

SSPSNJ Foster Home Guidelines

Overview

Thank you for opening your heart and home to a foster dog! This document is intended to provide an overview of the foster process and help with any questions you may have. And always remember, support is only a phone call away.

Foster dogs are all different, but most of them are 'broken' in some way when they come to rescue. Their hearts may be broken from losing the only home they've ever known, or they may have medical issues from long-time neglect that needs to be addressed. This is where a foster home comes in - your responsibility as a foster is to help a dog heal, evaluate the dog's personality and behavior, and help us get to know these dogs better. This evaluation is a vitally important part of finding every one of our foster dogs the home that best fits them. Dogs always come first to us! We strive to set the dog up for long-term success by placing them in an adoptive home where they will flourish. We will take a 'graduate' of our program back at any time for any reason, but we do our best with appropriate placement so that doesn't happen.

Intake

When the owner surrenders a dog, they fill out the relinquish form. Rescue asks them to be as honest as possible, as that helps us with evaluating a dog. We always ask for copies of all vet records for the dog, if they are available. We do not turn dogs away due to behavior or medical issues. But sometimes we get partial or inaccurate information. And sometimes we don't get any info. If there is any question, the dog will go to an interim foster home experienced in dog behavior for evaluation first. We share everything we know about a dog with the foster home.

If a dog comes from a private home, we will place them directly in a foster home. If the dog comes from a shelter environment, they will be quarantined for at least 14 days (at a vet's office, or a boarding kennel) to ensure they are free of any contagious diseases. We don't want to put a foster family's own dogs at any risk.

Rescue tries to place a dog in a foster home that best fits based on the information we have. Occasionally, a dog just does not fit in a particular foster home - if that happens, we will move the dog to a different home.

Fostering - what is expected

You have a foster dog - now what?

Rescue will go over the correct way to introduce a foster dog to your own dogs. Every situation is different, so there will be different methods of introduction.

Initially, it's best to just give a new dog some space. The foster may be confused about what just happened. They'll need a little time to decompress and realize that they will be okay. Your first reaction may be to smother the dog with love, but that is actually counterproductive. Less is usually more! Let the dog approach you for attention and pets. Give them space. Give them someplace quiet where they will feel safe and not threatened. Let them realize that you are no threat to them. Use high value treats when initially interacting with a dog (chicken, warmed hot dogs, cheese ... always small treats, like the size of a penny, because you will be giving lots of them!).

Treat the foster dog like you treat your own dogs. If the dog needs a specialty food, rescue will provide that. We ask that if appropriate, feed the foster dog what you feed your own dogs. If you're not sure, check with us. Also note that it is NOT unusual for a new foster to be uninterested in food. This is pretty normal. A dog can skip a meal or 2 with no ill effects.

Rescue will provide you with anything the foster dog needs - collar/leash/harness, bed, crate, xpen, etc. If you think you need additional things, let us know and we will get it to you.

Once the dog is settled in, we want to set up an appointment with the vet. Rescue will pay for approved vet care. That means you need to check with rescue any time the dog needs to go to the vet, or needs treatment. No vetting or treatment can be done without prior approval. Also note that it is the foster's responsibility to get any vet paperwork emailed to rescue. This includes bills, lab values, etc. This is important because we give adopters all vet paperwork at the time of adoption. And we need those bills for our bookkeeping.

Rescue has vets all around the state that help us with our foster dogs. If there isn't one that is close to you, contact your primary vet and ask if they will give us a discount. If they agree to give us a discount, we post that vet on our website as a Care Partner so it's free advertising. The foster home is responsible for taking the foster dog to the vet for appointments, and providing feedback once the vetting is complete.

Rescue will give you a list of what needs to be done for your foster. Typically, it is:

- Physical exam and treatment for any issue that is found (ie, ear infection, allergies, arthritis, etc) (CALL for approval if treatment is beyond the basic)
- Catch up on vaccinations (we just do DHPP and rabies)
- Basic bloodwork, or for a senior or 'compromised' dog, we do a senior panel
- 4DX - checks for heartworm, and tick borne diseases
- Fecal check for parasites
- 6 months of flea/tick and HW preventatives (Credilio and Interceptor Plus)
- Neuter or spay
- Dental exam and cleaning or extractions, as needed
- Micro chip (we use Nano chips and will provide this)
- Additional medications or treatment as per vet recommendation

Foster dogs will also need to be groomed. If you have a groomer, ask if they will give us a discount. We try to make those donated \$ go as far as we can!

Training and Evaluation

Some dogs start to decompress within a few days, and some take longer. They're all individuals. At this point, it may be helpful to keep a notebook and jot things down that you notice about the dog. Where do they like to hang out? Can they walk reasonably well on a leash? Are they housebroken? Are they eating well? Do they like other dogs? Are they higher energy and love to chase a ball or go for a walk, or would they rather hang out on the couch and watch TV? Do they love car rides? Are they good with strangers ?

While the foster is with you, evaluate any basic training that may be needed. Some dogs may need a refresher on housebreaking, or leash walking. We don't expect our foster homes to do advanced training with a dog, just remedial type training. Rescue can walk you through how to do this.

Adoption

There isn't a specific time frame for adopting a dog - it depends on how the dog is doing overall. Again, they are all individuals and different dogs have different needs. But once the foster is caught up on vetting, grooming, and anything else they may need, it's time to find them a forever home! This is where all those notes come to play. Rescue will match the HOME with the dog's needs, not the other way around !

Our adoption process has several steps, and different volunteers do different parts of the process. In some cases, rescue may ask you to talk to a potential adopter about your foster dog, especially if the dog is special needs. Again, we want to be sure it's a good match. Sometimes we find a home right away, and sometimes it takes a little bit more time to find that perfect home.

Final word

Fostering is a very rewarding experience - seeing that scared or sick dog 'get happy' again is so wonderful ! Rescue could not save dogs without the help of our fosters. Remember rescue is only a phone call away - do not hesitate to call us with any questions or concerns.