA-FBC provides all medical care for our foster dogs at our approved veterinary clinics. Because we are ultimately responsible for your foster dog's well-being, our staff must authorize any and all treatment for foster dogs at our approved veterinary partners PRIOR to treatment.

If your foster dog needs to go to the veterinarian, please notify the Medical Coordinator or your Foster Mentor by email or phone. The Medical Coordinator will schedule the appointment.

For non-emergency situations, please understand that our veterinary partners book quickly and may not be available for same-day appointments. We ask that you schedule basic non-emergency appointments at least 24- hours in advance. Most of our veterinary partners will not schedule rescue appointments on Saturday.

**Remember, foster parents will be responsible for payment of any medical care if they take their foster dog to a veterinarian without authorization from the Medical Coordinator.**

Dogs generally do a good job of masking when they don't feel well, so determining if your foster dog is under the weather will require diligent observation of the dog's daily activity and appetite levels.

### **Common ailments in animals from shelters**

Shelter dogs may suffer from kennel cough, giardia or intestinal parasites. Symptoms of kennel cough include a dry hacking cough, often with phlegm discharge, discharge from the nose and/or eyes, decrease in appetite, dehydration and slight lethargy. Symptoms of giardia or intestinal parasites include vomiting, diarrhea (often with a pungent odor) and/or dehydration.

If your foster dog is displaying one or more of these signs, please contact the Medical Coordinator. These ailments can worsen if left untreated.

### **MEDICAL AND EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS**

Our emergency vet is VERGI and a visit must be preauthorized by your Medical Coordinator. Please contact enroute to the vet. If it is not life threatening and can wait until normal business hours, it is not an emergency.

Criteria for emergencies:

What constitutes a medical emergency in a dog? A good rule of thumb is any situation in which you would call 911 for a person. Here are some specific symptoms that could indicate an emergency:

- Not breathing or labored breathing
- Symptoms of parvovirus: bloody diarrhea, vomiting, weakness, high fever (above 103.5 degrees)
- Signs of extreme dehydration: dry mucous membranes, weakness, vomiting, tenting of the skin (when the skin is pulled up, it stays there)
- Abnormal lethargy or unable to stand
- Unconsciousness or unable to wake up
- Cold to the touch
- Broken bones
- Any trauma: hit by a car, dropped, stepped on
- A large wound or profuse bleeding that doesn't stop when pressure is applied
- Loss of appetite for more than 24 hours

**\*\*\* Unless your animal has a MEDICAL EMERGENCY please help us to keep costs down by notifying us of symptoms during normal vet business hours, do not WAIT until the weekend to tell us your dog has been sick for days. Weekend and afterhours visits costs can add up quickly for the rescue, thus reducing the number of animals we are able to help. Please do your part by notifying us ASAP instead of waiting.**

If you are fostering a dog who is on medications, please make sure that he/she gets all prescribed doses. Do not end medication early for any reason. If your foster dog has not responded to prescribed medications after five days (or in the time instructed by a SOCA-FBC veterinarian), please contact the Medical Coordinator.

### **TEMPERAMENT OR BEHAVIOR ISSUES**

Resource guarding (you, food, or another prized object), human aggression, other dog aggression, excessive barking, marking and any other issue you notice that might be cause for concern should promptly be reported to your Foster Mentor. The quicker we address these issues, the better we can resolve them and help your foster find a forever family. Sometimes these issues can be retrained by the foster, and sometimes we need to provide professional assistance. All aggression issues should always be taken seriously and precautions taken to provide for the safety of your family, your pets, and your foster. You may be asked to keep the pet separate or crated around children or other pets until we can address the issue. Pets displaying issues cannot always be immediately moved.

**If your foster dog displays behavioral issues, please notify your Foster Mentor by email or phone as soon as the issue is noticed.**

### **WE ARE VOLUNTEERS**

Please note that our organization is staffed solely by volunteers. Volunteers are not compensated financially in any way. Most of our volunteers have families and full-time jobs. We ask that you be patient in requesting a response from us. We will try very hard to get back to you quickly. Most of the answers to any question can be found on the SOCA-FBC website – [www.SOCA-FBC.org](http://www.SOCA-FBC.org). Please refer to this manual or the website when you have questions. If you cannot find the answer, then please call your Foster Mentor or Adoption Team.

**Adoption event dates and any events will always be listed on the SOCA-FBC Facebook page, website and sent by email by Signup Genius. Please take a look and plan to attend a least 2 events per month.**

**SOCA-FBC is a 501c3 non-profit organization and we rely solely on donations to help the animals in our care. Please share our website, our Facebook page and tell your friends about us.**

**We are always looking for great foster parents LIKE YOU!**

**[www.SOCA-FBC.org](http://www.SOCA-FBC.org)**