

Foster Policy Manual



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Welcome to Foster Parenting

Foster parents provide temporary care for kittens, puppies, dogs, cats and sometimes other companion animals. Some may only need a few weeks of care while others may stay with you for a more extended period of time. By providing your time, energy, and home to an animal in need, you are helping to prepare the animal(s) for adoption into a permanent home as well as assisting the Office of Animal Services to mitigate inevitable cases of shelter overcrowding.

The Office of Animal Services' Montgomery County Animal Services and Adoption Center (MCASAC) is here to help ensure your enjoyment and success in being a foster parent. We will provide training, all necessary supplies, and our fully trained staff are just an email away. The staff at MCASAC would like to take this opportunity to thank you for opening up your hearts and home to an animal in need, giving them (and the animal who took his/her space at the shelter) a chance at life! We could not do this without you!

[About Montgomery County Animal Services and Adoption Center](#)

The Montgomery County Animal Services and Adoption Center (MCASAC), operated by the Office of Animal Services, provides high-standard sheltering and care to the homeless, abused, and neglected animals in our community and ensures the safety and welfare of the county's residents. We are the county's only open-admission municipal shelter.

MCASAC's doors are open to all animals in need, from dogs and cats to farm animals, wildlife, and exotic pets. Trained staff provide animals with daily care, mental and physical enrichment, health and wellness checks, and more. Through adoptions, spay and neuter assistance, vaccination clinics, education and outreach, the MCASAC serves as a critical community resource to promote and advocate responsible pet care. Through community support and partnerships with other animal-welfare organizations our Foster, Rescue, and Volunteer programs enhance and save the lives of homeless animals.

Animal Services Officers are on-call seven days a week to investigate citizen complaints and respond to animal emergencies 24-hours a day. These calls include animal-related matters such as: animal abuse and neglect, humane law enforcement, calls regarding stray, rabid, or aggressive animals, and sick or injured wildlife.

MCASAC is proud to serve as the region's largest eco-friendly animal services and adoption center.

Since MCASAC is a municipal organization, expenditures made for fostering, including gas and mileage for transporting foster animals to and from the shelter, are not tax-deductible. MCASAC provides fosters with all necessary supplies, enrichment items, and food which keeps out-of-pocket expenses to a minimum. Some fosters choose to purchase special items for their foster; however, these items are not tax-deductible.

About This Manual

Please do not feel overwhelmed! We want your fostering experience to be fun for you and your family. There are so many moving pieces to this puzzle and we do not expect you to remember it all. This manual has been created as an introduction to our policies and procedures for you to reference during your fostering experience. We realize that you will have a lot of questions along the way, and that is okay! Many of the answers may be found within these pages but please remember to also consult your Foster Contract and any addendums pertaining to policy and procedure.

We recommend that you take the time early on in your foster journey to become familiar with the contents of this manual. This manual will include information on scheduling vaccine appointments, reporting behavior and medical issues, and expectations of foster parents.

We appreciate your attention to this manual as we have limited staff. While we make every effort to respond to all emails in a timely manner, we have a lot of other tasks to perform at the shelter. Separate from this guide will be manuals on Cat/Kitten Care and Canine/Puppy Care, for your reference.

Foster Volunteers serve at the discretion of the Montgomery County Office of Animal Services (OAS), operating as Montgomery County Animal Services and Adoption Center (MCASAC). Fosters are expected to provide their services in a manner consistent with the highest standards of integrity. We ask that fosters make every effort to adhere to their assigned duties and training provided by the Office of Animal Services.

Recruitment and Equal Opportunity

MCASAC promotes practices that ensure fair and equal treatment of all fosters, including equal opportunity. MCASAC will not tolerate discrimination because of race, creed, color, religion, national origin, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, or any other legally-protected classification. Fosters are recruited based on their interests and ability to handle and house animals selected for the foster program.

Code of Conduct

As a foster with MCASAC, your conduct and interaction with staff, other volunteers, fosters, and the public is expected to be professional and courteous, always. By volunteering as a foster, you are making a commitment to carry out tasks to the best of your abilities.

Sexual and Other Unlawful Harassment

MCASAC is committed to providing an environment that is free from all forms of discrimination and conduct that can be considered harassing, coercive, or disruptive, including sexual harassment. Actions, words, jokes, or comments based on an individual's sex, race, color, national origin, age, religion, disability, or any other legally protected characteristic will not be tolerated.

If you experience or witness sexual or other unlawful harassment it should be reported to the Foster and Rescue Coordinator immediately. If the Foster and Rescue Coordinator is unavailable, or you believe it would be inappropriate to contact that person, you should immediately contact the Community Relations Manager. You may raise concerns and make reports without fear of reprisal or retaliation. All allegations of sexual harassment will be promptly and discreetly investigated.

Fosters serve at the discretion of the Montgomery County Office of Animal Services, operating as MCASAC. Fosters are expected to provide their services in a manner consistent with the highest standards of integrity. We ask that fosters make every effort to adhere to their assigned duties and training provided by MCASAC.

MCASAC reserves the right to dismiss Fosters from the Foster Program at any time. Fosters may cease participation in the program at any time by notifying the Foster and Rescue Coordinator.

MCASAC appreciates feedback on the foster experience.

Essential Capabilities of Fosters for Montgomery County Animal Services and Adoption Center

To safely and effectively serve as a foster with MCASAC, fosters must possess the following physical, mental, and emotional capabilities.

