Fostering Q&A

Indy Homes for Huskies
www.indyhomesforhuskies.org
Thanks for your interest in becoming a foster home for Indy Homes for Huskies. Your compassion could mean the difference between life and death for a husky at an area animal shelter.

This booklet should answer most of your questions regarding the fostering process. If you have additional questions, please feel free to speak to one of our volunteers, call us at 317.251.PAWS, or email us at: indyhomesforhuskies@yahoo.com

Thank you for considering to become a foster parent. We look forward to welcoming you into the IHH family.
What is fostering?
Fostering gives a shelter dog that is out of time a safe haven until a permanent, loving home can be found. Fostering bridges the gap between imminent death at a shelter and being delivered into the safe, loving arms of a forever family.

Why is fostering necessary?
Most shelters are forced to euthanize dogs when their kennels reach capacity. Fostering gives dogs a “stay of execution” and allows them time to readjust to living in a home before being adopted by their forever family.

How does it work?
When a dog has run out of time at a shelter, the staff will inquire about the possibility of placing it with us. Indy Homes for Huskies will then try to find a foster home within the organization to take the dog until a permanent home can be found.

Are these problem dogs?
Some people feel a dog wouldn’t end up at the shelter unless it was a bad dog or a problem dog; this makes them hesitate about fostering for fear of having a difficult time with the dog. We’ve found that most of the dogs that end up at shelters aren’t bad dogs or problem dogs, they’re just misunderstood dogs.

People who get a dog without researching the breed and its specific needs are often disappointed by the way the dog
behaves. For example, huskies are a high-energy breed that
loves to run and people who don’t know this become
frustrated when their dog keeps “running away.” A little
research would have taught them that huskies must be
properly contained at all times. Unfortunately, when not
contained the dog may run off once too often and the owner
decides to leave it at the shelter rather than having to
constantly chase it down.

What if I already have pets, will they get along
with a foster?
Most shelters temperament test dogs before releasing them
into rescue. Shelters will also test a dog for compatibility
with cats and other dogs if we request it. This helps us
place the dog into the right foster home.

We do request that potential foster homes are certain their
existing pets will accept a strange dog into their territory
before taking on the responsibility of a foster dog. We are
always willing to bring one of our dogs to your home to see
how your pets react. And we will always help with
introductions between your pets and your foster dog.

What does a foster parent do?
Foster parents have the unique opportunity of taking on the
day-to-day responsibility of owning a dog without the 10-15
year commitment of having a dog.

You will be responsible for feeding, exercising and
general care of your foster dog. You will help your foster
dog become reacclimated to being part of a family again. You will also help your foster dog learn basic house manners and proper social behavior.

As a foster parent, we ask that you make your foster dog available to meet potential adopters at our adoption events. We know that Saturday is a busy day for everyone, so we may be able to arrange for another volunteer to handle your dog if you’re not available to stay at the store during adoption hours. We may also ask you to be available for a potential adopter to meet your foster dog at another time or place; you will be able to arrange this visit at a time and location convenient to both you and the adopter.

Foster parents are also an integral part of the adoption and placement process. Fosters parents know their dogs better than anybody else, so their input on potential adopters and their homes is vital to a successful placement. Many of our foster parents also take part in the home visit of potential adopters in order to assure themselves that their foster dog is going to the place that is right for them.

**Does Indy Homes for Huskies reimburse me?**
As a foster parent, it will be your responsibility to pay for the day-to-day care of your foster dog. This would include food, treats, and all the toys and love you can give. IHH will pay for any veterinary needs of your foster dog. You may use one of our veterinarians or your own vet if you prefer.
If you use your own vet, you may want to see if they will let you run an account for your foster dogs. This way you can submit a bill to IHH and we can reimburse you when funds become available.

**How much will it cost me?**
We will pay for all veterinary bills on your foster dog. We just ask you to buy the dog food. This cost will depend on what brand of food you feed your foster dog. Huskies do best on a high protein dog food. This would include Eagle Pack or Nutro Max brands. Many of our fosters feed Nutro brand as it is high quality, reasonably priced and easily available at any pet supply outlet.

Our partnership with local pet stores offers us the added bonus of receiving broken or returned bags of dog food, and our partnership with Purina often results in our receiving bags of food for our dogs. Whenever these opportunities arise, our foster families are able to receive these bags of dog food free of charge.

**Why would I want to foster?**
First and foremost, you would be saving a precious life. You would also help to alleviate shelter overcrowding and save shelter staff from the agonizing decision of which dogs live and which dogs die.

