



Austin Sheltie Rescue Foster Responsibilities and Guidelines

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Responsibilities

Thank you for your interest in helping the abandoned and unwanted shelties in and around the Austin area. Our foster homes, many of which have been with us from the beginning of our program, experience great joy and deep satisfaction when they see that through their efforts a neglected dog gets a second chance at life and a new opportunity to share his or her unconditional love with people who care. Not only do foster homes have the joy of seeing their foster dog placed into a new forever home, but also there is the additional joy of seeing the happiness of the new family: many of these homes need the dog as much as the dog needs them.

What is Foster Care?

Being a foster home means sharing your home with a rescued dog: providing food, shelter, toys, walks (after the dog is well from heartworm treatment or more confident if shy), and lots of attention, until a permanent home for the dog is approved. We count on our foster homes to evaluate temperament and observe behaviors in a variety of situations, and we welcome those updates so we can assess the dog and enhance the description on the web site. Positive reinforcement training is encouraged. Most foster care situations require 2 weeks to a month of residential foster care, and in some cases where the dog is ill or older, several months. In rare cases, you must be able to cope with the possibility that **Austin Sheltie Rescue** and our doctors may find it necessary to put the dog to sleep--always for a reason we discuss at length (e.g., unwarranted aggression with other dogs and people, unprovoked biting of people, and terminal illness)--but never because we couldn't place the dog.

What You Need to Foster a Rescued sheltie

The most important requirements are time and attention. You must be willing to include the dog in family activities, allow the dog to live as a house dog with much human companionship, and provide some daily one-on-one time with your rescue, including cuddles, play, and walks on leash, with our secure collar and **Austin Sheltie Rescue** tag on the dog at all times. The dog may not be completely house trained, in which case use the crate and take the dog out on leash, giving praise and treat reward when the dog is successful. Most of our shelties are trained within a week or two. Crates are an invaluable piece of equipment for rescue people. A Vari-Kennel #400 or one of similar size is suitable for most shelties, and is a great aid in transporting and isolating dogs. It is also a cozy den and a place of refuge for most dogs. We will loan foster homes a crate.

Our dogs must be kept indoors except for exercise and elimination (see our reasons in the program description). A fenced yard must be of appropriate height (4-6', as some shelties are jumpers) and in secure condition. If it has a gate, the gate must be locked when the dog is in the yard to prevent someone from opening the gate and letting the dog loose. At no time are our dogs

to be confined in the yard while caretakers are away. We do not accept homes without fences because of the danger of someone forgetting and letting the dog out or accidentally leaving a back door open for the dog to escape through. These are rescued dogs who have sometimes been runners, and we do not want people to have to chase and capture our dog in what can be a dangerous situation for both dog and pursuers.

Apartment homes can also be excellent foster homes, with proper attention to providing several leash-walks daily for the dog as well as adequate off-leash exercise in a safe area like a fenced dog park when possible (several of these have opened in the Austin area). We have also found that most modern apartment complexes are now gated which protects our dogs as well as residents.

We do not accept trailer homes due to the danger to our dogs in high wind/tornado situations.

Introducing Your Foster Dog

Austin Sheltie Rescue will discuss with you the best methods for introducing the new dog into your household. During this time, the rescued dog may appear shy or submissive, may drool a bit with anxiety. shelties, especially, may be particularly wary in a new situation. Your foster may also have been hit, dragged by the collar, or kicked, which you'll know immediately from his behavior around you and your family. Take it slow and easy; let the dog learn to regain trust; give him hugs and kisses as he can tolerate them; he may be surprised at first, but will eventually relish the attention and return it. You will know the dog is relaxing when his eyes soften, tail begins to wag, and he seeks you out.

Kids and Foster Dogs

If you have children, never introduce a new rescued dog to them without assistance. It is preferred to make introductions with an **Austin Sheltie Rescue** representative present. Never leave a rescued dog and a child unsupervised. Sometimes, even though we make every attempt to uncover all available history on each dog, we may not have the full truth about the dog, and he or she may be a fear biter or dislike kids because of prior abuse from children who had not been taught how to treat animals kindly. It is preferred that foster homes have experience with pet dogs, and that children in the foster family are over the age of 5 years, though we realize many children even younger have a special rapport with animals. We will work with the family and dog on a case-by-case decision.

