



Greetings foster parents! You're a Mercy Full Project Foster now!

Thank you for becoming a Mercy Full Project (MFP) Foster! We appreciate your willingness to open your heart and home to our animals in need. Your commitment and dedication allow our organization to rescue animals we would otherwise have to turn away due to limited space at our facility.

The primary goal of MFP's foster care program is to give pets individualized care, begin socialization, and prepare them for adoption. Information gathered during the foster process helps us place dogs and cats in forever homes with families who can best meet their needs.

This manual outlines the responsibilities and expectations of Mercy Full Project foster families. We know this will feel like a lot to read, but it's meant to serve as a resource throughout your foster care experience. Before taking your foster pet home, please review the overview of key responsibilities and policies. You will also be asked to read and sign the Foster Contract Agreement each time you take a new animal home.

Mercy Full Project Animal Rescue Mission Statement

We envision a world with more Empathy, Kindness and Love for all living creatures.

Mercy Full Project is a nonprofit foster-based animal rescue dedicated to rescuing homeless, neglected, and abandoned animals and rehabilitating them so that they can find loving forever homes. We educate the community and all pet parents on responsible pet parenting, including the importance of spay/neuter, obedience training, and good nutrition. To learn more, visit our About Us page: mercyfullprojects.org/about/

Greetings foster parents! You're a Mercy Full Project Foster now!.....	1
Mercy Full Project Animal Rescue Mission Statement.....	1
Overview of key responsibilities and policies.....	3
IMPORTANT MFP CONTACT INFORMATION.....	3
Preparing and dog-proofing your home:.....	4
Crate training:.....	5
House-training:.....	5
Medical Expenses:.....	6
Donations:.....	6
Facebook groups:.....	6
Vaccines:.....	7
Deworming:.....	7
Health concerns:.....	8
Vaccine reactions:.....	8
Fostering puppies:.....	9
Fostering animals with medical concerns:.....	13
Post-surgery:.....	15
General and Emergency Veterinary Care:.....	17
Emergency Medical Care:.....	17
Cleaning your home between foster animals:.....	18
Foster Program FAQs:.....	19

Overview of key responsibilities and policies

To ensure success in our foster program, we ask that you follow our general policy guidelines. We expect each foster family to provide a safe, loving home for these animals to grow and explore the world in.

Keep the following policies in mind:

1. Never let the dog run loose outside. Be sure the dog is leashed to guard against escape. Notify the rescue immediately if you have an animal escape that you cannot catch.
2. Never leave your foster dog unattended with any resident animals. Feed them separately from your resident pets and do not allow them to eat from each other's bowls.
3. Notify the facility if your foster animal has stopped eating or has a new medical symptom that could signal an illness such as a fever, diarrhea, vomiting, or itchy ears or skin.
4. When fostering an animal with a contagious illness, the animal must remain segregated from your resident pets for the duration of the stay or illness.
5. When fostering a dog or cat without any obvious medical issues, it is still important to keep them segregated from your resident pets for at least two weeks. Some diseases and illnesses take a while to present themselves and this ensures that the shelter pet, as well as your own pets, remain safe.

IMPORTANT MFP CONTACT INFORMATION

Program these staff members into your phone in case of emergencies!

Heydi, Director: 813-836-0711

Jen, Foster Coordinator: 919-815-3410

Isabelle, Adoption Assistant: 813-418-2996

Preparing and dog-proofing your home:

Taking in a foster dog requires some preparation, even if you already have dogs in your home. Foster dogs often come with very little information and we rely on you to assess their behavior as it relates to being in a home as opposed to a facility environment.

MFP will provide many supplies including a crate, food, bowls, any necessary medication, and toys. Other items you may want to have and can be provided based on availability:

A baby gate - to keep your foster dog contained in a room or section of your home

A dog bed - to have a comfortable place for them to lounge

A dog brush - for dogs with frequent grooming needs

Enzyme cleansers - a new environment and new faces could cause accidents even for those animals that are potty trained

Bitter apple spray - to discourage inappropriate chewing

Training treats - to encourage learning basic commands and good behaviors

Your home will also need to go through a certain level of dog-proofing. These are some ideas to think about as you walk through your home:

- Clear out small and sharp objects like paper clips, nails, staples, and rubber bands from low tables and floors.
- Move curtains or drapes that can be chewed or pulled off the wall out of reach.
- Move electrical cords out of reach or cover them with PVC pipe to prevent chewing.
- Keep washer and dryer units closed and always check that they are empty before using.
- Cover the trash can to keep out curious noses or purchase a dog-proof trash can.
- Install latches for cabinets where toxic cleaning supplies and medication are kept.
- Keep toilet lids closed.
- Keep all house plants out of reach.

