



Fostering by the numbers

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Best Friends[®]
SAVE THEM ALL[™]



Let's first talk about the data.



Statistics show us that...



▲ 112.35
▲ 38.70
▼ 20.24
▲ 81.44

Data-driven organizations have a higher likelihood of meeting performance objectives.



Start with the Data

DATA = INFORMATION

- Allows us to **Focus & Prioritize** our Foster Care efforts
- **Targeting** our efforts helps us achieve the greatest lifesaving impact
- **Maximizes Resources** – Every organization has different needs and resources
- Allows us a starting point to track progress. You can add progression points that triggers when to go to the next phase in the program
- Allows us to make changes along the way based on changes in the data
- Allows you to share overall success with hard data. Whether that be a Board level or gaining public support





Target Population Groups

Orphan Kittens & Puppies

**Feral Cats & Unsocialized
Kittens**

Fearful Animals

Nursing Animals

Behavioral Animals

Long- or Short-Term Illness

Post Operational Animals

Seniors

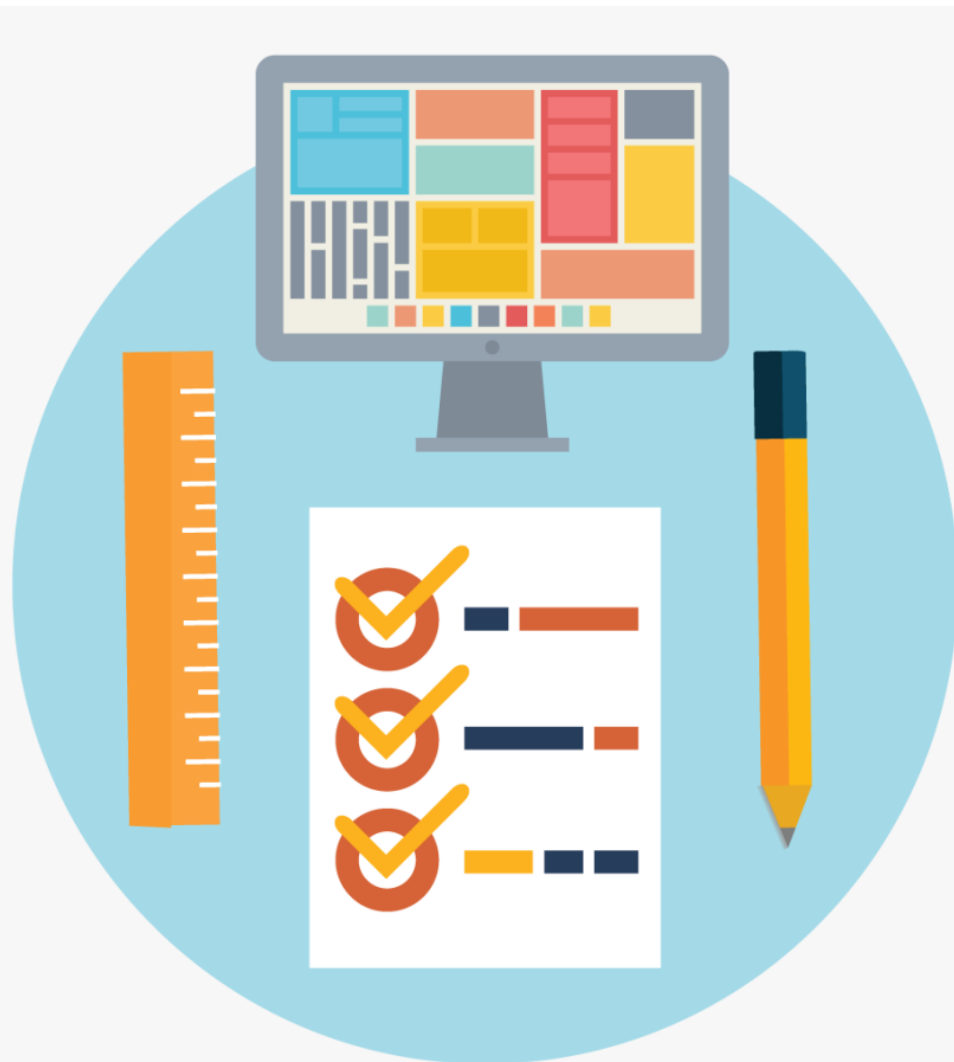
**Animals that need a break
from the shelter**





Data Collection

- Intake data over the last year
- Number of animals in each target group
- Adoption rate
- Species, Age, Health Status
- Euthanasia rate & reason
- Be honest with the data to make tracking easier





Analysis

- Percentage breakdown of each groups as a percent of total intake
- Which groups are euthanized and why
- Which groups are adopted the quickest using the least resources





Example

- Sick, Elderly and injured take more resources
- Healthy puppies, Kittens, Moms with litters take fewer resources





Determining needs

Bottle babies

Staff to train fosters

Food/KMR

Scale

Heating pads

Bottles, etc.

