

Screening Cat Foster Applications

I. Organization

Screeners work as a team under the direction of the Team Leader, a person who has foster experience and thus has a broad knowledge of the entire AustinPetsAlive! foster system.

Screeners work from their home computer to access applications and conduct telephone interviews of applicants.

The screener's responsibility is to determine, during a short telephone interview, whether the applicant will be a satisfactory foster parent. The screener then makes a decision to approve or reject the applicant.

It is helpful for screeners to have had experience fostering so that they can answer a variety of questions from applicants.

II. Foster Applicants

An applicant for fostering, submits an application electronically. The application is found on the Austin Pets Alive! website.

A. What We Look for in a Foster:

1. Safe environment of our foster animals
2. Kind, caring individuals
3. The ability to transport the animals to our clinic
4. The ability to provide food, bedding, litter, toys, treats, etc.
5. Appropriate amount of time to spend with foster animals
6. Homeowner or landlord's approval

III. The Telephone Interview: Preview

Screener should read the application prior to phoning the applicant.

1. Check that applicant is 18 years old. If younger, we cannot accept the application. Request that an adult in the household submit an application. This often happens when high school students are wanting to be involved in fostering for school community service credit.

2. Also check the preferred time to reach applicant by telephone. Many applicants prefer to be called in the evening, after work.

3. Check whether the applicant has cats and what sort of experience. This will enable Screener to guide applicant to the appropriate foster cats -- either kittens, medical, Felvs, hospice, seniors, etc. If applicant has a specific preference, screener can inform appropriate foster manager to expedite placement of cat.

IV. The Telephone Interview: Script

Screener: Hello, I'm calling from Austin Pets Alive about your application to foster a cat. Do you have about three minutes now for us to go over your application?

Applicant: yes.

Screener: My name is _____ and I'm looking at your application on my computer. Is your address _____?

Applicant: No, that's not my address. I lived there last year. My new address is _____.

Screeener: I see that you have a cat. How old is your cat?

Applicant: He's 8 years old, and he's diabetic. I give him insulin injections every day.

Screeener: I'd like to ask you the 3 questions that I routinely ask every applicant. [here the screener can use the acronym ACT to remember these questions about A. Allergies, C. Cat Care experience, and T. Transportation.

A. Screeener: Is anyone in your household ALLERGIC to cats?

Applicant: No. [if answer is yes, ask about degree of allergy, tell applicant you'll get back to her, and refer application to Team Leader for a decision.]

C. Screeener: Do you have experience taking CARE of a cat?

Applicant: Yes, my family had cats at home when I was growing up.

T. Screeener: Do you have TRANSPORTATION -- a car or access to a car?

Applicant: No, but my boyfriend has a car and will give rides to me and my foster cat.

Screeener: Your application looks good, so I'm going to approve you to foster. Thank you!

Do you have any questions for me at this time?

I'm going to send the Welcome Letter to your email -- it will tell you step by step how to foster for APA. You will be put in our Google Group and receive emails from the foster managers -- these will be lists of cats who need foster homes right now. You can scan the lists and when you see a cat whom you'd like to foster, send an email to the address at the top of the email. A foster manager will get back to you quickly.

Thank you for fostering and being a Lifesaver for cats!

END of interview. Send Welcome Letter and add new foster parent to Google Group.

V. Issues that usually cause rejection of an application

1. applicant wants to let the foster cat go outside. This is definitely forbidden.
2. applicant's cat is indoor/outdoor and will be with foster cat, thus exposing to illnesses contracted outside.
3. applicant doesn't have transportation
4. applicant lives out of area -- too far to travel to APA clinic. Refer to a pet shelter in applicant's area.
5. applicant or a member of household is allergic to cats. Team leader will make this decision.
6. applicant plans on declawing his foster after adopting him -- definitely REJECT.

VI. Frequently Asked Questions from Applicants

1. How many weeks does fostering last?
2. May I adopt my foster cat?
3. How do I get my foster cat adopted?
4. Do I have to pay for veterinary-medical care?
5. Does APA provide food and litter?
6. I'm hearing impaired. Am I eligible to foster?
7. Is the foster healthy? (Applicant's own pets must be current on vaccinations.)
8. Why must I separate foster cat from my cats for 2 weeks?
9. May I let the foster outside onto my fenced patio?