Essential Physical Capabilities:

- Ability to use both hands simultaneously with a high level of dexterity, have relatively quick reflexes, and maneuver well in small or confined spaces (examples: open a door while handling animal; quickly pursue/retrieve an animal who escaped from your control; leash/harness animals of varying sizes, energy levels, and temperaments; bend or squat to leash/harness/pick up an animal).
- Average vision (with or without correction) to move safely in a variety of environments, to be able to observe animal body language without difficulty and be able to read paperwork and instructions.
- Ability to assess body condition of animals, and to note signs of injury or illness.
- Ability to hear if animals are growling or making sounds indicating fear or pain.
- Ability to speak and effectively communicate in English, both verbally and in written form.
- Ability to handle and restrain animals of small (15 pounds or less) to large size (up to 75 pounds) with extreme caution and care.
- Must not have strong allergies to animals and chemicals used in cleaning that are not able to be controlled by medication.
- Capacity to deal with strong and unpleasant odors, fleas, feces, and possible wounds of injured animals with whom we come into contact.
- Ability to tolerate the possible exposure to zoonotic diseases such as ringworm and mange.

Essential Mental Capabilities:

- Ability to understand, remember, and follow instructions and procedures with minimal direction.
- High level of English reading, writing, spelling, and communication skills
- Possess problem-solving capabilities.
- Ability to be aware of potentially dangerous situations when working with animals; ability to remain calm with animals who are upset, behave sensitively and confidently, show good judgment and act appropriately in these situations.

Essential Emotional Capabilities:

- Ability to cope with unexpected animal behavior without assistance
- Ability to cope with a highly emotionally charged environment.
- Ability to understand Montgomery County Animal Services and Adoption Center (MCASAC) policies and procedures and an ability and willingness to appropriately and accurately represent those policies when interacting with the public or otherwise representing MCASAC.
- Ability to communicate with a variety of people effectively and without judgment or making negative remarks.
- Must be flexible and willing/able to change plans and/or directions at any given moment.

Adapted from HSUS national volunteer Center http://www.humanesociety.org/assets/pdfs/national-volunteer-center/essential-capabilities/pfl_essential_capabilities_1.pdf

Contact Information & Hours:

Montgomery County Animal Services and Adoption Center
7315 Muncaster Mill Road
Derwood, MD 20855
Phone: 240-773-5900
www.montgomerycountymd.gov/animalservices

Hours of Operation

M/T/Th/F	12:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Saturday – Sunday	12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Wednesday	CLOSED

MCASAC is closed for most State Observed Holidays.
Closings due to inclement weather will be announced on the MCASAC Foster/Volunteer Facebook Page as well as the shelter's website.

Contacting MCASAC

Email is the preferred method of communication to all non-urgent questions:

Foster Team: fostermcasac@montgomerycountymd.gov

Veterinary Team: FosterVet@mcgov.onmicrosoft.com

All emails are generally answered within 24-hours (48-hours at most). If you do not receive a response, please resubmit your email as it may not have reached us. While we are very excited about the growth of our foster program, keeping up with demand can prove difficult. We appreciate your patience!

Never hesitate to email us should you have any questions or concerns. Please be sure to notify us immediately should your foster(s) display any medical or behavioral issues. The earlier we learn of an issue, the better we can work on resolving it.

Please include the following in your email correspondence:

- Your full name
- Your foster's MCASAC name (please do not use any names you may have given the animal(s)) and Animal Identification number (A#)

Foster Match-Making Process

Congratulations on becoming an official member of our foster program! We are excited to begin working with you. Some fosters take in animals around the clock on a year-round basis, while others have more seasonal availability. Some fosters fall in between the two spectrums. Regardless of where you may fit, we are thrilled to have you and cannot thank you enough for volunteering your time and opening up your heart and home to an animal in need.

I am ready to start fostering, now what?

We are glad to hear that you are ready for your first (or next) foster animal! MCASAC utilizes a **Foster Registry** to match animals with their respective fosters. A **Foster Capabilities Questionnaire** is sent to each foster home to complete and submit back to fostermcasac@montgomerycountymd.gov.

When it is determined that an animal is a candidate for foster care, shelter staff will use the Foster Registry to match an animal with a potential foster. After a match has been made, we will reach out to the foster via email (non-urgent requests) or phone (more urgent requests, such as in the case of neonatal kittens). At the time of pickup, please let staff know if you are available to take additional fosters, or if your household is now full. If at any time you are unavailable to foster (due to vacation/life situations) please email the Foster and Rescue Coordinator so they can update your availability in the registry. Some fosters may be matched more frequently than others if their interest and/or experience more closely aligns with the needs of the department at any given time. Do not be discouraged—we encourage fosters to inquire about receiving the necessary training to become eligible to foster specific populations of animals, such as neonatal kittens.

Inactive Foster Policy

MCASAC acknowledges that people are often unable to foster for long periods of time due to life circumstances or animals not fitting in the household makeup, therefore, prior to being archived as an inactive foster, the Foster and Rescue Coordinator will reach out to gauge continued interest in participation in the program before deactivation.

Veterinary Emergency Procedures

What Constitutes an Emergency?

