

Fostering with Austin Animal Center

Thank you for your interest in the Austin Animal Center Foster Program! Our foster program enables us to save hundreds of animals each year that might not otherwise be given a second, or even a first, chance at adoption. We cannot tell you it will always be a warm and fuzzy experience. There will be messes... Very young kittens may not fully grasp the concept of the litter box at first; puppies have no understanding of housetraining yet; some adult dogs may never have been housetrained or given appropriate things to chew on and play with. They will require lots of patience, praise, and assistance before they get it right. Foster animals can be fragile... Puppies, kittens, and even adult animals may get sick, sometimes quite seriously, and some animals just fail to thrive despite our best efforts. Diseases and parasites can be contagious.... Austin Animal Center cannot guarantee that foster animals are free of diseases and parasites that may affect you, your family, or your pets. There can be disappointment.... Sometimes it is discovered that a foster animal has such severe behavior issues that they cannot be safely and responsibly re-homed in our community. However, most of these are rare occurrences, and for many people the benefits of fostering far outweigh the risks.

Please consider joining us. Together we can help end animal homelessness in Central Texas!



How does this work?

Once AAC has approved your Foster Application, we will invite you to join the Yahoo Group "Project Starfish" which is how AAC communicates with its foster homes. If you are interested in fostering a particular animal or litter that you see posted on the Yahoo Group, please reply to the Yahoo Posting or email animal.foster@austintexas.gov as soon as possible. Once we receive your response, we will verify that the animal is still available and solidify a pick up date and time.

Housing Expectations

- Kittens and cats in foster care should be kept indoors only.
- Puppies (under 5 months of age) in foster care should be kept primarily indoors, but can go outside for supervised potty breaks and play time/exercise. High traffic areas, such as the park, pet stores, public sidewalks/trails, etc... should be avoided, as puppies can be susceptible to deadly diseases that could be lurking there.
- Dogs (over 5 months of age) in foster care should be kept primarily indoors, but can go outside for supervised potty breaks and play time/exercise. Short periods of unsupervised outside time are acceptable as long as you have ensured that your yard is secure. Some dogs can jump/climb over and dig under fences surprisingly fast, so please be cautious when leaving foster dogs unsupervised.

Restraint Expectations

- Unless contained in a securely fenced yard, or other appropriate enclosure, all puppies and dogs must be kept on leash while outside. In addition, a person must be holding the leash and in control of the animal at all times.
- Since the history and behavior of foster dogs is not always well known, off leash dog parks are prohibited.

Picking up New Fosters

When picking up new foster animal(s), please go to the MAIN LOBBY and into the CASHIER's office. Let the Customer Service staff member know that you are a foster and that you are picking up an animal(s). You will need to have the animal(s)' ID numbers (found in the original posting) with you. Please note, the shelter provides food for foster kittens under 4 months of age and foster puppies under 1 year. This food can be requested at the time of pick up. Food for adult foster pets is the responsibility of the foster parent. After picking up your foster pet you will be emailed a schedule with additional details regarding their care and their future needs. Please be on the lookout for this email, it will be sent within 2 days from the day that you pick up.

The Main Lobby and Cashier's Office are open Monday-Sunday from 11am-7pm.

Booster Shots

All foster pets under 4 months of age should have their weight checked and be given booster shots every 3-4 weeks. This means that kittens and puppies that are very young when they go to a foster care may receive as many as 4 boosters. Foster pets over 4 months of age when they go into foster care should return to the shelter for booster shots just once, 3-4 weeks after their initial shot. Stop by the INTAKE office with the pet(s) and their ID#(s) during business hours. This is a quick in and out process (typically 15-30 minutes).

The Intake Office is open Monday-Sunday from 11am to 7pm. After 5pm on Saturday and Sunday you may need to knock. Please try to arrive no later than 6:30pm for boosters.

