

Bring love home.

CHALLENGE



Open Adoption and Foster Marketing and Communications Guide

December 2025 | Bring Love Home Challenge

Open adoptions, sometimes called conversation-based adoptions, are about removing barriers to adoption and fostering — making the adoption and fostering process faster, friendlier, and more accessible to people in your community, so more pets go home.

What does that look like in practice? Each shelter's open adoption journey may be different, depending on a number of factors including the organization's — and community's — comfort level with the change.

You can bring your leadership, staff, volunteers, and community on board with good communication!

This checklist includes content, resources, and tips to help you effectively communicate with both internal and external audiences. *Do you have questions or need more communications support? [Reach out](#) and let us know!*

External Communication: Talking to the media and your community

- **Website:** Feature a prominent announcement or banner on the homepage to notify visitors about the new open adoption policy, with a link to the adoption page explaining the open adoption policy. Also, include any updates to adoption fees ([reduced or fee waived](#)), expanded adoption hours, and same day adoptions.

Tip: Rather than using a banner, Muddy Paws Rescue [explains its open adoption policy](#) under their Community, People, and Partnerships section. Consider using a banner when you launch your new practices, and also including a permanent explanation elsewhere on your website!

+ Open Adoptions and Minimizing Barriers in the Adoption Process

At Muddy Paws Rescue we support and practice an open-adoptions process that removes barriers to include adopters from all backgrounds. We practice a conversation-based approach to our adoption process, which encourages a discussion between the organization and the adopter, and cultivates trusting, long-lasting relationships during all stages of the process. We believe that the open adoptions process facilitates successful matches and ultimately maximizes lifesaving.

- **Social Media Platforms:** Create a dedicated announcement post on each social media platform you use to introduce new open pet adoption policies. Keep post

messages welcoming, concise, and easy to understand. Consider utilizing both English and Spanish language assets if applicable to your community.

Use eye-catching visuals such as photos of adoptable pets, clever videos, or engaging graphics to accompany the announcement. These visuals can be created in [Canva](#), a free, intuitive design tool that enables users to create graphics, flyers, and more. Plus, you can promote your adoption event using our [provided templates](#).



Tip: Consider paid social media ads to expand your audience reach beyond your current network of followers and supporters! If you can add a few dollars, boost your posts. You can start with as little as \$1 a day on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

- **Press Release:** We've created a customizable press release template ([available in November](#)) about your participation in the Bring Love Home Challenge, and your piloting of open adoption practices, for you to share! Issuing a press release to your local media before your event — 1-2 weeks before would be typical — helps you reach a broader audience beyond your organization's existing network, including potential adopters, community members, and stakeholders.

You can also create and share press releases about your adoption events, waiving of adoption fees, expanded adoption hours, and any other changes you want your community to know about and engage with.

- **Onsite Signage:** Consider making banners or signs that welcome and encourage same day adoptions and fostering opportunities. If adoption hours

have expanded be sure to update hours at entrance to building and include signs at the adoption processing if fees are reduced or waived.

- **Check Google Listing:** Ensure your hours are updated to reflect any changes.

Tip: If you haven't claimed your organization on Google, use [this guide](#) to learn how!

- **Update Third-Party Sites:** It's a challenge requirement — and [a smart idea](#) — to actively promote all available animals for adoption through Adopt a Pet and/or Petfinder. Confirm that your organization's "about" section, and pet listings, are up to date and accurate on Petfinder and Adopt a Pet, and any other third-party sites.

Tip: You can have your shelter management software automatically post pets to [Adopt a Pet](#) and [Petfinder](#). Set up these automations to save time and get more pets seen!

Internal Communication: Talking to your staff, volunteers, and other internal stakeholders

- **Key Message:** What do you want your staff, volunteers, and other internal stakeholders to know about your participation in the Bring Love Home Challenge, and your piloting of open adoption practices? Develop a central message point to serve as consistency in communication, resonate with the intended audience, and effectively convey why and how you are transitioning to an open adoption policy.

You can pull messaging points about the importance and effectiveness of open adoption from a lot of sources including [the Bring Love Home Challenge web page](#), from the customizable challenge templates, from [this blog](#) sharing the data behind open adoption practices, and from the materials on the Best Friends [adoption resources](#) and [foster resources](#) pages.

- **Email and/or Newsletter Announcement:** Consider sending an email to staff, volunteers, fosters, and other internal stakeholders outlining the new open adoption policies. Include the reasons for and objectives for the new policy, key changes, and implementation timeline. Provide links to relevant documents and resources such as the [adoptions training playbook](#), this [module on open adoptions](#), and this [blog on the data supporting open adoptions](#).
- **Flyer:** Create an announcement flyer that concisely summarizes the open adoption policy, emphasizing its benefits and the organization's commitment to

transparent and responsible pet adoption practices. Post in common staff areas, such as in the breakroom and on billboards.

- **Training Sessions:** Host interactive training sessions where staff members can learn, ask questions, and participate in discussions. Train staff and volunteers on the importance of screening versus putting up barriers. Use visual aids, case studies, and role-playing exercises to enhance understanding. [Find training resources for conversation-based adoption here.](#)
- **FAQ:** Compile a list of frequently asked questions about the new open adoption policy, categorizing them into relevant topics such as the adoption process, pet care guidelines, and post-adoption support. This will serve as a reference for staff to ensure consistent understanding and implementation throughout the organization. [Here is a sample FAQ document](#) that Muddy Paws Rescue shared with their staff.

