

# BAHS Canine Foster Manual



Until they all have a home...

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Dear Future Foster Parents,

Greetings! Thank you for your interest in fostering with the Belleville Area Humane Society (BAHS). We are so grateful that you chose our shelter to participate with and help improve another animal's quality of life.

Fostering is an extremely rewarding, educational, and fun experience. The impact you can have on our community's animals is huge! Some animals come to us as susceptible young puppies and kittens and their young immune system does not do well in a shelter environment. Other animals find their way to us with existing behavior problems and would benefit from some consistent training and discipline. Whether you are looking to nurture a youngster towards more health or help a troubled animal learn social skills, fostering will be a journey that will benefit both animal and its foster parent. This handbook will provide a comprehensive guide to our program.

Before we jump into the guidelines of fostering, here is a bit of history about how our organization began:

In 1959 two woman, Marilyn Heidelberger and Georgeana Frick, spotted a stray dog that was desperately in need of attention. They realized they had nowhere to take the animal. They wanted a place where residents could bring unwanted pets. Ads were placed in the paper asking others for help. Dozens responded to the call for help and they became a charter. At that time there were not funds to buy property, so animals were kept at the homes of good Samaritans. They would have as many as twelve animals at a time, but space was limited so they had to turn many away. This predicament only made them strive harder to find a solution.

Five years later, the charter took possession of a barn on a small tract of land at 1301 South 11<sup>th</sup> Street. Fast forward another five years and a lot of fund raising, the group built a small cinder block building with kennels and pens on the land. The building was eventually enlarged to include small runs, more kennels, an office and a kitchen. In 1989, an addition valued at \$100,000 became the current shelter people visit today, with a few more renovations that would happen over the next few years.

As BAHS enters a new chapter, we want to provide our foster parents with those key purposes in our mission. We saw a need to seek out additional foster parents, so thank you for taking the time to read through our handbook to guide you. Our foster program was set up to best serve the animals in our care and our community. Our goal is to ensure the animals are comfortable and happy during their stay with us. With the help of many, we are able to do just that. Thank you for sharing your time, talent, expertise, and compassion to benefit animals in need.

I look forward to seeing you at the shelter or at a community event!

Sincerely,

Katie Nelson  
Executive Director

## **Mission Statement:**

The Belleville Area Humane Society will provide temporary care to homeless companion animals and find them loving homes; keep the shelter safe, healthy, and comfortable for our animals; teach the community to properly care for their companion animals and to eliminate overpopulation; increase adoption rates; and raise the necessary funds to provide these services.

## **Hours of Operation:**

Monday-Saturday 11:00 AM-5:00 PM

## **Contact Information:**

For foster questions, email Julie Grady: [foster@bahspets.org](mailto:foster@bahspets.org) or call 618-235-3712.

## **BAHS Facts:**

- BAHS houses approximately 35 dogs and 75 cats at any given time.
- Kittens and puppies are often kept in foster homes because they are more susceptible to illnesses.
- BAHS was chartered in 1959 by Marilyn Heidleberger and Georgeana Frick.
- BAHS never puts down an animal due to lack of space.
- Over 600 animals are adopted from BAHS each year.
- BAHS is 100% donor and business funded. We do not receive any government funding.

## **For More Information About BAHS Go To:**

- **Website:** Bahspets.com
- **Facebook:** Facebook.com/bellevilleareahumanesociety
- **Twitter:** @bahspets
- **Instagram:** bahspets

## Reasons to foster:

- Saves lives
- Alleviates strain on shelter
- Provides stepping stone for animals on their way to a permanent home
- Helps set the stage for successful adoptions
- Teaches skills that enable you to help other animals in need

Foster care can give temporarily unadoptable animals a second chance at adoption. It provides these animals with an environment where they can prosper. Such a program allows staff and volunteers to provide foster care in their homes to currently unadoptable animals until they are in “adoptable” condition. Young animals, in particular, and sick or injured animals do not do well in a shelter situation. Stress decreases their already compromised immune system.

### Animals in foster:

- Typically animals sent to foster have either a behavior issue or medical issue that need to be addressed.
- Foster homes provide the animals with a temporary home that is less stressful and teaches them valuable skills to help them adapt to a home environment.
- After being fostered they are:
  - More likely to be adopted.
  - Less likely to be returned.
  - Less likely to have training or behavior issue.
  - Less stressed and & easier to adapt to a new home.

## Preparation & Homecoming:

### Preparing for your foster dog

- When you take your foster dog home, he may be frightened or unsure about what’s happening. It’s important not to overwhelm him.
- Prepare a special area for the foster dog to help ease his adjustment into a new home environment.
- It is better to confine the foster dog to a small room or area at first, to let him adjust before giving him free rein in your home.
- This area should be large enough for an appropriately sized crate for the dog and should allow the dog access to his food, water dishes and toys.
- During the first couple of weeks, minimize the people and pet introductions to your foster dog, so that she is only meeting immediate family and your personal pets.
- If you have other pets at home, it is especially important to give your foster dog a space of their own where they can stay while getting used to all the new sounds and smells.
- Don’t leave your foster dog unattended in your home with your personal pets until you are comfortable that all of the animals can interact safely.

