



SPCA Florida Foster Parent Orientation

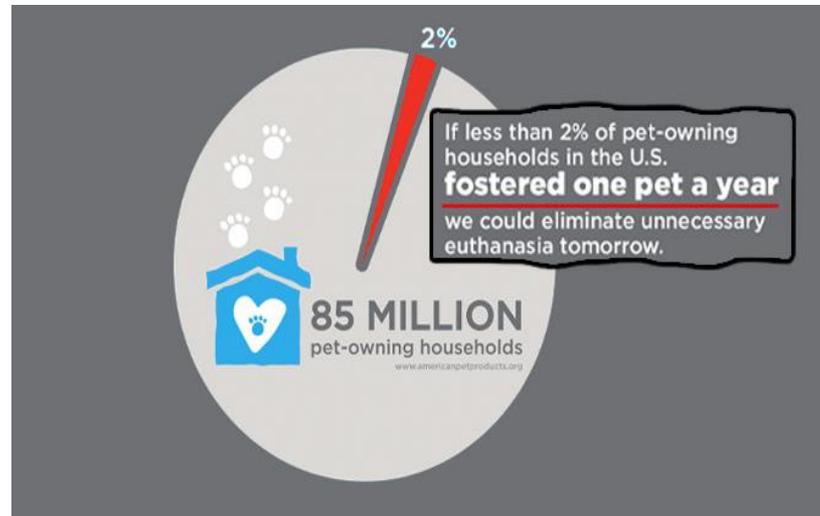
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Fostering with SPCA Florida

Thank you for your interest in joining the SPCA Florida foster team! The following is intended as a guide to help you know what to expect as you begin your foster journey with us. At the end there is a small quiz to register you as a foster parent. We look forward to working with you!



About SPCA Florida

SPCA Florida is a no-kill non-profit organization located in Lakeland, Florida.

We were created in 1979 and have gradually expanded over those years, now taking in over 6,000 animals per year and adding a full-service medical center treating owned pets

The foster department is a part of the Adoption Center, which houses our animals who are available for adoption, our surrender department and a dedicated team of veterinary staff to work with onsite and foster animals

We take in animals from our community and local Animal Control, and our mission is to end the plight of homeless animals in Polk County by 2025



What is foster?

Simply, foster homes are needed so that animals can be in a home until they are ready for adoption, as opposed to living in a kennel onsite

Predominantly this is for age-related reasons – the bulk of fostering is kittens and puppies who are too young for spay/neuter and adoption

- Sometimes it is for medical care or to help a stressed animal decompress

SPCA Florida acts as your guide throughout your fostering experience, offering advice, medical care and support

- Your primary contact is with the foster department, who triage all questions and concerns with the onsite veterinarian. We are here 7 days a week and provide an emergency number should you have an after-hours issue

SPCA Florida covers all medication and vaccines for your foster animal, and can provide additional supplies when requested

Once your foster is healthy and/or old enough for adoption, they return to the shelter for spay/neuter and adoption. You did it!



Why foster?

Fostering is an amazing way to give back by providing a warm, safe, loving home to animals in their time of need

By providing a home, you allow the team at SPCA to have more space and resources to take in more animals who otherwise have an uncertain future.

- Therefore, you are saving not only the animals in your home, but many more

Families are encouraged to foster! Teaching children about the care of animals helps teach them responsibility and is a great way to connect as a family

Fostering is great for people who travel frequently or are not in a place to take on an animal full time – you can take care of animals in need on your schedule, and only sign up to take on fosters when it suits you!



Who can foster?

Anyone can foster!

Fostering can be for any household set up – couples, families, roommates and solo adults can all find joy in becoming foster parents. We will provide you with advice and support throughout to help familiarize you with caring for your fosters, but basic pet knowledge is a bonus

There are just a few requirements:

- You must be over the age of 18 to be the primary foster parent, but older children and teens are encouraged to help
- You must have access to reliable transportation to visit SPCA Florida for vaccines and medical appointments
- You must have email access to be able to communicate effectively with the foster department



Common misconceptions of Foster

False: Foster is a way to “trial” an animal!