Specialized Foster

Home (can they feed
every 2 hours?)





Program Goals

The goal is to save the most animals given what resources you have. Data Decision Making will help you make those decisions.

- Which groups are the most in need?
- Which groups do you have the resources to foster?
- How many animals do you want to send to foster?
- What increase in adoptions do you want to see for your target groups?



Program Goals

The Goal is every animal sent to foster gets adopted

- If 30% of nursing cats go into foster, then there should be a 30% increase in the adoption rate
- Start small increase over time
- Work ahead of anticipated busy season





Allocating Responsibilities &
Recruitment.



Foster Coordinator

- Main contact for fosters
- Responsible for communication, placing and training fosters

Co-Managers

- Small group that shares responsibilities
- Requires consistent communication within the team

Hybrid Model

- One point of contact for the Fosters
- Duties are delegated to a team for training, placing and marketing



Recruitment

- People want to be part of your lifesaving mission
- They get to spend quality time with a pet for a short amount of time
- Teaches responsibility and compassion to children



Recruitment

RECRUITMENT = MARKETING

MARKETING = DEMOGRAPHICS

DEMOGRAPHICS = DATA



Recruitment

- What **Audience** are you trying to reach?
- Target based on that demographic and tailor the message to that group
- Run reports from your shelter software about the demographics of your current fosters
- Analyze that data to either grow the group or diversify the demographics





Recruitment

- Use current volunteers and foster to recruit from their networks
- Make short videos of foster sharing their stories
- Local Press/TV donate spots for fostering
- Flyers at libraries and community centers
- Social Media
- Talk at local meetings (Rotary clubs, Optimist groups, etc.)
- Vet Clinics
- Direct Mail
- Partner with Petco/Petsmart to put flyers in checkout bags
- Have Fosters put out yard signs



Recruitment

- Recruit at Intake (Finder to Foster)
 - Short term until you can find a permanent foster solution
 - Bottle babies
 - Best Friends Podcast Episode 58
 - [Animal Services in Long Beach, CA is using foster kits to help keep litters of kittens out of the shelter until they are ready for adoption](#)
- Foster to Adopt
 - Gathers information about how the animal does in a home
 - Allows the family to find the perfect fit
 - Foster Fails
 - [saving-americas-pets-vlog episode 4](#)
- Foster Field Trip and Sleepovers
 - Gives the animals a break from the shelter
 - Allows the Foster to test drive the Foster process



Recruitment

- Create a marketing plan around your busy seasons
 - Who are you targeting?
 - Which method are you going to use?
 - Budget for each approach used
 - Length of the campaign
- Gather the data on the success of each campaign
 - Modify future campaigns to maximize the ROI



Training Fosters





Training

- Training helps with the need for constant communication with the Foster

In Person Group Training

Pros

- Fosters get to know the staff
- Large groups mean you can teach a lot people at once
- They get to meet other fosters interested in the same things

Cons

- Space – You need a spot for a large group
- Time – How often are you going to have trainings
- Delays placing animals when fosters must wait for an open training session.

Offer different days and times to maximize the availability opportunities of the foster.



Training

One on One Training

- Requires Staff members to do the training at the time of pickup
- Training can be tailored for individual pets
- A hybrid of both training methods can be used. One foster group could be done using group training while another could be one-on-one
- Some form of One-on-One training is recommended so you can talk about the needs of the specific pet
- If there are any changes to the policies, they can be addressed at that time





Training

Foster Care Handbooks <https://network.bestfriends.org/>

Best Friends Animal Society

ABOUT PET HEALTH ▾ PET TRAINING ▾ ADVOCACY ▾ SHELTER & RESCUE WORK ▾ GENERAL PET ▾ COVID-19 HOME



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Section 4: Caring for your foster kittens

Because kittens are fragile, it is important for you to watch the behavior of your foster kittens closely and monitor their health daily. To keep track of their health, keep a journal of the kittens' weight, eating habits and overall health. You should weigh the kittens daily to ensure that they are growing, and record the weight in the journal.

Watch for signs of illness, including frequent crying, restlessness, weakness, coldness (hypothermia), diarrhea, dehydration, shallow or labored breathing, paleness or blueness in color. Notify the foster department immediately if a kitten is losing weight, is cold to the touch, or is having trouble breathing (either shallow or heavy breathing).

Kittens are susceptible to illness, so foster kittens must be kept indoors. If your personal cat has access to the outdoors, he or she cannot interact with your foster kittens. Also, please do not let your foster kittens ride loose in a car. Use a carrier at all times to transport kittens to and from appointments.