It's also vital to get down to a dog's eye level to look for safety hazards you may have missed including small holes or tight places between furniture, and escape opportunities in your backyard fence. Never underestimate a dog's size versus the space. They will surprise you, and even if they don't make a great escape, they could seriously injure themselves trying.

Crate training:

Crate training can be an effective component of house training and must be done positively. A crate is best for nighttime sleep, can be a safe space for your foster dog to have downtime during the day, and can also limit their access to the entire house until the rules are learned. A crate should never be used as a form of punishment and a dog should never be left in a crate for an extended period (except overnight).

Set your foster dog up for success by helping them to associate good things with the crate. Start by putting treats and/or toys in the crate and encourage them to go in. Some dogs warm up to the crate slowly. If they are afraid to go in, place a treat in the crate as far as they are willing to go. After they take the treat place another treat a little farther back in the crate. Keep going until they are eating treats at the very back, then feed them their next meal in the crate with the door open so that they can walk in and out at their own pace.

Crate training a fearful dog can take days so be patient and encouraging. If a crate is properly introduced and used, your foster dog will happily enter and settle down. There are a lot of useful resources online to assist in this process.

House-training:

It's unlikely that your foster dog will be perfectly house-trained when you take them home. Most of the dogs in the foster program have lived in a shelter for a while, often with minimal walks or chances to relieve themselves outside, or they have lived outside and don't understand how to behave indoors. Be prepared for an adjustment until your foster dog gets used to you and your schedule and remain patient with them.

Our foster animals will have a better chance of being adopted if they are house-trained, so please help your foster dog to perfect good behaviors. Take your foster dog outside to go potty multiple times per day (3 to 6 times daily, or more depending on age). Initially, you may need to take them out more frequently to remind them where the door to the outside is and to reassure them that they will be taken out for potty breaks. Most dogs will give cues such as standing near the door, or sniffing the ground and walking in small circles, to indicate that they need to go out. Keeping the dog in a crate when you're not available to supervise them indoors is good practice.

If your foster dog has an accident inside the house, do not discipline or punish them. That will only teach them to fear and mistrust you. To ensure cleanliness, clean up all accidents with an enzymatic cleaner. Nature's Miracle and Simple Solution are two products containing natural enzymes that tackle tough stains and odors and remove them permanently.

Medical Expenses:

MFP covers all medical care expenses for foster pets to prepare them for adoption (spay/neuter, vaccines, microchip). If you feel your foster animal needs any emergency or additional medical care, you must contact MFP staff and receive approval from the MFP Director before taking them to a vet. MFP will not reimburse any personal expenses incurred by foster parents for unauthorized veterinary care. If deemed necessary, you will be told which veterinary practices are MFP approved and how to go about seeking treatment for your foster animal.

Donations:

Non-reimbursable expenses that you incur during your term as a foster parent, whether for supplies or medical care, may be considered tax-deductible donations. Keep all receipts and ask for an in-kind donation form once your foster is adopted. Consult a tax professional to determine whether your foster expenses are tax deductible.

Facebook groups:

Want to connect with other Fosters volunteers and staff? Join the Mercy Full Project Facebook group! This group is open to current, active volunteers, fosters, and staff members.

There are several ways for you to be a part of this community:

- Take candid, cute photos and/or videos of animals at the shelter. We can use these, along with your stories and observations, to construct posts for MFP social media channels. This helps find homes for our more difficult-to-adopt animals.
- Have non-urgent medical or behavioral questions about a foster pet? Ask it to the group and you are likely to get helpful responses.

- Want to share a happy or informative article with the group? Go ahead! We all love to learn new things relating to animals and there are so many great resources out there!

The Facebook group is a wonderful tool and a key part of our volunteer and foster program. There are a few things we ask you not to post on the Facebook page, but to instead address directly with management:

- Concerns or complaints about staff members, volunteers, or an issue at the shelter.
- Complaints, suggestions, or concerns about shelter policies, or procedures.
- In addition, we ask all group members to conduct themselves with respect and compassion toward others. MFP reserves the right to moderate comments and posts.
- No solicitation or selling of items is allowed on this page.

