



## Kitten Foster Parent Guidelines

Thank you for opening your heart and home to a homeless kitten! You are literally changing the world one kitten at a time, and change doesn't happen immediately. By offering to open your heart and home to a kitten in need, you are helping to make the world a better place for cats and humans! We hope that you enjoy your foster experience.

Please read this document carefully and keep it for future reference. When you sign your foster agreement you will be asked to verify that you have received, have reviewed, have understood, and will comply with the guidelines within this document. If you have any questions regarding these guidelines, please feel free to speak to your Foster Coordinator.

Note that The Dancing Cat is a 501c3 cat rescue organization and your time fostering kittens may qualify for employee volunteer credit and corporate matching donations. Check with us for details.

### **What You Can Expect From Us:**

A Foster Coordinator will be assigned to support your fostering experience. Your Foster Coordinator is your resource for any and all questions and concerns you may have. You can expect from your Foster Coordinator:

- Regular communication for updates on your foster kitten
- Training for medication administration, if applicable

Please don't be shy, your Foster Coordinator is always interested in your experience!

In addition to personal support, you will receive the following supplies so your foster kitten has what he/she needs:

- Litter Box
- Litter
- Food
- Probiotic for adding to food (helps with stool)
- Food Dishes
- Bedding
- Toys
- Scratching Post
- A crate as your kittens may need to be kept in a crate until they are old enough to wander the house on their own.

If you would like to supply these items on your own, that is always appreciated. Please ask us for recommendations for food and litter before you purchase.



Please contact your Foster Coordinator when you need more supplies. Supplies are available at The Dancing Cat located at 702 East Julian Street. We will arrange a time for you to pick up your supplies.

Note: Expenses related to fostering a kitten may be tax deductible.

### **What We Expect From You:**

- Loving care for your foster kitten
- Clean water daily
- Feeding (3-5 times per day is normal, depending on weight) and oversight to ensure your foster kitten is eating.
- Weighing your kitten as requested by your foster coordinator. If you do not have a scale, please let your foster coordinator know so one can be supplied to you.
- Responsiveness to TDC Foster Coordinator and/or volunteer communication
- Notice well in advance for any vacation plans/business trips while fostering.
- Transportation for your foster kitten (e.g., for vet visits).
- Hosting potential adopter visits, if applicable
- Administration of medication if necessary.
- Keeping your foster kitten indoors or in the crate as applicable
- Socializing your foster kitten to help prepare her for her forever home.
- Immediate notification of any health, injury, behavior issues, or if your foster kitten goes missing.
- All foster kittens should be quarantined for 2 weeks from other animals in the house. There is a 10-14-day incubation period for most diseases.
- Agreement to not foster any other cat or kitten from other organizations during the time you have a kitten from the Dancing Cat in your home to avoid the transfer or any illnesses.

### **Things you may need to supply for your kitten:**

- Dawn dish washing liquid for bathing your kitten. Kittens can be a bit messy and will need to get a bath on a frequent basis to keep the kitty and your house clean.
- Enzyme cleaner to use for cleaning up accidents. Anti-lcky poo and Nature's Miracle work the best.



## Key Points for Kitten Fostering

The most important things for your kitten are:

1. To ensure that your kitten is eating sufficiently and gaining weight every week. In general, kittens should gain a pound a month. If a kitten loses weight over 2-3 days, this is of concern and your Foster Coordinator should be notified.
2. Kittens should be playful, bright and active. If they are not, please contact your foster coordinator ASAP!
3. Any and all medical issues MUST be reported immediately. Kittens have a much weaker immune system and can decline very quickly if left untreated.
4. Kittens will get into everything and can hurt themselves in many ways. Their environment needs to be as safe as possible to ensure they do not find a way to get into trouble.
5. Select an area to keep them that does not have carpet and can be easily disinfected.

## General Foster Guidance

Your foster kitten must be kept separate from other animals in the house for two weeks, so they can acclimate themselves to your home and the new situation (unless you've been told otherwise). Remember the kitten you're bringing home doesn't know your house and may be stressed. Keep all medication and chemicals out of reach of your foster kitten.

Set up your new kitten in his/her own room if you have not been provided with a crate. Check for holes and cracks that lead to crawl spaces where they can get caught. Kitten(s) put in laundry rooms can crawl behind the pipes. Please remove/tie all cords that hang from blinds and curtains as kittens will play with them and can hurt themselves. Please inspect all household appliances prior to using. We have seen kittens crawling in washers, dryers, and dishwashers. Dry cleaning plastic bags should be removed from closets. It's always a good idea to start cats off in [basecamp](#), which is most often a bedroom or office with all their supplies (litter box, food, beds, toys, etc).