- Labored/open-mouth breathing that is not associated with an upper respiratory infection (URI)
- Animal is unable to walk
- Reopening of spay/neuter/surgical incisions
- Profound lethargy (i.e., animal cannot lift head, unable to move/keeling over)
- Attempting to urinate but unable to (could indicate a blockage)
- Fever exceeding 104° F
- Animal appears to be in severe pain
- Profuse bleeding
- Possible fracture/sudden injury/trauma
- An animal getting into a potentially toxic substance

Emergencies between the hours of 9:00am and 6:00pm

If you experience an emergency between these hours, please call our admissions desk at (240) 773-5665 or (240) 773-5666, and ask to speak to the Foster and Rescue Coordinator, or an Animal Care Attendant Supervisor if the Foster and Rescue Coordinator is out of the office or otherwise unavailable. Explain the situation so that staff can direct you to the correct person.

After Hours (6:00pm until 9:00am) Emergencies

After hours emergency vet visits to MEAC are very costly. ***Emergency vet care must be approved by the on-call veterinarian prior to any visit to MEAC.*** If you experience an emergency before 9:00 am or after 6:00 pm, please contact the on-call veterinarian at 240-383-5900. You must take the animal(s) to the following emergency clinic:

Metropolitan Emergency Animal Clinic (MEAC)
11503 Rockville Pike, Suite A
Rockville, MD 20852

Non-Emergency:

- Upper respiratory infection signs (sneezing, coughing, watery eyes/nose)
- Mild redness/irritation of spay/neuter/surgery incision (place an e-collar on the animal immediately, if you have one)
- General vomiting/bowel or bladder movements
- Partial anorexia or complete anorexia (not eating at all for two consecutive meals)

For these and other non-emergencies requiring your foster(s) receive a veterinary examination, please schedule a veterinary appointment via our **online appointment scheduler** as soon as possible.

Important Note

Please note the importance of promptly scheduling your kittens and puppies for a veterinary appointment should they be showing signs of an upper respiratory infection (URI) or have diarrhea. Kittens/puppies are very frail, and their immune systems have not fully developed, causing them to get very sick, very quickly. URIs can lead to pneumonia and diarrhea can rapidly cause dehydration; both can result in their death. It is imperative to bring all sick animals in promptly, but underage animals should be brought in immediately.

Veterinary & Medical Care Procedures

Foster's Responsibilities

If you have veterinary questions or concerns and are unsure if you need to schedule an appointment, please email FosterVet@mcgov.onmicrosoft.com

You are responsible for bringing your foster animal(s) to MCASAC, by appointment, for vaccinations, spay/neuter, and to treat any illness symptoms you may see. You will receive medical records following each visit to the shelter listing due dates for routine follow-up visits. Spay/neuter surgeries are scheduled via email with the foster parent by the Foster and Rescue Coordinator. Spay/neuter surgeries are scheduled once the animal reaches 1.75 lbs. It is the foster's responsibility to let the Foster and Rescue Coordinator know that their animal has reached the 1.75 mark so that the animal can be added to the surgery schedule on the next available date.

Routinely check your fosters from head to toe to ensure that nothing is visibly wrong with them. You should be keeping a close eye on your foster animal(s) and immediately make an appointment if you notice any symptoms of illness.

If you do not bring your animal(s) back for follow-up care, MCASAC reserves the right to terminate the Foster Contract and have the foster return the animal(s) to the shelter.

Do not use non-prescribed medications or attempt to treat any illness on your own. MCASAC veterinary staff will need to see and treat any medical issues.

Vaccinations

Vaccinations at MCASAC begin when the animal is 4 weeks old and weighs at least one pound. All adult animals are vaccinated upon intake, but additional vaccines may be required. The vaccination schedule for any animal may be delayed due to a medical reason (e.g. fever, is on some type of medication, etc.). You will receive automated emails reminding you of vaccination due dates.

Of note:

- Boosters vaccines cannot be given even one day early.
- Not all parasites are treated with the basic de-wormer. Please make a Vet Visit if you see anything suspicious, e.g., worms or soft stool.
- Do not permit more than 3 weeks to lapse from the due date of a vaccination as it will render the vaccine less effective.
- Litters of kittens/puppies may NOT be combined without the consent of MCASAC veterinary staff.

See the next section for instructions for scheduling a veterinary appointment using Acuity.

Note that you do not have to make a separate vaccination appointment if your animal is scheduled for spay or neuter surgery within one week from the vaccination due date.

Flea & Tick Treatment

Advantage Multi application does not require an appointment. You can swing by with a current weight, and staff can get you another dose. Sending an email to:

Fostermcasac@montgomerycountymd.gov

and copying

Admissionsmcasac@montgomerycountymd.gov

Letting us know you will be stopping by is always appreciated and can expedite your visit to the shelter.

[Scheduling an Appointment in Acuity](#)

Routine vaccination and veterinary appointments as well as supply pickup appointments are made via our **online scheduling site** at:

<https://app.acuityscheduling.com/schedule.php?owner=14167986>

Step 1: Select Appointment Type

We offer the following four types of appointments from which you will select:

- Foster Veterinary Appointment
- Urgent Illness Appointment- Drop Off
- Tech Appointment (Booster Vaccines)
- Rabies Vaccine Appointment
- Supply Pickup Appointment

Foster Veterinary Appointments:

For foster animals who are exhibiting signs of illness or in need of a recheck for a previously addressed medical issue that requires examination by a veterinarian. Routine vaccines may be performed at this exam if the animal is due to receive them. If the animal is not exhibiting signs of illness and is only in need of routine care (vaccinations, etc.), please schedule a Tech Appointment.

