

# Care and Feeding of Foster Families



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# What to Expect

- Framework for understanding foster volunteers
- Creating program infrastructure
- Care and feeding of foster parents

# A Word about Recruitment

A well run program is your \*best\* recruiting tool

That said: engage current fosters, failed fosters, prospective adopters, animal lovers in community to find more!

# Foster Families are Volunteers

Same best practices for foster parents as you'd use for direct care or shelter volunteers

- Recruiting
- Screening
- Training
- Supervising
- Appreciating

# Program Infrastructure

Decisions to make:

- Types of animals/skill level required?
- Level of support?
- Which program person is responsible?
- Rules for fostering

# What types of animals...

Everyone? Or just some?



- Behavior (jumpy-mouthy, reactive, stressed, fearful, litterbox)
- Medical
- Age

# Behavior Cases

## Special Considerations:

- Foster parent abilities
- Training resources
- Acceptance of failure
- Insurance
- Direct access to managers
- Length of stay



*Don't start your foster program with these cases.*



# What level of support can you offer?

- Supplies?
- Vet Care?
- Behavior Training?
- Grooming?
- Expertise?
- Oversight?
- Communication? Fellowship?
- A shoulder to cry on?

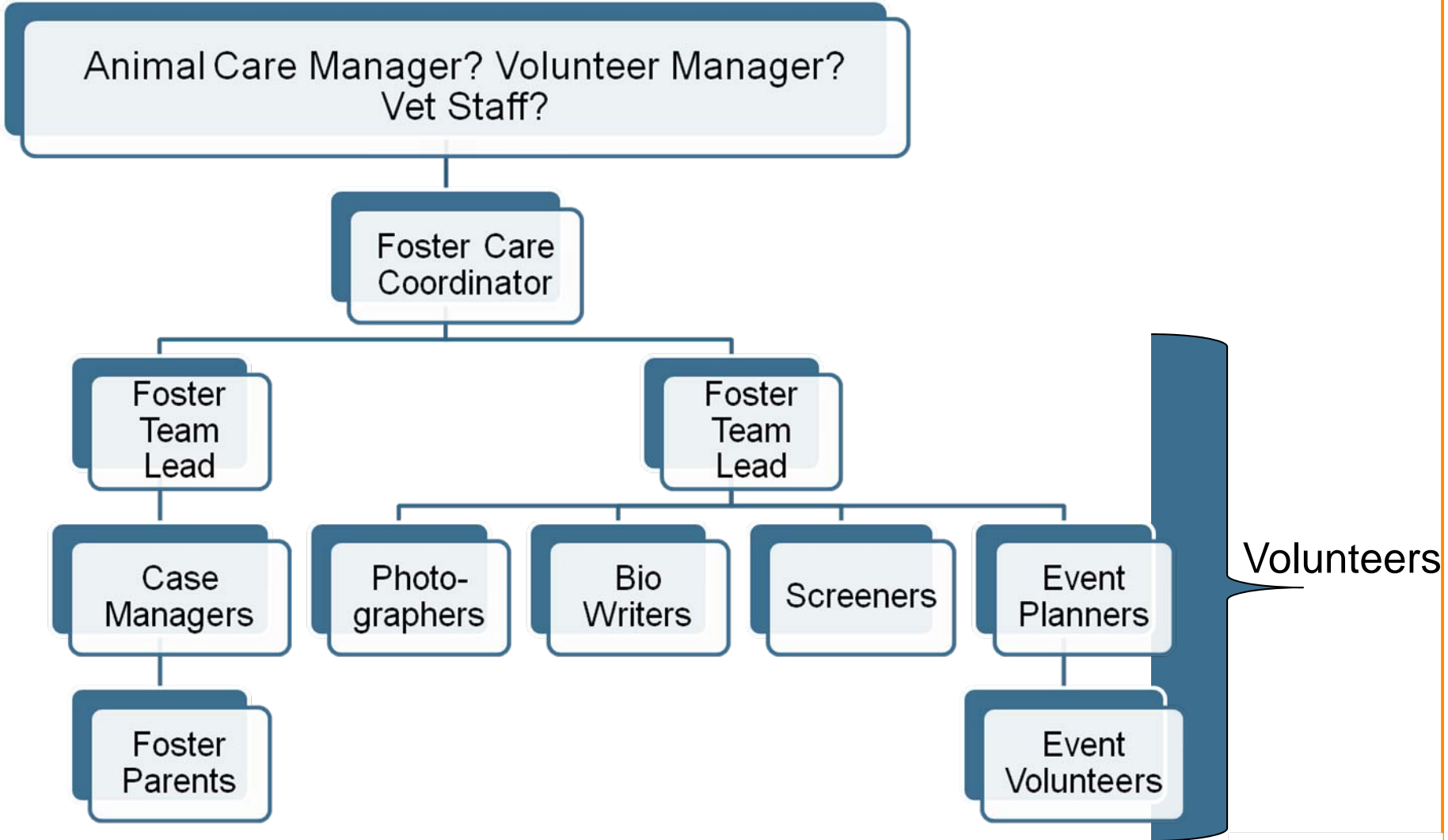


# One (Very Cute) Kitten...

- Supplies? Crate, pee pads, food, toys, carrier
- Vet Care? Amputation, check-up, x-rays, meds
- Behavior Training? He was a biter due to pain
- Expertise? Fellow foster who had an amputee
- Oversight? Case Manager... “Just give him drugs”
- Communication?
- Fellowship?
- A shoulder to cry on?
- ~~Grooming?~~



# Who runs the show?



# What are the rules?

What are the standards of care you expect from foster parents?

How will you communicate and enforce standards?



