Care and Feeding of Foster Families

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What to Expect

- Framework for understanding foster volunteers

- Creating program infrastructure

- Care and feeding of foster parents

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A Word about Recruitment

A well run program is your *best* recruiting tool

That said: engage current fosters, failed fosters, prospective adopters, animal lovers in community to find more!

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Foster Families <u>are</u> Volunteers

Same best practices for foster parents as you'd use for direct care or shelter volunteers

- Recruiting

- Screening

- Training

- Supervising

- Appreciating

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Program Infrastructure

Decisions to make:

- Types of animals/skill level required?

- Level of support?

- Which program person is responsible?

- Rules for fostering

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What types of animals…

Everyone? Or just some?

- Behavior (jumpy-mouthy, reactive, stressed, fearful, litterbox)
- Medical
- Age

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Behavior Cases

Special Considerations:

- Foster parent abilities

- Training resources

- Acceptance of failure

- Insurance

- Direct access to managers

- Length of stay

Don't start your foster program with these cases.

What level of support can you offer?

- Supplies?

- Vet Care?

- Behavior Training?

- Grooming?

- Expertise?

- Oversight?

- Communication? Fellowship?

- A shoulder to cry on?

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One (Very Cute) Kitten…

- Supplies? Crate, pee pads, food, toys, carrier

- Vet Care? Amputation, check-up, x-rays, meds

- Behavior Training? He was a biter due to pain

- Expertise? Fellow foster who had an amputee

- Oversight? Case Manager… "Just give him drugs"

- Communication? ☑

- Fellowship? ☑

- A shoulder to cry on? ☑

- ~~Grooming?~~

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Who runs the show?

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Animal Care Manager? Volunteer Manager?
Vet Staff?
        |
    Foster Care
    Coordinator
    /         \
Foster        Foster
Team          Team
Lead          Lead
  |         /    |     |      \
Case    Photo-  Bio  Screeners  Event
Managers graphers Writers       Planners
  |                                |
Foster                          Event
Parents                         Volunteers
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Volunteers

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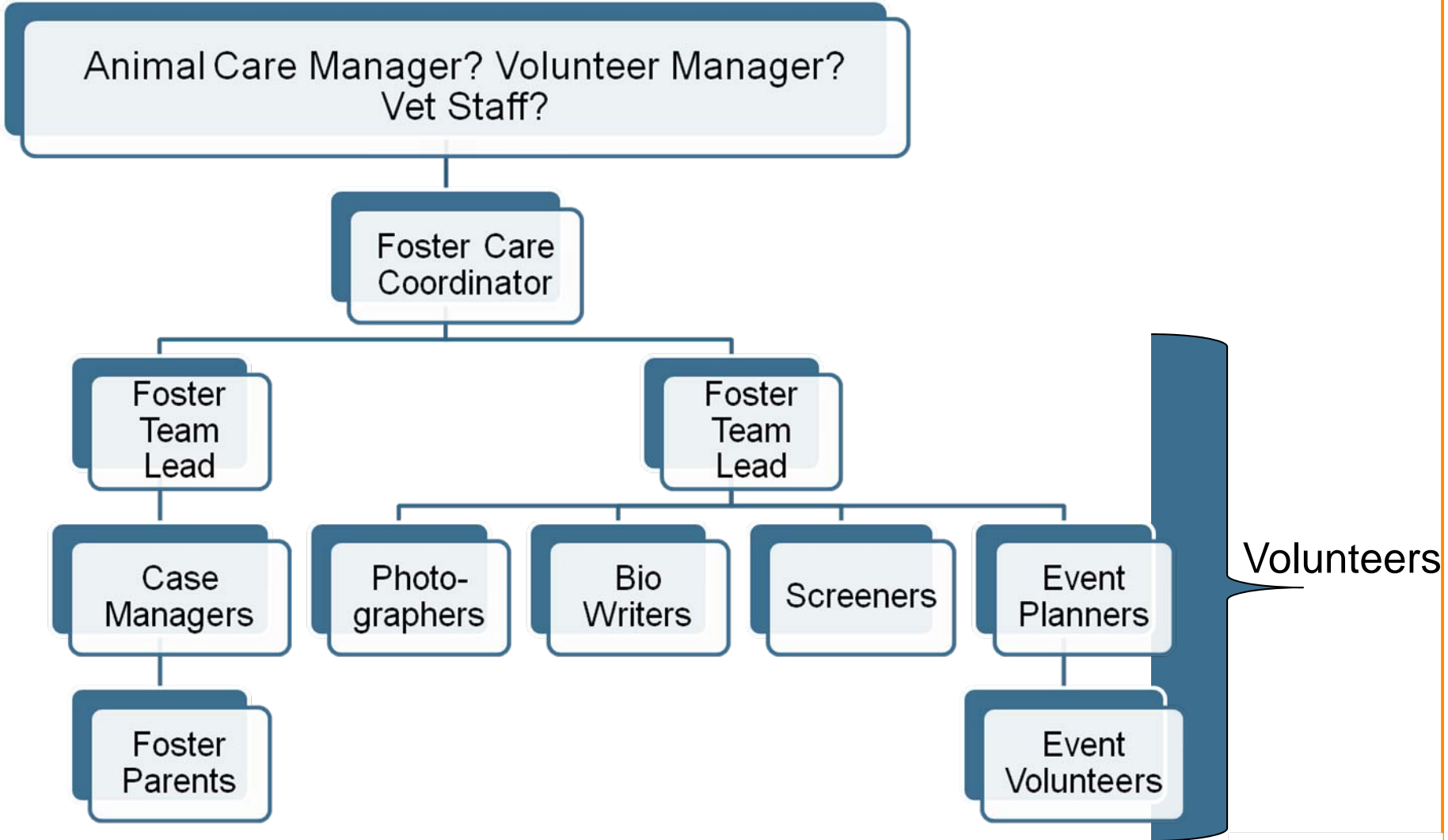
What are the rules?