Vaccines:

DA2PP is the vaccine for Canine Distemper, Adenovirus Type 2, Parainfluenza and Parvovirus. (Adult dogs are typically given two vaccinations of DA2PP, the first one done upon intake and the following booster vaccine 2-3 weeks afterward).

DA2PP is given at six weeks of age or older depending on when they went through intake.

The second dose of DA2PP is given 14-21 days after the first dose. No later than 30 days after, or you will need to restart the series.

The third dose of DA2PP is given 14-21 days after the second dose. No later than 30 days after, or you will need to restart the series.

The fourth dose of DA2PP is given 14-21 days after the third dose. No later than 30 days after, or you will need to restart the series. This vaccine may not be given if the puppy was vaccinated after 18 weeks old with the third DA2PP.

The Bordetella vaccine is given to help protect against the virus that causes kennel cough. This is given once when they arrive at the shelter, a booster is recommended every six months.

Deworming:

Pyrantel is for roundworms. You might see these pass in the stool after treatment – they will look like spaghetti. Pyrantel is given at two weeks of age or older, depending on when they went through intake. The second dose of Pyrantel is given 14-21 days after the first dose. The series is repeated every 2 to 3 weeks until the puppies are ready for adoption. If you are more than 21 days late, you will need to restart the dosing series. Panacur is for hookworms. Hookworms can cause an animal to be lethargic, refuse to eat, and lose weight.

Drontal or Cestex is for tapeworms. You will see rice-looking segments in their stools.

Drontal or Cestex is given at surgery time if needed (noted by a foster parent).

Tapeworms usually do not cause significant problems and may be treated at the time of altering.

Health concerns:

The following is a list of common medical issues you may encounter as a foster parent with your dog or cat. This information is not meant to be extensive, it is to give you an idea of what common ailments may look like and how they may be resolved. This is not a substitute for the expert advice of a trained medical professional.

If your foster pet displays any of these symptoms, call the shelter immediately:

- Sneezing, and/or congestion with green or yellow discharge from the nose and or eyes
- Coughing, wheezing, or heavy breathing
- Diarrhea or vomiting – this can be life-threatening to puppies!
- Straining to urinate or defecate – this can be an emergency!
- Bleeding from any part of the body
- Lethargy – the animal seems sleepy all the time
- Fever
- Paralysis
- Extreme change in attitude or behavior
- Not eating or drinking regularly
- Temperature too low (below 98°F) or too high (above 104°F)

Please have specifics ready to give when contacting the facility. The more information that you can share with us regarding what is going on with the animal, the easier it will be for us to determine a diagnosis for them. Bring a sample with you if the pet is

experiencing diarrhea as it may assist us with finding the underlying cause. You can refrigerate a Ziploc bag for up to 24 hours.

Vaccine reactions:

- Vaccine reactions can include, but are not limited to:
- Limping
- Not eating or drinking the normal amounts for one to two days
- Lethargy
- Pain at the site of injection
- Unwillingness to play
- Low-grade fever
- If any of these symptoms do not improve within 48 hours of the injection, please contact the shelter.
- More serious reactions happen shortly after injection and include:
- Severe vomiting and/or diarrhea
- Facial swelling
- Difficulty breathing

The animal will need to be seen by a vet. Contact the MFP Director immediately.

Fostering puppies:

We see a lot of puppies come into the facility. Those puppies that are especially young require greater care due to their weak immune systems and should be in a home environment instead of the facility. Being in a foster home also increases their socialization skills, allows for closer observation as they grow and basic training can start earlier.

Puppies from birth through four weeks:

Raising puppies is fun and incredibly rewarding, but it also requires hard work and close monitoring. Puppies at this age are very delicate and require around-the-clock feeding and care, much like a human baby. Puppies at this age are susceptible to what we refer to as feeding puppy syndrome (hypothermia and hypoglycemia). Being hyper-vigilant is important, even the slightest sign of illness can quickly become life-threatening.

Supply list for neonatal care:

Esbilac or GNC formula (preferred brands)

Heating pad, no auto shut-off

Baby wipes
Puppy pads
Towels/blankets
Gram scale
Human baby bottles have, a slow flow
A stuffed animal for cuddling

Newborn to 2-week care:

Puppies are kept on a heating source at all times with the heating pad on low. Puppies are fed at least every three hours, even if sleeping at feeding time. The formula should be made at a 1:3 ratio regardless of the recommendation. Formula should be warm, but not hot. An average puppy at this age eats 0.5 ounces to 2 ounces per feeding or one cc per ounce of weight, depending on the breed and size of the puppies.

