

SAN DIEGO HUMANE SOCIETY

FOSTER TRACK MANUAL

KITTEN TRACK • CAT TRACK • DOG TRACK • PUPPY TRACK •
SMALL PET TRACK • MEDICAL TRACK • BEHAVIOR TRACK •
ADOPTION AMBASSADOR TRACK • **SAFETY NET TRACK**



*A guide to providing
temporary housing and
care for pets whose
owners are experiencing a
time of crisis.*

Safety Net Track Purpose

Welcome to the Safety Net Track!

Thank you for opening your home and your heart to an owned animal in need. The goal of Safety Net fostering is to care for an owned animal in your home while their person receives a helping hand. The best option is to keep pets and people together whenever possible; however, there may be times that a pet owner experiences an emergency and needs help boarding their animal(s). This temporary housing is for animals whose pet parents are in crisis, such as in cases of homelessness or domestic violence. In these cases, a pet may be approved to be boarded at no cost through San Diego Humane Society for a specified period of time. Through this program, our organization will help bridge that gap of care and provide temporary housing for these pets to support keeping families together.



As a Safety Net foster volunteer, you take on the important task of providing a safe space for an owned animal so they can be reunited with their person when the time comes! You support the community by temporarily caring for these animals and eliminating the need for the animal to spend this time in the shelter. This manual will serve as a resource to guide you through this unique fostering track.

Goals of the Safety Net Track include:

- Providing a safe, nurturing environment for owned animals
- Helping socialize and/or keeping pet stress levels low while in foster care
- Adhering to any dietary or medical restrictions
- Keeping the pet safe and out of the public eye

This manual outlines the responsibilities and expectations of San Diego Humane Society Safety Net foster volunteers. The information compiled here is from years of experience caring for San Diego Humane Society animals, feedback from foster volunteers and information from several leading shelters across the country who kindly shared information from their foster manuals. This information should serve as a resource throughout your foster care experience.

To qualify for a Safety Net foster assignment, the following training steps must be completed:

- ☐ Read and sign the foster care agreement (at time of application)
- ☐ Read the Volunteer Handbook and Foster Manual and complete the general Foster eLearning
- ☐ Complete the species track eLearning for the type of animal(s) you wish to foster – dog, cat, small pet, puppies or kittens
- ☐ Review this Safety Net Track Manual and complete the eLearning
- ☐ Read and sign the Safety Net foster care agreement (accessible in your volunteer record)

All eLearnings are accessible in our volunteer database under My Profile > Training. After all training is complete, you are officially approved to foster Safety Net animals when they are in need. You can respond to assignments posted or the Foster team may reach out to you directly to match you with an incoming pet.

Contents

• Contacts	3
• Supplies	4
• Safety Net Match Process	5
• Safety Net FAQs	7
• Returning Your Foster Pet	8
• Your Next Assignment	8
• Foster Quick Links	9

Contacts

Foster teams

Contact for questions or concerns about caring for your foster pet

- San Diego Campus: foster@sdhumane.org
- Escondido Campus: escfoster@sdhumane.org
- Oceanside Campus: oscfoosterandrescue@sdhumane.org

Community Engagement team

Will be the main contact for the pet's owners and will check in with the foster via email during the assignment: safetynetfoster@sdhumane.org

Pet's Owner

Due to confidentiality concerns, communicating with the owner is never approved. All communications will be via the Foster and Community Engagement teams.

Supplies

San Diego Humane Society will provide some essentials, but we ask foster parents to purchase some supplies if able. Links are provided for where to purchase some items. If you are unable to purchase supplies, please speak to your Foster team since we do have a small stockpile of items we can sign out for you to use during your assignment. These items need to be returned and accounted for once the assignment is complete.

The following section provides more information on some of the supplies you may not be familiar with including their intended use and when to use each item.

