



Foster guidebook

PLENTY OF PIT BULLS

We're in this together!

Our goal is to make fostering a positive experience for you and your foster dog! Without fosters, we cannot save dogs' lives, so we have a lot of motivation to make it work. We hope the information here will help make fostering fun and easy for you. We are happy to spend time helping you whenever we can, but please remember that we are all volunteers, with jobs, family commitments, our own pets. No one pays us to do this – like you, we do it because we love dogs and want to help. Please be patient with us.

Where do I get answers?

First, read this whole document carefully! If you still have unanswered questions, look at the list of names below for volunteers who can help with particular areas. In addition, a good resource is our Facebook group page – please visit often and feel free to post your questions!

Below is a list of the key people who can help with most issues you'll face. The new foster letter has their phone numbers and emails, or email gainesvillepitbulls@gmail.com and ask to have your message forwarded.

Veterinary Care: Blanca Carbia is the vet care coordinator and should be your first point of contact for all health and vet care related questions, including appointments, health concerns, medications, etc.

Supplies: Supply list is posted every week on Facebook group. Carla Sabbagh is the supply coordinator.

Foster coordinator: Caroline Dimmer coordinates our foster program, including placement, provide support, advice, and information for new and experienced fosters.

Ambassadors and volunteer help (e.g. rides to events): Jennifer Gunn is our volunteer coordinator. She can help connect you with an ambassador or other volunteer help.

Training and behavior issues: We are in between trainers at present. Please contact Anna Peterson with any behavior questions for now.

Backup/holiday fosters: Caroline Dimmer is our foster coordinator. Please let her know as soon as possible if you need a backup foster while you are travelling.

Adoption events: Jude Macera coordinates events and can answer questions and provide support for events.

Adoption applications and process: Erin Carr is our adoption coordinator. If you have any questions about the adoption process or potential adopters, please tell her. We encourage fosters to participate in the adoption review, especially home visits, and also to help identify potential adopters.

Trouble-shooting

We don't mind questions, emails, and phone calls – but the one thing we hope to avoid is a call saying “come get my dog.” Please do not offer to foster if you are not able to cope with common issues and problems with patience and a sense of humor. When you get a dog straight from the shelter, you need to be prepared for surprises and for a transition period that can last several weeks (or more). Your foster dog may never have lived in a home before. She or he may never have had kind treatment from humans, may have been on a chain or in a pen and unable to socialize normally with other animals, may have been hungry or abused, or may just be very confused and scared.

Most problems can be resolved if you are consistent and patient. However, if you are going to throw in the towel the first time your foster dog growls at your own dog (or vice versa) or has an accident in the house, then please do not volunteer to foster! We would love to have you volunteer in other ways that are less stressful for everyone concerned.

We do not have a backup foster home. If you really have tried everything and cannot keep your foster dog, we will do our best to find a new foster home but it may take time. Please understand this before you commit to fostering. (The exception is when we take a dog from a current foster to try in a new foster home. We do this especially for fosters with cats. We can arrange this, but otherwise we take dogs from the shelter's euthanasia list directly to the foster home and there is no backup.)

Dog-dog interactions. Perhaps the most common reason that fosters want to return their foster dog is issues with their own dogs. We recommend giving it at least two weeks before you give up! During this time, please keep the foster pet separated from your dog(s) and follow our instructions for carefully managed interactions. We have had good success with slow introductions even for dogs who were reactive and growly at first. It's hard for your dogs to accept a stranger

into their turf, and it's scary for the new dog to try to fit in. If you are not willing to follow instructions and stick it out for a couple of weeks, then please do not try fostering.

If you follow instructions and it still doesn't work out between your dog and the foster, then we will find a new foster home – but it may not be immediate. Please keep dogs separated during this time

House training. Another common issue is house training. Again, we can almost always resolve this problem if you follow instructions and are patient and consistent! Crate training is key. We will give you detailed instructions and support.

Guidelines and Rules

1. **Communicate!** First and foremost, please let us know whenever you have questions or concerns, about health, behavior, or anything else. We want you to enjoy fostering and we are glad to do anything we can to help.
2. **Veterinary care and health issues:** For health concerns, please do not take your foster dog to a vet without first getting approval from POPB. We need to keep track of every foster dog's health and know what is going on. We know the dog's history and may be able to address the issue without a vet visit. We also cannot afford unnecessary vet visits, nor can we afford visits to private vets who do not offer us a rescue discount. If a vet visit is necessary, we can direct you to the right place. Blanca Carbia is the veterinary care coordinator and should be the first person you contact. Her email is blanki1@aol.com and her cell phone is 352-665-0585.
EMERGENCIES: If you think that your dog's life is in danger, please try to get in touch with Blanca, Carla, Anna, or another POPB volunteer immediately. If you cannot reach us and it is truly an emergency, please take your dog to Gainesville Animal Hospital during regular hours (7-6 weekdays and 8-12 Saturdays) or Affiliated Emergency Vet on weekends and nights (352-373-4444, 7314 W University Avenue, Gainesville).
3. **Dog parks:** DO NOT take your dog to off-leash dog parks. We cannot afford vet care or a lawsuit if something goes wrong! Even if your foster dog is perfectly well-behaved, we cannot control the behavior of other dogs or people at the park.
4. **Off-leash:** Do not let your foster dog off-leash in any other setting besides a fully fenced yard. Accidents happen, even to well-behaved dogs. It's not worth the risk of having your dog hit by a car, attacked by another dog, or lost.

5. **Follow Instructions** regarding food, medication, and all health and behavior issues. If your dog is heartworm positive, it is especially important that you follow the rules about restricted exercise. We won't place a special-needs dog with you if you have not agreed to it, but sometimes issues arise unexpectedly. As always, we will try to work with you to make the situation better. Please be patient with us and with your foster dog!

Resources

1. **Training** – We have drop in obedience classes (offered through PUPS Gainesville) every weekend. These are free and open to all foster and adopted POPB dogs. We can also provide assistance with reactivity, resource guarding, and other common behavior issues. If you can't get your foster dog to class, please tell us and we can try to find another volunteer (such as an adoption ambassador) who can take him or her.

2. **Socializing your foster dog** - If you'd like your foster dog to socialize with other dogs in a controlled environment, we can arrange that! We can set you up with well-socialized dogs for play groups and walks that will be fun and also good for your foster dog. We often have "pack walks" on weekends or evenings which are great opportunities for fun and training. These are announced on our Facebook group page.

3. **Adoption ambassadors** - these are volunteers who take adoptable dogs on outings, walks, and/or to class. They help socialize the dogs and expose them to potential adopters. If you'd like an ambassador for your foster dog, tell us!

Supplies

Tell us what you need! We supply it all – crates, leashes and collars, food, heartworm and flea prevention, and more. Please don't wait until you are out of food to let us know. The way to do this is by using our weekly supply and event attendance list, which is posted on our group Facebook page at the start of each week. We ask all fosters to respond every week. Even if you do not need anything, we need to know about your dog's event attendance, crate needs, etc. Requests close Wednesdays at 10 pm.

Monthly medications: Heartworm and flea prevention will be provided at the adoption event on the Saturday nearest the 1st of each month.