Keep kittens in a confined area with enough space for play. Be careful not to give them too much space. Kittens are still learning to use a litter box and if they have too many options available they may find another place more appealing. Keep the temperature of the room at a comfortable level. Be sure to keep all windows and doors closed if there are no screens.



Grooming and bathing are important to keep them clean. It is ok to bathe kittens with diluted Dawn dishwashing liquid. Be sure the water is at least as warm as you like it for a bath. Kitten body temperatures are 100 to 102 F and they get upset if the water is too cold. Be sure to keep kittens warm after bathing and dry them thoroughly.

### **Kitten Interaction with you and your guests**

- Move cautiously around kittens - they are fragile and can be seriously injured if stepped on.
- Remember that every person interacting with your foster kitten can add to (or subtract from) the foster kitten's experiences. Please remember to help your foster kitten to behave when people are visiting.
- Put your foster kitten away from visitors if the situation is overwhelming or the kitten seems uneasy.
- Never leave small children unattended with a foster kitten. Always supervise all interactions between children and kittens.
- Your foster kitten depends on you to look out for its safety and wellbeing. Don't be shy about politely asking someone to modify their behavior with your foster kitten if you have concerns.
- Don't allow anyone to take your foster kitten away from the home unless they are an approved volunteer from The Dancing Cat.

### **Socializing**

Kittens need to be handled on a regular basis for **socialization purposes, so make sure that you are playing**, holding and handling the kittens regularly!!

Your kitten(s) will probably mouth you and bite you as they do not know any better at this point. Never swat, blow on, spray with water, or scruff a kitten for mouthing or biting. Loudly say "OUCH!" whenever a kitten bites even if it doesn't hurt. Give them a toy to play with in place of your hand so they start to understand that your hand is not a toy.

Patience and compassion are key with a shy kitten. It can be frustrating to try and try to help your shy kitten to no avail. You may even start thinking about bringing her back to us, but please don't give up. You've probably been in situations where you were terrified or traumatized: recall those times and think about what would have helped you to cope. Your compassion may also provide insight into what might help your shy kitten.

### **Here are a few tips:**

- Keep it quiet. Not only do kittens have very sensitive hearing, but loud noises terrify a shy kitten.
- Talk to your kitten in a soothing voice. Keep the pitch and volume of your voice low, tell the kitten what you're going to do, and use the kitten's name often.



Imagine you're talking to a baby who needs comforting. Maybe you can even sing a little lullaby.

- Food is a great way to win friends and influence a shy kitten. Even the shyest kitten can be won over by tasty food.
- Allow a shy kitten to approach you. When your shy kitten does poke his/her head out from her hiding place, don't rush to touch the kitten. Hold your hand out in a relaxed position, with the palm down, and allow your kitten to determine how close to get.
- Use a calming pheromone. We often use Feliway for shy kittens. We can provide you with a diffuser as well as the pheromone if you would like to try it for your kitten.
- Don't get discouraged. Don't stop working with your shy kitten if he/she regresses in response to something you did. Instead, finish your interaction with something you and he/she have previously enjoyed together.
- Please do not let your foster kitten play with fingers or hands. These should not be considered toys. We strongly discourage kittens from biting and scratching; these habits can be difficult to break.

### **Health Monitoring:**

Kittens are very fragile, and their health can change very quickly. Please do not hesitate to contact your foster coordinator at any time to discuss your kitten's health. If you cannot contact your Foster Coordinator and you feel your kitten needs medical attention, please take your kitten to one of the following veterinary clinical:

- The Cat Hospital (Campbell)
- VCA Crocker (San Jose)
- ArkVet (San Jose)
- Cherry Chase Pet Hospital (Sunnyvale)
- MedVet Campbell and Mountain View
- Adobe Animal Hospital (Los Altos)

Please keep an eye on the health of your foster kitten. For health concerns contact your Foster Coordinator immediately as it may be necessary to take your foster kitten to an emergency clinic. Your Foster Coordinator will work with you to better understand the health concern and make that determination.