Urgent Illness Appointment (Drop-Off):

For any animal(s) exhibiting signs of illness or injury that warrants immediate medical attention. Please plan on dropping off your animal(s) and the veterinarian will examine them as soon as possible, contacting you with a pick-up time. If you are unsure what type of appointment to make, please email FosterVet@mcgov.onmicrosoft.com

Tech Appointment (Booster Vaccines):

This appointment is for routine, booster vaccines/deworming of healthy foster animals, which can be performed by support staff. There WILL NOT be a veterinarian available for these appointments. If there are any veterinary concerns with your foster(s) please do not use this appointment type.

Rabies Vaccine Appointments:

For foster animals over the age of 12 weeks in need of a rabies vaccine. Rabies vaccines may only be administered by a veterinarian.

Supply Pickup Appointment:

To request resupply of litter, food, toys, etc.

Step 2: After selecting the appropriate appointment type, you will be prompted to provide us with your contact information (name, phone #, email) and complete a Foster Appointment Questionnaire.

Step3: You will receive a confirmation email and text message confirming your appointment.

Appointment Policy

- All routine/non-urgent appointments should be scheduled at least 24-hours in advance.
- Appointment cancellations and rescheduling should also be taken care of at least 24-hours in advance of the original appointment. In the event of an unforeseen circumstance that necessitates cancelling your appointment less than 24-hours in advance, please contact our admissions desk via phone at (240) 773-5665 or (240) 773-5666.
- For urgent appointments requiring a same-day examination, please follow the instructions outlined in the emergency protocol, page 11.

Additional Information:

- Vaccines may not be administered even one day early.
- Do not allow more than 3 weeks to lapse from vaccine due dates.
- If your animal has a mild URI and NO fever, vaccines can still be administered.
- If your animal is sick at the time of the vaccination appointment, there is no guarantee that we will be able to convert the appointment to a vet visit due to conflicting schedules. You will likely have to make a separate appointment to bring your fosters in. We know your time is valuable, so please make sure to follow the correct parameters when coming in for appointments.
- If your foster is scheduled for surgery, all vaccines can be given at that time. There is no need to make a separate routine vaccination appointment.

- If you are fostering a litter, please bring EVERYONE for the appointment, even if only some of the animals are exhibiting symptoms (including mom, if applicable).
- Only one animal or one litter is permitted per appointment slot. Please reserve two appointment slots for litters that are greater than three or for moms with more than three kittens/puppies. These appointments should be scheduled back-back.

Coming in for Your Appointment

Please enter through the “Animal Services” entrance and sign in on the sign-in sheet located on the front counter. Please sign in this area any time you are coming to the shelter as a foster. For their safety, please keep your animals contained in their appropriate carrier or short leash while you are in the lobby. If you are coming in with a litter of kittens or puppies, please have them properly identified via colored collars (can be provided by shelter) to label offspring with their shelter name/animal ID #. Labeling your kittens/puppies will assist our staff in serving you even more efficiently. If you are not sure who is who, please ask a shelter staff member to assist you.

Please be patient. While we do our very best to serve you as quickly as possible, we have limited veterinary staff available at the shelter. They oversee the daily care and medical treatment of all the animals at the shelter, handle all emergencies that come through our doors, process the steady stream of new animals arriving daily (20 +/- a day), in addition to taking foster appointments. Please bear with us, and know that we will take care of your needs as soon as we possibly can. We appreciate the time and energy you are expending to foster for us!

Spay/Neuter

Spay and neuter surgeries should be scheduled as soon as the animal is of age and weight and in good health.

Kittens: 8 weeks, 1.75+ pounds (must be both)

Nursing Cats: shortly after their offspring have been weaned

Puppies: 8 weeks, 3 pounds (must be both)

****Make sure kittens just reaching 1.75 pounds are of this weight at the date of surgery, as their weights can fluctuate until around the 6-week mark. ****

Additional Information

- Please separate nursing moms from their offspring for 7-10 days prior to surgery to allow enough time for their milk to dry up.
- All animals will be checked to see if they are due for vaccines or medications, and given all appropriate vaccinations at the time of surgery. You do not have to make a separate vaccination appointment if your animal is scheduled for surgery within one week from the vaccination due date.
- The animal may not be spayed or neutered if it is on certain medications, so please check with the Foster and Rescue Coordinator.
- Litters may be split up for surgery. You may have a litter with animals growing at different rates. If this is the case, please contact the Foster and Rescue Coordinator who will determine whether to split up the litter for surgery.
- Nursing mothers may also be scheduled for a separate time than her young.

Setting up the Spay/Neuter Appointment

Please email the Foster and Rescue Coordinator Fostermcasac@montgomerycountymd.gov to schedule your spay/neuter appointment. When emailing, please provide us with the following information:

- Foster animal identification number (A#)
- Current weight
- Any upcoming surgery dates (Mondays or Wednesdays) that conflict with your schedule so that we may more efficiently work your foster(s) into the surgery schedule.

****If you are unable to make your appointment, please contact the Foster/Rescue Coordinator ahead of time so that we can get you rescheduled and use that precious time for another animal in need! ****

Surgery Drop Off

Drop offs occur the morning of surgery between 9:00 am and 10:00 am. If you absolutely cannot get your animal to the shelter the morning of their scheduled surgery, please ask the Foster and Rescue Coordinator to make arrangements for you to drop off the evening prior. Drop-off the night before surgery should be by 6:00 p.m. (weekdays) or 4:00 p.m. (weekends).

