

TILLIE'S SAFE HAVEN **Foster Care Guide**

A safe haven for the ones nobody else came back for.
tilliessafehaven.org 770-891-6493

Thank you for opening your home to a dog in need! By fostering, you give a dog a safe place to decompress, recover, learn to trust, and prepare for a permanent home.

Tillie's Safe Haven (TSH) is a foster-based, nonprofit animal rescue serving Marietta, Cobb County, Metro Atlanta, and surrounding North Georgia communities. We do not operate a shelter facility at this time though we do hope to have a physical location in the near future. Our ability to help dogs depends on compassionate people like you.

You do not have to foster forever to make a difference. A temporary foster for a few days, a weekend, or while another foster is traveling can be just as valuable as a longer placement.

This guide explains what to expect, how to care for your foster dog, and how TSH will support you along the way.

1. What Does a Foster Home Do?

As a foster caregiver, you provide temporary housing, daily care, safety, and affection while TSH works toward the dog's next chapter.

Fostering helps dogs by:

- Giving them a break from the stress of a shelter environment.
- Providing a comfortable place to rest and recover.
- Allowing their personalities, habits, and needs to become clearer.
- Helping them build confidence and positive relationships.
- Providing photos, videos, and observations that help potential adopters get to know them.
- Creating space and opportunities for other dogs who need rescue.

Types of fostering

Regular fostering: Provide a home until the dog is adopted or another placement is arranged.

Temporary or respite fostering: Care for a dog for a few days or during a regular foster's vacation or other absence.

Emergency fostering: Offer a short-term safe place when an urgent need arises.

When you agree to foster, discuss the anticipated duration, the dog's known needs, and any limitations with TSH. Short-term placements should have a clear plan for the dog's next home.

2. What TSH Provides and What Foster Families Provide

TSH's role

TSH will work with you to coordinate the dog's placement, share available background and medical information, arrange or authorize veterinary care, provide guidance on behavior concerns, and coordinate adoption inquiries and next steps.

Before placement, ask TSH to clarify which supplies and expenses it will cover, how to obtain approval for veterinary services, and whom to contact outside normal hours.

Your role

As a foster caregiver, you agree to:

- Provide a safe, clean, comfortable environment.
- Supply fresh water, appropriate food, exercise, enrichment, and companionship.

- Follow TSH's care instructions and veterinary protocols.
- Keep your foster dog securely contained and supervised.
- Monitor appetite, drinking, elimination, energy, and behavior.
- Communicate promptly about medical or behavioral concerns.
- Provide honest updates, photographs, and videos when requested.
- Keep the dog until the agreed end date or until TSH arranges an appropriate transition.
- Never transfer the dog to another person, surrender the dog elsewhere, or arrange an adoption independently of TSH.
- Follow the foster agreement, including any liability, confidentiality, and animal-handling requirements.

Please ask rather than assume. Contact TSH before arranging nonemergency veterinary care, purchasing major supplies for reimbursement, changing medications, or making significant changes to the dog's routine.

3. Preparing Your Home

A little preparation helps your foster dog settle in safely.

Before pickup

- Choose a quiet area where the dog can rest undisturbed.
- Prepare a comfortable bed or washable blankets.
- Set out food and water bowls.
- Remove medications, cleaning products, toxic foods, and small objects the dog might swallow.
- Secure trash cans, household chemicals, electrical cords, and accessible food.
- Check fences, gates, doors, and window screens.
- Identify a suitable crate, exercise pen, or other safe containment area if appropriate.
- Discuss any resident pets, children, or other household considerations with TSH.
- Confirm the dog's food, medications, veterinary arrangements, and emergency contact procedure.
- Make sure everyone in the household understands the rules for keeping the dog safe.

Resident pets

Do not assume that a dog who is friendly at a shelter will immediately get along with your pets at home.

- Follow TSH's instructions for introductions.
- Start with physical separation and secure barriers when appropriate.
- Keep food, treats, toys, beds, and other valued items separate.
- Supervise interactions closely and provide each animal with a safe retreat.
- Never leave a new foster dog alone with resident animals until TSH has approved an appropriate plan.
- If either animal shows fear, escalating tension, guarding, or aggression, separate them safely and contact TSH.
- If you cannot safely separate the animals, tell TSH before accepting the placement.

4. Bringing Your Foster Dog Home

The first day can be overwhelming. A dog may be frightened, overstimulated, exhausted, or unsure what is expected.

On arrival

1. **Prioritize safety.** Use a properly fitted collar or harness and secure leash. Follow the transport instructions provided by TSH.
2. **Go directly to a secure potty area.** Keep the dog leashed, even in a fenced yard until you know the dog's habits and escape risks.
3. **Show the dog the basics.** Introduce the resting area, water bowl, and designated potty area without overwhelming them.