# Program Infrastructure

Systems to establish:

- Screening
- Paperwork
- Training program
- Tracking system
- Communications system
- Return process
- Emergency plans

# Screening

Two approaches:

- 1) Take everyone.
- 2) Identify capacity, availability, lifestyle, skill level, adaptability.

Create a stepped approach:

- Start slow with easier cases
- Develop skills for more challenging cases

# Paperwork

## Volunteer Services Orientation Manual



## Get Organized

- Foster Manual – basics of attendance, conflict resolution, and expectations
- General volunteer agreement
- Liability waiver
- Per animal contract

SEATTLE  **animal shelter**  
ADOPTION ASSISTANTS-DOG

### *VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION*

#### TEAM DESCRIPTION

Adoption assistants work on Saturdays or Sundays when the shelter is open to the public. They assist in the introductions between shelter dogs and potential adopters, answer questions about adoption and other shelter procedures, assist the public looking for lost pets, and answer general questions about dog behavior and care.

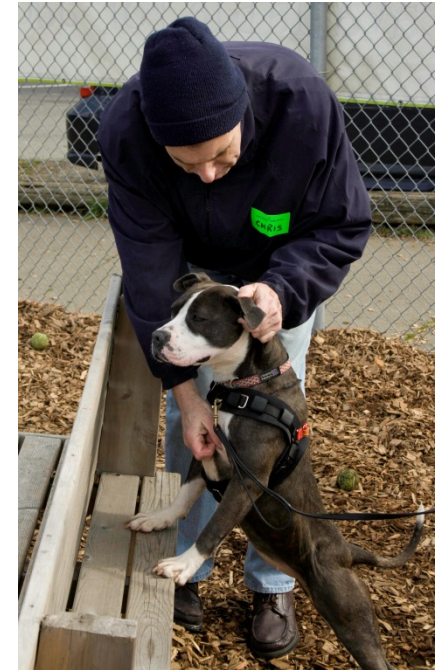
#### HOW CAN VOLUNTEERS HELP?

- Greet people who come to the shelter — Direct the public to the cats, dogs or other animals.
- Answer questions — Help the public understand adoption procedures, general dog behavior and care, etc.
- Explain the cage cards — Help potential adopters read them and identify an appropriate dog for their lifestyle.
- Help in Adoption Dogs Room — Volunteers help potential adopters get acquainted with a dog by removing it from its kennel and escorting the potential adopters to the Canine Corral where they can visit with the dog off-leash.

# Training

## Train your volunteers

- Spend time with them!
- Training at the beginning avoids lots of challenges later!



