

Welcome to the MADACC Foster Program!

Milwaukee Area Domestic Animal Control Commission

Dear Foster Caregiver,

Welcome to the MADACC Foster Program — we're so glad you're here!

By opening your heart and home to a dog in need, you're giving one of our community's most vulnerable animals a second chance. Whether you're fostering a playful puppy, a senior dog in need of comfort, or a dog recovering from medical treatment or surgery, your role is absolutely vital to their well-being and future.

Fostering saves lives. With your help, we can ease the strain on our shelter, provide dogs with the one-on-one care they deserve, and offer additional exposure to MADACC's adoption program outside of social media and sponsored events. You're not just helping a dog — you're making a lasting impact on our entire community.

This manual is your go-to guide throughout your fostering journey. Inside, you'll find essential information on dog care, behavior, medical protocols, emergency contacts, and what to expect every step of the way. We encourage you to read through it carefully and keep it handy as questions arise.

Remember: You are never alone in this process. Our dedicated team of volunteers is here to support you with resources, guidance, and encouragement. We're just a phone call or email away.

Thank you for being a part of this lifesaving work. You are a valued member of the MADACC family, and we are truly grateful for your compassion and commitment.

With gratitude,

The MADACC Foster Team

Gabrielle Gebhardt
ggebhardt@madacc.org

Contents

- PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION 1
- Program Rules..... 1
- WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY:..... 2
 - BEHAVIORAL emergency assessment guide..... 2
 - MEDICAL emergency assessment guide 3
- WHAT TO DO IF YOUR DOG gets out..... 5
- CHOOSING A DOG TO FOSTER 6
- PREPARING FOR YOUR FOSTER 8
- EXPECTATIONS OF THE FOSTER 13
- INTRODUCTIONS..... 14

PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

MADACC FACILITY

ADDRESS	3839 West Burnham Street West Milwaukee, WI 53215		
STAFFED HOURS	M-F – 8a – 7p Sa-Su – 8a-5p	These hours fall outside of when MADACC is open to the public; not all staff is available during all hours	
GENERAL PHONE	414-649-8640		
EMERGENCY LINE	414-763-6243 (only answered during open hours)		

PRIMARY CONTACTS

NAME/TITLE	EMAIL	PHONE	HOURS
Gabrielle Gebhardt - <i>Senior Adoption Counselor</i>	ggebhardt@madacc.org	414-649-8640 x 115	Sunday – Thursday (Off Fri/Sat)
Karen Hernandez - <i>Adoption Counselor</i>	kherandez@madacc.org	414-649-8640 x 115	Tuesday – Saturday (Off Sun/Mon)

**If none of the above employees are available (or the matter is urgent) contact MADACC’s emergency number (414-763-6243) and they will forward your call to the appropriate personnel.*

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

AFTER HOURS MEDICAL SUPPORT	VCA MECA	414-543-7387	3670 S 108th St, Greenfield, WI 53228
AFTER HOURS DOG REMOVAL	Milwaukee Non- Emergency Police Line	414-933-4444	

PROGRAM RULES

While we make every effort to allow you to foster in a way that best fits your home and lifestyle, there are a few rules that are *non-negotiable*. If you believe your situation is unique, you must obtain approval from MADACC **before** you alter fostering expectations.