Your Pets and the Foster Dog

Though many dogs and cats, especially those used to their owners' rescue work, welcome the rescued sheltie, keep in mind that there may be a period of adjustment for the first few days up to 2 - 3 weeks depending on the rescued sheltie's history and personality and the resident dog's willingness to accept the foster dog. As he becomes more confident, your foster may change his behavior towards resident pets, beginning to play and explore the pecking order. As the resident dog accepts the foster, the bonding becomes beneficial for both. Unless the dogs get along famously from the beginning, feed your pets and your rescued dog separately; consider feeding the rescued sheltie in a crate if you notice any food aggression between dogs. Be careful when dispensing treats or other high-value items like rawhides or favorite toys. Sometimes what is thought to be food aggression is actually just a territorial imperative that will take care of itself as the pecking order is established and the dogs relax. Keeping this in mind, always supervise the interactions of your rescued dog with other pets. When leaving the rescued dog home alone (even if you have other pets at home), the use of a crate or gate is recommended at least the first few days up to two weeks; for dogs going through Heartworm treatment, the crate is absolutely necessary to keep the dog quiet. Confining your rescued dog protects him, your pets, and your property from possible injury or damage.

Austin Sheltie Rescue recommends that all resident dogs be inoculated for kennel cough along with their regular vaccinations, as many rescues coming in from shelters contract this disease and are being treated for it. We cannot stress this enough: the incidence of kennel cough in dogs coming from Shelters is increasing. However, we always recommend the bordetella inoculation for kennel cough in all resident dogs because the disease now has some 600 strains: it can be picked up by your own dogs on a simple walk in the neighborhood or nearby greenbelts. Though kennel cough is treatable with medication and rest, it has become so virulent that dogs can too easily go quickly into pneumonia. Please have your veterinarian include the bordetella as part of the regular vaccination regimen. Also, some dog owners mistakenly think heartworms are contagious: they are not. See our heartworm care guide and the American Heartworm Society web site for the explanation of heartworm disease and treatment.

Finally, **Austin Sheltie Rescue** requires that all resident dogs in the foster home are neutered or spayed as we support only professional breeding of purebred dogs, and sometimes when our dogs are very ill, we need to wait to spay/neuter them until they are well. But, also, spaying and neutering your dogs is better for them both medically and behaviorally. Talk this over with your own veterinarians, if you have any doubts. We do make an exception for knowledgeable, professional breeders, who want to work with our program to help our shelties. In these cases, to avoid accidents, of course we would only place a rescued sheltie that had been spay/neutered already.

What To Do in a Medical Emergency

We will try to place 'easy' dogs in new foster homes and will not place a seriously ill dog in a foster home until the family has gained experience. But if you do feel you have an emergency, and you cannot reach **Austin Sheltie Rescue** Coordinators, you should take the injured or ill dog to the nearest vet who can stabilize the animal until **Austin Sheltie Rescue** can authorize further treatment. This is particularly necessary if your foster dog is going through Heartworm treatment: any vomiting with listlessness must be reported immediately, and the dog taken to a vet as quickly as possible. Because we are responsible to our donors, dogs, and program welfare, **Austin Sheltie Rescue** coordinators are the only persons who make major medical decisions for program dogs. You don't want that responsibility, and we have years of experience in making those decisions with the clinics.

How Expenses Are Handled

The foster home is responsible for food, toys, and in-home bathing and grooming; we are happy to provide tax receipts for expenses and will reimburse for professional grooming and any additional purchases for the dog; please keep your receipts for all expenses. **Austin Sheltie Rescue** coordinators usually transport the dogs for veterinary care and sometimes for home visits (for example, a home-bound family), though foster homes are encouraged to participate in those transports as well because the dog is more comfortable with the foster family. With your permission, we send prospective adoptive homes to visit your foster dog in the home, but only after we have personally checked out the families. Finally, we will reimburse you for approved emergency veterinary care and medications (again, save all your receipts).