1	2	3	4
late assertiveness in terms of mere, tone. Effective at giving oral and nonverbal cues and directions to dog.	Body posture or tone is a bit too weak or strong at times, or occasional issues with giving dog clear cues verbally or nonverbally.	Some problems with posture and tone being too weak or strong and some problems giving clear cues to dog.	Body posture and/or far too strong. I cues to dog, and it
exceptionally aware of signs. Has clear control over all times. Dog is not lunging or barking at hand offs and does throughout the walk.	Is aware of surroundings. Has clear control over dog. Dog is not lunging and disorderly <u>most of the time</u> . Checks and properly fits collar or harness at hand off.	Must be reminded by others of surroundings. There is some disorder and concern about maintaining control throughout the walk. Does not check fit of collar/harness after hand off or during walk.	Is unaware of surroundings. Has control of the dog.
behavior appropriately to dog's ability level. Is patient, firm, and kind with the dog. Follows class given in class. Handler is changing situations without led and always displays safe judgment.	Adapts behavior appropriately to dog for own ability level. Is patient, firm, yet kind with the dog and follows directions in class. Is able to adapt <u>or when situations arise in class</u> . Displays safe judgment.	May adapt behaviors inappropriately to dog, or may be too relaxed or become frustrated with dog. May have difficulty applying directions to various situations, <u>must let adult directions</u> . Displays reasonable judgment.	Displays two or more concerns (such as frustrated with dog to follow directions in class or handler, dog, as
evenly distributed over both sides ready for (re)action and is not led around by the dog.	Weight is evenly distributed over feet is ready for (re)action most of the time, but occasionally caught by surprise. Isn't pulled around by dog.	Weight is <u>not</u> evenly distributed. Ready for (re)action some of the time, is occasionally caught by surprise. Sometimes pulled around by dog.	Weight is <u>not</u> evenly distributed. Unprepared repeatedly can
dog over 6 feet away from others at all times, demonstrates normal conflict avoidance techniques.	Keeps dog at least 6 feet away from other dogs at all times.	Let dog <u>sniff</u> within 6 feet of another dog during class. Conflict with another dog is possible.	Allows dog <u>sniff</u> another dog, place risk for post
navigates past other dogs, and crates, avoids potential and is in clear control of dog.	Safely navigates past other dogs, people, and crates with minor lunging or disorderly once or twice.	Has some difficulty navigating past other dogs, people, and crates. Dog is lunging or disorderly once or twice.	Allows dog to engage behavior while in multiple times. Dog
Pushes kennel door IN, locks properly. Checks and properly fits collar/harness before leaving kennel. Removes harness if finished. Distracts dog, pulls door IN, checks properly, and checks both ways before exiting kennel. Handler is mindful of dog's (re)action but may exhibit a minor issue with entrance/exit, such as reinforcing problem behaviors.	Entrance: Remembers to push kennel door IN. Checks and properly fits collar/harness before leaving kennel. Exit: Removes harness if finished walking. Distracts dog, pulls door IN, and checks both ways before exiting the kennel. Handler is mindful of dog's (re)action but may exhibit a minor issue with entrance/exit, such as reinforcing problem behaviors.	Exhibits a major error (such as forgetting to open door IN, or forgetting to check both ways before exiting the kennel, or is struggling to enter with kennel without releasing being pulled by dog). Is forgetful of dog. Checks collar/harness but it is too tight or too loose, or harnesses dog incorrectly, or fails to remove harness before exiting kennel.	Exhibits two or more errors (such as door open check to see if and enter exit without by dog). Other error or harness secure that escape or injure remove harness by etc. There is a potential injury, or



# Tracking

What animal tracking software are you using?

*Simple solutions can be highly effective.*

Communicating need for ongoing care?

*Simple reminder forms and assigned “staff”*

How do you make sure animals don't fall through the cracks?

*Set communication expectations.*

*Case managers/Staff?*

*Weekly check-ins?*

*Online groups?*

# Initial Communications

What are you using to do outreach when foster is needed?

1. Email/Group/social media – great first ask
2. Know your fosters and ask directly
3. Consider alternate arrangements

Set Expectations.

Know your fosters.

Keep organized notes; lifestyle, other animals, living situation, skill level, additional training

“It’s all in my head” is *not* a solution.