Caring for bottle-fed kittens

Bottle-feeding neonatal kittens requires an around-the-clock commitment. Thank you so much for offering your time and attention to these fragile babies. And please remember that we are here to support you. Here's some general info about bottle-feeding.

Milk preparation. You can pre-mix enough formula to last for 24 hours of feeding, but it must be refrigerated at all times. Discard all unused and mixed formula after 24 hours. Only heat enough formula for each feeding, and throw away any uneaten warmed formula after each feeding. Do not re-use warmed formula because harmful bacteria can develop in it.

Bottle-feeding tips. It is easier to feed your kittens when they are gently wrapped in a towel or blanket, instead of just using your hands. The towel or blanket is softer and warmer than your hands, and being wrapped up makes the kittens feel safer as they eat. If the kitten allows it, the forelegs should be free to allow him to "knead" with his feet. This kneading activity is essential to the kitten's muscle development and helps aid in digestion of the kitten's food. Also, be careful to position the kitten so that his belly is toward the floor. To decrease the chance of formula being aspirated into the lungs, kittens should not be fed on their backs.

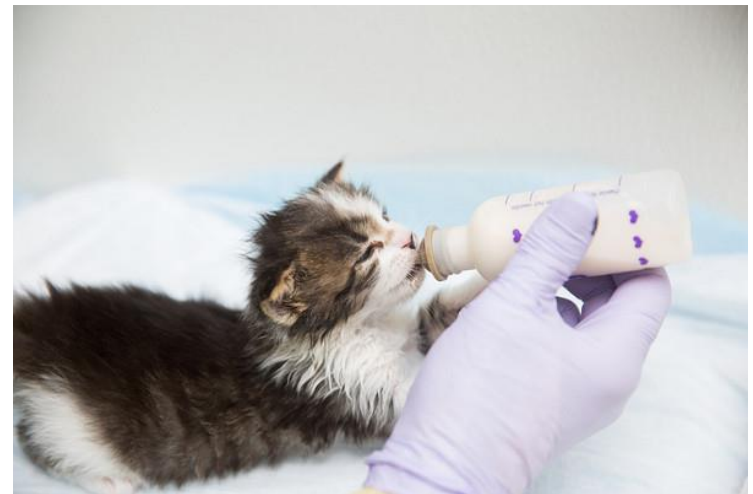




Training

Neonatal Example

- Bottle Feeding
- Stimulating for elimination
- Growth stages
- Body Temperature
- Emergency care
- Daily weight schedule
- When to return for medical needs





Foster to Foster Communication

- Having a place where fosters can talk to each other allows experienced fosters to coach new fosters
- Encourages foster to try fosters a different group
- Facebook groups, Slack, Discord, etc.



Foster Coaches

- When foster has agreed to foster a new group assigning an experienced foster will help get them through their first foster experience.
- Having another foster to call helps overburdening the staff with calls



Foster Retention



Retention

- Retention starts the minute the foster shows interest
- Great experiences spread but so do bad experiences
- Retention is all about having a great foster experience





Retention Support

- Practical Support
 - Policies & Procedures
 - Specific Care Information
 - Written Materials and Guidelines
- Physical Support
 - Supplies
 - Litterboxes
 - Leashes
 - Food
 - Heating Pads
 - Medical Support
 - Emergency Line





Retention Support

- Emotional Support
 - Appreciation
 - Compassion for when things don't go well
 - Have staff or coaches to provide guidance





Retention Plan

When developing a retention plan it is important to talk with the fosters to get their perspective and make the process as easy as possible





Retention Plan

- Do surveys and follow up interviews for first time fosters. Getting their thoughts and listening to them will help retain them in the future.
- Set aside more time to coach first time fosters





Retention

- Training Builds Confidence
 - It allows the foster to be informed and feel like they are part of a team
 - Make sure they have access to staff or a group that can help along the way
 - Staff and Coaches need to be understanding when things don't go as planned
 - Build in breaks so the fosters aren't experiencing burnout



Retention Ideas

- Foster Newsletter with stories of how their efforts are impacting the mission of the organization
- Thank you cards
- Spotlighting Fosters on Social Media or on your website





Retention Perks

- Waive adoption fee if they want to adopt
- Have the foster be a part of the adoption process
- Give tickets to organizational events
- Have a party after a busy season celebrating achievements
- Drawings for prizes



Conclusion

- Use Data to find out which animal groups are most in need
- Develop a plan based on the resources available and grow over time
- Create a recruitment plan based on demographic data
- Setup trainings for different foster groups
- Retention is all about making the experience easy and having the fosters feel like they are part of the team and making a difference



Q&A

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