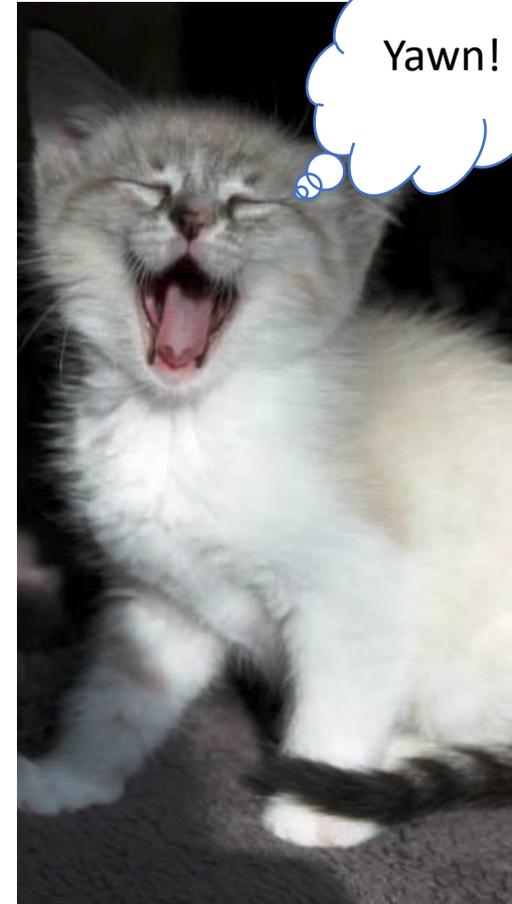
True: Whilst some foster parents do adopt, most foster to save as many lives as they are able. The foster animal you take may not be the right match for your household long-term, but that’s okay!

False: I’ll be bringing home a “perfect” animal!

True: The animal you take home will require some extra work – that is why it needs foster! Be it medication, socialization or monitoring as it grows, you will need to commit time to your foster pets.

False: Foster is easy!

True: Fostering takes patience and dedication, and can be challenging at times. It takes a special person to be a foster parent!



Fostering Kittens

Kittens are our most common foster need, due to the many, many unaltered felines in Polk County. They are usually between the ages of 4 and 8 weeks old, and may or may not have momma cat with them. We work with local Animal Control and members of the public to take these kitties in, help them get healthy and strong, and eventually find adoptive homes for them.

Kittens can vary in the amount of care they need dependent on their age and whether momma is with them or not. Our foster requests will outline what type of care they need, but older kittens or those with moms are fine to be left alone throughout the day whilst their foster parents go to work.

Some kittens may come home with medication or need additional care, or you may find that an illness develops after they enter your home. SPCA are here to support you if that is the case

Once the kittens are big enough for surgery they return to the shelter to be altered and find their forever home. If your kittens have a mom with them, she may return with them or a little before, and will be spayed and placed up for adoption just like her babies.



Fostering Kittens: Supplies needed

- Litter box and non-clumping clay litter
- Food and water bowls
- Dye-free kibble and pate-style wet food
- Blankets, bedding etc
- Toys and enrichment
- Kittens, or moms with kittens, should always be transported in a carrier – SPCA will loan this to you when you collect!

SPCA may be able to help with some of these items, but our ability to help is dependent on donations



Fostering Kittens: First two weeks

These first weeks are the most critical time with your foster kittens – if they are harboring any illness, this is when you are most likely to see it. We recommend monitoring their weight, eating habits, and development, and keeping them segregated from your pets until this period is done. If mom is present a segregated room is especially important so she can feel safe whilst she raises her babies.

When ready, slowly introduce to the rest of the home. Remember, kittens will always find trouble, so don't forget to kitten-proof your home!

Friends, neighbors, children, and kitty-friendly pets are all welcome to meet your kittens! The more they experience at a young age, the better, as it will make them well rounded adults.