Please be prompt for drop off. Your animal may be bumped if you arrive late. Our medical staff and surgeon(s) need time to examine each animal prior to surgery.

If you drop off in the morning, **no food after midnight for animals older than 16-weeks**. They may have free access to fresh water.

Kittens under the age of 16 weeks should not be fasted overnight and may eat until 8 a.m. the morning of surgery. They may have free access to fresh water.

Please drop off your foster(s) at the “Animal Services” side admissions desk. If you are dropping off in the morning, the door will still be locked. Please ring the doorbell and a staff member will assist you.

Pick Up

Pick up occurs between 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. the same day as surgery, unless a staff member contacts you directly to tell you otherwise.

Please come to the admissions lobby and let the front desk staff know that you are here to pick-up your foster animal(s) from surgery. A staff member will review post-op instructions with you.

In the Event of the Death of Your Foster

Sadly, death may be a part of your fostering experience. Animals can pass from a variety of reasons such as natural causes, illness, or humane euthanasia. The mortality rate of abandoned or sick newborns is higher than that of your average owned puppy or kitten. Sometimes, it is simply nature taking its course. Kittens and puppies are most likely to die at birth or within the first week of early separation from their mother. Please do not feel discouraged if this happens to you.

Natural Causes

Sometimes, despite our best efforts, we are unable to save an animal due to severe or terminal illness, congenital issues, disease left untreated far too long, failure to thrive, and a long list of other reasons. These occurrences are often more frequent in small kittens and puppies. Human intervention often leads to more of these young offspring surviving than if they were on their own.

Euthanasia

Humane euthanasia may also occur at the shelter or in an emergency at a partnering veterinarian for a variety of reasons. An animal may be suffering due to natural causes or have a terminal illness that cannot be treated. Some diseases, such as panleukopenia and parvo are extremely expensive to treat and oftentimes treatment is unsuccessful. On some occasions, an animal in foster care may start to exhibit potentially dangerous behavior that was unknown or suppressed when the animal was at the shelter. When possible, and safe and humane to do so, we will exhaust all other alternatives, such as finding a partnering rescue organization who might be better equipped to handle the animal and its needs.

What to do if Your Foster Passes at Home

Please keep the remains of the body in a bag or shoebox. Should the animal need to be tested for panleukopenia or parvo (specifically in kittens and puppies), when they are exhibiting signs of illness such as vomiting and/or diarrhea, please refrigerate the body and bring it in within 48 hours to be tested for contagious disease. If the animal does not need to be tested, you can freeze the body and return to the shelter at your earliest convenience. Please email to let us know about the passing of your foster animal: fostermcasac@montgomerycountymd.gov

The remains of deceased animals are cremated together and their ashes are scattered over a local park.

Coping with the Loss

If you experience difficulty coping with the loss of your foster animal, help is available. The [Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine](#) runs a pet loss support hotline with grief counselors available to speak with bereaved owners: 607-253-3932 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. EST, Tuesdays and Thursdays.

MCASAC staff, volunteers, and other fosters have gone through this loss as well and are here to help you through it. Do not blame yourself and don't feel that you are alone. Our foster family is here for you; don't hesitate to reach out!

Bites & Scratches

Reporting Bites & Scratches

Bites or scratches that break the skin will require an Animal Services Officer or staff member to complete a bite report. Depending on the severity, most bite cases will be an in-home quarantine lasting for 10 days, but is at the discretion of the Animal Services Officer. Please notify the Foster and Rescue Coordinator immediately should your foster animal bite and/or scratch you or another person, breaking the skin. **It is mandatory that you report any bites or scratches that break the skin to a shelter staff member.**

Quarantine Rules and Regulations

- The animal must be under physical control at all times and must not be able to reach persons passing by.
- The animal must be kept inside of a building. The animal must be on a leash on your property under your immediate control when outdoors to relieve itself.
- The animal must not be moved from its original place of quarantine unless:
- The Animal Services Officer directs another place of quarantine, or
- You have obtained prior approval for the move from the Animal Services Officer or their representative.
- If the animal shows a change in behavior during the quarantine period, please notify the Office of Animal Services at 240-773-5925 immediately.
- Do not vaccinate for rabies, perform surgery, or give routine vaccinations during the quarantine period.
- If the animal dies during the quarantine period, notify the Office of Animal Services at 240-773-5925 immediately for instructions. Do not dispose of the animal. If necessary, refrigerate, do not freeze.
- Notify the Office of Animal Services at 240-773-5925 to verify the health of the animal after the 10-day quarantine period.

Supplies

Fosters are by no means expected to pay out-of-pocket for any necessary supplies for the care and well-being of their foster animal(s). The Foster Program at MCASAC provides fosters with all necessary supplies including, but not limited to, food, litter, litter boxes, beds, crates, carriers, and enrichment items. All fosters are expected to provide a comfy home and top-notch TLC (tender loving care). **When you start to run low on supplies, please schedule a supply pick up appointment through Acuity.** These appointments are available daily until 30 minutes before close.

Some fosters choose to purchase special extra items for their foster(s), which is permitted, as long as the item is safe for its intended usage. If there is something that you were not provided with that you need or believe would be beneficial to your foster(s), please email the Foster and Rescue Coordinator and they will let you know if it is something that can be provided.

