



## Adoption Ambassador Program

**Thank you for your interest in the Asheville Humane Society's Adoption Ambassador Program. Here is some basic information to get you started!**

### **What is the Adoption Ambassador Program?**

The Adoption Ambassador Program is designed to get our adoptable animals out of the shelter sooner than their adoption date. The animal you are matched with will live at your house, and will be a part of your daily life while they wait for their forever home.

### **What kind of animals can I foster?**

Most of the animals on the waiting list for an Adoption Ambassador are cats, dogs, and small animals (like rabbits, gerbils, and guinea pigs).

### **What is my out-of-pocket cost?**

Absolutely nothing! We will provide everything you need to care for the animal while they are with you. This includes food, bowls, toys, litter boxes, crates, and medical care. The animal will be altered, up to date on vaccines, and up to date on flea preventative.

### **What if my animal needs to come back to AHS for an appointment?**

You will be responsible for transporting your animal to and from the Asheville Humane Society as needed. If you run out of supplies, you will be responsible for communicating with the Adoptions Manager in a timely manner, and for picking them up from us. Exceptions are made rarely, and are on a case-by-case basis.



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### How can I help my animal get adopted?

You will be communicating directly with potential adopters. AHS will post your preferred method of contact on the animal's online profile. You can provide a phone number or an email address (many ambassadors like to create a new email address for this purpose). Adoption Ambassadors are expected to respond to inquiries within 72 hours, so please do your best to be prompt!

This is the fun part; you get to promote your animal! The greatest way to get your animal adopted is by letting the animal interact with people! You can also:

- Use social media to promote your animal (this is especially helpful for cats and small animals)
- Take dogs on walks with "Adopt Me," gear on (provided by AHS)
- Send updated pictures and information to Adoptions Manager so that we can update the animal's profile on our website

Get creative! Have fun with it! When in doubt, just ask!

### Can my animal meet with potential non-human siblings?

At AHS, we are able to offer dog-dog meets to see if potential doggie siblings will get along, but we are unable to offer cat-dog and cat-cat meets. Forcing these kinds of introductions is unsafe and extremely stressful for cats. Please do not allow potential adopters to bring their animals for meet and greets with your ambassador cat. Cats require a long, slow introductory period, and we recommend going over the correct introduction process with potential adopters to set them (and their animals) up for success.

If a potential adopter wants to do a dog-dog meet and it is the first time you have conducted a dog-dog meet with an AHS ambassador animal, please contact the Adoptions Manager to schedule a time to conduct the meet with one of our staff at our Adoption Center.

If you have conducted dog-dog meets in the past and have been given permission from the Adoptions Manager to conduct dog-dog meets on your own, all you need to do is send an email to the Adoptions Manager to inform us how the dog meet went.

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### What is the Open Adoptions Theory?

The Open Adoptions Theory, also known as conversational counseling, is the theory used by the Adoptions Program at Asheville Humane Society. We approach every adopter with the intent to find them the right fit for their home. We have removed many barriers, such as applications and home visits, to welcome more potential adopters to our facility. Research has shown that by removing these barriers, we create a larger pool of potential adopters for rescue animals, and we build a better relationship with the community.

Adoption Counselors use open-ended questions to find out about the adopter's living situation, what they are looking for in a companion, and what they are willing to work with. We disclose all of the information we have gathered about the animal, and we try to make sure we have all of the information we need from adopters to make the best fit for both parties. We are honest with adopters about what we don't know, as well. We are not able to guarantee any behavior because animals are living creatures with their own free will. We ARE able to use past experiences as examples. The Need-to-Know Checklist below is the information that you must know before deciding if the adopter is a good fit (or not). This list is the bare minimum, and there are many other questions that can be asked as follow-ups to their answers!

#### Need-to-Know Checklist:

- ✓ Other people involved (men, women, kids, elders, friends)
- ✓ Other animals involved (dogs, cats, small animals, livestock, etc.)
- ✓ Living situation (home, apartment, urban, rural)
- ✓ Environment for animal (inside, outside, etc.)
- ✓ What do they want/expect out of pet ownership (personality, traits, training, etc.)