## **Emergencies to Watch for:**

These are some of the symptoms to watch for:

- Stool that is white, light yellow, dark black, mucousy, or has a lot of blood in it
- Streaming diarrhea
- Extreme dehydration: if you pinch the kitten's skin at the nape of the neck and the skin remains tented for 5 seconds. The kitten's eyes may appear sunken. The gums will feel dry or tacky.
- Excessive vomiting or vomiting blood or green or yellow bile
- Vomiting combined with diarrhea
- Difficulty breathing or very shallow rapid breathing.
- Extreme lethargy where the kitten is barely moving.
- If you have reason to believe your foster kitten has ingested something toxic.
- Swollen or broken limbs
- Anything else that makes you think your foster kitten is unhealthy.

## **Non-emergencies to watch for:**

- Kittens that are not eating (notification after 2 skipped meals)
- Eyes that are red, inflamed, weepy, or have yellow discharge.
- Lethargy
- Vomiting undigested food with no other symptoms and vomiting does not recur.
- Congestion or sneezing
- Coughing or wheezing
- Limping
- Peeing or pooping outside of the litter box

If you have any concerns regarding the health of your foster kitten or have questions about something you have observed, please contact your Foster Coordinator immediately. There is no such thing as too much communication when it comes to the health of our kittens.

## **Vet Visits**

The kittens we rescue from the shelter generally receive a health check by the shelter; however, due to their age and size, they will most likely need several services during your care.

These include the following:

- Spay/Neuter surgery.
- Vaccinations (FVRCP)
- Dewormers
- Flea medication
- Microchip



Some of these may be done by a volunteer in your home but may also need to be done at a vet visit.

Our kittens are generally examined and treated by one of our approved vets once they settle in the foster home (unless there is an immediate need). We will communicate with the vet directly to discuss treatments.

We will work with your schedule to ensure that the vet visits accommodate your schedule to the best of our ability. We ask that you are available to transport your foster kitten to and from the vet visits. If possible, a volunteer from The Dancing Cat will meet you at the vet for the visit. If that is not possible, we will communicate with you prior to the visit so you understand what is to take place during the visit.

If you are asked to provide approval for any treatment during the vet visit, please direct the office to contact Casey Stenblom at 408.888.5841 or Ann Chasson at 650.906.4876.

If you receive any paperwork from the veterinarian for the medical services provided, please scan and email to your foster coordinator.

NOTE: You will not be required to cover any medical expenses.

If your foster kitten is prescribed medication and you are not comfortable administering, please notify us immediately. We will make resources available to you to assist in resolving any issues, and if needed we will find a new foster home.

### **Potential Adopters/Adoption Fairs**

Our intention when we rescue a kitten is to find a home for it as soon as it is ready (generally right after it is spayed or neutered). For older kittens (6+ months old) we can bring them to The Dancing Cat to be seen by potential adopters. We begin marketing kittens as soon as they are cleared medically and socially to be adopted.

If you have someone contact you directly about adopting your foster kitten, please direct all adoption inquiries to [adoptions@thedancingcat.org](mailto:adoptions@thedancingcat.org).

All potential adopters will be asked to complete an adoption online. If the application looks good, you will be contacted by your Foster Coordinator to arrange a meeting with the potential adopter.

Please note: Adopters are excited to meet your foster kitten, so we would appreciate it if you could be open to setting up a meeting at your earliest convenience.





We do not approve adoptions of foster kittens immediately after the meeting. We want the potential adopters to think about their decision. We also want to have an opportunity to speak with you in regard to your thoughts on the meeting. We want to ensure that the fit is good for both the kitten and adopter. With this in mind, please refrain from promising any outcome directly to the adoption applicant until discussed with your foster coordinator.

If the adoption is approved, we will work with you on arrangements to have your foster kitten delivered to his/her new forever home. Since you have an established relationship with your foster kitten, if you would like to do the delivery to their new forever home, we would gladly provide that opportunity to you.

If you become interested in adopting your foster kitten, please contact your Foster Coordinator to discuss! We love these situations and lovingly refer to them as “foster failures.”

## **Social Media**

Social Media has revolutionized cat rescue. The more exposure, the faster connections are made. The Dancing Cat team is working hard to market your foster kitten through social media.

We welcome as many updates on your foster kitten as you are willing to provide. We do request that you provide a weekly update at a minimum. Updates on personality are essential, so please inform us of any quirks, their favorite pastimes, as well as capturing it on photo/video.

Good quality photos and videos are a great addition to our social media marketing. Please take lots of photos and videos of your foster kitten.

Email your updates and media directly to your Foster Coordinator, and we will take it from there.

NOTE: Fosters are not to advertise any foster kitten as being for sale on any social media venue.

**We can't save lives without you! Thank you for opening your home to a kitten in need!**