



## Intake to Placement Toolkit

### What problem does Intake-to-Placement solve?

In the traditional sheltering model, animals enter the shelter and are placed in kennels where they may wait days or weeks to move through the system toward a placement. The traditional process may increase the number of animals housed in kennels, result in sickness, mental health decline and stress, shelter crowding, and needless animal deaths in shelters. The traditional process is also expensive, requires unnecessary daily shelter care, and feeding for animals that could be cared for outside the shelter.

[Learn more about intake data and the traditional sheltering system in this video.](#)

### Getting Started

It depends on your organization, the particular laws and ordinances that govern your stray hold and placement policies, and current available space and resources.

1. Know your data! In order to start your Intake-to-Placement program, it helps to know the following:

- The overall length of stay in the shelter of cats and dogs
- Length of stay in the shelter before available to the public of cats and dogs
- What groups of animals have the longest length of stay
- Average 'kennel inventory' or 'shelter census' which is the number of cats and dogs housed in the shelter at any given time.
- What are your current foster policies? How many animals are allowed to go to foster care? Which animals? How many go to foster annually and how many are in foster at any one time?

2. Ask yourself if you need to start a foster program or expand your existing foster program in addition to implementing Intake-to-Placement.

Everything you need to know about how to start, grow, and improve your foster program can be found [here](#).

3. Build a [foster-on-deck](#) list to efficiently utilize foster caregivers who are willing to foster but for whom you don't immediately have a pet to take home.



# HUMAN ANIMAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Don't lose the opportunity to utilize those fosters. You can issue a foster questionnaire to people who are interested and keep track of people who want to foster. When new pets come in you can match those animals with potential foster caregivers. For many pets, this can mean they may have their foster pick up appointment scheduled so they simply come in the shelter, get vaccinated, and leave immediately to go to foster care. You can also build an adopter-on-deck list for adopters who are waiting for a particular match.

4. Commit to [open fostering](#) and make sure [all animals are available](#) and visible to the public on the same day they enter the shelter.

Making animals visible and available and helping make it easy for the public to take them home are the building blocks of starting an intake-to-placement program. For animals on a 'stray hold' or another legal hold, they should be visible while on stray hold and 'pre-adopted' so they can be altered and leave on the day they are off their hold.

5. Decide if you want to target your intake-to-placement program on animals with the longest lengths of stay (often big, adult dogs, and/or adult cats) or on animals with shorter lengths of stays.

There are benefits to both approaches and you can also do a combination. If you move 'easy' animals faster this will create more space and resources for a longer stay and more challenging-to-place animals. If you focus intake-to-placement on 'harder' animals you may place fewer but see immediate improvements in lifesaving and quality of life for that group.

6. Schedule animal intakes via phone or email so you can have a placement waiting when the animal arrives.

Scheduling intake ahead of time for '[fast track](#)' animals gives you a chance to find a placement for an animal before its arrival. Kittens, puppies, and special needs animals can head straight to foster or rescue, and 'owner surrender' animals who don't need emergency medical care or have significant behavioral concerns can go immediately to foster or adoption placement, either by using your foster/adopter-on-deck list or just making them immediately available and marketing them at intake.

7. Start a [finder-to-foster](#) program for lost animals so that citizens who are willing to foster a pet they've found as a stray can hold on to them while the shelter locates their family.

8. If you want to go 'all in' with Intake-to-Placement your organization may consider hiring a dedicated staff or volunteer for the program.



# HUMAN ANIMAL SUPPORT SERVICES

If your organization does not have additional staff resources you can start by using your existing 'intake' or 'admissions' staff but they will need some retraining to get out of the old habit of transactional intake. If you have no staff to dedicate to Intake-to-Placement you may consider making this a finder-to-foster. You will need to have this volunteer work closely with staff and be a regular, 'committed' volunteer so they can learn the basics of software management and the case management approach.