Most Frequently Asked Questions

"Don't you get attached to the dog?" -- Yes, and that is what we want for both you and the dog. It's fun to get to know new dogs, and for your foster dog and resident dog(s) to make new friends, too. Often, your resident dog will be revitalized in the presence of the rescued dog, and you will witness amazing developments in both dogs. It's educational to see how different dogs react to training, how they play with and teach one another. It's also educational to see when any territorial problems develop and learn to deal with those, usually allowing the dogs to work things out within reason, calling for crate time when the problem needs to be dealt with. You will fall in love with your foster dog, which is necessary to his or her rehabilitation and also leads us to the

next question.

"How can you give him up?" -- This is probably the number one reason why a lot of caring people do not offer their homes for foster care: they are afraid giving the dog up will hurt too much. However, it's a hard truth, but without enough foster homes, we cannot rescue and save these dogs: they will die in the shelters if we don't have space for them in our program. It helps to think of your foster dog as your neighbor's dog that you are keeping during a vacation. Sure, you like him and will take really good care of him, but when your neighbor gets home, you will give the dog back! Some of us think of ourselves as the rescued dog's 'aunt' or 'uncle,' a loving guardian for the dog on his or her way to a permanent home. This is a dog that ultimately belongs to someone else, who is in our care for only a short time. When you give him or her up, it will be to a sheltie 'forever home' that this dog has been waiting for--and you will be opening a space for the next rescue that needs you so desperately. There is ALWAYS another rescue dog. But, also, after many years of fostering, your fellow volunteers can assure you there is nothing quite as moving as seeing your beloved foster dog happy, healthy, loved, and cherished by the forever home that really wanted him or her and in some cases really needed your dog. It's contagious, and we hope you will be hooked on fostering, too.

"What if I don't think I have enough room for a foster dog?" -- Our rescued shelties are generally small, take up very little space, and won't be with you very long as indicated earlier. You might be surprised by how quickly they work themselves into the family situation and your hearts: all they really need is a small space to recuperate until they are ready for their forever homes, and they are touchingly grateful.

"What if I'm afraid my foster dog who is ill might die?" -- We ease foster homes into the work very gradually and never give a heartworm patient or other very sick or injured sheltie to a home until they feel ready to take on that responsibility. To be honest, though, we can tell you that if you foster long enough, you may very well eventually lose a foster even with all our efforts to save him or her. Tragically, most of us who have fostered for a long time have gone through the pain of loss because, after all, most rescues are in the program because they have been neglected, abandoned, and abused: and that includes previous owners not giving them heartworm pills or other medical care. The illness is not the dog's fault, and sometimes the weeks or months he or she is with us are the only medical care, peace, and love the rescued sheltie has ever known. We have held them in our arms when they crossed over and wept tears for them. It happens. But in every case, if we hadn't intervened, the dogs would have had a far worse experience, dying on a cold steel table at the end of a needle in an overworked shelter putting down dozens of animals every day, or alone, frightened, and sick on the streets. The dogs we do lose in our program knew we loved them and did the best we could for them; and we are humbled by their sweetness and understanding even as they cross over. It is, in fact, a very humbling experience, and we're never sorry we tried to help these dogs. However, it's also important to remember that through loving foster care and the best medical care in Austin, we save over 90% of even the sickest dogs. Most of your fosters are not only going to make it, but are going to thrive, become unbelievably gorgeous, go on to a wonderful new life, and make you very proud.

"What if I really like the dog and want to keep her?"-- This does happen. Sometimes the "perfect dog" comes along, and everyone in the family just seems to agree that theirs is the "perfect home." Fortunately, qualifying as a Foster Home usually qualifies you as an Adopter as well. **Austin Sheltie Rescue** is concerned to place our shelties with their needs and preferences as important as the adopters'. Sometimes the dog tells us which home is right; and we respect that. Should this happen, and we all agree, then the foster home will pay the adoption fee, complete the Final Adoption Agreement, and assume ownership of the dog. Please think about this carefully, though, as often adoption means the family feels it no longer has foster space available, and we desperately need those homes.

