



BAHS Foster Manual

Thank you so much for your interest in fostering with the Belleville Area Humane Society. Foster homes not only allow us rescue more animals, but also provide a healthy, low-stress environment for animals in crisis.

You, as a foster, are an important part of transitioning pets to their new homes. This is an incredibly rewarding experience and we hope that you enjoy it.

Our foster manual is meant to help you have a successful foster journey. We have many fostering opportunities and we would love to find the perfect fit for your preferences and lifestyle. This handbook provides a comprehensive guide to our program and offers useful tips and suggestions.

This manual is meant to guide you, but BAHS staff are always here to answer questions and help you with any problems that may arise. We want fostering to be as rewarding for you as it is for the pets you are bringing into your home.

BAHS has been helping animals and pet owners in our community for over 60 years. Thank you for joining with us to make lives better for animals in need. Together we can change lives.

Shoshana Mostoller

Executive Director

About BAHS

Mission: The Belleville Area Humane Society strives to improve the lives of homeless animals in our community through adoption, humane education, and community outreach.

Vision: Homeless animals in our community are valued, cared for, and treated with compassion.

Values: Compassion, Education, Community, and Collaboration

BAHS is a limited admission shelter. This means we intake adoptable animals and never euthanize for shelter space.

We have been housing animals in our community since 1959. Thousands of homeless animals have been adopted since that time.

We adopt out approximately 600 animals annually, but as of 2020, we expect to reach a higher number in part due to our growing foster program.

We are 100% donor funded and receive no government support.

The Belleville Area Humane Society provides humane education and community outreach in order to promote animal welfare and eliminate overpopulation. These include programs like Pet Resource Pantry as well as spay/neuter and vaccine clinics.

Contact Information:

For general questions and concerns please contact Foster Counselors **Amanda Roos** and **Melissa Janes** at foster@bahspets.org or **1-866-951-0247 ext 102**.

For non-emergency medical questions or concerns please contact Intake Manager **Dawn Blackwell** at intake@bahspets.org

For medical emergencies only please call **1-866-951-0247 ext 103**. ***You must leave a message for us to be notified.***

Main BAHS Shelter Line: **618-235-3712**

NEW! Check out our BAHS Foster Portal to request supplies, learn more information, and see who we have available to foster.

Fostering FAQ:

Why foster when you have a brick and mortar shelter?

Fosters save lives.

Fostering is the future of animal rescue. Time and time again, research has shown the immense benefit of foster programs to animals and the community. It opens up space for more animals and keeps pets from deteriorating in the sometimes-chaotic shelter environment. A single foster home can change an animal's entire life.

Your commitment to fostering will open doors for making our facility a resource center for our community. We want to not only house homeless animals, but prevent loving owners from losing pets due to emergencies, financial constraints, and other unexpected circumstances.

Will I have to provide my own supplies?

Not at all! We will provide you with everything you need. This includes food and litter as well as toys, bedding, bowls, training tools, crates, and more. If you have special requests for your household, we'll do all we can to meet your needs.

What about veterinary care?

All medical care goes through the shelter. We work closely with area vets and occasionally send animals to be seen by a veterinarian. In most cases, we can provide any medications and procedures needed right here at the shelter. Dawn Blackwell, our intake manager, will be your point-of-contact for vaccines, medications, and special veterinary care.

Do I have to take any animal you choose?

Absolutely not. Your application and discussions with you are taken into account. You are a part of the process. If you feel an animal we've matched you with is not a good fit, we'll try another. We can facilitate meet-and-greets with kids and other pets.

What if it doesn't work out with my foster pet?

That's okay! We want the fostering experience to be a positive one for you and the

animal you've been matched with. Valuable information can be gleaned even when fosters have to come back to the shelter. Don't let it discourage you from trying again with a different pet.

What if I want to adopt my foster pet?

We never mind a "foster fail." We ask that you let us know if you've made that decision as soon as possible so we don't disappoint potential adopters.

How do adoptions work?

Once your foster is ready to be adopted, they will be promoted on our website and social media. Potential adopters then fill out an application on our website. If we approve an application, we'll call you to set up a meet-and-greet.

We're very flexible about how you'd like to facilitate meet-and-greets. You can have them at your home, at the shelter, or even in a park. It's entirely up to you. If the meet-and-greet goes well, adopters can take home the animal that day or arrange a pick-up date once they've paid and filled out our contract.

What if I have an emergency or a planned vacation?

In nearly all cases, we can arrange to take your foster temporarily. We appreciate advance warning for trips and vacations, but we absolutely understand when emergencies come up.

Will I have to attend adoption events?

We may ask you to attend some events, particularly if you have a dog foster. We do our best to work with your schedule and comfort level.

Preparation & Homecoming:

Every foster pet is different and each pet has unique needs. However, the key to a happy transition is all about setting up a reliable environment.

Create a calm environment where your foster can decompress.

For cats, this usually means a room of their own for a few days to a week. Observe them for signs of stress before deciding whether it's time to open the rest of your home to them. Never force a cat to meet your other pets. Allow them to take it at their pace and escape to their room if needed. Keep dogs on a leash when introducing them to your foster cat.

Cats should be allowed to approach new people at their pace as well. Giving them space will help them feel safe with you and speed up the bonding process.

Dogs are looking for a leader to follow. If you have a fenced yard, outside time is a great way to release stress. Provide them with their own bedding and help them learn your routine by rewarding positive behavior. New visitors are discouraged in the first week or two and trips out should be kept to a minimum until your foster dog settles in.

Be safe.

We take your safety and the safety of your pets seriously. Every animal we take in is assessed to make sure no dangerous pet is adopted out or fostered. Even so, animals can be unpredictable and it's important to set them up for success.

Never let young children be with your foster pet unsupervised. Don't let them climb on top of an animal or yank on their tails and fur. Even the most docile, sweet pet can have limits if they feel threatened or in pain.

Dogs should be kept on a leash at all times when outside the home unless they're

contained in a fenced yard.

Stick to a routine.

Many pets in our care have been through chaotic transition and need something to rely on. Routine helps them gain a sense of security and a desire to form bonds.

For dogs, this means taking them out to potty three to six times a day (depending on age and size) and feeding them on a schedule. Dogs may need to be taken out to potty more frequently in the first few days as they adjust.

Cats are less reliant on routine, but respond well to scheduled feeding and play time.

Help your foster dog adjust to other pets.

If you have dogs, BAHS staff will arrange to do a meet and greet at the shelter with your animals and any potential foster dog.

Once home, we recommend that you keep dogs on leash while they are getting to know one another. This will allow you a safer opportunity for breaking up any potential disagreements by simply grabbing the leash.

BAHS will provide you with “correction tools.” These are noise-making tools that can discourage problem behavior safely and harmlessly.

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 close to the foster dog; always separate them at feeding time.

Whether you’re fostering a dog or a cat, never leave your foster pet unsupervised with your other pets in the home.

BAHS Fosters must agree to the following:

- If BAHS tries to contact you regarding your foster animal, you must respond within twelve hours. Failure to respond can result in us taking the foster animal back. Let us know the best way to reach you.
- You will need to bring your foster to the shelter for vaccinations, deworming, spay/neuter surgery, and other medical needs.
- You must work with BAHS to arrange the visits of approved adopters.
- Fosters agree to contact BAHS regarding your foster animal's medical care.
- Foster animals may not be placed in anyone else's care. If you can no longer foster, please contact BAHS so that we can make arrangements for that animal's care.

If you have any questions or concerns about the Foster Manual and its contents, please contact us at foster@bahspets.org