Puppies this young and up, until their eyes open, require stimulation to go potty after feeding. A warm cotton ball or baby wipe is used to rub their privates and cause them to urinate and defecate. Avoid bathing but baby wipes can be used to clean the puppies as needed.

Weigh puppies once daily and chart to assess growth accurately. Let MFP staff know in the group chat if any puppy is losing weight or not gaining over 2 or more days. The following signs and symptoms should be considered emergencies and staff must be notified immediately:

White or gray gums
Cold to the touch
Very watery or explosive diarrhea
Not eating, even missing one meal
Lethargic or unresponsive
Struggling to breathe

2 to 4-week care:

Eyes are opening now and puppies are beginning to try to stand up and move around some. Heat should be provided, but they should be able to move away if needed.

Puppies continue to eat at least every three hours. At 3 to 4 weeks old, they can go to every four hours, and by four weeks old can make it 4 to 6 hours overnight without a bottle. An average puppy at this age eats 2 to 4 ounces per feeding or one cc per ounce of weight.

The pups can urinate and defecate on their own.

Weigh once daily and chart to assess growth. Puppies at this age may appear to be thriving and growing, but without measuring food and output, there is no way to know with certainty how your puppies are doing. Because puppies will go downhill very quickly, often within 24 hours, it is best to weigh each puppy daily, regardless of outward visible health.

For all puppies in this age group:

Avoid too many guests. Minimizing exposure will help keep the puppies healthy.

Puppies for the most part should be kept indoors. Starting at three weeks if you have a trusted outdoor area (like your yard) they may have some supervised outdoor time but only for short periods.

Once puppies are three weeks old, they can be bathed to be kept clean but should be blow-dried and fed immediately after.

4 to 8-week care:

Continue monitoring the puppies' weight daily. They should be weighed using a baby scale or a human scale that can read fractions of a pound. Puppies should be steadily gaining weight. Any puppy that loses half a pound or more in 24 hours should be brought to the shelter's attention by calling the main number at 813-836-0711.

Supply list:

Baby or human scale

Heating pad

Thermometer

Puppy food, pate style, wet, kibble, formula

The following should be considered red flags:

Decrease in appetite.

Diarrhea that is not improving in 72 hours

Very watery or explosive diarrhea, even once

Losing interest in playing with littermates

Suddenly being "bullied" by littermates

The following should be considered emergencies:

White or gray gums

Cold to the touch

Hot to the touch

Very watery or explosive diarrhea

Not eating, even missing one meal

Lethargic or unresponsive

At 4-5 weeks of age, puppies begin the weaning process and start to eat gruel. Gruel is canned food, pate style not chunky, blended ideally with puppy milk replacer (MFP recommended brand is Esbilac) or water to make a thin paste. If your puppies eat the gruel well and seem hungry, they can transition to canned puppy food, not thinned into gruel. (Royal Canin puppy mousse is an excellent food to use as gruel for the early weaning process because it already has a formula in it. It is the perfect consistency, and can be found at most pet stores.) Puppies should have easy access to fresh food and water.

Dehydration:

Puppies stay hydrated by drinking water and eating canned food. Most puppies will adequately hydrate themselves. You can do a quick elasticity test by pinching a little skin between your thumb and forefinger on your puppy's back. When you release it, it should pop back into place immediately. Puppies should always have access to clean water. If you are concerned that your puppy is becoming, or is dehydrated, try using a syringe or small bottle of water to encourage drinking. Alert the shelter if there is no improvement within 2 hours.

Temperature:

Your puppy's temperature does not need to be taken regularly. However, if you are concerned a puppy is too cold or running a fever, it is best to take a rectal temperature. Using petroleum jelly or a similar substance, insert the thermometer into the rectum. A normal temperature is between 100.5 and 102. Contact the shelter if the temperature is outside of this range.

Hypoglycemia:

Puppies will quickly become hypoglycemic if they miss even one meal. Puppies must eat 3-4 times per day and always have access to fresh food. If puppies become even slightly hypoglycemic, they can begin to go downhill very quickly.

