

## SPCA Foster Guide

Thank you for your interest in SPCA Westchester's foster program. Every year, SPCA Westchester places hundreds of homeless animals into foster care who are too young, too sick or injured, or too timid to thrive in a shelter environment. We rely on and greatly appreciate our foster team who share a vital role in our mission to help the many animals in our care that have specific needs.

Please read through this guide thoroughly for more information on our foster program.

---

- **Halfway and Transport Animals:** (*Needed Most*)

These animals are old enough to eat and eliminate on their own. Ages range from 6-16 weeks. These animals can benefit from basic training, learning cues such as "sit" and potty training for pups and appropriate human interactions for pups and kittens. Small puppies and kittens relieve themselves frequently, about every 1-3 hours. Puppies should not be left alone for more than 3-4 hours at a time, and when left alone, be crated or housed in a small room with no carpet. Kittens at this age eat frequently and should be offered food 3-4 times daily with access to 1-2 small litter pans. Kittens should be checked on frequently. Animals of this age can be playful and curious. It is important to puppy and kitten proof their room. See "Housing" section for proofing a room. Commitment time is 1-4 weeks, depending on age.

- **Timid Animals:**

Timid and frightened dogs and cats need to decompress often when living in a shelter environment. Most timid dogs do best when fostered with other dogs, and all timid animals do best in a quiet, adult-only home or with older kids. Typically, we ask that you do not mix foster pets and household pets; however, timid animals are an exception. The commitment time ranges from 1-4 weeks or more and is taken on a case by case basis depending on the individual animal's need.

- **Recovering and Sick Animals:**

Animals recovering from a medical procedure recover much faster in a loving home. This holds true for sick animals too. Medication or physical therapy may be required a few times a day. Sick foster animals should be kept away from household pets as many illnesses are contagious (but are cat/dog specific). Medical instructions are provided to you at the time of pickup. Commitment time ranges from 2-8 weeks, depending on medical needs.

- **Permanent Fosters:**

Senior animals with medical conditions can become rather stressed in a shelter environment. Unfortunately, they are often overlooked as well. As a permanent foster parent, you can provide a loving end-of-life home for the foster pet while SPCA covers most medical expenses. Reach out to our foster coordinator for more information.

- **Pregnant and Nursing Mothers:**

A shelter environment can be quite stressful for pregnant and nursing cats and dogs. Often, nursing mothers will stop nursing their young due to stress. Pregnant and nursing mothers should be housed in a non-stressful, quiet room through pregnancy and until the babies are roughly 5 weeks old. Mothers normally provide all care for their offspring up until kittens and pups become mobile. As soon as they begin walking (3 weeks), the babies will mess often, and their area will require

frequent cleaning. This is especially true for young puppies! Kittens are a bit cleaner. Babies can be handled at a young age for socialization. Newborn puppies and kittens are delicate and must be handled with care. Babies begin eating on their own at approximately 5-6 weeks of age and should remain with momma until 8 weeks. The commitment time can be up to 8 weeks. Moms should be separated at 8 weeks, as she will require a much-needed break and time for her milk to dry. This can take an additional 2-3 weeks.

- **Bottle and Syringe Fed Babies:**

These babies do not eat or eliminate on their own and require your help doing so. Depending on age, babies need to feed every 2-5 hours. Nighttime feedings are a must for babies under 3 weeks! Stimulation to defecate and urinate must occur prior to each meal. Bottle babies will learn to eat on their own around 5 weeks of age and are ready for adoption around 8 weeks. At this age, babies cannot regulate their body temperature and must be kept warm with a heat disc. Young babies are delicate and should be handled with care. The commitment time is between 2-8 weeks.

---

**Supplies:** SPCA Westchester is a not-for-profit organization with limited resources. Any donations of supplies are appreciated and tax deductible (*so is your foster time*)! SPCA will supply all necessities if you cannot. The following is a list of supplies you may need as a foster parent:

- Food and water dishes
- Leash, collar/harness
- Food - Hills, Science Diet
- Crate or pen
- Bedding
- Absorbable pee pads
- Chew toys and puppy toys
- Baby gates
- Litter Pans or lasagna pans for small kittens
- Non-clumping litter
- Cat toys
- Cat carrier
- Heat disc
- Bottles and miracle nipples
- KMR formula for kittens

---

**Housing:** Plan to prepare your home prior to picking up your foster pet(s) to ensure safety. Keep fosters in an area that can be disinfected with ease. Below are some suggestions for animal proofing your home.

- Block off small areas, holes, and hiding spaces (*if their heads fit, they fit*)
- Keep doors and windows closed at all times
- Wires, ropes, strings should be out of reach
- Keep lids on trash cans and toilets down
- Small items are choking hazardous and should be out of reach (hair ties, paperclips, pins, etc.)
- All cleaning supplies and hazardous chemicals should be out of reach
- Keep all plants out of reach (some plants are toxic to animals)
- Keep all medications and supplements out of reach
- If you have a cat, keep litter boxes out of reach (feces is a delicacy for some dogs!)
- NEVER leave small or young children and/or household pets with foster pets unsupervised

---

**Medical:** Foster parents should be flexible and able to transport foster pet(s) for appointments and emergencies at SPCA's Cody's Clinic any day between 9 a.m. and 4 pm. Weekend appointments are limited as we do not have a vet in-house. Appointments are scheduled as needed according to SPCA's veterinarians and type of foster. Sick or injured foster pets may require frequent appointments.

- The first appointment must be scheduled during or prior to foster pick up.
  - Unless directed otherwise, all foster animals should be kept separate from all household pets; animals can harbor contagious diseases without showing any symptoms prior to foster.
  - Unless directed otherwise, introducing household pets to foster pets will be done at your own risk. SPCA will not be medically or financially responsible for illnesses transferred from foster to owned pets.
  - All medications must be given as directed. Please do not self-medicate.
  - Please do not make any medical decisions based on outside advice. (e.g. internet, non-SPCA vet, friends, etc.).
- 

**In case of medical emergencies, SPCA Westchester is available seven days a week between the hours of 8 am and 5 pm at (914) 941-2896 ext: 111, or rush animal back to SPCA if phone goes unanswered. After hours (5pm-8am) emergencies only, please contact our Veterinary Staff at (914) 261-6881.**

---

All foster animals are the property of SPCA Westchester including any puppies or kittens that may be born while in a foster home. Foster animals, including any puppies/kittens born in foster care, may not be offered for any reason to anyone. Potential adopters must go through the adoption process at SPCA.

All medical care must be carried out at Cody's Clinic, located at SPCA Westchester. SPCA will NOT be financially responsible for any outside veterinary services performed without prior permission. SPCA Westchester will NOT be responsible for injuries acquired at the foster's home not relating to pre-existing conditions.