## Tips and Tricks

* Finding Mentors for Foster Parents
  + We advise finding mentors for volunteers interested in fostering before you invite them to foster training (if your mentor program is established).
    - This ensures that your new foster parents have the necessary support to foster successfully.
    - It also prevents them from wasting their time at training if there aren’t mentors available to take them.
    - If you have to turn away an interested volunteer due to a lack of mentors in their area, provide them with a list of other shelters or organizations who have foster programs in their area (if applicable). If feasible, you may also let them know that you’ll contact them should you add a mentor in their area.
* Foster Training
  + If available, have an experienced foster parent conduct foster training with the foster coordinator or on their own. We have found that having two trainers makes foster training more fun for the participants. Training does not need to be conducted by a staff person, but the foster coordinator should know how to deliver foster training/fill-in if necessary.
* First Litter Assignments
  + If possible, set up first-time foster parents with easy groups (healthy, social).
  + Ideally, they should take home older, nearly at-weight groups to ensure a positive first experience.
    - In the beginning of Kitten Season, this will not be possible, so try to send them home with the best available litter, and a smaller litter.
  + **Note:** Do not send home a litter with a foster parent who has not attended foster training.
    - This can be tempting, but if the foster parent decides not to foster/follow the rules after attending the training, you will have to rehome their kittens, which can be a stressful experience for the kittens.
* Difficult Litters
  + There will be litters who will not be appropriate for everyone based on their needs (medical or behavioral).
    - In these cases, you will either need to disclaim the issues regarding the litter so only appropriate foster parents respond, or contact the appropriate foster parents for help. Make sure you are not overwhelming your experienced foster parents/those able to take more difficult litters.
  + If you can’t find appropriate homes, deny the litter’s admission to your shelter. This will be hard, but you do not want to lose your foster parents to burn out. Think big picture and take care of your foster parents as they will thank you in the long run.
* Fostering Multiple Litters
  + Do not allow new foster parents to take more than one litter of kittens at a time.
  + If an experienced foster parent wants to take two litters at a time, they must receive approval from their mentor first and have the capacity to provide quality care for both litters.
    - Once approved, only one of their litters can be under six weeks old.
    - If they volunteer to take an unvaccinated group, their other group must have received a vaccination at least five days before they receive their unvaccinated group.
      * We highly recommend not making any exceptions to this rule due to the high probability of losing both litters should they both be unvaccinated/one have panleukopenia. It isn’t fair to the foster parent to put them through the pain of losing both litters.
* Foster Rooms – Temperature Control
  + In the colder months, remind foster parents to increase the heat in their foster rooms to keep their kittens warm since kittens cannot fully regulate their body temperature. For those foster parents who cannot raise the heat in their foster rooms, ask them to make a covered “nesting” box for their kittens or to partially cover a box and to place a warming disc inside.
  + Remind foster parents to monitor the heat in their foster rooms during the summer months. If the foster parent does not have air conditioning, they can crack open a window with a screen. However, they should only open it an inch or less, and they must secure it to prevent the kittens from pushing it open. They can also try placing a piece of frozen tile in their foster rooms to provide temporary relief for their cats and kittens. They can also place a fan in their room on a sturdy surface as long as it and the cord are inaccessible to the kittens. Finally, they can place a towel over an ice pack to cool off older kittens. However, the ice pack should be placed on the floor in a location that allows the kittens to easily get on and off the pack (should they get too cold). We do not recommend this method for young kittens who are not fully mobile.
* Invoice Your Foster Bags
  + Use your point-of-sale system or a spreadsheet to check out foster bags, scales, and warming discs to foster parents. These items are expensive, so it’s important to track them. If you can’t do it in your POS then use a clipboard and track it on paper.
* Foster Parent Communication
  + Ask your foster parents to communicate the following via the Preventative Care Google Form:
    - Vaccines- date given
    - Strongid- date given
    - Medications- what and how long
  + Ask your foster parents to communicate the following to the foster coordinator:
    - Kitten birth details (if they take a pregnant cat)
      * Delivery date, sexes, colors, and birth weights
    - Kitten names- if the kittens were born in foster care or went out without a name
    - Offsite location visits
      * Where and when for the kitten list
    - Anticipated mother cat return
      * Date they would like to return the mother cat to the shelter for adoption (if the cat isn’t already scheduled for surgery)
* Veterinarian Check-Out Sheets
  + Have a template form for your veterinarian to complete when foster kittens are seen at the shelter. This will provide foster parents with a clear understanding of their kittens’ ailment(s), treatment plan, and course of action should their health decline. We have created one that you can use.
* Foster Kitten Pick Up
  + Make sure to provide your foster parents with a pick-up time frame to get their kittens so that they don’t arrive too early or too late. For example: pick up between 4pm-6pm.
* Vaccine and Deworming Data Entry
  + Train a trustworthy volunteer how to enter vaccines, deworming, medications, etc. into your shelter software. Your foster parents will enter this information in the Google Preventative Care form. The volunteer can then take the information from the completed forms and enter it into your system. This will save you a lot of time.
* Kittens Who Don’t Make Weight for Surgery
  + Create a plan for pre-adopted kittens who do not make surgery weight. Decide who on your staff will call the adopter, and ask the foster coordinator to contact the foster parent to pick-up the kitten.
  + If feasible, we recommend loaning scales to your foster parents so that they can weigh their kittens prior to surgery. If their kitten(s) don’t make weight, they can notify the foster coordinator and keep their kittens longer. If it isn’t feasible to purchase or loan scales, weigh the kittens at the time of surgery drop off. If the kitten(s) don’t make weight, the foster parent can take the kitten(s) home without making a return trip to the shelter, and the kitten will not have to stay at the shelter longer than necessary. Finally, ask your vet if they would be willing to alter kittens who are 1-2 ounces underweight.
* Pre-Adopted Kittens
  + Ask your foster parents to notify pre-adopters of their kittens’ surgery dates. We also recommend training your adoption staff to review pick-up instructions/details at the time of the pre-adoption (example—pick-up timeframe and location within the shelter).
  + Remind foster parents and/or adoption counselors to immediately notify the shelter of offsite pre-adoptions to ensure the kittens aren’t bumped on the spay/neuter schedule. Also remind them to drop off or mail the payment and original adoption paperwork.
* Foster Kittens Returning to Shelter to Stay
  + Make sure to reserve kennel space for kittens who are not pre-adopted and returning to the shelter. We also recommend creating a back-up housing plan for instances when reserved kennels are unexpectedly unavailable. Perhaps this could be an admissions room or another flex space within your shelter. Finally, if necessary, remember to move the kitten’s paperwork from the foster files to their new shelter housing location.
* Disciplinary Action- Foster Parents
  + If you need to provide correction to a foster parent, you do not need to involve the volunteer department.
  + However, if you need to provide a verbal warning with documentation, written warning, or final warning, you must inform and involve the volunteer department.
* Chain of Command
  + Clearly communicate and delegate duties and responsibilities within your foster program. Your foster parents, mentors, on-call lead mentors, etc. should understand their roles and know when/how to elevate a concern or issue should one arise.