Flea/Tick and Heartworm Prevention

All foster pets over 8 weeks of age should be given flea/tick and heartworm prevention monthly. Since these medications are based on the weight of the pet, if your foster is still growing, you will need to follow the same protocol given above for booster shots. If you are fostering an adult animal whose weight has not changed, you can simply stop by the INTAKE office with the pet's ID# and request the medication as the due date approaches. Due to the large numbers of animals in the foster program, it is up to the foster home to keep track of their foster's booster shot and prevention schedule.

The Intake Office is open Monday-Sunday from 11am to 7pm. After 5pm on Saturday and Sunday you may need to knock. Please try to arrive no later than 6:30pm to pick up parasite prevention.

Sick or Injured Fosters

The shelter is responsible for the medical care of sick and injured foster animals. If you notice that your foster pet has mild, cold-like symptoms (sneezing or coughing occasionally, clear ocular or nasal discharge) or they have diarrhea, but are alert, active, eating and drinking well, please email the foster coordinator at animal.foster@austintexas.gov so that we can discuss the pet's symptoms and determine if they need to be seen by a veterinarian. If your foster pet has more severe symptoms, such as vomiting, lethargy, yellow or green ocular or nasal discharge, previously undocumented hairloss, straining to urinate or defecate, etc... please bring them by the INTAKE office during business hours to be seen by a veterinarian. If you are fostering a litter of kittens or puppies, even if only one pet is showing symptoms, the entire litter should be brought in. When you arrive, let staff know that you are bringing in a sick foster, they will ask you for additional details and/or have you fill out some paperwork describing the symptoms that you are seeing. Unfortunately, outside of our clinic hours (see below for details), we are not able to schedule appointments, so do not plan on waiting for your foster animals to be seen. You will need to drop them off and we will call you once they have been seen by a veterinarian and are available for pickup.

The Intake Office is open Monday-Sunday from 11am to 7pm. After 5pm on Saturday and Sunday you may need to knock. Please try to arrive no later than 6:30pm to drop off sick or injured fosters.

Sick or Injured Fosters - Clinic Hours

During clinic hours, it is our intention to have veterinary staff available to provide care for foster animals while you wait. Most animals coming in during these hours will be seen and discharged within 30-45 minutes. However, there are times that the veterinary staff assigned to clinic hours will be needed to handle more urgent/emergency situations, so wait times may vary, or you may be asked to drop off and pick up later.

During clinic hours, as you enter intake you will see a sign posted on the counter along with a sign in sheet. Please sign in and begin to fill out one of the "Foster Sick Check" forms (located next to the sign in sheet). If you would prefer to fill out this form in advance, you can find it on the Yahoo group in Files > Medical section.

Current Clinic Hours are Tuesday and Saturday from 1:30pm-3:30pm. Days and hours are subject to change.

Fosters with Fleas, Ticks or Other Parasites

Despite the shelter's best efforts at providing parasite prevention, there are times when foster animals will have parasites that may not have been fully addressed at the shelter. This will most commonly occur in very young kittens and puppies that are not able to safely receive flea/tick prevention. If you notice that your foster kittens or puppies have fleas on them, they can be bathed with plain Dawn dish soap and a small comb can be used to remove the dead and dying fleas. Kittens and puppies should be dried thoroughly after bathing and steps should be taken to ensure that they stay warm. For additional advice on how best to handle fleas/ticks and other parasites, please email the foster coordinator at animal.foster@austintexas.gov.

In Case of an After Hours Emergency

If you have a true emergency before the shelter opens or after it has closed, first please try calling the foster program hotline at 512-978-0541; we are frequently able to assist foster parents outside of business hours. If it goes to voicemail, you can take your foster pet to the North or South Austin Emergency Vet Clinics found here: <http://www.eahnwa.com/>. When you present your foster animal to the emergency clinic, you MUST inform the staff there that it is an Austin Animal Center foster pet AND provide them with the animal's Austin Animal Center ID#. The emergency clinic staff will then contact designated Austin Animal Center staff to verify that treatment can be provided. If the foster parent is unable to provide emergency clinic staff with the animal's Austin Animal Center ID# or the emergency clinic staff is unable to reach Austin Animal Center staff to verify that treatment can be provided, the animal may still be treated, but at the foster parent's expense. In such cases, the foster parent may apply for reimbursement from the shelter.