### Supplies you will need

- At least one bowl for dry food and one for water
- A supply of dry dog food: All dogs are fed dry food unless a special diet is needed
- A collar with an ID tag and a leash: even though foster dogs are microchipped, they still need an ID tag
- A soft place to sleep
- A baby gate: This comes in handy to keep certain areas of your home off-limits.
- A crate: The crate should be large enough for the dog to stand up and turn around in, but not much bigger than that.
- Dog treats
- Dog toys
- Grooming supplies: a well-groomed dog has a better chance of getting adopted

### Dog-proofing your home

Foster dogs 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.

- Remove anything that would be unsafe or undesirable for the dog to chew on
- Latch securely any cupboards and doors that the foster dog could get into
- People food and chemicals can be very harmful if consumed by dogs, so please store them in a place that the foster dog cannot access
- Make sure that *all trash cans* are covered, latched or kept inside a closet
- Keep the toilet lids closed
- Make sure aquariums or cages that house small animals like hamsters or fish are securely out of reach of your foster dog
- Remove medications, lotions, or cosmetics from any accessible surfaces
- Move and secure all electrical and phone wires out of reach
- Relocate knickknacks or valuables that your foster dog could knock down

### Choosing a foster dog

The foster coordinator 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 foster coordinator have decided on a foster dog, an appointment will be scheduled so you can pick up the dog and any supplies that you will need.

The foster coordinator will meet you at the shelter and introduce you to the dog. Together, you and the foster coordinator will decide if the dog is the right fit for you. Be honest: if you aren't comfortable with anything about the animal you may be fostering, please tell the foster coordinator before you take the animal home.

### Dog introductions

- If you have 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.
- Make sure that high-value items (food, chew toys, plush toys, Kongs, rawhides or anything else that your dogs hold in high regard) are put away whenever the dogs are interacting.
- Never feed your dogs in the same room as the foster dog; always separate them at feeding time.

### Cat introductions

- If you have cats, you'll need to make the first introduction to the foster dog carefully and safely.
- Start by either keeping your cats in a separate room (equipped with food, water, litter boxes and beds) 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.)
- 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.
- Never leave your foster dog unsupervised 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.
- 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.

## **Daily Care**

### Feeding

- All foster dogs should be fed a diet of dry dog food, unless otherwise specified by

the foster coordinator

- Feed your foster dog once or twice daily; the amount will be based on the age and weight of your foster dog
- Make sure the dog always has access to fresh, clean water
- You can give your foster dog limited treats (unless he/she has known allergies)
- Most dogs like to chew on things, so try rawhide chews, Greenies, antlers, or Dentabones. Keep in mind, though, that not all dogs like to share, so only give these treats when your foster dog is confined to his/her own area

#### Daily routine

- When you first take your foster dog home, try not to overwhelm him/her with too many new experiences at once
- Establish a daily routine of regularly scheduled feedings, potty breaks, and walks
- On a daily basis, be aware of your foster dog's appetite and energy level. If he/she is not eating well or seems inactive, something may be wrong medically

#### House-training

- 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 your foster out more frequently to remind them
- Keep the dog in a crate when you are not available to supervise indoors

#### Grooming

A clean and well-groomed dog has a better chance of getting adopted, so bath your foster dog as needed and brush him regularly if he has longer hair or requires more frequent grooming.

## **Frequently Asked Questions:**

### Where do the foster dogs come from?

The dogs in need of foster care are:

- Returned adoptions

- o Owner surrenders
- o Animal Control

What do foster families need to provide?

Foster families need to provide:

- o A healthy and safe environment for their foster dogs
- o Transportation to and from the adoption center and vet appointments as needed
- o Socialization and cuddle time to help teach dogs positive family and pet relationships
- o Exercise and positive stimulation to help them develop into great dogs

What do I need to foster?

Love and a separate area for your foster. This area should be close enough for them to receive adequate attention yet segregated from your pets and easy to clean (preferably linoleum or tile floors). Some areas that typically work are utility rooms, bathrooms, kitchen, sunroom or basement (last resort). All fosters are required to be licensed in the state of Illinois. It is a simple application and requires a \$25 fee paid to the Department of Agriculture. The license is good from June to June.

What supplies does BAHS provide?

We supply food, litter, bedding, collar, leash (if needed) and toys. You are welcome to buy special things for your foster but you do not need to feel obligated to.

How much time do I need to spend with a foster dog?

As much time as you can. With that said, the amount of time will vary depending on the energy level and needs of the dog you are fostering. It is ideal to spend around two hours a day exercising and playing with your foster dog to ensure that he or she receives adequate socialization and stimulation.

Who will you foster and how much responsibility is it?