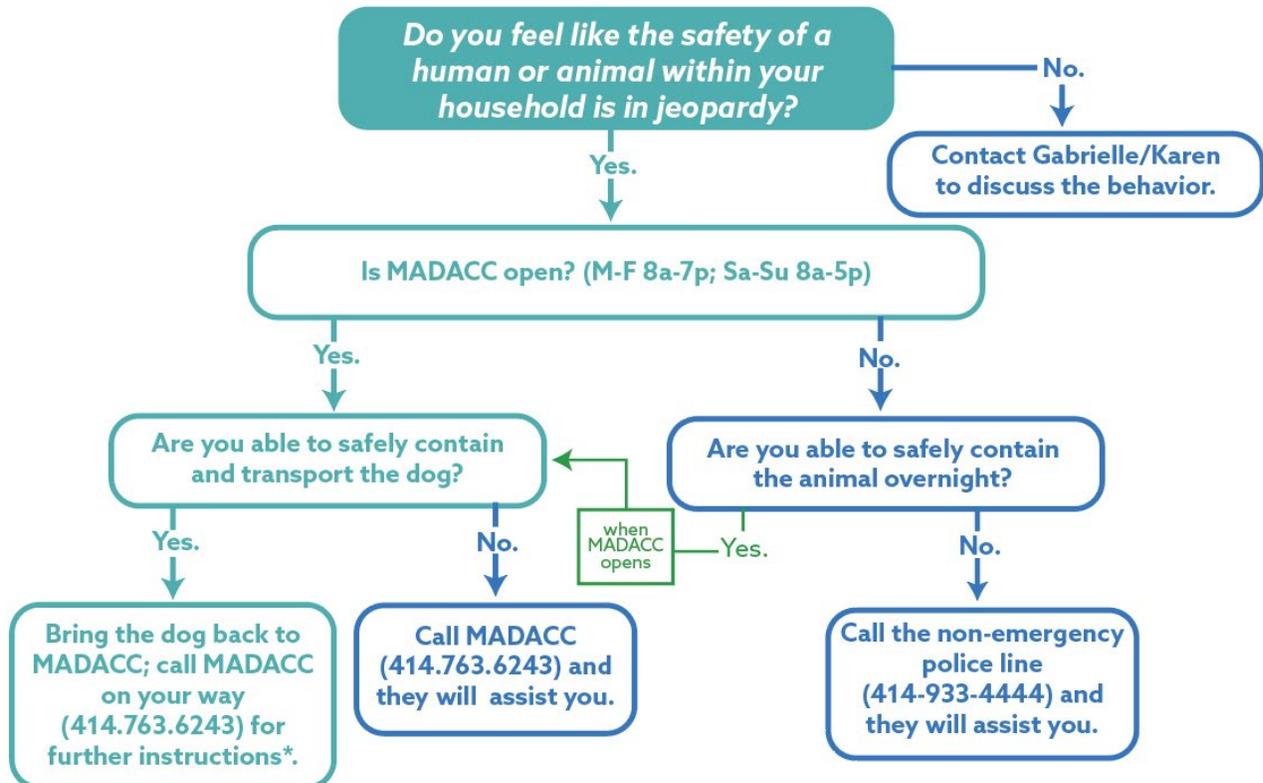
1. Dogs must be leashed in any unsecured/unfenced area
2. No dog parks.
3. Do not give any medications without veterinary approval (MADACC or VCA MECA)
 - a. Dogs may not be treated by personal veterinarians
4. Fosters must not use training equipment beyond what is supplied by MADACC
 - a. Martingale collars and easy walk harnesses are acceptable
 - b. No prong, pinch, choke chains; no e-collars (sound, stim or shock); no harsh correction methods
5. Professional training/group training classes must be approved by MADACC
6. Foster must be separated from resident dogs/children during feedings and if given high value chews/treats

Unapproved violation of any of these rules may result in immediate suspension/removal from the foster program.

WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY:

The below resources are meant to help you identify emergency situations for your foster dog; do not hesitate to contact MADACC to help with assessing your specific situation. If at any point the safety of your foster dog or that of another human/animal are in jeopardy, please contact MADACC immediately.

BEHAVIORAL EMERGENCY ASSESSMENT GUIDE



*If the dog is human aggressive, do not bring him into MADACC until directed to do so by staff.

Contact appropriate emergency personnel to treat injuries, if necessary. Even 'minor' bites should be examined by a medical professional to avoid potential infection.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

For "nuisance" issues/questions (ie. potty training, jumping, chewing, barking, etc.) you can also post on the MADACC dog foster Facebook page/messenger group for advice. Gabrielle/Karen are also on that page, but should not be expected to monitor every post - if you are concerned, email/call them directly.

MEDICAL EMERGENCY ASSESSMENT GUIDE

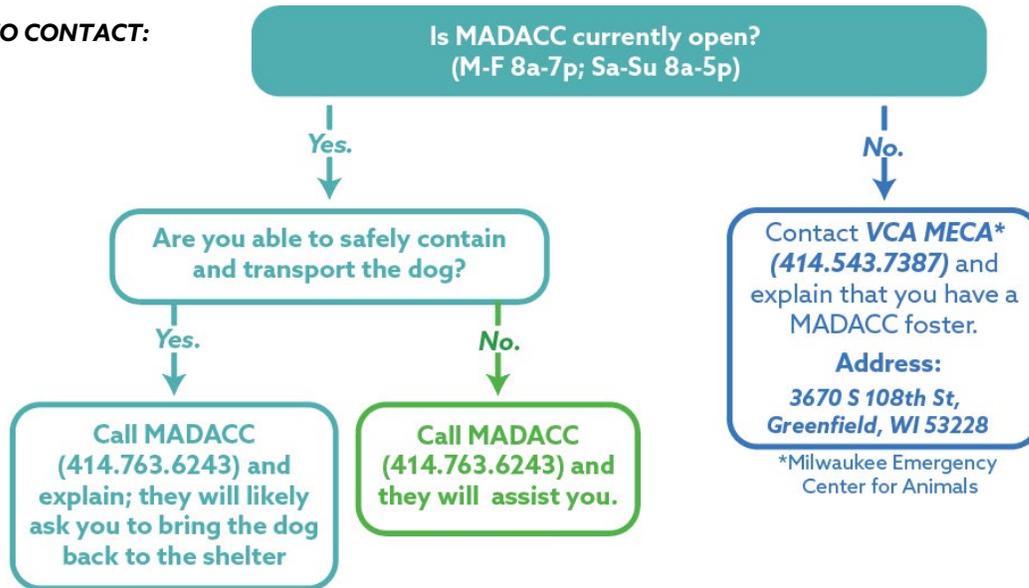
**Reminder: If a dog is ill/injured – allow them to tell you what they need: If they retreat into their kennel or a quiet corner, leave them alone unless instructed otherwise by a veterinarian/MADACC staff member– consider turning down lights and keeping noise/commotion in the household at a minimum until you can secure appropriate medical care. A box fan/low-volume classical music may also help keep the animal calm.*

(Pro Tip: Ask alexa to play 'calming music for dogs' if the device is connected to a streaming music source.)