## Kitten Foster Resource Guide

## Orphaned Kitten Care

* + Maddie’s Fund [Orphaned Kitten Care How To](http://www.maddiesfund.org/orphaned-kitten-care-how-to.htm?p=topic51) Video Series
  + Examining an Orphaned Kitten (video: 5 minutes)
  + Bottle Feeding an Orphaned Kitten (video: 7 minutes)
  + Stimulating an Orphaned Kitten to Urinate or Defecate (video: 3 minutes)
  + Bathing an Orphaned Kitten (video: 3 minutes)
  + Weaning Orphaned Kittens onto Solid Food (video: 3 minutes)
  + Giving Orphaned Kittens Probiotics (video: 2 minutes)
* Kitten Lady [Kitten Care](http://www.kittenlady.org/videos/) Instructional Video Series
  + Bottle Feeding (video: 12 minutes)
  + Syringe Feeding (video: 12 minutes)
  + Helping Newborns (video: 9 minutes)
  + Weaning Kittens (video: 9 minutes)
  + Comforting Kittens (video: 6 minutes)
  + Helping Baby Kittens Pee and Poop (video: 6 minutes)
  + Orphaned Kitten Care (video: 5 minutes)
  + Dealing with Diarrhea (video: 10 minutes)
  + Weighing Kittens (video: 4 minutes)
  + Bathing Dirty Kittens (vide: 5 minutes)
  + How to Treat Fleas (video: 5 minutes)
  + Kitten Photography (video: 10 minutes)
* Best Friends [Bottle Feeding Kittens](http://bestfriends.org/resources/bottle-feeding-kittens) Resource Guide
* Alley Cat Allies [Kitten Care](https://www.alleycat.org/resources/kitten-care-webinars/) Webinars
  + Help! I Found a Kitten! Neonatal Kittens (webinar: 90 minutes)
  + Advanced Feline Bottle Baby Care (webinar: 1 hour)
  + Basic Kitten Medical Issues (webinar: 1 hour)

## Kitten Growth

* + Alley Cat Allies [Kitten Progression Chart](https://www.alleycat.org/resources/kitten-progression/)

## Kitten Aging and Sexing

* + Animal Sheltering [How to Determine a Cat’s Sex](http://www.hsi.org/assets/pdfs/eng_ht_cats_sex.pdf) Guide
  + [How to Determine the Gender of Kittens](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zYUGXzZlulU) video (2 minute video)

## Socialization

* + Maddie’s Fund [Socializing Unsocial Kittens](http://www.maddiesfund.org/socializing-unsocial-kittens/presentation_html5.html) (webinar: 24 minutes)
  + Kitten Lady [Kitten Care](http://www.kittenlady.org/videos/) Instructional Video Series
  + Socializing Hissy Kittens (video: 4 minutes)

## Medical Emergencies

* + Maddie’s Fund [Emergencies in Kittens and Puppies 0-4 weeks](http://www.maddiesfund.org/emergencies-in-kittens-and-puppies-0-4-weeks/presentation_html5.html) (presentation: 13 minutes)
  + Maddie’s Fund [Emergencies in Cats & Dogs- 5 Weeks and Older](http://www.maddiesfund.org/emergencies-in-cats-and-dogs-5-weeks-and-older/presentation_html5.html) (presentation: 24 minutes)