Other Things You Need to Know

- If you have a problem or a question, call **Austin Sheltie Rescue** coordinators. Though very rare in shelties, if the dog bites someone (actually breaks the skin), you must call **Austin Sheltie Rescue** coordinators immediately. Though some biting is fear biting and can be corrected, no dog will be allowed to remain in the program if he has become aggressive. If the dog escapes the fence, fights with other dogs, won't leave your cat alone, or has other behavior problems, we need to know this and will probably move the dog to another home, giving you a new foster. We may also be able to help with management or training suggestions, and will take these facts into consideration when screening potential adoptive homes for the dog.
- When your foster dog arrives, **Austin Sheltie Rescue** coordinators will tell you everything they know about the dog and the dog's history. The dog will have a collar and a tag with name, "**Austin Sheltie Rescue**" with the program number, and the phone number on it, which shall remain on the dog at all times (except during bathing). If the foster home picks up the dog at the clinic or from a volunteer, be sure the collar with **Austin Sheltie Rescue** tag and rabies tag are on the dog; if not, put them on immediately. The dog will be vaccinated and neutered; any health problems or behavior issues will be fully discussed. The Coordinators will keep in touch with the foster home through E-mail and by phone; we need occasional updates on the dog's progress for our records and the web site descriptions, so the foster home would need to be available to exchange information with the Coordinators at least every couple of weeks. We also appreciate updated pictures for the web site if you can help with that. Foster homes need to administer prescription medications and HW preventative (provided by **Austin Sheltie Rescue**), crate a dog going through heartworm treatment, follow all veterinarian directions, alert **Austin Sheltie Rescue** officials of any medical emergencies or if the dog is being taken out of town or out of state for family visits or recreation. Foster homes also need to observe the dog's behavior and report any concerns, including if the dog seems to be a runner or actually escapes so we can assist in recovery. If the latter happens, the foster family must call us immediately as time is of the essence in capturing our dog.
- If you send a dog home with a prospective adopter who has visited the dog, be sure the collar and tag are secure on the dog, take the check and final agreement (e-mail or call us for a copy of the agreement form and either save it on your computer or make extra copies of it) from the new family and send them immediately to Linda at the address above. E-mail or call us immediately to tell us the dog has gone home so we can note that in our records and celebrate with you on another happy adoption.
- **Austin Sheltie Rescue** coordinators are the only persons who can accept a dog into the program. If you learn of a sheltie in need of rescue, please notify us as soon as possible with the information, and we will take steps to work with you to bring the sheltie into the program. Additionally, **Austin Sheltie Rescue** coordinators are the only persons who can approve a permanent home for your foster dog. If you have a family member or friend interested in adoption, or you meet a potential adopter, by all means, encourage him or her to apply and provide him or her with the phone number and/or web site, explaining that in addition to completing the adoption application, the prospective home must arrange for a home check by one of our volunteers and an in-home visit with the dog. Please contact **Austin Sheltie Rescue** and give us that person's phone number. You must not promise or place a dog yourself. **Austin Sheltie Rescue** must screen the applicant through an impartial volunteer and interview all potential homes, and has the paperwork necessary to finalize all adoptions. Foster homes give our dogs the love and renewed trust they need to move on to

their new homes with confidence; they know their foster dogs better than anyone else in the program. We appreciate the work our fosters do more than can ever be satisfactorily expressed. In return, we appreciate our foster homes' trust in us as well: the coordinators are extremely careful in our adoption procedures, and though we welcome our foster homes' love for and concerned interest in and suggestions about our dogs, taking them very seriously in our adoption decisions, because we are a charitable organization overseen by the IRS and health organizations, the coordinators make the final decisions about the actual adoptions of our programs' dogs.

We deeply appreciate your concern for shelties and your willingness to become involved with foster care. If you think you would like to do this important work in helping us save and rehabilitate our precious dogs, please complete the foster application. Thank You!