If you're not sure where to start, here are some examples of open-ended questions for each (I've used the name Fluffy to stand in for the ambassador animal for these examples):

1) Tell me about the people, besides yourself, that will be interacting with Fluffy on a regular basis. If there are children, what are their ages? What is their experience level with animals? (I always recommend a meet with children, unless the animal is not allowed to live with children. If there are roommates, I like to ask if they have discussed the adoption with the roommates. If they live with their parents, even if they are 18, we must have parental approval).



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- 2) Tell me about the other animals that you own, or that will interact with Fluffy on a regular basis. (This is a good time to talk about introductions, decompression, and any information we have about how Fluffy interacts with other animals).
- 3) Tell me about where you live (house/apartment/rent/own). (If they rent, ask if they have checked with landlord. You can also delve into questions about the house setup, how busy the neighborhood is, yard/fencing/tethering, etc.).
- 4) Where will Fluffy be kept? (For the most part, we want our animals to be inside or inside/outside, depending on the animal. You can discuss this with the Adoptions Manager if you have questions about your specific ambassador animal).
- 5) What are you hoping to do with Fluffy? What are your expectations in terms of training?

For cats, I like to ask the next question:

- 1) Do you have questions about scratching posts, or how to keep a cat from scratching inappropriate objects? (We use this question to indirectly ask about declawing. If a potential adopter is planning to declaw the cat, we cannot adopt to them per our contract unless the cat is already declawed).

Here are some good outside resources to explore the Open Adoptions Theory, and as always, please ask the Adoptions Manager if you have any questions!

<https://www.aspcapro.org/webinar/20160615/conversational-adoption-counseling>

<https://www.uwsheltermedicine.com/library/resources/support-for-open-adoptions>

### **What if I'm having trouble with a potential adopter?**

Contact the Adoptions Manager as soon as possible! This person is your point of contact, and you can use this person as a buffer if you need help with any situation.



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### Can I offer a trial adoption?

We are unable to offer trial adoptions at this time. Exceptions are made rarely, and will be on a case by case basis.

### What can potential adopters expect to pay for an animal from AHS?

Dog adoption fees:

Under 6 months: \$350 (we do not adopt puppies/siblings to the same home)

6 months and up Hound/Pit: \$35

6 months and up other large dog breeds: \$75

6 months and up under 35 pounds: \$150

Seven years and up: \$35

Cat adoption fees:

Under 6 months: \$50 (and buy one get one free); please note that we have a limit of two kitties per adoption, and exceptions are made rarely. See Adoptions Manager with questions.

6 months and up: \$25

Bonded Pairs: \$25 for both

Small animal adoption fees:

Rabbits: \$20

Rats, Hamsters, Gerbils: \$5

Guinea Pigs: \$5

\*Please note that we have adoption promotions frequently, which will be applicable to Adoption Ambassadors. See Adoptions Manager with questions.



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### **I've found the perfect adopter for my animal; now what?**

Once you have found a good fit for the animal, you will have the adopter send the following information:

- First and last name
- Address
- Email address
- Phone number (up to 2)
- Date of birth (make sure you check their ID as they must be 18 or older to adopt)
- Driver's license number

Once you receive this information, send it to the Adoptions Manager. The Adoptions Manager might follow up with the adopter if they need to ask questions, or to make sure they are aware of an animal's history as needed. Then, you will send that information to the Adoptions Manager, who will run the person's information through our database and create a person profile. Once this step is complete (this should take 24 to 48 hours), the Adoptions Manager will contact you, and at that point the animal will be ready to go home with their new family!

### **What happens if the adoption doesn't work out?**

The adopter will need to bring the animal to the Buncombe County Animal Shelter to surrender the animal back to AHS. Because the animal was legally released to them, in order to surrender them back to us, they have to sign a legal document at the shelter that releases the animal back to us. If this happens and you'd like the animal to come back to your house, reach out to the Adoptions Manager to see if this is an option.

**We at the Asheville Humane Society look forward to working with you to find your new ambassador animal a forever home!**