Signs of hypoglycemia are wobbliness, listlessness, or seizures. If you see any of these symptoms, try feeding with a syringe or small bottle. If there is no improvement within 1-2 hours, contact the shelter.

Anemia:

Puppies are also susceptible to anemia. Anemia is a loss of red blood cells that in puppies is most often caused by an infestation of fleas or intestinal worms. The easiest way to check for anemia is to look for white or pale gums. Normal puppy gum color is close to salmon pink. If your puppy's gums are white or gray contact the shelter at 813-836-0711 as this may be an emergency. If you are concerned your puppy's gums are not pink enough, send a photo in the group chat.

Parvovirus:

Parvovirus is a serious, highly contagious, life-threatening condition that affects the intestinal tract and causes severe vomiting and diarrhea. The key to survival is early detection.

The signs and symptoms are:

Decrease or loss of appetite

Vomiting

Diarrhea, in conjunction with one of the above

Lethargy

If your puppy is experiencing any of these symptoms, alert the shelter.

"Meatball" Test:

A healthy puppy will likely be excited to eat a treat. If you are concerned your puppy may have Parvo, parasites, a fever, or respiratory infection, offer a "meatball" of canned puppy food. If they refuse to eat it, they may be sick. Contact the shelter immediately.

Activity:

It is important to recognize a lethargic puppy from a tired puppy. Puppies will normally play, play, play, then get tired and sleep for some time. If the puppy is going through this cycle, that is normal. However, if the puppy is lethargic for any extended amount of time, please notify the shelter.

Fostering animals with medical concerns:

Canine heartworm disease:

Heartworm disease is a serious and potentially fatal disease in both dogs and cats. It is caused by foot-long worms (Heartworms) that live in the heart, lungs, and associated

vessels of affected pets, causing severe lung disease, heart failure, and damage to other organs in the body. Heartworms are transmitted by infected mosquitoes. Having your pet on a heartworm preventative, using a natural (dog-safe) mosquito repellent, and avoiding times of day when mosquitoes are at their peak will help prevent transmission and infection.

Once an animal is bitten by an infected mosquito, it takes approximately six months for the larva to mature into an adult heartworm, and an animal will not test positive until that time. During the early period of heartworm infection, most dogs are asymptomatic. Signs of mild heartworm disease may include a cough, reluctance to exercise, weight loss, decreased appetite, and fatigue after moderate exercise. More severe disease may cause heart failure, severe coughing, a swollen abdomen (due to fluid accumulation), labored breathing, and collapse. Every cat and dog in this area should be on heartworm prevention medication.

Cage Rest:

Sometimes we have animals in our care that have undergone surgeries or medical procedures that require cage rest. This typically involves placing them in a crate or kennel for the majority of the day and monitoring closely when they are outside of that kennel. Potty breaks outside are to be done on a leash to limit their activity. The length of time the animal will be on cage rest is dependent on the extent and type of injury.

Limiting the animal's activity allows them to heal faster and potentially prevent many other future medical problems. Rest in a foster home vs. the shelter allows the animal a quiet place to decompress while receiving individualized care, attention, and monitoring.

Ringworm:

Ringworm is a fungal skin infection, which is somewhat common in cats, and occasionally seen in dogs. It is highly contagious, can spread between animals, and is zoonotic (transmitted between species from animals to humans or from humans to animals), as well. Classic signs of ringworm include skin lesions that typically appear on the head, ears, and forelimbs.

Ringworm causes patchy, circular areas of hair loss, which may be flaky and red in the center. In mild cases, there may be localized areas of redness or simply dandruff, while more severe infections can spread over the animal's entire body. It is also possible for a cat to carry ringworm spores and not show any symptoms whatsoever. Ringworm is spread through direct contact with an infected animal or indirectly via fomites such as

bedding, dishes, and other materials contaminated with the skin cells or hairs of infected animals. Ringworm spores are difficult to destroy and can survive in the environment for over a year.

Ringworm Treatment:

1. House separately from noninfected animals.
2. Treatment typically takes 6 to 8 weeks and can take up to four months.
3. Administer lime sulfur dips twice weekly, for two weeks. Recheck.
4. Continue this pattern until the skin is normal.
5. Give oral medication as prescribed.
6. Apply topical ointment if prescribed.