[Preparing for Your Foster](#)

We want this to be a safe and fun experience for both you and the animal(s) that you are fostering. To ensure their safety, we ask that you animal proof your home or foster room. In general, you should have a small, enclosed space that should be fully animal proofed. When you take the animal out of that space to play with them, you should still have them in a space where you can be confident of their safety.

Animal Proofing

Designate an enclosed space for the foster animal(s) inside your home. A calm, quiet, small, easy to clean room in your home is ideal, such as a bathroom. Keeping animals in an easily cleaned and bleachable surface allows for ease of clean-up when your foster may have an accident. It also ensures that if an animal becomes sick, you could easily bleach the space that they were in to avoid infecting future fosters or resident pets that may have access to that space later.

Some fosters choose to use a baby gate with litters of animals as a “double” security door when entering the room that animals are contained in (if they have access to the entire room). Often, your foster animals are so excited to see you, they may rush out the door when you enter and escape. A baby gate helps keep the escape artists in their designated area.



Check for the following hazardous items:*

- Electrical cords, TV and telephone cords, and chargers
- Remove small, dangerous objects that can be ingested (pins, needles, paper clips, nails, staples, thread, string, rubber bands, moth balls, chemicals, plastic bags, clothing, etc.)
- Check for and block off places that an animal could hide or get trapped
- Remove breakable items
- Remove toxic plants and foods (refer to Files section on Volunteer/Foster Facebook page)

- Watch curtains
- Keep toilet seats and trash can lids closed at all times
- **Tip:** Get down on their level. Lay on the floor and check around. You may find some areas of concern you may not notice from your higher vantage point.

*A good rule of thumb is: “If you don’t want to lose it, put it away.”

When You Arrive Home with Your New Foster

Start to create a routine with your foster(s) to better assist with the adjustment to the new household. Keep interactions with others limited. Doing too much or meeting new people too quickly can over-stimulate an animal and increase their stress level. Spend quality time with your foster(s) to help them become more relaxed in their environment and build rapport with them. Allow time for adjustment. Some animals may feel comfortable right away, while others may be scared or lash out in fear. Remember you are there to start a new beginning for this animal. Your goal is to provide a good foundation for his/her new family.

In the midst of all the excitement and activity surrounding the new arrival(s), do not forget your own pet(s). Allow them to become acclimated at their own pace. You will want to give your pet(s) some extra attention and praise, so they don’t become jealous of the foster animal(s). It is always a good idea to add extra treats and love at this time.

****Please remember that your cats must always remain indoors. ****

Naming Your Foster Animals

All animals sent to foster will have a shelter-given name or a name that they were given by their prior owner. While in your care, you may rename your foster animal, however, to eliminate confusion for staff and in order to retain accurate veterinary records, names will not be changed in the shelter database without approval of the Foster and Rescue Coordinator.

Foster Support & Social Media

MCASAC Facebook page for Volunteers and Fosters

We strongly encourage you to join our Facebook page for volunteers and fosters, which is a platform for active volunteers and fosters at MCASAC to communicate professionally amongst one another and share stories, photos, ideas, and inspiration. It is an ideal place to collaborate and seek advice and mentorship from your fellow fosters on the basic care and socialization of your animal(s). We have many seasoned fosters with lots of great advice and tips so don't be afraid to jump right in!

Shelter staff are also on this page and will occasionally use it to post volunteer and foster program updates and requests. This page is not a place to ask questions pertaining to the shelter's policy and procedures. Questions and concerns of this sort should be addressed with the supervisor of the program for which they pertain to.

The Facebook page for MCASAC volunteers and fosters is a secret group (cannot be searched). You will receive an invite to join shortly after becoming an official member of our Foster Program. Please let the foster staff know if your Facebook email address differs from the one that we have on file since you will only be able to accept the invite via the email address linked to your Facebook account.

Orphaned Kitten Bottle Feeders and Fosters Facebook Group

We have a small group of talented fosters dedicated to helping our vulnerable orphaned neonatal kitten population. These foster parents have joined this Facebook group to offer support and education to fosters involved with hand-rearing (bottle-feeding to weaning) neonatal kittens. It does not take the place of promptly seeking veterinary care and advice from the shelter should your kitten(s) become ill; however, there are a lot of tricks of the trade to be learned when it comes to raising kittens on the bottle. This page is a great resource and community of support from wonderful fosters like you with a common interest and skill set.

Page URL: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/652342198193392/>

Of course, don't forget to follow our Main Page

Don't miss a beat! You are now a member of our team so make sure to follow us (and your fosters) on Facebook! Our main Facebook page is one of the avenues in which shelter updates, our programs, promotions, and adoptable animals, including your foster(s) will be featured so be sure to "like" and follow us from wherever you may be!

Page URL: <https://www.facebook.com/mcasac/>

Facebook Page Guidelines

To better assist us in staying focused on our ability to save lives, please be mindful of the following guidelines of the MCASAC foster and volunteer Facebook page:

- Be respectful of others, their abilities, and boundaries.
- Be professional.
- No messages that are cursing, threatening, abusive, defamatory, vulgar, or racist are permitted.
- If you have a question or concern regarding something on the page or anything pertaining to policy or procedure, please bring this to our attention via email so that we may discuss and resolve those issues.
- Please do not email and then post that you have sent an email. If you are concerned we have not received your email, please just submit a new one.
- Non-relevant posts may be removed from the page by system administrators.
- When presenting yourself as a MCASAC representative on social media, always be courteous, positive and truthful. If you are not sure if something is true, do not write it and if you have nothing nice to say, please don't say it!