Provided by SDHS

- ☐ Animal ID paperwork
- ☐ Emergency procedures document
- ☐ Travel crate (if needed), leash and collar for dogs
- ☐ Tag with SDHS phone number & emergency foster number
- ☐ All food including wet food, dry food, formula and alternative diets if needed
- ☐ For cats/kitten: All litter including non-clumping clay or Yesterday's News
- ☐ Personal supplies provided by owner (i.e. blanket or toy) – must be returned at time of reunification

Provided by Foster

- ☐ Review the species track manuals for supplies you will need to provide for your foster pet

Emergency Procedures Document

The main foster manual contains instructions on our emergency after hour's number and the 24 hour emergency clinics San Diego Humane Society works with. It is important that you familiarize yourself with your closest clinic so that you are prepared in case of emergency.

Safety Net Match Process

When a pet is in need of a foster home, the Foster team will post these assignments and/or review volunteer records and match pets directly with fosters based on selected availability, interests and completed Safety Net eLearning. Blog posts will not include photos of the exact animal but will include information about the pet to help you decide if the assignment is a good match for your home.

Update your volunteer record to let us know you are open to this assignment!

1. Availability and foster pet interests

- a. Under the My Profile tab, click Additional Info
- b. Choose the Foster account
- c. Update your availability and animal preferences
 - i. Check the box under the Foster Pet Interest - Not Available for Adoption section, titled Safety Net Foster to let us know you are open to these assignments
- d. Keep this section of your record updated!

Complete required training

eLearnings are available in your volunteer record, accessible under My Profile > Training:

- General Foster eLearning
- Safety Net eLearning
- The species eLearning(s) for the type of pet you wish to foster: Dog, cat, small pet, puppies or kittens.

Get matched with a Safety Net foster pet!

The Foster team will post foster assignments to Volunteer Impact (News section or Opportunities list) or reach out to foster volunteers directly with potential matches. If you see an animal you are interested in fostering, follow the instruction to notify the foster team.

Once matched with a pet, you will pick them up from the shelter and bring them home to get settled in.

Confidentiality

Animals enter the program for various reasons and owner confidentiality is important for the safety of the owner, the foster volunteer and the pet(s).

Fosters will not be provided any information about the owner and will not be communicating directly with the owner. Our staff will be in steady contact with the owner to notify them of the wellbeing of their pet and track their expected reclaim date.

In order to protect the confidentiality of the pet's owner, fosters are not permitted to share any photos of and/or information about the pet on social media. You may only take photos to provide to SDHS. Please make sure there are no identifying landmarks, such as street names, addresses, etc. in any image.

Owned dogs should spend limited time in public spaces. High traffic areas such as parks, outdoor malls, beaches, hiking trails, etc. should not be visited. Leashed walks in the foster's neighborhood are permitted as well as essential travel to San Diego Humane Society for routine appointments. Non-essential animal movements should be avoided. All other species (cats, small pets, etc.) are not permitted to leave the foster's home unless being transported to San Diego Humane Society or our approved emergency clinics for appointments.

Check Ins

For these assignments, email check-ins will be performed by the Community Engagement team to see how things are going and how your foster pet is doing. You may be asked to provide photos or an overall update about the pet so this can be communicated to the owner via the shelter staff. Providing the owner with pictures and updates on the pet's well-being can be very comforting and motivating for the owner. To maintain confidentiality, all communication about the pet must go through the CE team, and pictures or emails should not include any distinguishing features or descriptions that might disclose the pet's location.

Fostering Until Pet and Owner Reunification

When you pick up your Safety Net foster pet, we will communicate when we expect the pet and owner to reunify to occur and will continue to provide updates to you as we get them. While a consistent environment for the pet is ideal during this time of transition, the reunification process can take time, and we understand that can be a strain on foster parents. As such, we will offer opportunities to end your foster caregiving experience if the original reunification date is extended and arrange for another foster to take over. Fostering for the duration of the pet's time in the program is preferred, but not required to be a Safety Net foster family.