Dipping procedure:

1. Mix lime sulfur dip according to the instructions on the bottle.
2. Apply lubricant to protect the patient's eyes.
3. Soak the patient to the skin, one patient at a time. Use a cotton ball to apply the dip to the face and ears, avoiding the eyes.
4. Do not rinse off the dip. Let the animal air dry.

The dip will help reduce the number of fungal spores being shed by the animal and help prevent the spread to other animals. Continue treatment until cleared by a veterinarian with a DTM (dermatophyte test medium) culture.

Post-surgery:

While spay and neuter surgery is a safe and routine procedure, you must keep a close watch on your pet for two weeks following surgery for any potential complications. Check your foster pet's surgical site at least twice per day to ensure the site is clean and healing well. They need appropriate care, including a clean and dry place indoors to rest and recover. If you have any questions or concerns about how your foster is recovering from their spay or neuter surgery, please message in the group chat, including photos or videos if necessary, or call MFP at 813-836-0711.

What to expect when you get home:

Your pet may be groggy when you get home and sleep more than normal for approximately 24 hours after surgery. He or she may also be agitated due to the after-effects of anesthesia. We strongly recommend keeping your foster separated from other animals and confined in a crate or small room the night after surgery.

Post-surgery instructions:

Follow these rules to ensure your foster pet's successful recovery:

1. Give your pet free access to fresh water once you return home. It is important to keep your pet hydrated after surgery.
2. One to two hours after pick up, feed your pet about half of what they would normally eat. Anesthesia can cause an upset stomach so some animals may not eat for 24 hours post-surgery. Do not change your pet's diet or give treats or table scraps during this time as this could mask post-surgery complications.
3. Check your pet's incision site daily until it has fully healed. A small amount of redness, and or swelling is normal. For female puppies and dogs, watch for discharge or pus at the spay incision site and contact the shelter if you notice any drainage or bad smell.
4. Males have a scrotal neuter, which leaves a small incision open so that the surgery site can drain. They may have small drops of blood/fluid that will drain from their incision site for 2 to 3 days after surgery. This is normal but contact the shelter if there is a bad odor.
5. Your pet was given a pain injection. This will last for several hours, perhaps 1-2 days. Please do not give your pet any additional pain relievers as mixing medications can be fatal.
6. All animals have internal dissolvable sutures unless otherwise noted by the veterinary staff. This means that your pet will not have to return to the shelter as the sutures will dissolve on their own. The incision is closed with glue and the green tattoo is to show that they have been spayed or neutered.
7. Prevent your pet from licking the surgery site as it can reopen the incision and cause a painful infection. Putting an E collar (cone) or soft cone/inflatable collar on your pet may help with the licking.
8. No excessive running, jumping, or playing for seven days after surgery. Too much activity can cause the surgery site to open or become swollen. This means no visiting the dog park, no solo yard play, and no training classes. Take outside on a leash for potty breaks to limit activity.
9. Do not allow your pet to get wet for two weeks after surgery, as this could cause the dissolvable suture to dissolve before it should. This means no swimming, no beach, and no baths for at least two weeks after surgery. Wet wipes can be used for paws and spot cleaning of other areas.
10. Keep your pet away from other animals, especially those who may not have been sterilized yet. Unaltered males may continue to try and mount newly spayed females, especially those that were in heat. This can cause life-threatening complications, so it is very important to keep any at-risk animals separated. Additionally, newly neutered

males can still impregnate unspayed females for up to 30 days after their neuter surgery.

11. If your pet received a microchip today, it was inserted under the skin, between the shoulder blades. Do not briskly or firmly rub the area between the shoulder blades for the first few days, as it could cause the microchip to dislodge or migrate to other areas of the body.

Complications:

What you see on the day of surgery is what we consider normal. If you see any of the following signs, please call the shelter immediately at 813-836-0711 to schedule a recheck.

- Bleeding
- Decreased body temperature
- Diarrhea
- Lethargy
- Loss of appetite
- Pale gums
- Vomiting
- Lack of urination or defecation after 2 to 3 days

General and Emergency Veterinary Care:

MFP covers all approved medical expenses for the animals in the Foster Program. All emergency or additional medical care must be approved by the shelter's Director. See below for emergency care instructions.

You will be contacted with instructions for any general medical care including vaccinations and spay/neuter appointments.

Once the foster animal is in your care, you are responsible for transporting them to the shelter, or veterinarian for necessary medical care. Always make sure the pup has a harness or collar and leash that is secure. Scared or spooked pups can easily get away so use due diligence, especially when transporting the pet.