[Adoption](#)

See more on the adoption process at [How the Adoption Process Works](#).

Advocating for Your Fosters

Having now spent some time with the animal in your care, you are the best person to find a good match in a potential adopter. Here are some things to help you along the way:

1. Help complete your animal's online bio. Send three photos and a cute description of your animal to outreachmcasac@montgomerycountymd.gov. Describe the animal's unique qualities, special quirks, likes/dislikes, and anything else you think makes your foster animal unique. Don't be afraid to be creative and have some fun, but please keep your language positive. This information will appear in your animal's profile and be accessible on our website, when s/he is ready to be adopted. Remember to comply with the profile photography guidelines set forth in the "Animal Profile Picture Guidelines and Info" document found in the Files section on the Facebook page for volunteers and fosters. Your animal's bio will also be featured on any websites that cross-post available animals from our website such as Petfinder.com.
2. Respond to inquiries about your animal within 48 hours, unless there are extenuating circumstances that require additional time. Your animal's bio is now public on our website, so people may be contacting you for more information or to arrange a meet and greet. Your email address will appear in your animal's online bio by default. Please email foster staff if you have an alternative communication method preference. If a potential adopter contacts us first, we will courtesy copy you on the email to put you in touch to schedule a meet and greet.
3. Use social media to promote your animal. Do you have Facebook? Share your animal's photos with your friends! Savvy on Instagram? Many adoptable pets have gathered quite an Instagram following with their antics in the past, and this may be a good avenue for your foster animal.
4. Create a flyer for your animal. A template can be in the documents section on the volunteer and foster Facebook page and modified to reflect your animal's information. Hang the flyer in local coffee shops, stores, give it to friends, or take them to your office to share with coworkers.

5. Advertise your foster animal on Craigslist or NextDoor. Regular adoption procedures apply, but this is a good way to capture people who may be looking for pets online.

Facilitating the Adoption

Found someone who might be interested in adopting your animal? Wonderful! Here are the steps that need to happen in order to complete the adoption:

- Direct the potential adopter to our website where they can find the adoption application as well as review the requirements to adopt. www.montgomerycountymd.gov/animalservices/adoption/howtoadopt.html
- After the adoption application has been reviewed by Adoption Staff and all required documentation received, Adoption Staff will notify you to arrange a meet and greet.

Arrange a meet and greet between the potential adopter and your animal. This can occur at your home or at a third-party location (only for foster dogs). Meetings should occur within 7 days. If you have trouble scheduling a meet and greet, you may contact the Foster and Rescue Coordinator and Adoption Staff about bringing the animal to the shelter. You know your foster pet best so arrange to be present at any meet and greet, if possible, and do not allow the foster animal to leave with the potential adopter until the adoption has been processed and finalized.

- If the potential adopter wants to move forward with adoption, have them notify the Adoption Department, either through the adoptmcasac@montgomerycountymd.gov email or they may contact their Adoption Counselor directly.
- After the meet and greet takes place, e-mail adoptmcasac@montgomerycountymd.gov and copy fostermcasac@montgomerycountymd.gov to confirm that the meet and greet occurred and provide feedback about the meet and greet. If you are concerned about the match for any reason, this is the opportunity to express your feelings, but the final decision is made by Adoption Staff and/or management.
- Animal introductions with pets already in the potential adopter's home will be scheduled if necessary. Cat-cat introductions are not advised as this is something that will occur slowly in the adoptive home. Dog-dog intros may occur on a case by case basis. This must be arranged through the foster team, a member of the behavior team,

and a member of the adoption staff. To coordinate this, please email adoptmcasac@montgomerycountymd.gov

- Adoption Staff will schedule a time for potential adopters to complete the counseling session and pay the appropriate adoption fee. After this step is complete, the Adoption Counselor will contact you to confirm finalization. **Only after an adoption has been successfully processed and Adoption Staff has notified you may the animal be released to the adopter.**
- A pick-up of your foster animal by the adopter is arranged. This can occur at your home, or at the adopter’s home.

Basic Responsibilities for Facilitating the Adoption

Foster Parent	MCASAC Adoption Staff
Creative promotion of animal	Refer potential adopters to prospective foster animals
Timely response to inquiries about the animal	Arrange and oversee possible animal introductions
Relay adoption process steps to potential adopters	Complete counseling sessions
Arrangement of meet and greet	Provide ultimate decision on outcome of adoption
Relay feedback about meet and greets to staff	Notify foster parent when adoption is finalized

****If you decide to adopt your foster animal, you must follow up with adoption staff to complete your adoption within 24 hours of the animal being spayed/neutered****

Adoption Returns

Despite the effort that goes into adoption matchmaking, animals are occasionally returned by their adopters for a variety of reasons. If an adopter contacts you to return a foster animal, please direct them to the MCASAC adoptions (Adoptmcasac@montgomerycountymd.gov) email. Any animals being returned MUST first come to the shelter so the adopter can sign the surrender contract, legally releasing the animal back to MCASAC. MCASAC does not give refunds for returns.

The decision to send the returned animal back into foster care is made on a case-by-case basis. In the event one of your foster animals is returned, we may contact you to see whether you can take the animal back until a new home is found.

