

What is Safety Net Fostering?

Safety Net Fostering is the fostering of owned pets whose families are experiencing a temporary inability to provide care for them. This may be related to financial instability, domestic violence, or hospitalization. As COVID-19 eviction moratoriums are lifted around the country, Safety Net Fostering programs may be needed more than ever to keep people and their pets together.

Through this program, our organization will help bridge that gap of care and provide temporary housing for these pets.

How is Safety Net fostering different from traditional fostering?

- Pets are not available for adoption
 - The program's goal is to reunite the pet and their family, so "foster failing" or adoption by the foster parent is not possible.
 - No need to promote the pet for adoption, either by providing shelter marketing materials or posting online or in the community--they already have a loving home!
 - In order to protect the confidentiality of the pet's owner, you will not be permitted to share photos of and/or information about the pet on social media- including the private MCASAC Volunteers and Fosters Facebook Group.
- Liability/Safety Concerns
 - Per the contract signed by the owner, neither the shelter nor foster home will be liable for any damages.
 - Animals who enter the program as a result of Domestic Violence will not be placed in foster homes near the abuser.
 - Because the shelter is in contact with the owner, we are able to gather lots of information about how the pet acts in a home, which means we are able to pass more information on to you as fosters than we are for many shelter pets.

How is it similar to traditional fostering?

- All vet care will be handled by the shelter
 - Safety Net pets will receive the same standard of care we provide to all our foster pets.
- All dogs will undergo a behavior evaluation prior to placement in a foster home.
- All known medical and behavior information will be provided to the foster.
- You will have access to all the same foster support you usually receive
 - Behavior questions, supplies--any and all of the support systems that our shelter provides for traditional fostering will also be accessible to you as a Safety Net foster parent.

Other program-specific information

- Communication with owner
 - Your contact information as the foster will not be shared with the owner, and you will not be given the owner's contact information.
 - Owners do appreciate updates about their pet! The shelter will facilitate this communication, acting as a go-between to ensure that the updates, photos, etc. are passed along to the owner.
 - Depending on the situation, owners may want to visit their pet. Foster care staff will arrange any visits at the shelter or other neutral location. These updates and

visits are an important way for the owner to maintain their connection with their pet during a difficult time and can help support both the owner and the pet. Owners will be allowed one scheduled visit with their pet during the pet's time in care.

- Timeline
 - It can sometimes take a few months for a pet parent in the program to secure stable housing and reunify with their pet. When you pick up your Safety Net foster pet, we will communicate to you when we expect that reunification to occur and will continue to provide updates to you as we get them. The Foster Safety Net program maxes out at 90 days.
 - While a consistent environment for the pet is ideal during this time of transition, the reunification process can take time, and we understand that can be a strain on foster parents. As such, we will regularly offer opportunities to end your foster caregiving experience and arrange for another foster to take over.
 - Fostering for the duration of the pet's time in the program is not required to be a Safety Net foster parent.
 - Just like with our shelter animals, if the fostering situation does not work out, the animal should be returned to MCASAC. We will attempt to find another foster, however, if we are unable to do so, the animal will remain at the shelter under either our Safekeep or Emergency Boarding program.
- Reunification
 - MCASAC already offers a program called Safekeep, where owners facing the same types of circumstances are offered 30 days of temporary housing for their pets. In 2020, the reunification rate for these animals was 68%. Other shelters with similar programs who have extended their programs to 90 days have seen an increase in reunification. We are hoping with the addition of this program to support our Safekeep program, we will see an increase in reunification. The likelihood of reunification increases when owners have an outside form of support (such as a social worker), which is one of the requirements for this program.
- Need in Our Community
 - MCASAC housed 77 pets under its Safekeep program in 2020, and 111 companion animals in 2019. In the first quarter of 2021, MCASAC has already housed 20 Safekeep pets. When the eviction moratorium comes to an end, we expect to see even more families in need of assistance.
- Weekly check-ins
 - A representative from our shelter will be checking in with you once a week to see how things are going and how your foster pet is doing.

Impact on fostering shelter animals

- If you are both a regular foster and a Safety Net foster, fostering for our shelter animals takes priority over Safety Net animals. If you are able to foster a current MCASAC dog in need, we will prioritize you fostering the MCASAC dog over a Safety Net dog.
- You may choose to be a Safety Net foster and not foster shelter animals, or you may choose to foster only shelter animals and not participate in this program.
- As kittens need to be kept separate from other animals until they have had at least two FVRCP vaccines, provided you have a separate space for the kittens during the time period, you will still be able to foster kittens. Provided there are no health concerns, kittens may still be introduced to the household. However, just like with introducing any cats, it takes time for them to adjust and you may see behaviors from the owned cat

emerge from the stress. Any behavior information we have (including the animal's history of living with other animals) will be disclosed to you ahead of time.