More Tips and Tools!

As you navigate the transition to open adoptions, and seek innovative ways to promote foster pets, use these resources for effective strategies and compelling storytelling ideas. Effective marketing is important in your journey to save lives by bringing greater awareness about the pets in your care, and connecting them with the people in your community who can give them the home they deserve.

- **Reduce or Waive Adoption Fees:** Reduced and waived adoption fees help pets go home sooner. Consider reducing your fees to under \$100 — if not waiving them altogether.

Tip: Ask for donations at the time of adoption, in lieu of adoption fees. This is [how Animal Defense League of Texas brought in a lot of extra funds!](#)

- **Pre-Market Pets on Stray-Hold:** You don't have to wait until a pet's stray hold is up to start marketing them to your community. While you hope and try to find the pet's original family, you can also start taking steps to pre-market those pets in case they are not reclaimed. This will help you to fast track some pets through your shelter and give the pet a head start on finding a new home if their original family does not claim them.

Tip: Use a sticker for the kennel card that lets potential adopters know when the pet will be available for adoption. You can even include a [scannable QR code](#) that links to your adoption page, or a form where someone can place a hold on the pet.

- **Get Good Photos:** Often potential adopters' first encounter with an adoptable pet is online — whether they are combing adoptable pet pages or scrolling through social media. Capturing great photos (and replacing intake photos) of the pets in your care can make a lifesaving difference. For tips on how to create web-worthy photos check out [Hearts Speak's Easy Tips for Great Shelter Pet Photos](#).
- **Market Pets in Foster Homes:** Sometimes when a pet goes to a foster home, they can have longer lengths of stay because the pet is considered to be “safe.” Empower your fosters to begin marketing their foster pets to their network and community as soon as possible. This will more quickly support the pet's transition from shelter to adoptive home, and can open the foster's home to be able to take in another pet.

Maddie's Fund®'s [Foster Caregiver Marketing Guide](#) and Best Friends Animal Society's [10 Creative Ways to Promote a Foster Pet](#) provide insights and tips on best practices for marketing foster pets. If possible, add a page to your website that fosters can access with tips for marketing their foster pets. Here are some great examples:

- Muddy Paws Rescue: [How to Market Your New Foster Dog for Adoption](#)
 - El Paso Animal Services: [Foster Resources](#)
 - One Tail at a Time: [Help Get Your Foster Adopted](#) (available on their [Foster Resources page](#))
- **Host Adoption Events:** Holding regular adoption events will increase adoptions and reduce shelter overcrowding. Adoption events provide a fun and welcoming experience for your community to meet and adopt a pet. When hosting an adoption event, include and invite pets residing in foster homes to help get them noticed by potential adopters. For tips on how to plan a successful adoption event, check out [Best Friends Animal Society's resource on How to Conduct Successful Adoption Events](#).
- **Leverage the Power of Social Media:** Social media is a great tool to market the pets that are available for adoption, to share information about open adoptions and to engage your community! Aim for upbeat happy content in your marketing. Find [fun ways to market even your more “challenging” pets](#). The community will be more likely to follow your page and interact with your posts and organization if they see positive posts showing them how they are making a difference.

Tip: Don't forget to ask your staff, fosters, volunteers to reshare your content to increase the reach of your message.

- **Collaborate with Community Partners and Businesses:** Some of your best resources can come from working with your neighbors. Connect with community leaders, influencers, residents, and businesses around you. Visit businesses in your area and ask them how you might be able to run a collaborative promotion. Is there a local coffee shop where you can host an adoption event? Is there a local neighborhood restaurant that will put up signs about your event? Or a high school that has kids that need volunteer hours where you can find volunteers to help you post door hangers around the local neighborhoods?
- **Engage Your Local Media:** Local media love a feel-good story! You can promote your adoption event to help you spread the word and get your pets into good homes. You'll generally send your press release to the media outlets 2 weeks before the event — then you can follow up in the week before the event.

Share photos or videos of the pets available for adoption. When the press does cover your event, ask them to provide a link for you so you can share the story on your website and social media outlets. [Check out this page for some local media tips.](#)

Tip: Build a media list of all the local media outlets, and keep this list updated so you're ready to go when it's time to share news!

Sources

- [How to Boost at Post on Social Media \[Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter\] | HubSpot](#)
- [22 Facebook Marketing Tips for Small Businesses on a Budget | WordStream](#)
- [TikTok Marketing: The Complete Guide for Brands in 2025 | Sprout Social](#)
- [Social Media: What You Need To Know About Paid Social | MUD Marketing Resource Kit](#)
- [Edit Your Business Profile on Google | Google Business Profile Help](#)
- [Create an event for your Facebook Page | Meta Business Help Center](#)
- [How to create an event ad from your Facebook Page | Meta Business Help Center](#)
- [Get Started Meta Advertising | Meta Business Help Center](#)
- [How to boost posts on Facebook | Meta Business Help Center](#)
- [How to boost an Instagram post | Meta Help Center](#)