Kittens Returning to the Shelter for Adoption

There are two options for foster parents who are fostering kittens: keeping the kittens in their care through adoption or returning kittens to the adoption floor. There are pros and cons to both options, but fosters are strongly encouraged to elect the former option unless they absolutely cannot commit to fostering through adoption.

****When shelter population is low, the Adoption Staff may request that kittens be left at the shelter for adoption after surgery.****

Option # 1: Fostering Kittens through Adoption

Pros:

- Helps manage shelter space and prevent overcrowding
- Helps to prevent disease outbreak and spread and keeps the kittens healthier
- Reduces kitten stress-levels associated with kennel confinement
- The foster gets to be actively involved in their adoption and see their kittens graduate to their forever homes!

Cons:

- Additional level of responsibility placed on the foster (but so worth it!)
- May slightly increase their time to adoption, since they are not physically in the shelter

Option # 2: Returning Kittens to the Adoption Floor

Pros:

- May decrease their time to adoption since they will be physically housed in the shelter and more regularly seen by prospective adopters

Cons:

- Shelter more prone to overcrowding
- Increases risk of disease outbreak and spread
- Kennel confinement increases kitten stress-levels

Fosters will need to decide early on what track they would like to take to avoid confusion when it comes time for adoption. If fosters decide to take the adoption floor option, they are agreeing to keep the kittens until they are 1.75 pounds and then the shelter staff will take care

of the adoption process. If fosters decide to keep the kittens through adoption, they are committing to sending in profile info, transport to/from surgery, responding to prospective adopters, and coordinating adoption meet and greets. Knowing up front which option fosters plan to pursue will help shelter staff know how best to guide them on prepping the kittens in their care for adoption!

Please notify the Foster/Rescue Coordinator which track you opt to take by the time your kitten(s) are 6-weeks old.

Can fosters change their mind?

If the foster would like to place their kittens on the adoption floor: yes, but only if the kittens are not already spoken for. Once a kitten has an adoption application submitted they must remain in foster care and the adoption process must be completed through foster.

For example:

If they are fostering a litter of 3 kittens and one has an adoption application, the foster is welcome to request to place the remaining two on the adoption floor, but the adoption-pending kitten needs to remain with the foster parent through adoption, unless otherwise directed by Adoption Staff.

If the foster would like to keep the kittens through adoption: yes, but they would need to submit pictures and bios at the 6-week mark or if the kittens are older than 6 weeks, 72 hours after changing their mind. These fosters will now also need to be able to be responsive to potential adopters. If fosters have requested to have their kittens placed on the floor but change their mind, they need to notify the Foster and Rescue Coordinator so that arrangements can be made for them to go back to foster after their spay or neuter surgeries.

If fosters have already placed their kittens on the adoption floor, the kittens will remain on the adoption floor unless the need for foster rearises, in which case the foster may be contacted directly by a shelter staff member.

Eligibility for Adoption

In order to be eligible to return to the adoption floor, kittens must meet all of the following criteria:

- Healthy
- Have received at least two FVRCP vaccinations
- 1.75 pounds – for spay/neuter
- Social (a little hissy and shy is OK; popping, spitting, and swatting is not OK)

Sending your Foster to a Partnering Rescue Organization

MCASAC works in conjunction with a number of transfer and rescue organizations to help increase our life-saving capacity. We are fortunate to have such partnerships that allow us to make more space in the shelter and our foster homes so we can save more animals. Animals may be transferred or sent to a rescue based on specific requests or potential medical and/or behavioral issues.

Some fosters may have their own rescue contacts. We do ask that you speak with the Foster and Rescue Coordinator prior to reaching out to another rescue in regards to your foster(s). Our Foster and Rescue Coordinator has cultivated relationships with many transfer partners and rescues and we want to make sure that there is an actual need for rescue for your foster prior to utilizing outside resources.

Once a rescue has committed to taking your animal, all other attempts at marketing should stop. In order for a rescue to pull an animal, they must go through a rigorous process of finding their own foster, lining up veterinary care and transport of the animal, and sometimes they may already have an adopter lined up. We want to preserve our relationships with these partners appreciate the time and effort they take into pulling our animals. Please also respect these partners' time and do not contact them for follow up on your foster pet.

Saying Good-Bye

Saying good-bye to your foster can be one of the hardest parts about fostering. You have spent time building a relationship with each animal in your care, providing love and comfort. Seeing them move onto the next stage of their lives can be challenging. Know that you are not alone!

By fostering you have taken a big step in helping the problem of overcrowding in shelters. Without you, we would not be able to save as many lives as we do. Getting over the hurdle of wanting to “keep them all” is a huge step and definitely challenging. The heartache of letting them go can often be balanced with thoughts of all the lives you are able to help save. Each animal that leaves the shelter not only saves that animal’s life, but the next one that is coming through the door to take its place. Letting go opens the door for the next animal needing your love and care; a new foster pet is often the best medicine.

Take a happy tail picture with your foster and their new parent(s). Some of these photos are highlighted on our social media pages and are always a hit! Feel free to exchange information with the adopter. The “Let’s Stay in Touch” form can be used for the exchange, which is found in the Files section on the volunteer and foster Facebook page.

When handing your foster over to their new owner remember to rejoice with them as they are excited to have their new family member. Think of the positives: the life you have helped save, the life your animal will have, and the opportunity afforded to you to help another, if you are able.