
Austin Animal Center

Finder to Foster

Helping pets together





Table of Contents

- 02** What is Finder to Foster?
- 03** Is Finder to Foster the right fit?
- 04** I'm ready to help
- 05** Enrolling a found pet
- 06** Onboarding
- 07** Let's find their family
- 08** I found the pet's family
- 09** Your Finder to Foster appt
- 10** What to expect
- 11** Next steps
- 12** While a pet is on stray hold
- 13** Adoptions
- 14** Frequently Asked Questions
- 16** Foster Program Manual

What is Finder to Foster?

Austin Animal Center's Finder to Foster program was developed to address our growing need to house found pets outside the shelter, while providing Good Samaritans with the support of AAC's foster program.

A staggering 9 out of 10 animals who come through our doors are never reclaimed. We give animals as much time as they need when they're at the shelter, and so our average length of stay is rising. This means that animals come in faster than we can find them safe placement for, resulting in dogs having been held in crates anywhere we could find space.

The resulting space crisis, and support from our amazing community, has opened the door for AAC to expand our options for animals so we can continue our commitment to the City of Austin's No-Kill Plan.



Traditionally, all stray pets have been required to complete their mandatory 72 hour stray hold while physically at the shelter, but a change in city ordinance now allows Good Samaritans to offer safe harbor for a found animal in the comfort of a caring home, without a mandated shelter stay.

If you find a lost pet, you can help reunite them with their family - or help them find a home with full support of the AAC foster program if their family isn't found.

We are proud to work together with our incredible pet loving community in this new program.



Is FINDER to Foster the right fit?

Trusting in the good of people

You believe in reunification

Pets can go missing for a variety of reasons, and it's not always a reflection of their life at home or that the owner was even involved. We want to give owners the benefit of the doubt that the pet is safe, loved, and wanted. Reunification should always be the goal. If other circumstances arise, we have options in place to ensure the pet's safety.

You want to help the pet find its next forever

If no one comes forward, you're committed to helping this pet for the next 30 days (but we hope it might be longer!). Fostering a pet can come with challenges and rewards, and we're here to help you each step of the way.

Your vital role will be to identify their next home and serve as their loving guide through the process. We cannot change an animal's past, but we can rewrite their future by offering our support in their time of need.

I'm ready to help

**Thank you from all of us at AAC,
humans and non-humans alike!**

Thank you for helping keep this pet safe and out of the shelter. By fostering this pet, you're keeping the pet from having to endure a stressful shelter stay, and you're saving a space for a sick, injured, or vulnerable pet who really needs sheltering.

We will provide this pet with preventatives and medical care. We also have a support system in place if the pet is urgently sick or injured. If you need supplies we can help with a crate, food, and basic pet supplies as donations allow.

**Because of you, dogs like Wimbley
will be able to stay in a warm home
instead of a loud, cement kennel**





Enrolling a found pet in Finder to Foster

Whether you've already talked to AAC's Pet Resource Center and we've determined eligibility together, or you're reaching out to us for the first time, we need your help documenting the situation.

Tell us more by using the following questionnaire:



bit.ly/aac2freq

Once we review your response we'll reach out with next steps or resources available to you.

Once you're eligible, it's time for onboarding!



Apply for the Foster Program

To join the foster program, we'll have some basic questions about your home. Complete our Foster Application: at: bit.ly/aacfosterapp



AAC Foster App



Check for a welcome email

Once your foster app is approved, you'll receive instructions for next steps. You will also get a copy of the Foster Program Manual, your guide to everything foster pet related.



Schedule your initial Finder to Foster appointment

Now it's time to officially enter the pet in the AAC foster system. They will complete an initial workup with our vet services team to assess for health and receive basic wellness and age-appropriate preventatives.

Staff will reach out to you to schedule your appointment.



Try to find the pet's family

Use the tips on the following page and scanning the Reunification Guide QR code to find steps to reunite the pet!

Let's find their family

1 We'll make a Found Report

If you haven't already submitted a Found Report, we will help you make one. This allows the public to see pets who have been reported as found. This report will be on our website through 24PetConnect. If an owner reaches out to us we'll connect them with you!

