

Bring love home.

CHALLENGE



Open Adoption and Foster Practices Guide

December 2025 | Bring Love Home Challenge

You recently registered for the Bring Love Home Challenge and agreed to implement at least one (maybe more!) new open adoption practice(s) from December 1-31, 2025. Review the challenge steps and resources below to support your new lifesaving practice(s) and maximize the support from your community during this holiday season. Need additional support? Complete this [contact form](#) and a member of our network team will reach out to you shortly.

Ready. Set. Challenge!

These steps are our recommendation but if it doesn't work for your organization, that's okay! Do it the way that it works for you, and [we're here if you need support](#).

1. **Create a Plan:** Create a plan to implement your new open adoption practice(s)
2. **Get Buy-in:** Discuss with staff, volunteers and any other stakeholders and get them excited about the Challenge, possible grant, and what this could mean for your org! Having a hard time securing buy-in? Sometimes positioning a new change or program as a pilot can help you secure buy-in with your community or officials; pilots often feel less intimidating because they're time bound and it's clear that if they're not successful, they can be undone. Our hope is that whatever you call these changes, you'll see an increase in lifesaving and decide to keep them in place long-term.
3. **Communicate:** Use the Open Adoptions Marketing and Communications Guide ([coming soon](#)) to inform the community about these changes. For example, if you're changing your hours, they should be informed.
4. **Track your data:** Make note of your December 2024 adoption and foster data so you can set your goals to beat those numbers.
5. **It's challenge time:** December 1, get going and save more lives! We're here to support you along the way.

Bring Love Home Challenge Practices & Resources

Review the open adoption and foster practices below and the accompanying resources to support your new lifesaving practice.

Offer same-day adoptions and fostering opportunities

If you require a waiting period (such as 24 hours) for fosters to pick up or adopters to finalize an adoption, suspend that practice in December. Allow fosters to pick up a foster pet immediately and allow adopters to complete an adoption and take home their pet the same day they start the adoption process. Allow unaltered pets to be sent home to foster or adoptive homes with a signed agreement and/or voucher to bring the pets back for spay/neuter surgery.

[Playbook: Adoptions Training](#)

Waive or reduce adoption fees

Offer free or reduced adoptions fees of at least 25% for all cats and dogs of all ages, breeds, sizes, traits, and medical/behavioral needs. Reducing adoption fees to \$100 or less for the month of December is highly encouraged.

[Reduced Fee Adoptions; Why They Work](#)

[A Roundup of Resources to Advocates for Fee Waived Resources](#)

Increase open adoption and foster pickup hours

Be open for adoption until 7pm at least 2 weekday evenings and at least four hours on both weekend days for the entire month of December. Not sure which nights would be the most successful? Or not sure how to [make room in the staffing schedule](#) for nights and weekends with minimal daytime adoption impact? Run a report to list the days of the week and time of day of your adoptions for the last three months, then chart them out. Weekday afternoons that perform well would likely support evening hours; weekday times that are slowest may be considered for closure if needed.

[Success Story: Visalia Animal Services](#)

Remove Barriers in Adoption Application & Process

Implement a conversation-based adoption and foster process and remove barrier questions on adoption applications. Barriers could include family restrictions, fence requirements, reference checks, appointments, work questions, veterinary and landlord checks, references, etc.

[Roadblock Free](#)

[Pet Adoptions: Barriers and Solutions](#)

[Adoption Barrier Study](#)

[Dallas Animal Services Adoption Questionnaire](#)

[Williamson County Regional Animal Shelter Adoption Questionnaire](#)

Start a foster program or increase your existing foster program

If you don't already make pets available for foster, start a foster program by December 1. Get at least 10% of your population into foster homes by December 31. If you already have a foster program, send 30% more pets to foster homes in December 2025 than you did in December 2024. To calculate growth, use the formula ((December 2025 Foster – December 2024 Foster) / December 2024 Foster) x 100

[Playbook: Foster Programs](#)

[Manual: Dog Foster Care](#)

[Manual: Cat Foster Care](#)

[Manual: Kitten Foster Care](#)

Implement multilingual adoption/foster support, and remove or accept more ID types

Implement multilingual adoption and foster applications and provide your customer service staff with electronic translator devices (we can provide recommendations to help you find a high-quality translation device for your organization). *Best Friends will not purchase this device for you.*

Only accepting a state-issued driver's license or ID card as a form of identification can be a major barrier to potential adopters who might not have one. One way to make it known everyone is welcome in your shelter is by removing or relaxing the ID requirement. Additional ID types can include a piece of mail from their bank or utility, a gym membership card, or an international ID.

[Diversity, Equity & Inclusion](#)

[Success Story: Bernalillo County Animal Care and Resource Center](#)

Additional Resources

Do you want to explore opportunities to save more lives? Start with a [self-assessment](#).

Next, use the resources below or reach out to your [regional strategist](#) to make a plan to implement changes and save more lives.

Use these resources to achieve your goals.

- [Playbook: Open Adoptions](#) – Basic considerations and steps that every agency can take to create a well-rounded open-adoption program.
- [Webinar: Place More Pets Now with these Easy Changes](#) – Piloting open adoption and foster practices.
- [Lifesaving Training Module: Client Service & Open Adoptions](#) – Exceeding client service expectations to increase lifesaving.
- [Podcast: Removing Lifesaving Barriers](#) – Includes advice for getting stakeholder buy-in.

Get inspired.

- [Rescue Roadblock Pledge Participants Share Their Successes](#) – Success stories from rescues reducing barriers to adoption
- [Municipal shelters share strategies for increased adoptions in 2022](#) – Insights from municipal shelters
- [Should you or shouldn't you change your adoption fees?](#) – Success stories from organizations who've reduced or waived adoption fees
- [Pet adoption policies: More red carpets, fewer roadblocks, empty animal shelters](#) – with an example of how barriers and applications can cost pets good homes
- [Expanding your walls: Maximize lifesaving with a community-based foster program](#) – Maximize lifesaving with a community-based foster program