Foster Home/Volunteer Clinical Care and Home Care Guidelines

Rescue and Clinical Care

Clinical care consists of an initial in-take exam as well as conscientious treatment for whatever medical conditions the exam might reveal. However, **extremely important for our financial health:** We do not do additional blood work, allergy testing, x-rays, and other pre-op or pre-HW treatment tests unless the dog is elderly or severely compromised medically; any additional work-ups must be authorized by one of the coordinators. Foster Homes and Volunteers taking our dogs to clinics need to make sure the clinic is doing vaccinations (including bordetella for kennel cough), basic tests for parasites, basic HW treatment and that's it; do not allow the clinic to run up the tests and charges without consulting the coordinators first. We cannot afford hundreds of dollars on each dog for those tests, and clinics must understand that about rescue groups. If bills are run up for individual dogs, we are unable to help other dogs and would even be in danger of folding since we are completely dependent on donations. If you feel you have an emergency with your foster sheltie, e-mail or call one or all of the coordinators immediately; leave a message if you don't get us right away.

Transports: We recommend keeping old bath towels and paper towels in the car in case a dog gets sick, and bringing a crate in case the dog is too scared to ride on the seat. Also keep leash and **choke or greyhound collar** in the car for new rescues in case the dog tries to bolt, though if very small, carry her to the car, still with that collar on and leash attached. We also keep CapStar in our cars: it doesn't prevent fleas, but kills them instantly if we're bringing in a dog from the shelter, and she is heavily infested. Of course, you end up with dead fleas to vacuum, but the dog goes into the clinic in a lot better shape. In some cases, killing those fleas immediately can be a matter of life or death if the dog is severely anemic as a result of heavy flea infestation. We've had a couple of dogs who were so infected they were only points away from needing transfusions. If you're transporting a rescue for us from a considerable distance, also keep a bowl and bottled water in the car for the dog and allow for comfort stops, of course keeping collar and leash on her. If the dog has fleas or seed ticks, be sure to vacuum your car thoroughly after transport.

As a side-note, we would recommend rescuers not wear, or remove 'dangly' earrings when pulling frightened dogs from shelters and by-roads. Sometimes they are frightened and struggle a bit: the paws can be caught in these earrings and cause some painful results for rescuers.

Austin Sheltie Rescue Tags: We will provide each dog with a numbered **Austin Sheltie Rescue** Tag that must be kept on the collar along with the rabies tag.

Choke and Greyhound Collars: These are absolutely essential for any transports from shelters, to and from clinics, and for all walks. Shelties will slip a regular collar in a heartbeat: keep those choke or greyhound collars handy and use them for every single outing. We will reimburse you for collar and leash as well as the CapStar above (you can get it from your vet).

Initial Clinical In-take:

Foster Homes and Volunteers taking our shelties to the clinics need to ask if the dog is neutered (obvious) or spayed (not so obvious; ask the doctor to check for spay scar) and a general idea of the dog's age. The doctors don't just look at tartar build-up but also the wear on the teeth and if there are any missing. One thing you'll also learn is to check the gums: they should be pink; pale or white gums indicate possible illness, anemia, or shock. When you press gently on the gums (if he'll let you), the thumb print should come back pink, not stay white. If you see white gums on the dog in the shelter, get him quickly to the clinic.

Foster Homes and Volunteers taking our shelties to the clinics need to know that in addition to rabies and DHLPP vaccinations, we also do the Bordetella vaccine for kennel cough. Some clinics do not routinely give this one, and we need to remind them that rescue groups do. Foster homes also need to make sure their resident dogs have the Bordetella shot since we are exposing them to rescue dogs.

In addition to vaccinations and HW test, we also test for other parasites and treat for them as well. We need to make sure the clinic does the fecal for tape, round, and hookworms. Additionally, the dog needs to be given flea preventative like Frontline, unless the dog tests positive for heartworms; in that case, we wait to do the Frontline and use flea sprays during the treatment. If the dog tests negative, then he is immediately put on heartworm and flea preventative.