What are the standards of care you expect from foster parents?

How will you communicate and enforce standards?

Program Infrastructure

Systems to establish:

- Screening

- Paperwork

- Training program

- Tracking system

- Communications system

- Return process

- Emergency plans

Screening

Two approaches:

1) Take everyone.

2) Identify capacity, availability, lifestyle, skill level, adaptability.

Create a stepped approach:

- Start slow with easier cases
- Develop skills for more challenging cases

Paperwork

Get Organized

- Foster Manual – basics of attendance, conflict resolution, and expectations

- General volunteer agreement

- Liability waiver

- Per animal contract

SEATTLE
animal shelter

ADOPTION ASSISTANTS-DOG

VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

TEAM DESCRIPTION
Adoption assistants work on Saturdays or Sundays when the shelter is open to the public. They assist in the introductions between shelter dogs and potential adopters, answer questions about adoption and other shelter procedures, assist the public looking for lost pets, and answer general questions about dog behavior and care.

HOW CAN VOLUNTEERS HELP?
- Greet people who come to the shelter — Direct the public to the cats, dogs or other animals.
- Answer questions — Help the public understand adoption procedures, general dog behavior and care, etc.
- Explain the cage cards — Help potential adopters read them and identify an appropriate dog for their lifestyle.
- Help in Adoption Dogs Room — Volunteers help potential adopters get acquainted with a dog by removing it from its kennel and escorting the potential adopters to the Canine Corral where they can visit with the dog off-leash.

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Training

Train your volunteers

- Spend time with them!

- Training at the beginning avoids lots of challenges later!

Tracking

What animal tracking software are you using?
   Simple solutions can be highly effective.

Communicating need for ongoing care?
   Simple reminder forms and assigned "staff"

How do you make sure animals don't fall through the cracks?
   Set communication expectations.
   Case managers/Staff?
   Weekly check-ins?
   Online groups?

Initial Communications

What are you using to do outreach when foster is needed?

1. Email/Group/social media – great first ask
2. Know your fosters and ask directly
3. Consider alternate arrangements

Set Expectations.

Know your fosters.

Keep organized notes; lifestyle, other animals, living situation, skill level, additional training

"It's all in my head" is *not* a solution.