Stages of Kitten Development

Teeny Tinies and early Teeny Weanies need to be with mom or are “bottle babies”, needing to be fed every 3 hours

At 4-5 weeks, kittens start to eat on their own

By 6 weeks kittens can be separated from mom if needed

At 8+ weeks (and 2lbs) they are ready for surgery and adoption

TEENY TINIES The tiniest, most vulnerable kittens require gentle and frequent care.

<p>NEWBORN</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • umbilical cord attached, eyes closed, ears folded • can't regulate body temp. 	<p>1 WEEK</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eyes closed, ears folded, no umbilical cord • eyes open at 8-12 days 	<p>2 WEEKS</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eyes completely open, blue color • wobbly on their feet
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TEENY WEANIES As kittens age, you'll help them reach important developmental milestones.

<p>3 WEEKS</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • incisors emerging, ears unfolded • discovering litterbox 	<p>4 WEEKS</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • canines emerging • vision improving; walking confidently 	<p>5 WEEKS</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • premolars emerging • weaning slowly onto wet kitten food
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BIG KIDS CLUB These social, independent, and coordinated kittens are almost ready for adoption.

<p>6 WEEKS</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all milk (deciduous) teeth have emerged • eating confidently 	<p>7 WEEKS</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transitioning to adult eye color • coordinated and playful 	<p>8 WEEKS</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • once 2 pounds, kittens can be spayed/neutered and placed in their forever home!
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Bottle Babies

Bottle babies are kittens who are less than 4 weeks old who enter SPCA Florida without a mom

Their teeth are not yet developed and they are unable to hold on to calories for long periods of time, so, like human babies, they require a bottle every 3-4 hours, 24 hours a day

Foster parents for bottle babies are highly, highly valued but not many people are able to commit to feeding throughout the day and waking in the night.

For those who are, foster staff are more than happy to train and guide through the experience, as well as provide supplies

Bottle baby fostering is tough, as kittens mortality rate is significantly higher without mom. Wherever possible kittens always have a better chance at survival with mom to feed them, and keeping them together is always preferable



Kitten Ailments

Ailment	What does it look like?	How is it treated?
Upper Respiratory Infection (URI)	Nasal discharge accompanied by sneezing and sometimes ocular discharge. Your kitten is likely to feel “dumpy” and may not be eating its normal amount.	Antibiotics, nebulizing
Conjunctivitis	Colored, cloudy or clear discharge from the tear duct. Often accompanied by squinting and eye redness.	Topical treatment to the eye, such as Terramycin
Worms such as rounds or tapes	Spaghetti or rice in kittens stool. Photographs and a fecal float will help diagnose	Oral dewormers given once by foster staff
Protozoa’s such as Coccidia or Giardia	Diarrhea with no visible worms, kitten not gaining weight, blood or mucus in feces.	Course of oral dewormers. Litter box must be scrubbed daily to prevent reinfection
Fleas	Small black bugs in fur	For kittens under 8 weeks old, topical flea treatment cannot be applied. Fosters should use a flea comb and bath to remove fleas. Ask how!
Ringworm	Patches of hairloss, most commonly on ears, toes and in armpits, caused by fungus	Bi-weekly bathing, topical ointment and repeated trips to the shelter for plate-pulls
Panleukopenia	A rare but very serious illness attacking the GI system, causing diarrhea, vomiting, lethargy, and inappetence	Onsite hospitalization usually required. Virus is highly contagious and very hardy, remaining in fabrics and soil for years.

Fostering Puppies

Puppies enter SPCA less frequently than kittens, and are more likely to have moms with them. Puppies are adorable to watch grow and learn, but will require more hands-on time and a dedicated space in your home

Just like kittens, puppies will need to be with you until they are at least 8 weeks old and ready to come back for surgery and adoption

Some momma's may stay with her puppies until they return for surgery; others may feel ready to come back sooner. Regardless, mom will be spayed and placed up for adoption onsite just like her puppies!