WHAT CONSTITUTES AN EMERGENCY:

BREATHING DIFFICULTIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Labored or rapid breathing• Open-mouth breathing (not panting)• Blue or pale gums or tongue
UNRESPONSIVENESS OR COLLAPSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loss of consciousness• Inability to stand/severe lethargy (won't get up, even when stimulated)
SEIZURES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lasts more than 2 minutes• Inability to stand after seizure has subsided
TRAUMA OR INJURY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hit by a car or animal attack (even without visible injuries)• Broken bone or obvious deformity• Deep wounds, profuse bleeding
SEVERE VOMITING OR DIARRHEA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vomiting/diarrhea 3x in <2 hours• Presence of blood• Signs of dehydration (sunken eyes, tacky gums)• Inability to keep down food/water
HEATSTROKE (caused by exposure to hot temperatures without shade or water)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Heavy panting and drooling• Bright red gums and tongue• Vomiting, diarrhea, collapse
INGESTION OF TOXIC SUBSTANCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chocolate, grapes/raisins, xylitol, onions/garlic• Human medications, cleaning products, rodenticides• Marijuana, alcohol or other recreational drugs• Household plants like lilies, sago palm, etc.
ALLERGIC REACTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facial swelling (lips, eyes, muzzle)• Hives, itching, or sudden rash• Difficulty breathing• Vomiting after insect bites or stings
EYE INJURIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bulging or popped-out eye• Sudden swelling, bleeding, or squinting• Obvious trauma or signs of pain
TROUBLE URINATING OR DEFECATING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Straining without producing urine or feces• Crying out while attempting to urinate• Blood in urine or feces

WHO TO CONTACT:



*Do NOT administer any medications without veterinary approval.

NON-URGENT SITUATIONS

Contact Gabrielle/Karen if any of the following occur. They will provide next steps:

- Adult dog has not eaten in 48 hours / Puppy not eating for 24 hours
- Vomiting in an adult dog more than 3x in 24 hours
- Diarrhea in an adult dog lasting more than 24 hours without improvement
- Limping/swollen limb
- Minor wounds/bruising
- Problems with surgery incisions
- Sneezing/coughing/eye discharge/nasal discharge or other upper respiratory infection symptoms
- Hair loss/skin concerns
- Anything else that has you concerned

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR DOG GETS OUT

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS:

- 1 Contact MADACC**
Immediately contact MADACC at 414-649-8640 and inform them that your MADACC foster dog is missing.
- 2 Gather Supplies**
Grab a leash and some high-value treats (e.g., hot dogs, cheese, cooked meat).
- 3 Begin Searching**
Begin walking or driving around the neighborhood, remaining calm and composed.
- 4 Do NOT Chase**
If the dog is actively moving away from you, it believes it is being chased. STOP!

TIPS IF YOU FIND THE DOG AND IT APPROACHES YOU:

Video example: <https://petcolove.org/lost/articles/how-to-catch-a-shy-lost-dog/>

Crouch or sit at a 90-degree angle to the dog, avoiding direct eye contact	Toss treats to lure the dog towards you
Speak softly and move slowly	If the dog approaches, gently slip the lead around its neck

IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO FIND THE DOG:

- **Post Online:** Share information on neighborhood Facebook pages, Lost Dogs of Wisconsin, etc., including a picture of your dog and where they were last seen.
- **Contact MADACC:** MADACC and Friends of MADACC will provide additional advice in helping to locate the animal.
- **Important Reminder:** Do not chase the dog!! Most dogs will stay in a small area unless they are pushed out by well-intentioned people who don't realize they are pressuring them out - following, whether on foot or in a vehicle, is perceived as chasing by the dog. If they are intentionally moving AWAY from you, you are chasing them (even if you are not running).

CHOOSING A DOG TO FOSTER

At MADACC, fostering plays a crucial role in providing temporary homes for dogs in need. When selecting a dog to foster, consider the following priorities and guidelines to ensure a successful and fulfilling experience.

MADACC will send out pleas for specific dogs, but any dog that has been at MADACC for 14 days is eligible for fostering.