# Return Process

Coordinating spay/neuter and return to the shelter

Helping the animals get adopted from their foster homes

(See *ASPCA Adoption Ambassadors program*  
[www.ASPCApro.org/ambassadors](http://www.ASPCApro.org/ambassadors))

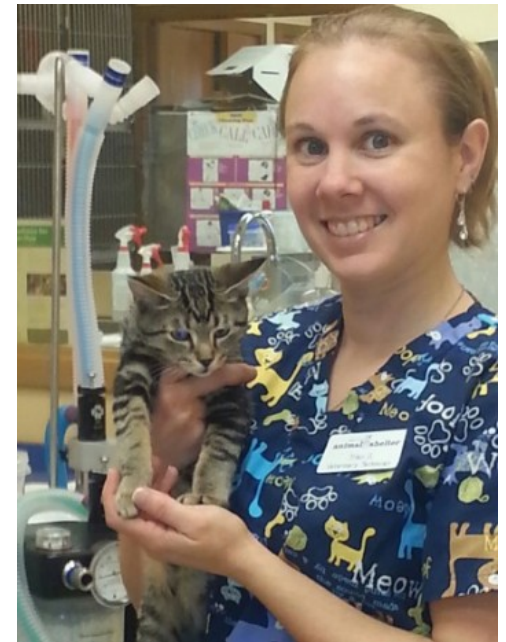
# Emergency Plans

When, not if!

Every foster parent should know *“What constitutes an emergency”* & *“Who to call”*

Make arrangements for:

- Emergency medical care
- Emergency behavior intervention
- Emergency re-placement



# Care and Feeding

Who is responsible for providing support to the PEOPLE, not just the animals?

*Hint: not just the program coordinator!*

# Care & Feeding: Case Managers

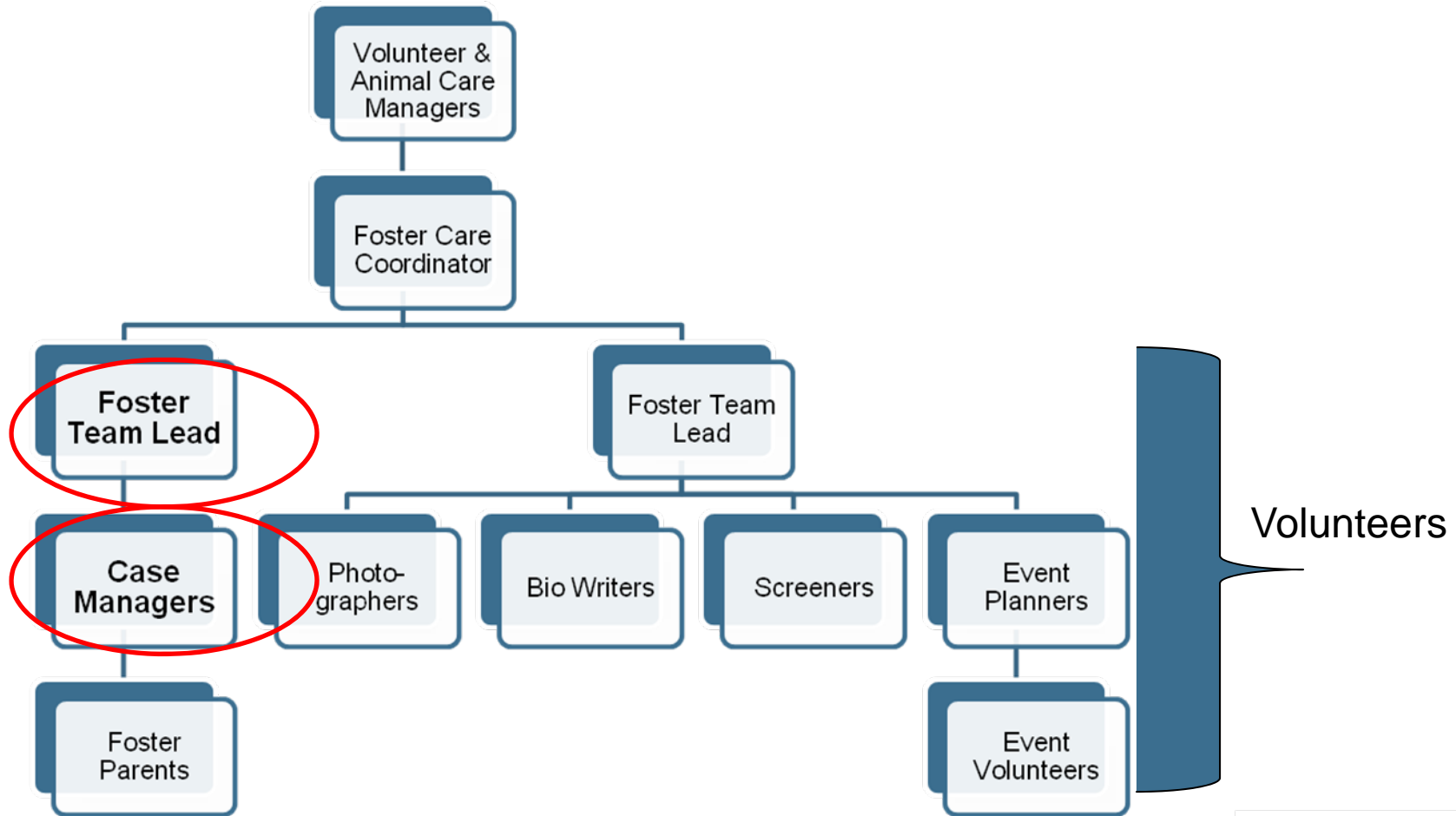
Q: How do you track all the foster animals?