2 Let your neighbors know

By keeping the pet in the neighborhood where it was found, you're already greatly increasing the chances that you'll find its family. Spread the word that the pet is safe with you on Nextdoor, local neighborhood groups, Austin Lost and Found Pets Facebook: bit.ly/alfppage and ATX Lost and Found Pets Facebook: bit.ly/atxlostandfoundfb

3 Post flyers where the pet was found

Hang flyers where the pet was found. We can make and print flyers for you at AAC's Pet Resource Center or even help you make copies of flyers you've already created.

4 Expand the search

It can seem hard to know where to start, but we've got you covered! Our Lost and Found guide has lots of helpful tips. Visit bit.ly/getpetshomeatx or scan the QR code below for the guide.



AAC Lost & Found Guide

I found the pet's family!



This is what it's all about!

If you've found this pet's family please let us know at animal.reclaim@austintexas.gov We'll help coordinate a return and will arrange next steps, which can include veterinary care like spay/neuter.

Your compassion and dedication have played an invaluable role in this pet's life!

What if I've found a better situation for the pet?

Our shared goal is to reunite a pet with its family, or provide them with a safe and loving home if no owner comes forward. We want the pet to have the chance to go home.

It can be very hard to say goodbye to a pet that we have been caring for and come to love. Because of you, you've helped reunite a family.

If you have any questions or concerns about reuniting this pet, please share them with us at: animal.reclaim@austintexas.gov

Your Finder to Foster Appointment

This is when we make things official!

This initial intake appointment includes a wellness visit, age-appropriate care, and preventative medication, like vaccines and dewormer. This is also when your pet becomes an official AAC foster.

You will need to bring the found pet, veterinary paperwork (if applicable), and any notes on symptoms you've observed to your appointment. The visit can take up to one hour.

The goal of this visit is for the pet to go right back out to you as your new foster after their work-up. If any pressing medical concerns are discovered at the time of the appointment, we will let you know and discuss next steps together.



Now that we've made things official, here's what to expect

You have received a welcome email from the Foster Team which explains steps for joining GivePulse (where staff posts important program updates), and how to join Adopets (where pet profiles are public online, and where you will receive and review applications for your foster pet) and a copy of the Foster Program Manual.

Medical care

Once the pet is an AAC foster they will have access to free preventative care, sick checks, spay/neuter, and a safety net for medical emergencies.

Adoption support

As part of AAC's foster program, you will have your foster pet listed on our website. The Foster Program Manual has lots of great marketing tips!

Supplies

We can help with supplies like a crate, basic supplies, and food as donations allow. Unfortunately, due to the number of pets in foster, we are unable to provide a steady supply of food for healthy adults, but we can provide specialty food and medication for eligible pets.

Behavior support

As an AAC foster, you have access to training programs that can provide support for behavior challenges you may be experiencing. We also have behavior and enrichment staff that can provide you with tools and techniques to use to set you and your pet up for success. We are all about positive reinforcement!



Next steps

Wellness and preventatives

Your foster pet will have received vaccinations and preventatives during their initial Finder to Foster appointment. In the coming days, you will receive an email with a 'Booster Schedule'. This will tell you when their next preventatives are due. You can schedule an appointment to get their boosters done using a link in the Foster Program Manual!

Stray holds

Legally, a pet is still property of the owner during its 72 hour stray hold. We are allowed to give the pet preventatives and a microchip during this time but we are not allowed to spay/neuter them or make them available for adoption.

If not reclaimed during stray hold, the animal will become available for adoption. This means that it will now be visible on our Adopets page, which you will receive an email invitation to join. This is where you will review incoming applications to determine the best adopter for your foster pet!

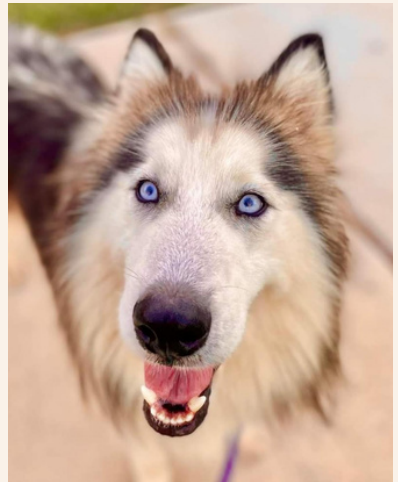
Spay/Neuter

We will schedule the pet for free spay/neuter to be completed at AAC, once the pet's stray hold is up. We'll share what you need to know during your first Finder to Foster appointment.