ELIGIBLE DOGS	WHO/WHY?	TYPICAL STAY
 <p>Medical Cases</p>	<p>Most often mange, weight gain, injury recovery or surgery</p>	<p>14-30 days</p>
 <p>Young Puppies</p>	<p>Puppies <8 weeks cannot be spayed/neutered and cannot be adopted out.</p>	<p>Varies by intake age; surgeries are set when the puppies are 8-9 weeks old.</p>
 <p>Struggling</p>	<p>Dogs who are nervous, reactive or over-aroused in the shelter setting</p>	<p>Based on foster availability</p>
 <p>Long-term Residents</p>	<p>Any adoptable dog that has been at MADACC for 14+ days.</p>	<p>Based on foster availability</p>

At MADACC, we understand that life can be unpredictable. While we encourage fostering for the agreed-upon period, we recognize that circumstances may change. **You are never obligated to keep a dog beyond your comfort or ability.**

If at any point you feel that you can no longer care for your foster dog, please contact Gabrielle or Karen. Remember, fostering is a flexible commitment, and your well-being is important too! Any amount of time out of the shelter is beneficial to the dogs in MADACC's care.

NOTE: Once a dog is cleared for adoption, fosters can bring the dog back to MADACC or keep the dog to adopt it straight from the home.

ALIGNING FOSTER CAPABILITIES WITH DOG NEEDS

MADACC will provide as much information as possible about each dog. However, please note that behavior in the shelter can vary significantly compared to what develops in a home environment.



NON-TRADITIONAL FOSTER OUTCOMES

 FOSTER FAIL VS. TRIAL ADOPTION	 SHELTER/RESCUE TRANSFER	 EUTHANASIA
<p>We LOVE a foster fail - but fostering <i>should not</i> be used as a trial adoption. MADACC offers a 5-day trial adoption period for families who are considering adoption but are unsure about choosing the right dog.</p> <p>The resources devoted to the foster program are allocated with the intent to foster. Please be mindful of this when selecting a dog to foster.</p>	<p>MADACC staff's primary goal is ensuring the best possible outcomes for every dog within their care.</p> <p>This occasionally means that dogs are transferred to partner rescues and shelters who offer better resources and a different adoption pool than what is available to MADACC.</p> <p>If you have extreme concerns over a dog in your care being transferred to a different organization, please let the adoption team know.</p>	<p>Unfortunately, some medical and behavioral issues are not seen while dogs are at MADACC.</p> <p>While we will do everything they can to provide appropriate resources and care at all times, there may be times when the only humane/safe option is euthanasia.</p> <p>These decisions are never made lightly, and are very rare for dogs in foster. MADACC staff will always be transparent in these instances.</p>

Please reach out to other fosters/volunteers/staff for support and with any questions/concerns you have.

PREPARING FOR YOUR FOSTER

The first 3-5 days should be focused on helping your foster dog understand that you are reliable and safe, while also helping them recover from the stress of MADACC. Dogs, especially those transitioning from a shelter environment, require ample rest. Healthy adult dogs typically sleep 16-18 hours daily, whereas shelter dogs often get significantly less. Providing a quiet space ensures they can rest without disturbances.

DECOMPRESSION CONSIDERATIONS/OPTIONS

	What it looks like	Considerations
<div data-bbox="207 499 586 804"> <p>Designated Area*</p> </div>	<p>Den, laundry room, spare bedroom, extra bathroom or even a spacious walk-in closet.</p> <p>Friends of MADACC can also provide a 'kit' to setup a designated area within a larger space (ie. an unfinished basement or an unused alcove in your home!)</p>	<p>Avoid high-traffic/high-commotion areas.</p> <p>Remove or block off access to anything you don't want the dog to chew.</p> <p>Consider laying down pee pads or vinyl remnant until you understand the dog's potty schedule.</p>
<div data-bbox="207 873 586 1178"> <p>Gates & Crates</p> </div>	<p>If a designated area is not feasible in your space, you can use gates to control your foster dog's movements AND to control who has access to your foster dog.</p>	<p>Requires everyone in the house to understand and agree to calm interactions at all times.</p> <p>May not work well for nervous dogs in a chaotic homes</p> <p>Best to create visual barriers between other pets for the first couple days.</p>
<div data-bbox="207 1241 586 1545"> <p>Tethering & Crates</p> </div>	<p>The foster dog is literally attached to you (best to pick one adult in the beginning) or in a crate. This ensures the dog is constantly supervised and safe.</p>	<p>May not work for nervous dogs in a chaotic home.</p> <p>May not work for reactive dogs if other pets are in the home.</p> <p>If resident pets/kids cannot ignore the foster, they need to be kept contained when the foster dog is out.</p>

*Until you know your foster dog's habits, it is best to crate them whenever you leave - regardless of your arrangement. Anxious dogs can jump/knock over gates, chew through doors, etc. - in most cases (except for severe confinement anxiety) a crate is the safest spot for your foster.

WHAT MADACC/FOM PROVIDES

MADACC and Friends of MADACC supply all necessary food, toys, and supplies at no cost.