4. **Keep things quiet.** Avoid visitors, outings, introductions to the neighborhood, and unnecessary handling.
5. **Offer food and water.** Follow the feeding instructions provided by TSH. A stressed dog may not eat normally at first.
6. **Provide rest.** Let the dog sleep and observe the household from a comfortable distance.
7. **Send TSH an update.** Confirm safe arrival and report any immediate concerns.

The first several days

Give your foster dog time to adjust. Some dogs relax quickly; others need days or weeks before their personalities become apparent.

A newly arrived dog may:

- Hide, tremble, bark, or follow you constantly.
- Eat less than usual.
- Have accidents despite being house-trained previously.
- Be restless at night.
- Seem unusually quiet or energetic.
- Be uncomfortable with unfamiliar people, sounds, or handling.

These behaviors do not automatically indicate a permanent problem. Keep a predictable routine, reward calm behavior, and avoid forcing interaction.

The goal at first is not perfect obedience. It is safety, rest, and trust.

5. Everyday Foster Care

Food and water

- Feed the food and amount recommended by TSH or the veterinarian.
- Keep fresh water available.
- Introduce food changes only with guidance.
- Store food securely and keep feeding areas clean.
- Monitor appetite and water intake.
- Report persistent refusal to eat, repeated vomiting, diarrhea, or unusual thirst.

Never give human medications, supplements, or leftover veterinary medications without explicit authorization from TSH and the prescribing veterinarian.

Potty breaks and house-training

Take your foster dog out regularly, especially after waking, eating, drinking, playing, and before bedtime.

- Use a leash unless TSH has approved a specific secure arrangement.
- Reward outdoor elimination immediately.
- Clean accidents thoroughly without punishment.
- Record patterns that help establish a routine.
- Never assume a dog is reliably house-trained in a new environment.

Exercise and enrichment

Choose activities appropriate to the dog's age, health, size, energy, and behavior.

Useful options may include:

- Short, calm sniffing walks.
- Supervised play.
- Food puzzles or simple enrichment activities.
- Chew items approved for the dog.
- Reward-based training.

- Quiet time near trusted people.

Avoid dog parks, off-leash areas, crowded events, and unnecessary outings while the dog is settling in. Do not allow greetings with unfamiliar dogs without an appropriate plan.

Crates and confinement

A crate or pen can provide a safe resting place when introduced appropriately. It should never be used as punishment. Tell TSH if the dog panics, injures itself, or shows severe distress when confined.

Grooming and hygiene

Follow any instructions for bathing, brushing, nail care, ear care, or skin treatment. Some dogs may have painful mats, skin conditions, or medical restrictions. Ask TSH before arranging professional grooming or attempting procedures that could cause pain or injury.

6. Medical Care and Emergencies

Your observations are important because you will see the dog in everyday situations. You are not expected to diagnose or treat medical problems yourself.

Routine medical care

TSH should communicate the dog's known medical history, vaccination and parasite-prevention status, medication instructions, and veterinary arrangements as available.

Please:

- Give medications exactly as directed.
- Record doses and report missed doses or possible side effects.
- Keep scheduled veterinary appointments coordinated through TSH.
- Report coughing, sneezing, nasal or eye discharge, skin problems, limping, changes in elimination, or other new symptoms.
- Keep a dog with suspected contagious illness separated from other pets as instructed.
- Follow veterinary advice about isolation, cleaning, and resuming contact with other animals.
- Do not start, stop, share, or change a medication without authorization.

Seek emergency veterinary help for signs such as:

- Difficulty breathing or choking.
- Collapse, unresponsiveness, or seizures.
- Severe bleeding or major trauma.
- Suspected poisoning or ingestion of a dangerous object.
- A swollen abdomen with repeated unsuccessful attempts to vomit.
- Inability to urinate with distress.
- Heatstroke symptoms or rapidly worsening weakness.
- Severe pain or sudden inability to stand.
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In an emergency: Contact TSH using the designated emergency procedure while promptly arranging appropriate emergency veterinary care. Do not delay urgent treatment while waiting for a routine reply. Follow the veterinary team's instructions and notify TSH as soon as practical.

For suspected poisoning, do not induce vomiting unless a veterinary professional specifically instructs you to do so.

Before taking a dog home, make sure you have TSH's current emergency contact information and know which veterinary facility to use.

7. Understanding Behavior

Every dog has a history, and some have experienced neglect, instability, fear, or stressful shelter conditions. A new home can bring out behaviors that were not previously apparent.

Helpful principles

Give choices. Let the dog approach you rather than forcing contact.

Reward what you like. Use praise, treats, and rewards approved for the dog.

Avoid punishment. Yelling, physical corrections, and intimidation can increase fear and worsen behavior.