Safety Net FAQs

How is Safety Net fostering different from traditional fostering?

These pets have an owner and therefore are not available for adoption. The program's goal is to reunite the pet and their family, so adoption by the foster parent is not possible, unless something changes with the owner's ability to reunite. In order to protect the confidentiality of the pet's owner, you will not be permitted to share photos of and/or information about the pet on social media.

How is Safety Net fostering similar from traditional fostering?

All vet care will be handled by the shelter. Safety Net pets will receive the same standard of care we provide to all our foster pets. You will have access to all the same foster support you usually receive. Behavior questions, supplies--any and all of the support systems that our shelter provides for traditional fostering will also be accessible to you as a Safety Net foster parent.

How long is the typical stay in a Safety Net foster's home?

We anticipate that most pets will be in foster care for 30 days, but this timeframe may vary based on the circumstances. It can sometimes take a few months for a pet parent in the program to secure stable housing and reunify with their pet. When you pick up your Safety Net foster pet, we will communicate to you when we expect that reunification to occur and will review the case weekly so we can provide updates to you as we get them.

What if I have concerns about talking to an owner?

Your contact information as the foster will not be shared with the owner, and you will not be given the owner's contact information. However, owners do appreciate updates about their pet! The shelter will facilitate this communication, acting as a go-between to ensure that the updates, photos, etc. are passed along to the owner. These updates are an important way for the owner to maintain their connection with their pet during a difficult time and can help support both the owner and the pet.

What happens if the owner is unable to take their pet back?

Our goal, and the owner's goals, is always reunification. However in certain cases, the owner will decide that he or she will not be able to take the pet back at the end of the contracted date. You will be notified of the pet(s) change of status and asked if you are interested in continuing to foster and/or adopt. At this time the animal would enter our system and go through all routine processes before being made available for adoption. This may include coming to the shelter for examinations. If the pet is determined healthy enough for adoption, you may then continue fostering the pet and participate on the Adoption Ambassador Track. If you are unable to continue fostering, a return date will be scheduled to return to the shelter or enter another foster home. Please allow up to 7 days to plan for this return. If interested in adopting a pet that cannot be reunited with its owner, please follow the guidelines in the adoption section of the main Foster manual.

Returning your Foster Pet

If your foster assignment is extended past the original expected return date, you will be given the option to continue fostering. However, we understand you may not be able to extend your commitment, so just let us know.

When it is time for reunification, the pet will be returned to the shelter by the foster family. This will be scheduled one day prior to the owner's scheduled pick-up day. This 24-hour window prevents any breach of confidentiality between the owner and the foster and gives the medical team an opportunity to perform an exit health exam.

At times the scheduled reunification may not go as planned because "life happens." If for any reason the reunification cannot happen at that originally planned time, you will be notified and given the opportunity to continue fostering until reunification can be rescheduled.

If at any point in your assignment, your situation changes and you are no longer able to make your full commitment to the pet, please email your Foster team 7 days in advance so we can coordinate another foster placement or kennel space in the shelter. At minimum 24 hours' notice must be given if you need to return the pet. Please follow any additional details provided by your Foster team after the return appointment is scheduled.

Your Next Assignment

After your foster pets have been reunited with their owner or returned to the shelter, please follow the cleaning guidelines in the General Fostering Handbook to ensure your home is cleaned appropriately prior to your next assignment. Even if the pets have not shown signs of contagious disease while in your home, we still require thorough cleaning between assignments.

You can then foster another Safety Net pet, train in another Foster Track to take on a different type of assignment or take a break from fostering and start again when you are ready.

Foster Quick Links

Foster Blog

fostersdhumane.wordpress.com

Volunteer Impact Database

myimpactpage.com

Foster teams

Contact for questions or concerns about your foster pet

- San Diego Campus: foster@sdhumane.org
- Escondido Campus: escfoster@sdhumane.org
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Community Engagement team

safetynetfoster@sdhumane.org