If you find you need additional items, contact MADACC or visit Paws In at 16040 W National Ave, New Berlin, WI 53151 (check Facebook for open hours!).

BRINGING YOUR FOSTER DOG HOME

DAY 1: OH SHIT! WHAT HAVE I DONE!!!

Fostering is not easy and it takes time to fall into a new routine – even seasoned fosters feel overwhelmed during the initial adjustment period.

REMEMBER- you're providing a significant improvement over their previous shelter environment where they were caged 23.5 hours per day (on good days)- you do not need to devote every waking hour to your foster dog. Focus on offering regular access to the outdoors, some playtime, and basic training. If you have concerns or need support, reach out to Gabrielle or Karen or post on the foster Facebook page!

DAYS 1-5: DECOMPRESSION

Prioritize		Avoid	
Sleep and quiet time	Calm bonding activities	Meeting lots of new people	Public Outtings
Consistent Routine	Enrichment	Playing w/ Resident Pets	A Ton of New Experiences

Initial Separation: Allow the foster dog to acclimate by keeping them in a separate from all other pets. This helps reduce stress and allows them to adjust at their own pace. This is a great time to build a relationship with you through quiet and calm interactions.

Supervised Interactions: When introducing the dog to other pets or family members, do so gradually and under supervision to ensure positive interactions. (See **INTRODUCTIONS** section for more!)

Routine: Establish a consistent routine for feeding, walks, and playtime to help the dog feel secure.

DECOMPRESSION OVERVIEW

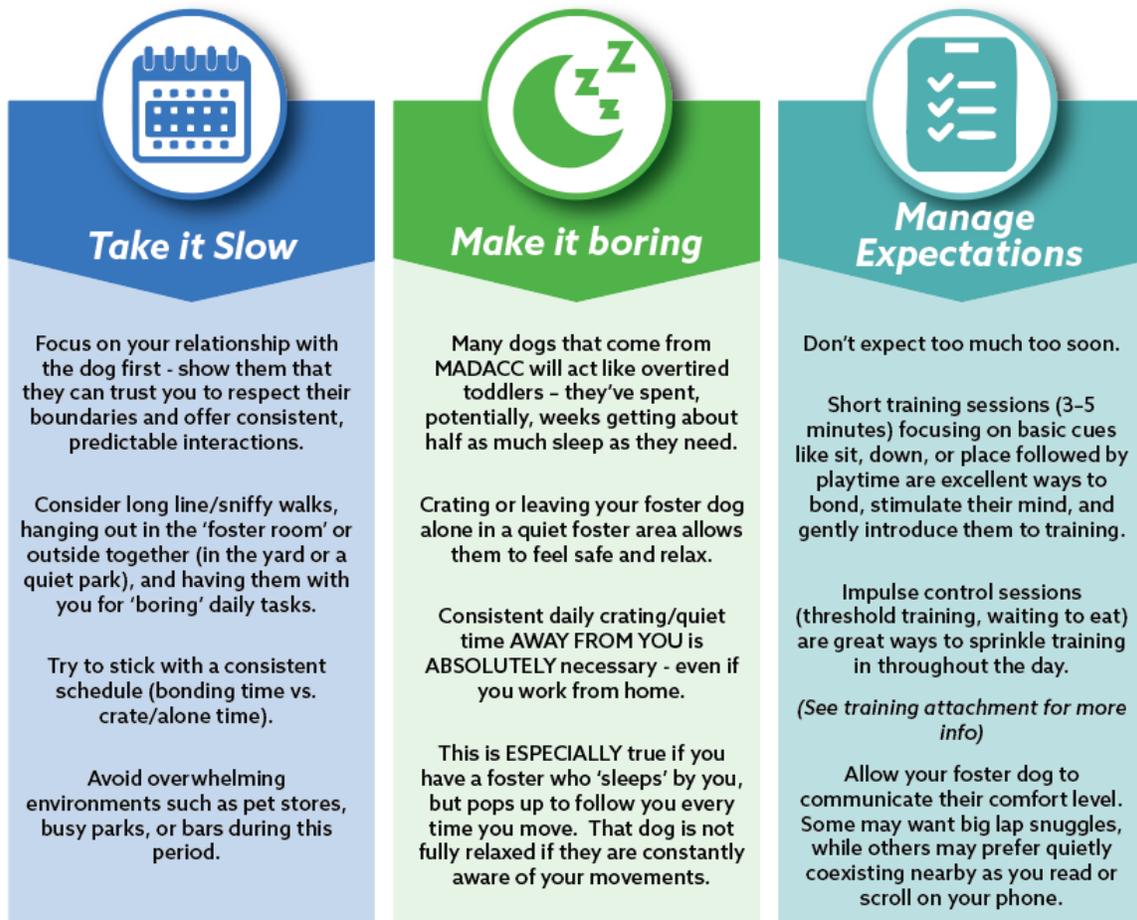
A general guideline for a foster dog's adjustment is:

3 DAYS	3 WEEKS	3 MONTHS
		
FOR THE FIRST 3 DAYS	AFTER 3 WEEKS	AFTER 3 MONTHS
<p>EXPECT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feeling overwhelmed Scared or unsure Not yet "him/herself" <p>DON'T BE SURPRISED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will not eat or drink Hides or retreats Has potty accidents in the house 	<p>EXPECT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Starting to settle in Comfort level increases Learning routine <p>DON'T BE SURPRISED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Starting to test boundaries New behaviors start to show up 	<p>EXPECT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed trust and bond A sense of security Established habits and routine Setting into their true personality

More information about decompression is available [here!](#)

TIPS FOR SUCCESS DURING DECOMPRESSION

Every dog is different. Some dogs, especially those who have spent months at MADACC, may need more time to adjust. The 3-3-3 concept is not a rule – it can take weeks for a dog’s brain chemistry and stress hormones to return to baseline. Give both your foster and yourself grace during this period!



REACH OUT FOR TRAINING SUPPORT SOONER RATHER THAN LATER!

Be prepared for new behaviors to emerge that were not visible in the shelter – it is a sign that the dog trusts you enough to be themselves. While it can be unsettling, it means you’re doing a good job!



If you are unsure how to handle the new behaviors, reach out to Gabrielle/Karen or post in the foster Facebook group for guidance. MADACC/FoM will provide you access to a trainer if needed – if you have a preferred trainer, they must be approved by MADACC. Please reach out as soon as problematic behaviors are detected – **waiting days or weeks “hoping” it will get better will only make future training more difficult.**

- **MADACC does not allow for punishment-based training methods**, such as prong or choke collars, hitting, yelling, dominance techniques, squirt bottles, or alpha rolls.

HEALTH & SAFETY NOTE

- We recommend keeping your foster dog separated from resident dogs initially, both for behavioral safety and to reduce the risk of spreading undiagnosed illnesses like kennel cough or other infections.
- Symptoms can take 10-14 days to appear. MADACC cannot provide veterinary care for your resident animals, so careful observation is essential.
- Make sure resident dogs are current on all vaccinations. Take extra care with dogs who may have compromised immune systems (ie. seniors, puppies, chronically ill, etc.)

KEEPING YOUR FOSTER DOG CONTAINED AND SAFE

Remember: Your foster does not inherently know that their life is better with you. The first couple of days are high-risk for dogs slipping leads and bolting from yards.



IN THE HOUSE

CRATE WHEN YOU LEAVE

This removes the possibility of destructive behavior, ingestion of dangerous materials, and conflict with resident pets. Baby gates can be pushed or jumped over and should not be relied on for confinement.

CONSIDER A DRAG LINE

Attach a long, handless leash to your dog at all times. This allows you to easily redirect them from inappropriate or unsafe activities without invading their personal space with a collar grab (which many dogs find intimidating).

NEVER UNATTENDED

If you cannot actively monitor the foster dog, they should be crated or in a room without any safety hazards.



IN THE CAR

NEVER leave a dog alone in the car

CRATE OR BUCKLE IN

This ensures the dog cannot bolt the second you open the door. Make sure to have a firm grip on the leash before releasing the dog.

SHUT THE HANDLE IN THE DOOR

Having the handle available before you open the door is another great way to ensure the dog doesn't get away.

RELEASE IN A GARAGE

Whenever possible, drive into an enclosed area before releasing the dog.

CONSIDER TWO LEASHES

Maximize control in the event of equipment failure.



IN THE YARD

CHECK FOR PROBLEM SPOTS

Walk the fence line BEFORE bringing the foster in. Secure any loose boards, large gaps and wonky latches.

KEEP THE LEASH ON

Even if the area is fully fenced, the leash allows you to have control without invading the dog's personal space.

NEVER UNATTENDED

Your foster dog should never be left alone in the yard.

RESPITE FOSTERING / VACATION

If you need to be away and cannot care for your foster dog:

1. **Foster Facebook Group:** Post in the foster Facebook group to see if an approved foster can watch your dog while you are out of town.
2. **Family/Friends:** If you have a friend or family member who is willing and able to watch the dog (within Milwaukee County), check with Gabrielle or Karen to see if they are an acceptable respite foster option.
3. **Return to MADACC:** You can always bring the dog back to MADACC while you're gone. This is one of the benefits of fostering through MADACC—no one is excited to bring their dog back to the shelter, but it's a great option if no one else can watch your pup.

EXPECTATIONS OF THE FOSTER

As a foster caregiver, your role is pivotal in providing a safe and nurturing environment for your foster dog. The following guidelines are designed to ensure the well-being of your foster dog and a harmonious experience for all involved.



PRIORITIZE YOUR OWN HOUSEHOLD

Fostering is both challenging and incredibly rewarding – but the security of your own household must come first.