Marketing

You can start marketing your foster pet for adoption after the stray hold is up. See page 13 in this guide and your Foster Program Manual for more info.

Check the Foster Program Manual for guidance on the next steps!



While a pet is on stray hold



Stray holds

Legally, a pet is not AAC property during its stray hold. This means we have to take extra special care to keep the pet safe:

Outings

Keep your pet inside only regardless of stray hold, except for bathroom breaks for dogs. Always keep your foster dog on a leash for potty breaks. If you have a securely fenced yard, they can be supervised off-leash for potty breaks. Foster cats and small animals must always be kept inside at all times.

Meeting other pets

Keep your foster pet separate from your pets during this time. Once the stray hold is up, facilitate safe introductions with your pets using guidance from the Foster Program Manual. Foster pets cannot meet animals that live outside your household. After the stray hold, staff will be ready to help you navigate adopters that want their pets to meet your foster before adopting.

If a pet already had a microchip

If a pet has a microchip, our Reclaim team will be attempting to contact the owner and any listed alternative contacts to try to reunite the animal. This may extend their stray hold while staff attempts contact.

When it's time to find them their next home

If no owner has come forward, it's time to help them find their forever.

As part of AAC's foster program, you will have your foster pet listed on our website and can benefit from additional marketing, such as social media and event promotion.

Your Foster Program Manual (shared on page 15) lists all the ins and outs of the adoption process and how to navigate the Adopters adoption website to facilitate your foster pet adoption.

We are proud to say that as an AAC foster, you will be able to directly involved in the adoption process.

You can even encourage friends, family, and coworkers to adopt your foster, and we love when fosters market their foster pets!



We just require that all adoptions go through the formal application process, and that no pet goes into an adoptive home until after it has been microchipped and spayed/neutered.

We do encourage you to wait to rehome an animal at until at least two weeks after you originally found it. This is recommended as a courtesy to the owner, since it can take time to track down a pet.

If an owner does come forward after the stray hold, we will work with you on steps to reunite them, taking all circumstances into consideration.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if my foster pet is sick?

Medical care is provided at the shelter and appointments can be scheduled through a link in the Foster Program Manual for your pet to be examined by our vet staff! If symptoms are mild, you can email the foster coordinators with a description of the symptoms you are observing; care of certain mild conditions can be coordinated via email and you may pick up medications at your earliest convenience, as directed.

For emergency situations outside of shelter business hours, review the section on page 9 of the Foster Program Manual.

What if I can't keep my foster pet anymore?

Depending on the circumstances, we have resources available to help you overcome challenges you may be experiencing with your foster pet, to prevent them from being returned to the shelter. Email the foster coordinators with your concern and we will help you navigate next steps. To participate in the Finder to Foster program and remain eligible, you have committed to keeping a foster pet for a minimum of 30 days.

Can I have more than one foster at a time?

For health and safety reasons, we only allow one foster pet in your home at a time. We encourage you to support other organizations but when you are actively fostering for AAC there can be no other fosters in your home at the same time.

FAQs continued

Who do I call with questions or concerns?

If you have questions or concerns about your foster pet or need support from the foster coordinators you can email animal.foster@austintexas.gov or call 512-978-0541. If an owner has reached out or you have been great at your research and have identified a potential owner and want to reach out to them with next steps, you can email animal.reclaim@austintexas.gov on what to do next.

What if the owner comes forward after the stray hold?

If an owner does come forward outside of the stray hold, we may ask for you to return the pet, depending on the situation. There could be a delicate personal aspect that gives context to why the owner may have not come forward sooner, which we may not be able to share with you. Rest assured that we do our due diligence to ensure that reunification is in the pet's best interest and that the choice is a thoughtful and caring one.

Foster Program Manual

This is your go-to for all things foster.

This manual contains info on procedures, medical care and emergencies, the adoption process, and more. We recommend reading this as soon as you get started to get acquainted with the ins and outs of the program.

This should be your main source for any questions. For anything else, the foster coordinators' contact info is shared in the Foster Program Manual.



bit.ly/aacfostermanual

Thank you.



Because of you, this pet
has a second chance.



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bit.ly/fosteraac