

Dog Foster (DF) Program Overview

The APA! Dog Foster Program was started in June 2008, before APA! had a shelter, and quickly grew into the largest foster program in the country. The foster program's ability to save so many dogs and puppies was a key factor in Austin becoming a no-kill city. For the first 3 years it was an entirely volunteer function. Although we now have some paid positions we still rely heavily on volunteers (see below).

The number of approved fosters increases monthly but as of 12/31/17 it was 2036. On average about 337 of those have a foster dog in any given month. In 2017 we began with 409 dogs in foster but by December that number had increased to 541 due to the extreme rescue effort following Hurricane Harvey. The number of foster dogs adopted each month also increased in 2017 from 166 in January to 201 in December. However, in September, the month following the hurricane, 401 foster dogs were adopted. The total dollars received for foster adoptions in 2017 exceeded \$320,000.

Austin has maintained no kill status for 6 years and continues to improve, now working on the last 3%. Because of this shift the biggest challenge for the DF Program is recruiting an adequate number of specialized behavior and medical fosters to meet the need.

The #1 priority of the DF Program is saving lives. We accomplish this by moving dogs through as quickly as possible, providing the best care within our means, and providing good customer service and support for our foster parents. We have a simplified application process that screens new fosters in, not out. Foster parents are supported by a team of approximately 40 individuals, 5 teams, and 7 staff. Almost everyone on the DF Team is a volunteer.

DF Manager (DFM) and Dog Foster Assistant Manager (DFAM)

The DFM and DFAM are responsible for developing and managing the DF Program, including developing policy and training, supervising staff and volunteers, and ensuring that foster parents are available and trained and all foster dogs are safe and receive the care they require.

Dog Foster Onboarding (DFO) Team

The DFO Team is responsible for answering all prospective dog foster applicant inquiries and processing all dog foster applications to bring new dog foster parents into the DF Program. The dog foster application can be found at: <https://www.shelterluv.com/matchme/foster/APA/Dog>.

DF Placement (DFP) Team

The DFP Team is responsible for the intake of dogs into the DF Program. This includes responding to rescue requests, posting pleas, matching dogs with the appropriate fosters, and coordinating the rescue transports and hand-offs to fosters. The DFP Team also facilitates all transfers of dogs in the DF Program, including moving dogs to new fosters and finding sitters.

DF Mentor/Coordinator (DFC) Team

The DFC Team is responsible for the ongoing management and support of foster parents, including the monitoring of foster dogs. The DFC Team is a foster parent's primary contact for any questions or concerns. They assist with scheduling spay/neuter surgeries, vaccinations, and other preventive care or medical treatment for foster dogs in a timely manner. They can also assist with most medical questions, except emergencies. The following are specific DFC Team positions:

DF Medical Liaison (DFML): The Dog Foster Medical Liaison is primarily responsible for working with the DFC Team and the Medical Team to ensure that foster dogs' medical records are up to date in all databases and spreadsheets, ensure that the DF Team and foster parents receive all relevant Medical Team/Clinic information, ensure that foster dogs receive the medical care they need, and develop consistent routine and special medical communications to foster parents.

DF Outreach Coordinator (DFOC): This DF Outreach Coordinator supports the DFC Team by following up with new or inexperienced fosters by email or phone, conducting informal outreach to see if they have what they need, are getting their emails, and have any issues/questions.

DF Adoption (DFA) Team

The DFA Team is responsible for assisting foster parents with all activities related to foster dog adoptions. This includes information on pre-adoption, meet and greets, and making arrangements to finalize an adoption. All foster dog adoptions must be coordinated through this team. They will also arrange for foster dogs to attend an adoption site and assist with the "surrender" of a foster dog to the shelter at the end of their foster placement.

DF Events (DFE) Team

The DFE Team is responsible for working with the APA! Development Team and foster parents to arrange for foster dogs to attend events. This extra visibility can help get foster dogs adopted more quickly.

DF Adoption Advocate (DFAA) & DF Assistant Adoption Advocate

The DFAA provides extra support in getting foster dogs adopted. The DFAA ensures that foster dogs have their "best face forward" on APA!'s website, that they attend adoption sites and events (if appropriate), and that if a foster dog cannot attend sites or events, that he/she is getting the additional marketing needed to find an adoptive home. The DFAA also obtains and updates foster dog photos, videos, bios, and scores. The DFAA works closely with the DFA and DFE Teams, the APA! Behavior Team, and the APA! Matchmakers.

DF Records Coordinator (DFRC)

The DF Records Coordinator is primarily responsible for creating and updating dog foster records in Shelterluv and in the DF Team's tracking spreadsheet.