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Return Process

Coordinating spay/neuter and return to the shelter

Helping the animals get adopted from their foster homes

(See ASPCA Adoption Ambassadors program
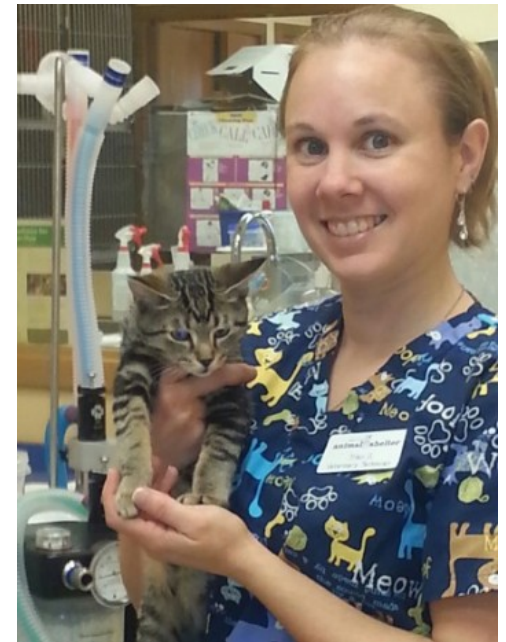   *www.ASPCApro.org/ambassadors)*

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Emergency Plans

When, not if!

Every foster parent should know *"What constitutes an emergency"* & *"Who to call"*

Make arrangements for:

- Emergency medical care

- Emergency behavior intervention

- Emergency re-placement

Care and Feeding

Who is responsible for providing support to the PEOPLE, not just the animals?

Hint: not just the program coordinator!

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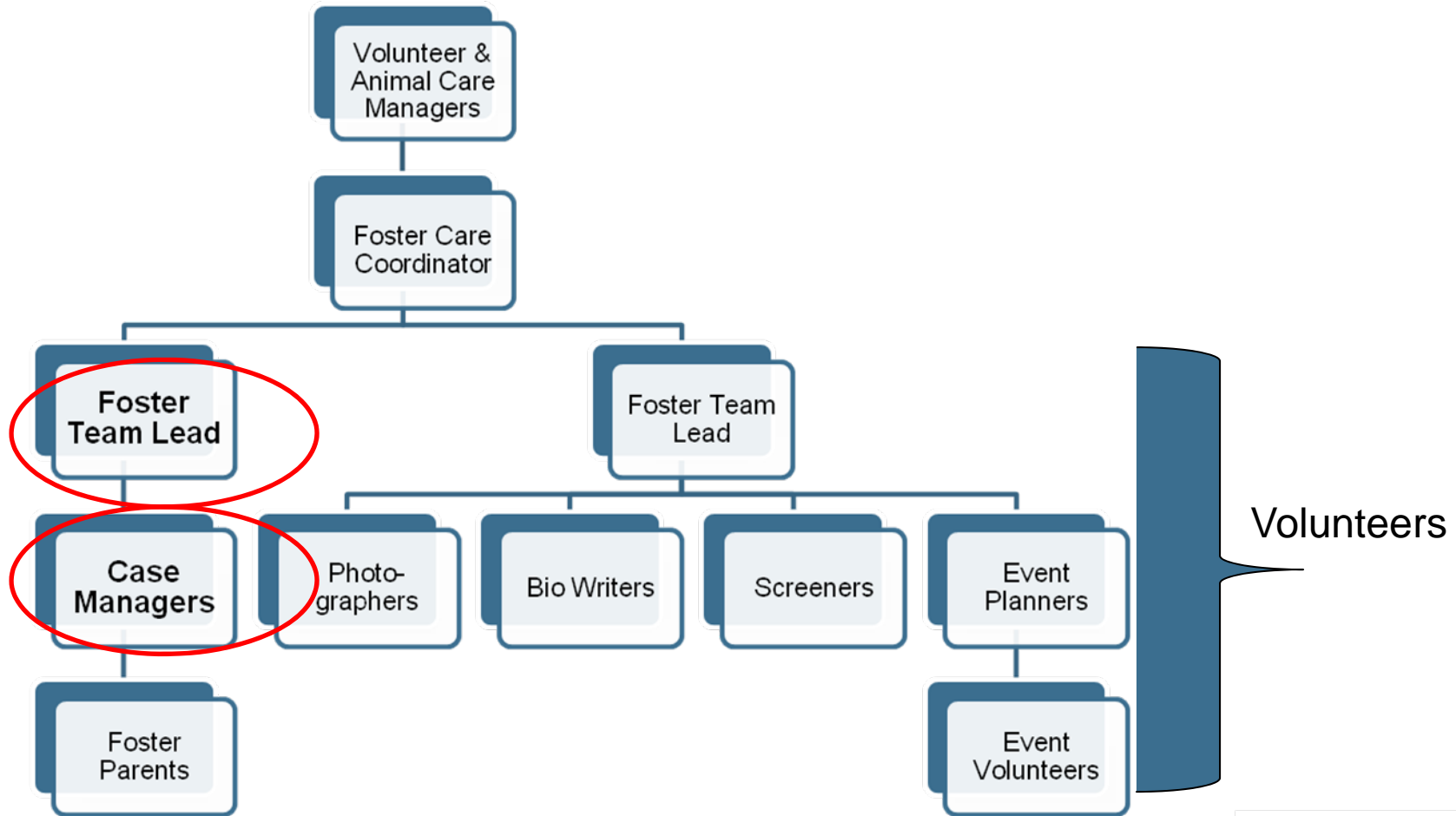
Care & Feeding: Case Managers