Typically the best suited animals for foster care are young, old or in need of behavior corrections. Fostering is a 24/7 responsibility. Work does not take place 24 hours a day but you are the one responsible for their care. Communication with the shelter and foster coordinator is an important component in ensuring that they are ready for adoption. If you notice a behavior or health issue, please contact the foster coordinator. It may be necessary to bring your foster animal to the shelter for us to take a closer look at them. The more information we have about an animal, the better we can prepare them for a permanent home.

Are fosters house or litter trained?

In many cases your foster dog may not be housetrained. This is a skill we hope you will help with when fostering. We prefer that you crate train your foster. Most homes will want them to be crate trained so this skill aids them in finding a home quicker.

Cats or kittens may also need litter training help. We have fosters and shelter workers who can help you with tips on this skill. Again this is a behavior that they need to master in order to find a permanent home.

Can I foster dogs even if I have a full-time job?

Yes. The foster application is designed as a survey to help the foster coordinator match you with the best animal for your needs and your current schedule. If you have a full-time job, the foster coordinator will match you with a dog that will be okay alone during the workday. You would then just need to provide ample exercise before or after you go to work.

Can I foster a dog if I don't have a fenced yard?

Yes. Even if you do have a fenced yard, we request that you supervise all outdoor activities with the foster dog. And we ask that you always keep him or her on a leash when you're on walks.

How long will the dog need to be in foster care?

Ideally, foster dogs stay in their assigned foster homes until they get adopted. The average stay is 2 weeks to 2 months depending on the animal's needs.

What if I think my foster needs to see a vet?

All foster medical goes through the shelter. BAHS shelter has medical personnel and most medications that fosters require. We do send animals to the vet on some occasions but this MUST be approved first. If you take the animal to a vet without prior approval, it will be at your own expense!

Will I need to give medicine to my foster dog?

Almost all of the dogs that we have in our foster program are rescued from shelters and have been exposed to shelter illnesses. Many illnesses have incubation periods, meaning symptoms can arise after you take a dog home. So while some dogs do not require any medicine, others may. If your foster dog needs medications, we can show you how to administer them before you take the animal home.

Can I let my foster dog play with my personal pets?

There are a few guidelines we ask foster families to adhere to regarding their personal pets. While foster dogs playing with other pets is often fine, we advise that you consult with your veterinarian before fostering to ensure that all of your personal pets are healthy and up-to-date on all vaccines. Foster animals should be segregated from your own for at least 2 weeks. Two weeks covers most medical issues that may be transferable to your animals and also provides decompression time. After the two weeks, you may consider integrating with your own animals after careful, proper introductions. This topic will be covered in your foster training.

What if I want to adopt my foster dog?

If you want to adopt a foster dog, you will need to complete an adoption application and follow the adoption process. If you do decide to adopt your foster dog, please contact the foster coordinator right away because once the dog is up for adoption, we cannot hold him/her for anyone, including the foster parent.

### Who will take care of my foster dog if I need to go out of town?

If you have travel plans while you are fostering a dog, contact the foster coordinator so they can set up an alternate trained foster or prepare a space at the shelter. Please provide at least one week's notice to ensure that we can find a boarding facility for your dog. If your trip is over a holiday, please provide a minimum of two weeks' notice.

You cannot leave your foster dog with an unauthorized person or pet sitter. We have specific training for foster parents, and pet sitters have not undergone that training or signed the release waivers for the foster program.

### Can I take my foster outside or on outings?

Dogs should be taken outside on a leash or kept in a fenced in yard. For the first week or longer, your foster should be supervised even in a fenced in yard. He/she could be a jumper or a digger and we may not know that yet. The temperament or quirks this dog has are not known to us at this point. Communication is so important because the better we know this animal, the more successfully we can place him into a forever home. If a dog is lost in an unfamiliar area and with people they are not yet bonded to, they can be very difficult to catch. Do not take your foster to any dog park.

### Can I take my cat or kitten on outings?

They should be transported in a carrier which we can provide for you if needed. We have a corral that you can check out from the shelter and set up if you are taking a kitten/kittens to a community event.

### How is my foster promoted for adoption?

Fosters are posted on our website, bahspets.org as well as our Facebook page. We encourage you to attend as many events with your foster as you can. Please send any promotional information about your foster to [social@bahspets.org](mailto:social@bahspets.org). Be positive and honest about your foster.

Remember that a good picture really does help get your foster adopted quicker.

### What if my foster dog bites me?

If any of your foster pets bite you and break skin causing you to bleed, you need to report the bite to the foster coordinator within 24 hours of when the bite occurred. The law requires that we report all bites.

### What if my foster dog is not working out?

You are not required to continue to foster a dog if you feel it's not working out. However, we may not have an immediate alternate foster home for the dog. We will work on moving your foster dog out as soon as possible, but ask for your understanding and patience. Please call the foster coordinator during business hours if this situation arises.

### What happens when it is time for my foster to return to the shelter?

We will be in contact with you often enough to know when this time is coming. The shelter may need a minimum of 3-4 days to prepare a space for them.