Should foster dogs require care from veterinary specialists, MFP will arrange appointments with approved veterinarians in the area.

Foster parents must not medicate or shave any animals in their care without prior approval and direction from the shelter.

Emergency Medical Care:

If you think there is something wrong with your foster animal that requires emergency medical attention:

Call the shelter's main number at 813–836–0711

Send a message in the group chat tagging Heydi and MFP staff

Call the Foster Coordinator

Call the Adoption Coordinator

Any emergency medical care obtained without following this procedure will not be covered by MFP and will be at the sole expense of the foster.

Cleaning your home between foster animals:

The joy of letting one foster animal go to their new home is knowing that you are now available to take another from the shelter that is waiting for a foster home. Please consider the following guidelines when transitioning between animals.

Deep cleaning in between fosters is important to the next animal's health. All bedding should be washed in hot water with bleach or oxy clean added. Food and water bowls can go in the dishwasher or use diluted bleach to sanitize and they will be clean and ready for your next fosters. Vacuum and spot-clean any carpets or area rugs. If you have a carpet cleaner, you should use it between fosters. Vacuum or sweep and mop your floors. Once the floor is dry, mop again with a bleach/water solution (one cup of bleach to 1 gallon of water) and let it sit for 10 minutes then rinse with hot water or steam mop. All other surfaces should be wiped down with a bleach/water solution, or Clorox cleanup, including the bottom 3 feet of your walls. Any other linens or fabric furniture surfaces should be vacuumed, spot-cleaned, or laundered.

Tip: Using bleach around animals can cause respiratory issues for them so only use it when the animals are not in the room and rinse well with fresh water before returning the animals to the space. Clorox makes a bleach-free disinfectant cleaner (CloroxPro EcoClean) that works great for daily cleaning, and in between fosters cleaning, as it is pet-friendly while still working as an effective germ and virus killer.

Foster Program FAQs:

How do I become a foster parent?

Becoming a MFP foster parent is simple. Start by completing the online application. You will then be contacted via text by our Foster Coordinator. They will ask you to submit a walkthrough video of your home and yard. More information will be sent to you after that to start your fostering journey.

What is required of me as a foster parent?

Your job as a foster parent is to provide a safe, nurturing environment for your foster animal to decompress, heal, and flourish in. You are helping your foster to adapt to life outside of a shelter environment or whatever unhealthy living situation they may have come from. You are responsible for ensuring that your foster animal receives any scheduled medical treatments on time. We ask you to help in training as well - potty, crate, basic commands, and leash - to help prepare them for their new homes.

Our fosters also work as a team with our Adoption Coordinators, providing pertinent and important information about the animal to help us find their best matches with potential adopters. You are required to send frequent updates and photos to keep us informed of their progress and to assist us in providing accurate online profiles.

How long am I expected to foster?

We ask that you commit to fostering your dog until they are adopted. Because we never know how long that can be, we understand when that is not always possible. If at any time you need to return your foster due to travel, time restrictions, or if they are no longer a good fit in your home, send a message in your group chat so we can help you find a replacement foster.

What supplies do I need to provide myself?

None! Mercy Full Project provides all foster parents with items needed to care for their foster animal. Crates, food, food/water bowls, toys, bedding, and treats are supplied throughout the fostering period. Any supplies you can provide on your own are greatly appreciated and allow us to spread our limited shelter supplies further. Note: Items you provide can be considered a tax-deductible donation (save your receipts).

How do I get a foster dog?

Once you are an approved foster, you will receive an invitation to come to the shelter to meet our available animals. When you find the right match, we send you home with the foster animal and all the items needed to care for them. Each time a new foster animal

is taken home, we ask you to complete a foster contract and connect you with staff via a group chat specific to your foster animal.

Can my foster dog interact with my resident pets?

If you have dogs of your own, you must bring them to the shelter to meet any potential foster animals to ensure they get along. Once home, it is recommended to keep your fosters separated from your resident pets for a short time to be certain everyone is healthy as shelter environments can have contagious diseases that may be transferred to your pets. When ready to integrate your fosters with your pets, make slow introductions until all animals get used to each other. You must supervise all interactions between your foster and resident animals for safety purposes.

Can my children interact with the foster dog?