Q: How do you track all the foster animals?

A: Volunteer Case Managers

- Experienced Foster Parents

- Specific Skills

- Helping Hand
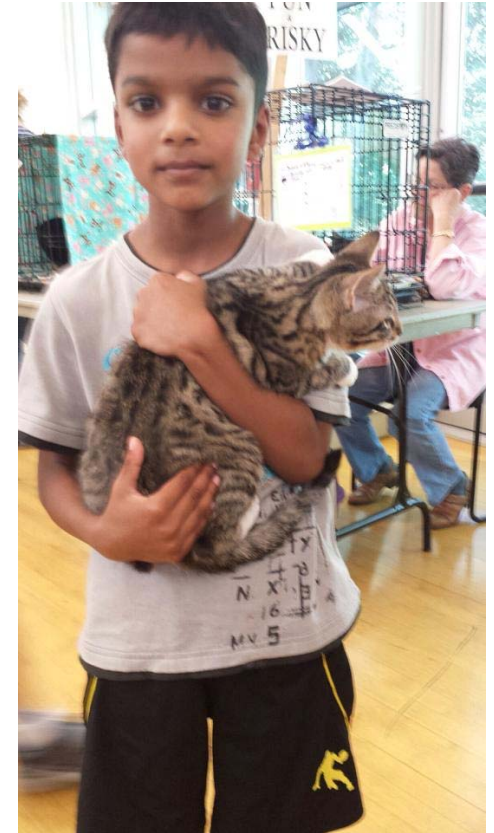
- NOT Staff

- Can see around corners

Care & Feeding: Case Managers

Care & Feeding: Opportunities

- Vet calls

- Behavior Questions

- Social media posts (closed)

- Applications for animals

- Adoption events

- Marketing updates

- Profile updates

- Social opportunities (for volunteers and animals)

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Taking Care of People

- Provide ongoing training

- Connect them with other foster parents

- Promote balance and self-care

- Encourage people to say no if needed

- Keep track of what they're telling us, evaluate their progress and re-adjust as needed

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Taking Care of the Leaders

- Your case managers and lead volunteers take more responsibility.

- Ensure a higher level of care, access and attention to them

Additional Resources

Using Volunteers as Case Managers for Foster Animals (including guidelines & samples)

ASPCApro.org/foster-case-managers

6 Ways to Find Foster Families

ASPCApro.org/blog/2015/10/23/6-ways-find-foster-families

Best Ideas to Attract, Keep and Grow Volunteers

ASPCApro.org/resource/praise-and-support-volunteers

Webinar Recordings:

Volunteer Management 101

Volunteer Management 201

Foster-Based Adoptions (see case management samples)

Questions?

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