Fostering gives new dog owners a chance to see what life with a dog is like before actually owning one. Think of it as a “try before you buy” opportunity. You wouldn’t buy a car
without trying it out, why adopt a dog without knowing what you’re getting into? When you consider that most people keep their cars less than the 10 plus years dogs live, it only makes sense that you should know what you’re getting into before you adopt a dog of your own.

Fostering can give your current dog a playmate. Dogs are social animals and enjoy having one of their own kind around to keep them company.

Fostering, or volunteering with rescue, can teach your children about compassion. It gives them volunteer hours and community service hours that many schools require from their students.

Volunteering with rescue will also look good on your resume. Many employers look for community service in potential employees.

Fostering also helps the rescued dog in many ways. Often dogs that are overlooked at the shelter for acting too “hyper” are just overstimulated in a shelter environment. Once they are in a stable environment with people that love them, their true personality comes out.

Foster parents are also instrumental in helping to renew a dog’s faith in mankind. Often the love they receive from their foster family is the first kind, gentle experience these dogs have had in a long time, or ever.
How long does a dog stay in foster care?
Dogs stay in foster care until a permanent home can be found. Sometimes it’s a couple of days; sometimes it’s a couple of months. The average time seems to be just a few weeks. Often those weeks make all the difference in the life of a dog.

It generally takes us a week to process an application and get a dog proper veterinary care, so unless a dog is adopted by a pre-approved adopter, and already vaccinated, they will be in foster care at least a week.

What if I don’t like being a foster parent?
We understand that being a foster parent to a rescue dog is not for everyone. If you find that fostering isn’t right for you, then once your foster dog has been adopted, you don’t have to take another one on. It’s as simple as that.

What if I want to adopt my foster dog?
We’re always happy when one of our dogs is adopted, especially by their foster family. This is what we call being a “foster failure.” If a dog has been in foster care for several weeks and doesn’t have an interested applicant, a foster parent is welcome to adopt their foster dog.

How do I become a foster parent?
Becoming a foster parent is quick and easy. Simply visit our website: www.indyhomesforhuskies.org and fill out our adoption application (please include a note saying you are applying to be a foster home). We will follow all the same
steps we would for a potential adopter; such as checking references and doing a home visit. This will help us determine which foster dog would be the best match for you and your living situation.

Will I have any help as a foster parent?
YES! We want to make your fostering experience as easy as possible. To help you out, we will assign you a foster mentor. Your foster mentor is an experience foster parent who will answer any questions you may have about the foster experience. You will also be invited to join our online group of fosters and volunteers where you can share your experience with other IHH volunteers.

Can I pull a shelter dog in the name of IHH?
Our good relationship with the shelters is important to us. Area shelters are in touch with members of our CORE group and will contact them if a dog is in need of rescue. To avoid confusion, we generally ask that volunteers contact the CORE group if they become aware of a dog in need of rescue. This way we can talk to our contact at the shelter and arrange to pull the dog. Once we have made arrangements with a shelter, we may ask you to stop by and pick up a dog if it’s convenient for you.

What if an IHH volunteer finds a stray dog that’s not a husky?
We love all dogs, no matter what the breed. If one of our volunteers needs help in rehoming a dog that they find, they are welcome to make the dog an honorary husky and use
our resources to help the dog find an appropriate home. These resources would include listings on our website and petfinder pages, using our adoption application and contracts, and attending adoption events.

**Who does a foster dog belong to?**
Dogs in foster care belong to IHH. They will only be adopted into homes approved by our board members. If someone you know is interested in adopting your foster dog, they would be required to fill out an application and be approved before adopted.

When you take custody of your foster dog, you will be asked to sign a foster contract stating you will follow all policies set by IHH. This is for your protection as well as the protection of our dogs and our organization.

**What paperwork will come with a foster dog?**
We will provide you with copies of the dog’s shelter records, veterinary records, rabies tags and microchipping information. Please keep all of this information in a safe place, along with any additional records you receive. Copies will need to be given to adopters once they take their dog home.

You will also be asked to sign a foster contract when you take your new foster dog. You will receive a copy of the contract for your own records and a signed copy will be kept on file with IHH. This is for your protection as well as the protection of our dogs and our organization.
How can I help get my foster dog adopted?
One of the best ways of helping your foster dog get adopted is to get it out into the public eye. Bringing your foster to our adoption events is a great start. You will meet plenty of potential adopters and be able to informally interview them while you tell them about the dog.