Fostering Puppies: Supplies needed

- Food and water bowls
- Dye-free kibble and pate-style wet food
- Blankets, bedding etc
- Toys and enrichment
- Pop up crate is recommended (and may be borrowed from SPCA)
- Puppy Pads

SPCA may be able to help with some of these items, but our ability to help is dependent on donations



Fostering Puppies: First two weeks

Again, we recommend that puppies go into their own space when they arrive at your home. This is especially important if mom is present so she has a safe space to raise her babies.

- Remember, puppies are messy! Make sure you can easily clean their living area

Once ready, puppies can be introduced to the rest of the home. Puppies are only allowed in fully-fenced yards as they are not fully vaccinated and susceptible to illness that may be in the outside world. You may not walk your puppy outside of your home, but can begin to work on potty or pee-pad training.

Just like kittens, exposing puppies to friends, family and daily household life helps them to adapt easier once they get older



Stages of Puppy Development



Puppies less than 4 weeks old will need bottle feeding, and less than 2 weeks have limited mobility or autonomy

4+ weeks is the fun, playful puppy stage!

Puppies must be 8 weeks to have their spay/neuter surgery, as this is when it is safe to anesthetize them.



Common Puppy Ailments

Ailment	What does it look like?	How is it treated?
Upper Respiratory Infection (URI)	Nasal discharge accompanied by sneezing and sometimes ocular discharge. Your puppy is likely to feel “dumpy” and may not be eating its normal amount.	Antibiotics, nebulizing
Worms such as roundworms or tapeworms	Spaghetti or rice in puppies stool. Photographs and a fecal float will help diagnose	Oral dewormers given once by foster or veterinary staff
Protozoa’s such as Coccidia or Giardia	Diarrhea with no visible worms, kitten not gaining weight, blood or mucus in feces.	Course of oral dewormers. Litter box must be scrubbed daily to prevent reinfection
Fleas	Small black bugs in fur	For puppies under 8 weeks old, topical flea treatment cannot be applied. Fosters should use a flea comb and bath to remove fleas. Ask how!
Ringworm	Patches of hairloss, most commonly on ears, toes and in armpits, caused by fungus	Bi-weekly bathing, topical ointment and repeated trips to the shelter for plate-pulls
Parvovirus	A rare but very serious illness attacking the GI system, causing diarrhea, vomiting, lethargy, and inappetence	Onsite hospitalization usually required. Virus is highly contagious and very hardy, remaining in fabrics and soil for years.

Fostering Cats

Adult cats should have a room all to themselves, with a set up with everything they need. Spare bedrooms work well!

- If your foster cat is social, they may wish to explore the house. Please make sure they stay inside and any meetings with resident animals should be conducted with care.

Adult cats usually go to foster for medical reasons, such as recovery after dentals procedures, amputations or flea-allergic dermatitis.

- This means they usually have medication and will need to come into the shelter for check ups with the veterinarian

Cats are usually in foster for a couple of weeks before returning for adoption.



Fostering Dogs

Dogs usually enter foster for medical reasons, such as recovering from surgery, allergies or illness. They are usually in foster for a couple of weeks and need medication and check ups with the veterinarian.

- We do not place dogs in foster homes unless it is determined by staff that they need to be fostered prior to adoption. If you are looking to adopt a specific breed or type of dog, we recommend connecting with our adoptions team

Before going home, we like the whole family to meet with the canine – this ensures that everyone is comfortable with each other before they enter the house

Our canines may have restrictions around what type of home they would do best in. We do this to ensure that everyone is happy and has the best chance of success



Fostering Dogs

If you have resident canines:

- It is essential that all the dogs meet at the shelter before you take your foster dog home. This is to ensure everyone gets along
- If it's a good meet, the dog can come home same day. Be sure to remove anything that the dogs may argue over (such as toys, food, or beds)
- The dogs should not be left alone together unsupervised. SPCA can provide crates!

SPCA only supports Positive Reinforcement training. More information on how to train your foster dog using positive reinforcement can be provided

Remember – it can take time for dogs to settle in, so be patient!