Watch body language. Turning away, freezing, lip licking, tucked tails, growling, and attempts to retreat may indicate discomfort or stress.

Respect boundaries. Do not corner, grab, hug, or disturb a dog who is eating, chewing, sleeping, or hiding.

Never punish a growl. A growl is a warning that the dog is uncomfortable. Create distance and contact TSH for guidance.

If a behavior concern develops

If a dog growls, snaps, guards food or toys, repeatedly attempts to escape, reacts intensely to other dogs, or shows other concerning behavior:

1. Stay calm and avoid confrontation.
2. Create distance and use barriers when safe.
3. Protect people and other animals.
4. Do not deliberately recreate the situation to test the dog.
5. Contact TSH promptly and describe exactly what happened.

Report any bite, injury, or serious safety incident immediately. Follow TSH's incident-reporting and veterinary guidance.

Honest reporting helps TSH make appropriate placement decisions. You will not be expected to manage a situation beyond your experience or ability.

8. Helping Your Foster Dog Find a Home

Foster families provide valuable insight that a shelter listing cannot convey. Your observations help TSH present each dog accurately and attract suitable adopters.

Share the dog's personality

Let TSH know:

- What makes the dog happy.
- Favorite toys, treats, and activities.
- How the dog behaves around adults and children, if known.
- Interactions with other dogs, cats, and other animals, if known.
- House-training and crate-training progress.
- Energy level and exercise needs.
- Comfort with handling, grooming, and being alone.
- Any fears, triggers, medical needs, or management requirements.

Be truthful and specific. If you do not know how a dog behaves in a particular situation, say so rather than guessing.

Photos and videos

Whenever possible, capture:

- Clear photographs of the dog's face and full body.
- Relaxed moments at home.
- Playtime and favorite activities.
- Calm interactions with familiar people.
- Short videos showing the dog's personality.

Avoid unsafe staging, off-leash situations, or introductions solely for a photograph. Send images and updates to TSH for use in approved adoption listings and outreach.

Adoption inquiries

TSH will coordinate applications, screening, and adoption decisions.

Please forward interested adopters to TSH rather than promising a dog to anyone directly. Do not publish your personal address, disclose confidential applicant information, or arrange a meeting or handoff without approval.

When a potential adoption moves forward, TSH will guide the next steps and coordinate the transition.

9. Communication and Support

You are part of the TSH team. You do not need to have every answer, and you should not feel that you must solve every problem alone.

Please keep TSH informed about:

- Health changes and veterinary concerns.
- Behavior changes or safety issues.
- Appetite, sleep, house-training, and adjustment.
- Upcoming travel or changes in your availability.
- Supply needs or questions about expenses.
- Adoption interest and requests for information.
- Any concern that the placement may not be working.

Communicate early. A small concern is often easier to address before it becomes a crisis.

If you cannot continue fostering, contact TSH as soon as possible. Please do not abandon the dog, leave it with an unapproved person, or arrange an independent surrender. TSH will work with you on a safe transition plan.

10. Ending a Foster Placement

When a dog is adopted or moves to another approved placement:

- Follow TSH's transition instructions.
- Share the dog's routine, food, medication schedule, training progress, and known triggers.
- Pass along any approved supplies and medical records.
- Tell TSH about anything the next caregiver should know.
- Give yourself permission to feel happy, sad, or both.
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Foster families sometimes experience sadness when a dog leaves. That is a natural response to caring about an animal. Remember that the purpose of fostering is to prepare the dog for a permanent home.

Every successful transition makes room for another dog who needs help.

11. Foster Care Quick Checklist

Before accepting a placement

- Confirm the expected duration and the dog's known needs.
- Review the foster agreement and care instructions.
- Confirm supplies, food, and expense arrangements.
- Obtain veterinary and emergency contact information.
- Prepare a secure space and a plan for resident pets.

Every day

- Provide food, fresh water, potty breaks, and appropriate exercise.
- Give the dog a comfortable place to rest.
- Monitor appetite, elimination, energy, and behavior.
- Give prescribed medications as directed.
- Communicate any concerning changes to TSH.

Before a handoff

- Confirm the transition plan with TSH.
- Share medical, behavioral, and routine information.
- Transfer approved supplies and records.
- Ensure the dog is securely transported.

12. Contact Tillie's Safe Haven

Email: tillies.safehaven@gmail.com

Website: <https://tilliessafehaven.org/get-involved>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/TilliesSafeHaven>

Instagram: @tilliessafehaven

Please use the current contact details and emergency procedure supplied by TSH for your individual placement.

Thank You for Fostering

You do not need a perfect home or years of experience to make a difference. You need a willingness to provide safety, patience, consistency, and care—and to ask for help when you need it.

Every dog deserves a chance to feel safe and loved. By fostering, you help make that possible.