If your foster animal is having an issue after having surgery at Emancipet, please see the 'Complications After Having Surgery at Emancipet' section below.

Foster animals taken to the emergency vet clinic for treatment will be kept overnight at the clinic and an Animal Protection officer will be contacted in the morning to transfer the animal back to Austin Animal Center for further treatment/care.

Scheduling Surgery and Microchipping

ALL pets MUST be fixed and chipped BEFORE being transferred to their new homes. No exceptions. Kittens must weigh at least 2 pounds before surgery and puppies must be around 8 weeks of age.

Emancipet surgery services:

Emancipet is across the grass from Austin Animal Center in the grey portable buildings. They also have a new location in Pflugerville.

- 1) VISIT <http://emancipet.org/appointments/> to schedule the appointment.
- 2) In the "Promotional Code" at the bottom, put "AAC Foster"
- 3) In the "Pet Name Field" list the animals AAC AID#
- 4) Once your appointment has been scheduled, please email the foster coordinator at animal.foster@austintexas.gov
- 5) Your drop time off will be between 8-8:30am.
- 6) Your pick up time is between 5-5:30pm.

If, and only if, you are unable to utilize Emancipet for surgery, e-mail your surgery request date to animal.foster@austintexas.gov and we will get your fosters scheduled for surgery at AAC. When animals are scheduled for surgery at AAC, they must be dropped off the day prior to surgery and can be picked up the day of surgery between 5-6:30pm.

Complications After Having Surgery at Emancipet

If you have an urgent medical question or your foster animal seems to be having a complication after having surgery at Emancipet, please call Emancipet at 512-587-7729. Outside of their normal business hours, their medical team can be reached anytime at the "on-call" phone number listed at the beginning of the recording. Emancipet staff will be able to advise you how best to proceed.

Finding Forever Homes

Austin Animal Center is almost always at or over capacity. While we will always take a foster pet back into the shelter to await adoption, having the foster parent be an advocate for the foster pet while in foster care will make finding a forever home happen more quickly and easily.

The best way to get your foster pet some attention is to take at least one clear, landscape-oriented (horizontal), 4x6 photo and send it to animal.foster@austintexas.gov. We will upload the pictures into the shelter database so they can be viewed by potential adopters on our website. If a potential adopter contacts the shelter's customer service staff to inquire about your foster, they will be provided with your contact information (first name and email address) to follow up with you directly. You can expect a few emails to discuss the pet's personality, behavior quirks, energy level, etc... Potential adopters may even inquire about visiting the animal in your home. If you are comfortable with this, feel free to proceed with the visit. If you are not comfortable with this, feel free to make arrangements to meet the potential adopter at a pre-appointed time at a neutral location. When trying to find adopters for the pets in your care, you can also promote your foster pets through your

own networks. Social media like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are terrific ways to promote your foster animals. You can also create and post flyers, create an ad on Craigslist, etc... Please be aware that pets in our foster program are not on a first come, first served basis. As the foster parent, you may take several applications and/or meet with different potential adopters before deciding which would be the best fit for the animal(s) in your care. However, once you have confirmed with an adopter that they will be adopting one of the pets in your care, you must stand by that commitment. Any questions or concerns that you may have about a potential adopter should be addressed before you make a commitment to them -- meet with them, get to know them, ask questions, even sleep on it if you need to BEFORE you make a commitment to them.

My foster pet has an interested adopter, now what?

Email the foster coordinator at animal.foster@austintexas.gov right away to let us know.

- A) Be sure to include the Animal ID number of the foster pet
- B) Be sure to include the Person ID number of the adopter. If you don't know the Person ID number, or if they completed a paper application with you, please scan and attach it to the email. If you are unable to scan the application and plan to bring it or mail it to the shelter at a later date, please send the person's full name, and one other identifier to include in the database, either a phone number or e-mail address.