Another option is to be sure to have IHH business cards handy whenever you take your foster out in public. That way if someone admires your beautiful dog you can tell them it’s available for adoption and steer them towards our website.

If you have a bulletin board or online classified system at work, be sure to post information about IHH and our available dogs where everyone can see it.

Can I start out slowly?
Absolutely. We always try to place an easy to foster dog with first time foster homes. Or, you can volunteer to be a temporary foster. Our foster homes may need someone to take their foster dog in for a few days or a week while they go out of town for work or on vacation. This will give you an opportunity to meet a rescued dog and experience life with a foster for just a little while.

What equipment will I need to foster?
We will provide you with a list of necessary items for fostering. These items are generally good to have on hand to help make your foster experience a little easier. Items
such as crates, x-pens, baby gates, carabineers, leashes and bowls are all part of this list. If you have these items already, great! If not, many of our volunteers already have them and may be able to lend them to you.

**What do you look for in a foster parent?**
Fostering takes no special talents other than compassion and a love of dogs. We’re just looking for caring individuals that are willing to help a good cause and maybe learn some new things about dogs in the process.

**What if I have problems with my foster dog?**
Your first step would be to contact your foster mentor; they may have had a similar experience and can give you some tips on fixing the situation. Your foster mentor may also talk to other members of the CORE group for more insight. With different dogs and different backgrounds, there are few issues the CORE members have not experienced. In addition, there are several behaviorists in the Indianapolis area who are always willing to offer us consultations if a behavioral issue arises.

**Why is a home visit necessary?**
The home visit gives us a chance to see the environment a foster dog will be living in. With years of husky experience, we can often spot escape routes and other potential problem areas and help you fix them before you take in your foster dog.
The home visit will also give us a chance to evaluate your fence if you have on. Some huskies are known to climb chain link fence or scale six foot privacy fence. We want to know what kind of containment you have before placing a known fence climber in your home. This may save you the problem of chasing your foster dog around the neighborhood.

**Do I need a fenced yard to foster?**
Absolutely not. We have had dogs fostered in apartments, condos and homes without fenced yards. As long as you’re willing to exercise your foster dog daily, either with walks or trips to the dog park, you shouldn’t have any problems.

**How can I let a foster dog go?**
Many potential foster parents are afraid they’ll fall in love with their foster dog and not be able to give it up. Foster dogs live in our homes, sleep on our furniture, and become members of our families; how can we love them and then let the go?

This isn’t much different than a parent raising a child for 18 years and then letting them go off to college and starting their own life. It’s always harder on the parent than it is on the child. Like human parents, our foster parents need to remember that they’ve done their job and it’s time to let go.
There are a couple of things to keep in mind that may help you let your foster dog go:

- Ask yourself if the adoptive situation will be better for the dog. If you work outside of the home and a potential adopter works from within the home, then your foster dog would have much more family time.

- You may not have a fenced yard and a potential adopter does have a fenced yard.

- Your foster dog may not like sharing your attention with your existing dog and a potential adopter may not have a dog the foster would have to compete with.

Remember, if you let your foster dog go, then your spot will be open to help another dog in need get out of the shelter.

Most adopters are great about keeping their dog’s foster family up to date with how things are going. They send emails and pictures and attend the reunion events we hold. In addition, many adopters will ask their dog’s foster family to dogsit if they go out of town. So think of fostering as dogsitting for a friend you haven’t met yet.

**Will I have any input on where my foster dog goes?**
Yes, we want you to be a part of the adoption process. You know your foster dog best so you’ll probably want to talk to the potential adopter as much as they want to talk to you.
You are also welcome to participate in the home visit process so you can see where your foster dog will be living.

Are there any other ways I can help? YES! If you aren’t sure fostering is right for you, we have plenty of other volunteer opportunities available to you. Once you get your feet wet volunteering, you may feel more comfortable about fostering.

We sometimes need temporary fosters to take care of dogs while their foster family is out of town. We need emergency fosters to take in a dog that has to be pulled from a shelter immediately and doesn’t have a foster home lined up. And we need drivers to help transport dogs from shelters to vets offices or foster homes.

We need people to help out at our adoption events, this may include answering questions from the public, taking dogs out to potty or setting up and breaking down our display. We can always use crafters to create items for us to sell, auction or raffle off as fundraisers.

And if you have any specific skills like fundraising, public relations, bookkeeping, or legal advising, we can always use your help.