While the first couple of days will always be stressful, if a foster is jeopardizing the safety or security of pets/family members, please reach out to volunteers on the foster Facebook page or MADACC.



MARKETING

(For dogs who have been cleared for adoptions)

- Craft a Bio for the Adoption Binder
- Post at least weekly on social media and tag MADACC
- Taking your foster out on the town to dog-friendly establishments is a great way to reach new people - but this is not a requirement.



TRAINING

BASICS: While we don't expect perfection, fosters should spend 5-10 minutes per day working on basic skills (sit, stay, loose leash walking, drop, etc.)

COMPLEX ISSUES: Contact MADACC immediately for training advice. The faster problematic behaviors are addressed, the easier they are to fix. Any outside trainers must be pre-approved by MADACC.



HOME SAFETY

- **Duration Alone:** Dogs should not be left alone for more than 9 continuous hours.
- **Outdoor Access:** Provide access to the outside at least 3 times a day for bathroom breaks and exercise.
- **Resident Pets:** All pets in the home must be fully vaccinated to prevent the spread of diseases.



TRAVELING & SOCIALIZING

The dog must not leave Milwaukee County unless approved by MADACC.

No dog parks under any circumstances. These environments can be overwhelming and pose risks to a dog still adjusting to a new home.

With the exception of potential adopters, fosters should not be meeting unknown dogs in public.



FEEDING

Adhere to the feeding guidelines provided for the dog food you are using. If you are concerned with portions, contact Gabrielle/Karen and/or post to the Facebook group.

Try to feed at least 2 meals per day (more for puppies).

Feed separately from resident animals.

By adhering to these guidelines, you provide a stable and secure environment that fosters trust and helps your foster dog transition smoothly into their new life.

If you have any questions or need further clarification on any of these expectations, please don't hesitate to reach out to Gabrielle or Karen. Your commitment and care are invaluable to the success of our foster program.

INTRODUCTIONS

REMINDER: FOSTER DOGS SHOULD NEVER BE LEFT ALONE WITH RESIDENT PETS OR CHILDREN. It only takes a split second for an interaction to go south, with catastrophic results.

Make sure to give your foster time in your home to get to know and trust YOU before introducing them to other pets. While every dog is different, **MADACC recommends at least 3-5 days in your home before animals meet.**

(Note: Some medical conditions like kennel cough or other viruses may take up to 10-14 days before appearing in your foster dog. If you have a pet that has a compromised immune system (very young or very old) most veterinarians recommend keeping animals separated until the 10-14 days have passed. MADACC does not pay for veterinary care associated with owned animals)

DOG-TO-DOG INTRODUCTIONS

Every dog is different and may require a different approach than what is outlined below. Follow the lead of both dogs and only proceed when both are showing positive or neutral body language.

*Please reach out to the foster Facebook group or MADACC if you need someone to help with introductions.

	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	WHY
Step 1: SPACE EXCHANGES	<p>Allow your foster dog to spend time in the living space without the resident dog present. Remove the foster dog and allow resident dog to explore the smells left behind by the foster.</p> <p>Repeat multiple times over the course of a few days.</p>	Dogs rely heavily on their noses. By allowing them time to familiarize through scent, they can 'recognize' their housemate when they finally see them.
Step 2: GATED VISUAL ACCESS	<p>Allow dogs to move freely, while being separated by a gate or fence. Do not force interactions. Observe their reactions; if either dog shows signs of stress or frustration, increase space between dogs.</p>	The fence provides a safety barrier and allows dogs to meet off-leash with out risking a potential negative interaction.
Step 3: PARALLEL WALKS	<p>Walk the dogs together on leashes at a comfortable distance, gradually decreasing the space between them as they become more relaxed.</p>	Shared activity promotes positive associations and the forward movement removes some of the pressures of interaction.
Step 4: FREE TIME IN NEUTRAL SPACE	<p>In a spacious, enclosed, neutral area, allow the dogs to interact while keeping leashes attached (Tennis courts are great for this! Your backyard may not be ideal if your dog has any guarding tendencies). Limit initial interactions to a few minutes, give both dogs a break from each other, and repeat.</p>	Any scuffles during early interactions will impact relationships. Frequent break while interactions are still positive helps keep everyone happy.
Step 5: IN HOME FREE TIME	<p>Allow the dogs to spend time together inside the home. Continue to monitor their interactions and provide positive reinforcement for calm behavior. Note: Doorways, narrow hallways or tight spaces between furniture are often the locations where scuffles break out.</p>	Remember: Your foster should never be left alone with resident animals without supervision.

The above steps should occur over the course of several days/weeks. Do not proceed to a new level of interaction until both dogs are showing calm/neutral and/or positive interest in each other.

Safety Tips:

- Always supervise interactions between the foster dog and resident animals.
- Remove toys during initial in-house interactions to prevent resource guarding.
- ALWAYS feed dogs separately to avoid food-related conflicts.
- Limit access to high-value treats or toys to when dogs are physically separated.
- Be cautious when giving treats to either dog in the other's presence.