After the foster pet is fixed and microchipped, you can transfer it to the adopter and collect the adoption fee. You can then bring or mail the adoption fee to the shelter. Once you have transferred the animal to the adopter and finalized the adoption, please let us know and we will email the adopter all of the animal's records.

Offsite Adoption Events

Another option for fosters searching for new homes are our offsite adoption events. These events are typically held on the weekends at various locations throughout Austin and the surrounding area. The details for these events, and a signup sheet, are posted weekly to the Project Starfish Yahoo Group. A staff member is available at these events to help process adoption applications and answer any questions that foster parents or potential adopters may have.

Under no circumstances should a foster pet go to an adoptive home without first being spayed or neutered and microchipped.

Returning fosters to the shelter

If you need to return a foster pet to the shelter for any reason, please contact the foster coordinator at animal.foster@austintexas.gov so that we can make arrangements for you to do so. When returning foster pets to the shelter, you will need to go to INTAKE with the animal and their ID# and let Customer Service staff know you are returning a foster pet.

The Intake Office is open Monday-Sunday from 11am to 7pm. After 5pm on Saturday and Sunday you may need to knock.

Frequently asked questions

How long does an animal need to spend in foster care?

The average time spent in foster care is 2-6 weeks, but may differ depending on the foster animal's specific needs.

What are some of the potential risks of fostering an animal?

- Owned pets and/or people could catch a disease or parasites from a foster animal
- Owned pets and/or people could be injured by a foster animal
- Sick animals could expire in foster care or have to return to the shelter for humane euthanasia

What happens if a foster parent's owned pet catches a disease or parasites from a foster animal?

Any disease or parasites contracted by the foster parent's owned pet is the responsibility of the foster parent and their personal veterinarian.

What do foster care providers need?

- Regular internet and email access
- Transportation to and from Austin Animal Center
- If renting, permission from landlord
- Enough room in the foster home to isolate foster pets from owned pets if needed
- Up-to-date rabies vaccinations for all pets in the home
- We also strongly encourage interested foster care providers to discuss fostering with their veterinarian, as their veterinarian may suggest additional vaccinations to protect owned pets

Can fosters adopt their foster pets?

Yes. If you decide that you would like to adopt your foster pet, notify the foster coordinator as soon as possible. They will advise you how to proceed.

Do fosters provide adopters for their foster pets?

The program encourages and empowers foster parents to find adopters for the pets in their care. However, it is not required. See 'Finding Forever Homes' section above for additional details.

Additional Information

Nursing Dog and Puppy Care

http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Animal_Services/Foster_Care_Manual/Nursing_Mother_Dogs_and_Their_Puppies.pdf

Puppy Care

http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Animal_Services/Foster_Care_Manual/PUPPIES.pdf

Puppy Socialization

<http://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/virtual-pet-behaviorist/dog-behavior/socializing-your-puppy>

Nursing Cat and Kitten Care

http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Animal_Services/Foster_Care_Manual/NURSING_MOTHER_CATS_AND_KITTENS.pdf

Itty Bitty Kitten Care

http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Animal_Services/Foster_Care_Manual/Itty_Bitty_Kitty_Care.pdf

Kitten Care

http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Animal_Services/Foster_Care_Manual/KITTENS.pdf

Ringworm

http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Animal_Services/Foster_Care_Manual/Ringworm.pdf

Feline Upper Respiratory Infections

http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Animal_Services/Foster_Care

Important Contact Information

Foster Program Hotline: 512-978-0541

Foster Program Email: animal.foster@austintexas.gov

Customer Service Phone: 512-978-0500

Customer Service Email: animal.customerservice@austintexas.gov

Mailing Address:

Austin Animal Center – Foster Program

7201 Levander Loop, Bldg A

Austin, TX 78702