If your foster dog is having surgery (spay, neuter, or other) and is an older dog or is anemic, we do ask for the pre-op blood workup to make sure the dog is strong and healthy enough for the surgery. Generally, though, we don't do surgeries or proceed with heartworm treatment on anemic or malnourished dogs until they are well enough to sustain the operation or treatment -- usually a couple of weeks. Post-op, be sure to watch the incision for pulled stitches, redness, swelling, and odor. If the incision looks suspicious to you, a quick sniff will generally confirm your suspicion of infection: take your foster sheltie to the clinic right away; just let us know you need to do this. The doctor will irrigate the incision and give your foster an injection along with pills to take home. If you are unsure how to proceed with other surgical issues, or what procedures to approve, or you feel you have an emergency, call and/or e-mail Linda, Connie, or Joan.

Medications: we know our foster homes will be vigilant about administering any prescriptions. Some of the best ways to do this are hiding the pills in cheese, cream cheese, peanut butter, or hotdog bits. Most dogs will line up right away at medicine time. If the dog is a 'snapper', put him on a sit-stay, with the medicine-treat balled in your hand (make a fist), and a firm "be gentle"; let him smell it; then open your hand flat as you would with a horse so that he can only take the treat from the palm; be sure to praise him for doing so and gently. That way he is conditioned to slow down a bit, can't bite your fingers, and learns to be mannerly. Some of these rescued shelties have never had treats; others are terribly hungry and afraid treats will be taken from them. Easy as it goes, and your foster will quickly learn.

Dental: We do not do teeth cleaning routinely, as we feel the new owners can take care of that. However, if the teeth and gums are seriously dirty and the breath is very bad, we WILL do the teeth cleaning for the health of the dog.

Heartworms: We have a separate guideline sheet for Heartworm Disease Aftercare. If your foster sheltie is having HW treatment, we will ask the doctor what level the dog is and whether the treatment will be full or split over four weeks. The coordinators and foster homes need to be sure

the follow-up is done for the baby heartworms after the full treatment is completed, generally one week later.

Home Care

Introductions: Some rescues are frightened when they first enter the foster home. Some of the more experienced resident dogs are very helpful in acclimating the new dog, even guiding her into the house from the car. Most rescues are best if introduced to the other dogs and to the family gradually and quietly. Most shelties get along well with cats, but if they chase or herd them too much, then we need to know that. Do report any undue problems with resident dogs or cats, and we will move the dog to another foster home.

Assessment: We need our foster homes to evaluate our dogs' behavior by introducing them to a variety of situations, determining what behaviors may need work and socializing them for their new lives. We like the foster homes to take the dogs on walks, car trips, outings such as trips to PetSmart etc., observing the dogs with other adults, children, noise, etc. We also want to see how the dogs relate to other dogs and cats. If foster homes note any aggression toward people or other animals, that does not ease as the dog settles in, we need to know that immediately.

House training: we do ask our foster homes to let us know if the dog seems well trained, and if not to help the dog learn through crating and vigilance. If needed, consult the tips sheet we send our adoptive homes.

Manners: we appreciate our foster homes teaching our rescued shelties the basics of 'sit' and 'stay' along with healthy walks on leash with a slip, choke, or greyhound collar -- without pulling or dragging. Basic obedience training will make fostering that much more pleasant and will assist the dog's adoptability.

Feeding: we trust that our foster homes offer good kibble to their own resident dogs, and the foster dogs can eat that as well. We recommend ProPlan, Iams, Nutro, etc. because they are processed better by dogs than some of the cheaper brands. If your foster is a bit reluctant to eat the first day or so, offer some Mighty Dog mixed in. They also all seem to like a little canned Veg-All with the kibble. However, as noted earlier, some of the rescues are very hungry; don't be surprised if the opposite happens, and yours eats a great deal the first few days: he may simply need to eat a lot, or, again, he may be afraid the food will disappear. In a few days, he should be more comfortable. The same applies to water: some dogs seem almost afraid of it at first; others can't seem to drink enough of it. After checking for diabetes or hypothyroidism, and those tests are fine, we think that's because they were deprived of water in their previous lives. Eventually, this, too, evens out. It's also true that they may not like the taste of the water; sometimes using a ceramic bowl will help. If you note some food aggression between dogs, then feed your foster in another room or in his crate. If the aggression continues, then we may need to move the dog to another foster home for everyone's comfort.