DOG-TO-CAT INTRODUCTIONS

Introducing a new dog to a resident cat requires careful planning and patience.

TIPS	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	WHY
GIVE YOUR CAT A 'SAFE SPACE'	A separate room with secure exits and elevated areas so the cat can observe from a distance. (A cat tree or baby gate should not be the sole strategies of keeping your cat safe.) Ensure the cat has access to essentials like food, water, litter box, and toys in their safe space.	Your cat deserves to feel safe in its own home.
KEEP THE DOG LEASHED	For early interactions, until you better understand the dog's feelings, keep a 15 ft leash (with handle cut open) on the dog AT ALL TIMES, unless you are 100% confident the cat will not make an appearance.	The long leash makes it easy to catch the dog before they make a poor choice during their interaction with the cat.
REWARD WHEN THE CAT APPEARS	Place small containers of high-value treats around the house (or keep a treat pouch on). When the cat is around, every time the dog acknowledges the cat is there (a quick glance or even an ear flick), mark with 'Yes!' and give them a treat. Throw a party to celebrate the great choice the dog made.	This teaches the dog that when the cat appears, good things come FROM YOU! They can't wait for a treat AND chase the cat.
USE THE LEASH TO REDIRECT	If the dog fixates on the cat or shows signs of chasing, calmly redirect their attention (using the drag line) and continue rewarding calm behavior from a greater distance.	Using the drag line allows you stay calm, even if the dog is getting overstimulated by the cat.
MAKE SURE THE DOG IS 'FULFILLED'	Provide ample exercise and mental stimulation AWAY FROM THE CAT for the dog to reduce excess energy that might lead to unwanted behaviors.	Dogs need an outlet for their energy - if you don't help them channel it in appropriate behaviors, they're likely to find things to do that we don't like.

Always supervise interactions between the dog and cat. Even brief unsupervised time can lead to negative experiences.

Gradual introductions, over several days or weeks, are key to fostering a positive relationship between your foster dog and resident cat.

DOG-TO-CHILD INTERACTIONS

TIPS	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	WHY
SET EXPECTATIONS	<p>Teach kids what appropriate handling of dogs looks like - no hugging, no climbing, no pinching and no pulling ears or tails.</p> <p>Teach them not to disturb a dog while its sleeping or eating.</p>	Not setting expectations of your kids, sets everyone up for failure.
KEEP THE DOG LEASHED	Conduct introductions in a controlled environment, keeping the dog on a leash and ensuring the area is quiet and free from distractions.	The leash allows you to control the dogs movement, but make sure to allow them to distance themselves from the child if feeling uncomfortable.
GIVE LOTS OF TREATS AND PRAISE	Whenever the dog interacts politely and calmly with the child, praise and reward! But you should also allow the dog to adjust to the presence of children over time, starting with brief sessions and gradually increasing duration.	Let the dog know that s/he's doing a good job and that you appreciate those efforts.
EDUCATE YOUR KIDS	Teach children to recognize signs of stress in dogs, such as turning their head away, lip licking, or stiff body posture. If the dog shows any of these signs, calmly separate them from the child and provide the dog space.	<p>Your dog should not have to resort to growling/ snapping to get space.</p> <p>Bites rarely, if ever, happen 'out of nowhere'.</p>

NERVOUS FOSTER DOG AND NEW PEOPLE

As a foster, you are your dog's advocate. It's your responsibility to ensure they feel comfortable and safe, even if it means politely asking others to adjust their behavior.

TIPS	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	WHY
TREAT AND RETREAT	When the dog approaches the new person, have them toss a treat AWAY. The dog will walk away to get the treat and now they get to choose to return or maintain space.	This approach (vs. forcing the dog to take a treat from the stranger's hand) builds trust by providing choice for the dog.
EXPLAIN BEFOREHAND	<p>Encourage new people to keep their hands to themselves initially, avoiding reaching out to pet the dog until the dog shows interest.</p> <p>Discuss appropriate behavior around dogs, discouraging hugging or grabbing.</p>	Reaching out to a dog invades their personal bubble and can make insecure dogs react.
IMPLEMENT CONSENT CHECKS	Implement consent checks by stopping petting after a few seconds. If the dog stays close or leans in, continue petting. If the dog moves away or shows signs of stress, stop petting and allow the dog to retreat.	Similar to treat and retreat, this provides choice for the dog and builds trust in the interaction.
SUPPORT PROPER INTERACTIONS	<p>Discuss appropriate behavior around dogs, discouraging hugging or grabbing.</p> <p>Direct people to avoid reaching over the dog to pet the top of their heads - soft shoulder and chest rubs are typically preferred by nervous dogs</p>	While these tips are true for all dogs, nervous dogs are more likely to feel threatened and act out.

