

Foster Manager Processes - Volunteer Intake and Rescue Fostering

A. Volunteer Intake

Normally Foster Volunteers Applicants are assessed when they apply, well in advance of receiving a dog. However, at times the assessment is completed 'just in time' when we have a foster requirement and a foster application is received specific to this requirement. In general the process for intake is as follows:

1. Applicant completes Foster Volunteer application at <https://companionpaws.ca/companion-paws-short-term-dog-foster/>. Application is autoforwarded to admin@thelifelinecanada.ca. An automated email is sent to the applicant confirming receipt of their application.
2. Administrative team (owner of admin@thelifelinecanada.ca webmail box) imports applicant to NEON.
3. Admin@thelifelinecanada.ca sends an email to foster@companionpaws.ca about new potential foster.
4. Within 48 hours of receipt of application Foster Manager (or delegate in their absence), sends first e-mail to the applicant to request Zoom Call to go over their application. See e-mail script at: <https://thelifelinecanada.ca/email-scripts/> (scroll down to Foster Program).
5. If the applicant does not respond within 2 days, Foster Manager will call the applicant (occasionally our e-mails land in people's SPAM folders).
6. If the applicant indicates continued interest in fostering after receiving the e-mail, Foster Manager sets up the time and date for a Zoom Call and e-mails the Zoom link details to the Foster applicant. If the applicant has not filled in the foster application on the Companion Paws site they will also need to do so at this point (see Step 1).
7. Following are the details the Foster Manager will review in the Zoom Call:

Companion Paws - give background; what we do and why you are involved: We help match clients and dogs with the intention of clients training the dogs to become ultimately therapy dogs. Our dogs are rescues and not trained when they arrive. The Foster is the place where they can acclimate and prepare for their forever home.

Do they have any dog experience?

Describe the 2 types of fosters needed:

- *Short-term foster- where the dog may just need a stop until we coordinate flights, or need to stay a little longer to socialize the dog to a home environment and possibly get them used to being around other pets. In most cases, the dog will not stay longer than 3 months, unless under special circumstances. Note: We do give them access to an online obedience level 1 training course so they can do some basics with the dogs while in their care. Helps keep consistency when transitioning to their forever.*
- *Training dog foster- is where the dog will stay for a minimum of 3 months, but during that time will go to training classes, obedience level 1 and 2 with you. We will enroll you and pay for the classes in your area, but the expectation is that you continue with the training at home so that when the dog goes to its forever home it will already know these fundamentals.*

Note: We will try to work with the trainer who is teaching them to also help with the transition. So the trainer will be responsible for obedience and no pressure on the foster (Foster Volunteer can share

behavior stuff – like favourite toys, treats, where they like to be scratched, etc.).

Talk about how Companion Paws will cover expenses: Vet (we do ask they let us know before), food, any accessories/treats required, gate, or crate (discourage in most cases but if they have a cat or other dog it might be necessary (under discussion)).

*****Note Liane may be coming up with a list of suggestions, especially for food to help keep costs consistent from foster to foster.***

We suggest every foster home get a tag done with the name "Foster" on the front and contact information on the back once they have been assigned a dog. This way they can put it on the collar as soon as they get the dog. Keep reusing it for the next foster.

- *Do they have family members'/ roommates' support?*
 - *Do they have neighbours' support?*
 - *Do they have other dogs/cats?**
 - *if yes, talk about introductions and the importance of doing it properly*
 - *may need to remove all toys/bones to ensure there is no guarding or disagreements at least until they have established a relationship.*
- **If they are unfamiliar with other pet introductions (dog or cat) the Training Manager can do a Zoom guidance session before they get the dog*

When possible, the Training Manager will Zoom with the Foster before they get the dog to discuss any questions they might have and Zoom on 2nd to 3rd day after they get the dog. The Training Manager will also be in close contact via email or text for those first 3-4 days.

Talk about the importance of letting the Training Manager know the moment they see any undesirable behaviours even if it seems small!!

- *Training manager will be there for them every step of the way!*
- *Describe next steps (see below)*
- *Obtain/verify references from the application form.*

Some notes regarding behaviours:

Dogs may not be potty trained - They are adult dogs so it will not take them long to learn but there may be a learning curve. Foster needs to learn the body language of the dog telling them they need to go potty and the dog needs to adapt to the foster home routines (when to drink, eat, walk, etc.).

Diarrhea - Let them know that in most cases transitioning from a home/rescue or food the dog will likely have soft stool for a few days. This is normal and there is usually no need for concern.

Dogs may be scared - so they may need to be patient and show the dog the world is safe in a slow and reassuring way. Our Training Manager can help with ways to build confidence.

Dogs may bark at other dogs - we will need to teach them that this is not acceptable. We will need to work on learning their body language and reading the signs before the bark comes so that we can move the dog away, distract, or redirect them to a different more rewarding behaviour. The Training Manager can help with that as well. NOTE: It's not necessary for our foster dogs to meet every dog on a walk; and

actually, it is not recommended for first 3 days. Be picky about who they meet. If they meet nose to nose, keep to 3 seconds and move on. In cases you want to meet dog (example friend's dog). do proper introductions. We do not recommend dog parks for foster dogs.

Our Training Manager will help guide them if an issue (for example if any of the above referenced issues persist).

Once a dog is approved for placement, foster dogs are matched by our Companion Paws program adoption team to one of our approved adopters. If an adopter is local, a meet and greet may be set up prior to adoption to confirm a suitable match.

Once a match is found and approved, a placement date and transport, if required is scheduled.

Note: if the Zoom interview described in #6, above is going well, the Foster Manager can ask to do the home visit on Zoom if the applicant is ready/able to walk through the home with a device at that time.

8. Foster Manager sends second e-mail as per the script referenced above. This e-mail will include the request for signing Dog Foster Agreement and Standards of Conduct/NDA (attach) and let's applicant know we are conducting references. **If the virtual home visit is not completed the request to set it up should be included in this e-mail.**
9. Foster Manager conducts the reference checks in the next day or two.
10. Once the reference checks are complete and the agreement/NDA are received, Foster Manager may need to schedule virtual home visit (if not already completed earlier).
11. When virtual home visit is completed and the Foster is approved for moving forward (consult with the Training Manager or CEO as needed), send third e-mail per the script referenced above to welcome the Foster Volunteer to the team. Include Foster package as attachments (3 Guides and video links) and note we will be in touch once a dog becomes available for their care).

NOTE: Feel free to also have the Foster Volunteer contact the Training Manager (training@thelifelinecanada.ca) for any training questions they might think of, especially after reviewing the material we provide. All questions can also be directed to Foster Manager who relates any training guidance required to Training Manager.

B. Rescue Fostering

A rescue dog is assessed/approved by the Training Manager, Adoptions Manager, and CEO when we are working with a rescue organization. Once the dog is approved to be fostered in our program, the Foster Manager will be informed by one of these managers to match a foster to that dog. All details will be shared with the Foster Manager about the dog and any other pertinent details required to support the dog.

Matching dogs to fosters: In the potential foster's Neon account there will be notes about requirements of the foster dog to be placed in that home. The dog and foster must be a match in activity, size, weight and environment. When a suitable dog has been approved to be placed in to one of our foster's, the foster and dog must be fully reviewed to confirm a match. Once a match is confirmed, contact with the foster for confirmation of availability, etc. with the guidance of the above-named managers can move forward.