How fostering for SPCA Florida works



Foster animal selection

Once it is determined that an animal needs foster, an email is sent to foster parents outlining the animals needs and skill level required

Foster parents are encouraged to email back if the animal described feels like a good fit for their home, skills and time commitment.

We will arrange a good time/day for you to come in and meet your foster – usually, the sooner the better!

SPCA will NEVER ask you to take an animal that you are not comfortable with – we want everyone to be happy!



The Key Word is SUNSHINE – remember this, you will need it for the quiz!

Booster Vaccinations

Kittens and Puppies will need boosters every 2-3 weeks

- Boosters are important to keep your animal healthy and build immunity
- This also gives us the opportunity to check in and see how things are going with your foster animals

We utilize an online scheduling system for booking your appointment. Pick a time that works for you!



The screenshot shows a mobile app interface for scheduling a kitten vaccination. At the top left is a back arrow. The SPCA Florida Network of Hope logo is centered at the top. Below the logo is a circular profile picture of a cat. The name 'Megan Allan' is displayed, followed by the title 'Kitten Vaccinations'. Below the title, it indicates a duration of '30 min' and the location 'SPCA Florida Foster Office'. A paragraph of text reads: 'Your kittens are due for vaccinations! Please use this link to schedule a time that works for you, between two and three weeks since their last vaccines. If you have additional concerns, please email Megan ahead of time on foster@spcflorida.org'. To the right of the text is a calendar widget titled 'Select a Date & Time' for 'October 2020'. The calendar shows days from Sunday to Saturday, with dates 1 through 31. A diagonal banner in the top right corner of the calendar says 'Primary Calendar'. At the bottom of the calendar, it shows 'Eastern Time - US & Canada (11:50am)'.



Veterinary Appointments

Your foster animal may be on medication when they go home, or issues may arise after you take your foster animal home

If the medication prescribed does not solve the issue, or if new symptoms present whilst your foster is with you, you are encouraged to email details, photos and/or videos to the foster department

- We will triage your case, and make an appointment with our shelter veterinarian should it be necessary.
- There is no cost to you for any medical care provided at or by SPCA Florida

You will be provided with an 24/7 after hours emergency line should your foster require critical care outside of office hours



Surgery

The aim of fostering kittens and puppies is to get them big and healthy enough to be altered so they can be adopted!

- Kittens need to be 2 pounds in weight and at least 8 weeks old
- Puppies should be between 8 and 12 weeks in age

Once they are healthy and of age, you will work with the foster department to arrange a good day to drop your foster animals off prior to their spay/neuter surgeries



Returning to the Shelter and Adoption

Once animals are altered and healthy, they are ready for adoption! They will stay onsite to meet their new families in our Adoption Center

If you, or a friend or family member, are interested in adopting one or more of your foster babies you must notify the foster department, and you will receive a call from our Adoption team to arrange pick up following their surgery. Adoption fees do still apply, but we will ensure that no member of the public has the opportunity to adopt your reserved kittens

Your work as a foster parent is done! As your babies go to their adoptive homes, clean your space and get ready for the next group that you can save!



Resources and Contacts

The Foster Department will always be your primary point of contact

- It consists of Foster Care Manager Megan Allan and Foster Coordinator Morgan Sistrunk, and one of us is here during office hours 7 days a week
- We are here to help with medical or behavioral questions, as well scheduling your pick ups, appointments and returns.

Once you collect your first fosters, you will be provided with the 24 hour emergency number should you ever need it

Maddies Pet Assistant is a wonderful app which helps you track your fosters progress and sends you hints and tips. Download it when you take your first fosters home!



Lets do this! What next?

If you're up for joining our team, please follow [this link](#) or use the QR code to complete our Application along with a little quiz to check you were paying attention (don't worry, it's easy!). After you have finished, you will be added to our mailing lists and you will start to see emails about animals in need of foster.



If you have any questions between now and then please feel welcomed to reach out via email on foster@sPCAflorida.org

