

Breaking Down Barriers in Foster Programming:

An Incremental Change Approach

CAL FOR ALL
ANIMALS





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About My Work

Feline foster and adoption program in partnership with LA County DACCC

9,000+ felines fostered by 1,000+ foster caregivers collaboratively

Ongoing efforts to remove barriers and create a racially diverse and economically accessible foster program



Scanning Operations for Barriers

Reflect by asking specific questions

Seek feedback from colleagues, other orgs or existing fosters/volunteers

Collaborate with teams outside the foster program

Avoid replacing removed barriers with new ones

Breaking Down Barriers Through Incremental Changes

Why Incremental?

- Starting point is clear
(not everything happens at once)
- Allows you to create your own pathway
- Small wins along the way!
- Easier to adjust behaviors, address challenges and identify lessons learned
- Defined metrics to collect and analyze along the way

Areas of Focus

- Foster Recruitment
- Foster Program Accessibility
- Foster Sign-Up Form
- Foster Onboarding Process
- Foster Development and Retention

Assessing Operations:

Sample Questions

Broad Questions Elicit Yes/No Answers

Are our recruitment tactics inclusive?

Is our foster program accessible to everyone?

Is our foster application welcoming?

Is our onboarding process streamlined?

Are we providing opportunities for development and retention?

Specific Questions Elicit Action

Which community members are we leaving out with our current recruitment tactics?

How can we make fostering accessible to anyone who wants to help?

What information do we *need* to know about applicants?

What steps do people *need* to take to onboard with our program?

What tools/resources can we provide to support foster development and promote retention?

Foster Sign-Up Form

Guiding Question:

What information do we *need* to know about applicants?

Possible Incremental Changes



- Review each sign-up form question and determine what you plan to do with the information collected
- Keep your application as concise as possible; ask only what you need to know
- Remove any questions aimed at denying people from helping your organization
- Ask questions aimed at learning about people's self-reported preferences
- Offer various sign-up form options (*e.g., online, in-person, phone call*)
- Explain the reason you need specific information

Foster Recruitment

Guiding Question:

Which community members are we leaving out with our current recruitment tactics?

Possible Incremental Changes



- Determine most commonly-spoken languages
- Set translation priorities, both priority languages & materials to translate
- Understand, define and accept the help you need (e.g., emergency fosters)
- Identify target recruitment spaces across your community, including non-animal related spaces (*virtual and physical*)
- Use explicitly welcoming language in all recruitment materials (e.g., *website, shelter, flyers, social media*)

Foster Program Accessibility

Guiding Question:

How can we make fostering accessible to anyone who wants to help?

Possible Incremental Changes

- Explicitly define the purpose and definition of **“fostering”**
- Offer and advertise various forms of support and resources, for example:
 - Supplies
 - Preventative and medical care (*plus, telehealth*)
 - Transportation support
 - Facilitating community-building between fosters
- Seek feedback from former or one-time fosters
- Be flexible with guidelines and norms
- Offer various communication options: Text, phone call, video call, Facebook, email

Foster Onboarding Process

Guiding Question:

What steps do people *need* to take to onboard with our program?

Possible Incremental Changes



- Make training materials as concise as possible and offer supplemental materials
- Explicitly mention how the information shared in the onboarding will help the foster caregiver
- Ensure that new foster caregivers are not expected to retain 100% of the information and welcome any questions
- Provide on-demand, self-paced training materials
- Offer alternative onboarding options (*e.g., in-person, by phone*)
- Be flexible with foster finders by focusing the onboarding on the animal(s) in front of them

Foster Development and Retention

Guiding Question:

What tools/resources can we provide to support foster development and promote retention?

Possible Incremental Changes



- Make continued learning opportunities optional and/or relevant to the individual
- Offer variety of training opportunities (e.g., on-demand, roundtables, Q & A format, reading, instructional videos, hands-on)
- Offer supplemental materials and support (e.g., *Foster Resource Hub*, handouts, videos, 1:1 coaching)
- Move to a learner-centered approach (e.g., growth mindset, 70/20/10 model of learning & development)

Measuring Success with Data

Don't let an adverse situation overshadow your wins!

- How / where did they hear about your program
- Preferred language for communication
- Preferred communication method
- Whether transportation assistance is needed
- Where foster caregivers live (*zip codes*)
- Continued trainings people are interested in and trainings attended
- Populations of animals supported (*e.g., age, eating ability, medical and/or behavior*)
- Feedback from foster caregivers

Reflections

**Non-
municipal**

**Majority of
foster base
White and
in affluent
areas**

**Tech-heavy
program**
*(webforms, online
trainings)*

**Onboarding
could
stand to
lose more
barriers**



Questions?