A: Volunteer Case Managers

- Experienced Foster Parents
- Specific Skills
- Helping Hand
- NOT Staff
- Can see around corners

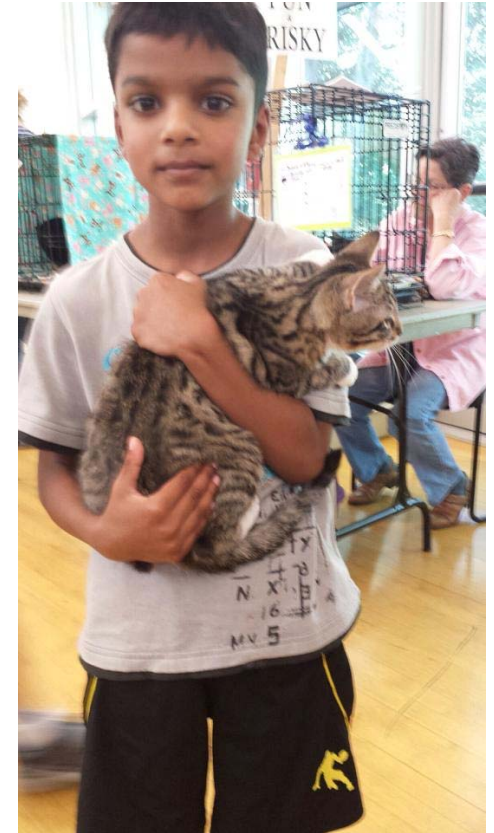


# Care & Feeding: Case Managers



# Care & Feeding: Opportunities

- Vet calls
- Behavior Questions
- Social media posts (closed)
- Applications for animals
- Adoption events
- Marketing updates
- Profile updates
- Social opportunities (for volunteers and animals)





# Taking Care of People

- Provide ongoing training
- Connect them with other foster parents
- Promote balance and self-care
- Encourage people to say no if needed
- Keep track of what they're telling us, evaluate their progress and re-adjust as needed

# Taking Care of the Leaders

- Your case managers and lead volunteers take more responsibility.
- Ensure a higher level of care, access and attention to them



# Additional Resources

## **Using Volunteers as Case Managers for Foster Animals** (including guidelines & samples)

[ASPCAPro.org/foster-case-managers](https://www.aspcapro.org/foster-case-managers)

## **6 Ways to Find Foster Families**

[ASPCAPro.org/blog/2015/10/23/6-ways-find-foster-families](https://www.aspcapro.org/blog/2015/10/23/6-ways-find-foster-families)

## **Best Ideas to Attract, Keep and Grow Volunteers**

[ASPCAPro.org/resource/praise-and-support-volunteers](https://www.aspcapro.org/resource/praise-and-support-volunteers)

### **Webinar Recordings:**

[Volunteer Management 101](#)

[Volunteer Management 201](#)

[Foster-Based Adoptions](#) (see case management samples)

# Questions?



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