Grooming: normal grooming (baths, brushing) is the responsibility of the foster home. However, if the dog is badly matted, has obvious dermatitis, or excessively long nails, a professional grooming is in order, and **Austin Sheltie Rescue** will reimburse the cost of providing one. While you're brushing your foster, please keep a vigilant eye for skin, coat, eye and ear problems because even after clinic care, problems can show up, especially for a dog coming in from a shelter or who has been 'out there' for a while in the woods and byroads. If you see your foster dog shaking her head, look inside the ears: black gunk spells ear mites; inflammation spells infection. If your foster seems to be rubbing her rear end on the floor or has bouts of diarrhea, she may have worms; eggs could have hatched after she was vetted. If her eyes are tearing excessively and reddening, she may have an infection. In any of these cases, get her to the clinic for check-up and medication.

Happy Grams: We welcome your writing the list about your foster sheltie: everyone enjoys those updates, and we add details to the dog's description on the web site. We also need photos, so if you can do that for us, we will get them uploaded quickly, further helping the dog's adoption.

Sheltie Shuffle: Finally, some dogs turn out to be more ill, or have more behavioral problems, than originally believed. We recognize the prospect of helping these dogs can be frightening or overwhelming. **Austin Sheltie Rescue** is blessed with foster homes that take a special interest in these challenges, and it is no "failure" to ask that such a dog be moved to a home with more experience in these areas. Our volunteers are our most valuable resource, and we never wish to overburden them either physically or emotionally.

Adoptions

If a prospective home comes to see your foster, we will get your permission first to give them the phone number, and only after we have reviewed their application, and another volunteer has done the home check. If a family and sheltie are a match, the home signs the final adoption agreement form linked below (please keep on your computer or print out extra copies) and provides the donation check. We never let our shelties leave the program -- even for a sleepover -- without both of those, though we will hold the check a few days if the family wants to be sure. If you are transporting a sheltie to the home, the same procedure applies; they must complete the paperwork and donation check before you leave the dog. After the dog's adoption, you will mail the paperwork to Linda (we'll give you the home address).

Extremely Important:

New owners need to understand these are rescued shelties and must be watched and guarded even more closely than usual. If you do the final adoption, make sure the new owners know we require that our **Austin Sheltie Rescue** tag be kept on our dog's collar, even if they buy a new one. We've had several cases where the adopted dog has slipped out through a door or gate accidentally left open. We get those calls and reunite family and sheltie within hours. New owners should also provide their own ID tag with their phone number as well. We further always urge owners to have their dogs tattooed or microchipped. They might be interested to know that all pets, including birds, can now be microchipped.

If a new adoptive family leaves with your foster, be sure the dog has a choke or greyhound collar on: we've had dogs slip the collar the instant they get to the car or arrive home. We do not want any tragedies, so this is an absolute requirement. Buy extra choke/greyhound collars if you need them and send us the bill, but be sure this is followed rigorously.

While we welcome adoption referrals from our foster homes, who know their dogs very well, other than immediate family for whom we are willing to vouch, ALL applicants will receive a home visit from an impartial volunteer.

How to Let Go: If you do an adoption, to help both the dog and family, it's best to leave the room if the family comes to your home, so they can leave with the dog; or if you go to the family's home, to ask the family to take the dog to another room so you can quietly leave. Letting go of your foster dog will be one of the hardest things you have ever had to do because you love this dog so much, and in some cases, you may want one of us to place the dog without your involvement -- both Linda and I have been in that situation and understand completely. Either way, take heart: we have found that when we give our dogs the best medical care possible and all the love we can provide them, though they love us too, they are now both physically and emotionally ready for their forever homes, and the new home really wants and needs your foster sheltie. In every case, the now rehabilitated sheltie has understood when her new home has finally come for her; seeing that joy for both family and dog is one of the many blessings you will have as a foster parent, even if you need to cry a bit later. It also helps to remember that another sheltie is desperately going to need you again -- sooner than you might imagine.