**Mentor Program FAQ**

***What traits/competencies make a good mentor?***Approachability, compassion, composure, effective communication, active listening, flexibility, ability to follow protocol, desire to learn, and empathy are all traits we look for in a mentor.

***How do I become a mentor? What kind of training is required?***If you have at least one year of experience as a foster parent and feel you have the time and skills required to be a mentor, you may express your interest to the foster coordinator. The foster program also reaches out to foster parents on occasion. You will be trained to do vaccines, sub-q fluids, give oral medications, eye medications, slurry feed kittens, and some light bottle training. You will shadow another mentor, and you will have the support of an experienced mentor to guide you.

***What do mentors do?***
Mentors are the first line of inquiry for foster parents with any questions/concerns about their foster kittens. They often travel to the homes of foster parents to give vaccines and help with other medical issues.

***How many foster parents will I mentor?***You may take on as many foster families as you feel you can handle based on your experience and available free time. Those starting out may wish to stick to one or two foster families while they are learning and gaining experience.

***How do I get assigned foster parents to mentor?***Before every foster training, the foster coordinator will send an email with a list of interested foster volunteers in need of mentors. The mentors may then claim families from the list.

***Do I have to travel as a mentor?***You will need to travel to your foster parents’ homes to perform health checks when necessary and administer vaccines and other preventative care treatments. You will also have a mentor assistant assigned to your area that can assist with vaccines.

***Do I have to do a house check with each foster parent?***It is recommended that you have a conversation with the foster parent about their room and setup before they take home their first foster group. Video chats can be very useful with this, or you can schedule a time to visit their home. Occasionally, you may need to check an experienced foster parent’s home if concerns arise. Sometimes it’s helpful to visit a foster home so that you may familiarize yourself with a specific group of kittens.

***Will I be reimbursed for any expenses including gas?***Any expenses you incur while helping with the foster program are tax deductible within the limits of the law. You will be responsible for keeping track of these expenses.

***Am I on-call 24-7?***You are not. If a foster family cannot reach you, on-call lead mentors are available to assist them. You should try to make yourself reasonably available. Remember, you are the first line of defense!

***Do I need to learn to give vaccines and fluids?***It is highly recommended. One of the mentor’s main responsibilities is ensuring kittens receive their vaccines on time. The ability to give fluids is highly desired, so mentors can help provide proper supportive care in a timely manner.

***Who do I call in an emergency?***In an emergency your first point of contact will be one of the on-call lead mentors. The name and contact information of the on-call lead mentor is posted to the Your Organization’s Foster and Your Organization’s Mentor Google groups every week. Lead mentors are the liaison between foster families and the hospital staff at the shelter.

***What do I do if I cannot get a hold of the on-call lead mentor?***Leave a message and give the on-call lead time to respond. If you are in an urgent situation, you may call another lead mentor or the foster coordinator.

***Can I call the veterinarian directly?***Calls to the veterinarian should only be made by lead mentors during hours outside of regular Your Organization clinic hours. The hospital staff has an on-call schedule so that no one person is on-call 100% of the time.

***How do I know when a kitten should have an appointment at the shelter? ER room?***If a kitten is not responding to supportive care an on-call lead mentor will help you discern if a trip to the shelter for a veterinary appointment or a trip to the ER is necessary. Please remember that all trips to outside veterinary clinics must be approved prior to the visit or the foster parent will be financially responsible for all costs incurred.

***What do I do if my foster parent and I aren’t getting along?***You are not going to like everyone you meet. You need to do your best to be pleasant with your foster families even if you don’t like them. If there are conflicts that go beyond just personality differences, you are encouraged to voice your concerns to the foster coordinator. If you truly believe that you cannot be cordial with your foster family, notify the foster coordinator and she will do her best to reassign the foster family.

***What do I do if my foster parent won’t communicate with me?***You need to be prepared to initiate contact and communication. The most important part of communication is that the kittens are getting the care they need. If you have tried to be communicative and your foster parent is still not getting the message, please contact the foster coordinator who can follow up with the foster parent.

***What do I do if I have a concern about my foster parents?***If you believe the kittens in the foster home are not receiving proper care in accordance with the foster program guidelines, you need to bring up the issue with the foster parent. Often many perceived problems can be easily rectified with simple corrective reminders or suggestions. If the foster parent is not taking corrective action and/or you feel the kittens are in imminent danger, please contact the foster coordinator immediately.

***Who do my foster parents call if I go on vacation?***In advance of your vacation, you will need to find someone to fill in for you. It is easiest to ask another mentor in your area or post your need to the Google group. It is important to make sure your foster families know the dates you will be gone and who they should contact.

***How do I become an on-call lead mentor?***You will be asked by a member of the foster program, or you can reach out to the foster coordinator for more information.

***What traits make a good on-call lead mentor?***The ability to stay calm under pressure and work well with the medical and shelter staff. Extensive knowledge and experience with providing supportive and emergency care for kittens. An empathetic yet firm demeanor.

***What are the requirements of the on-call lead mentor?***You will need to be available to be on-call 24/7 for about one week every month. You are expected to answer and return calls promptly.

***Is there additional training to be an On-Call Lead Mentor?***Additional training that covers Your Organization’s medical protocols is required.