We encourage your children to have supervised interaction with foster animals. Teething puppies have sharp teeth and kittens/cats can scratch if startled or overhandled. Even the mildest-tempered dog can be unpredictable when around children. Caution and direct supervision are a must!

Who do I contact if I need help?

You have a group of people that are here to support your fostering journey. If you need help that is not emergent, you can send a message in your foster-specific group chat.

If there is an emergency with your foster animal, follow these steps:

- 1) Message the group chat.
- 2) If no immediate response, call your Foster Coordinator, Jen. 919-815-3410
- 3) If no response, call MFP Director, Heydi. 813-836-0711
- 4) If it is a Facebook Messenger chat, call the group. If it is a text group, try calling the other numbers in the group.

If my foster animal gets sick, do I take them to my vet?

No! All veterinary care must be provided through MFP. Foster parents are not permitted to seek veterinary care from outside clinics. Any visits to outside veterinarians that are not pre-approved will be the financial responsibility of the foster parent.

Do my resident pets have to be up-to-date on their vaccines?

Yes! For everyone's protection and safety, your resident pets are required to be up-to-date on vaccines. They must also be spayed and/or neutered.

What if I have to go out of town unexpectedly?

Contact the Foster Coordinator as soon as possible so that we can find another foster for your foster pet. If there is time before your foster animal needs a new foster home, you can message in your group chat, the large Messenger foster group chat, or the Facebook Foster and Volunteer group to see if someone else is available to take over. If you find someone that is able, they must already be an approved MFP foster or they will need to go through the application process with us prior to taking your foster animal. Be sure to communicate with your Foster Coordinator before allowing your foster to be transferred to anyone else, even temporarily.

What if I don't think a prospective adopter is a good match?

We value your opinion as the foster. Please communicate openly and honestly with your Adoption Coordinator about what kind of home you think the animal needs so we can pre-screen our applicants accordingly. We encourage our fosters to play an active role in the screening process so that potential issues are recognized and addressed sooner rather than later. If participating in a Meet & Greet, please remember your role at that time is as the foster and you are meant to share the animal's personality, schedule, behaviors, etc. You are there to observe during the meet, not interject your opinion, however, afterward you will be asked for your thoughts. **Please note that you will need to articulate a specific reason why you feel the match is not good.**

Can I adopt my foster dog?

Yes! However, it is crucial you think through the decision carefully so that you are not making a decision to keep the animal solely because you think it will be too difficult to let it go. Trust us; it gets easier after the first time and helping to find the best match for the animal makes it easier to say goodbye. Adopters often stay in touch and watching your former foster animal flourish in its new home is extremely rewarding.

NOTE: Being approved to foster does not mean you are approved to adopt or are guaranteed to adopt your foster.

If you decide you would like to adopt, please submit an adoption application and contact the Adoption Coordinator for further instructions.

Do I have to use the crate for my foster dog?

YES! We cannot guarantee that a dog is housebroken, won't chew your items, and won't hurt itself when unattended. The safest way to protect your home and the dog is to use the crate. ***Mercy Full Project cannot be held responsible for damage done by a dog left unattended and uncrated. We also cannot reimburse any vet bills incurred if your own pet is injured by an uncrated and unattended foster dog.***

Please keep in mind that your foster dog's future adopter may be looking for a crate-trained dog.

What might be some examples of a good crate placement? Especially if the house has multiple floors and is pretty spacious.

You may want to consider keeping the crate in the living area when you go to work and either moving it to the bedroom with you at night, or having a second crate in the bedroom. If crated during the day, you can play music or put the TV on to assist with any separation anxiety that your foster dog may have. Some dogs like to have a sheet or blanket placed over the crate as well.

What if my resident pet gets sick from my foster pet?

We do our best to make sure this does not happen! Nonetheless, we strongly suggest that all your pets be current on their vaccinations, use flea & tick prevention, and have the bordetella vaccine (for kennel cough). In order to prevent your pet from getting intestinal worms (which are passed through the dog's stool), you should pick up each dog's stool immediately.

Can I rename my foster dog?

Not officially. You may call the animal another name or nickname at home but when communicating with MFP staff and in the foster group chats, you must use the animals MFP assigned name. In addition, all of the paperwork for Mercy Full Project animals is in the name that they are assigned. Adopters can rename an animal after completing the adoption process.

****** Thank you again for becoming a part of the MFP Family as a foster! We cannot do all that we do for animals in need without you! ******