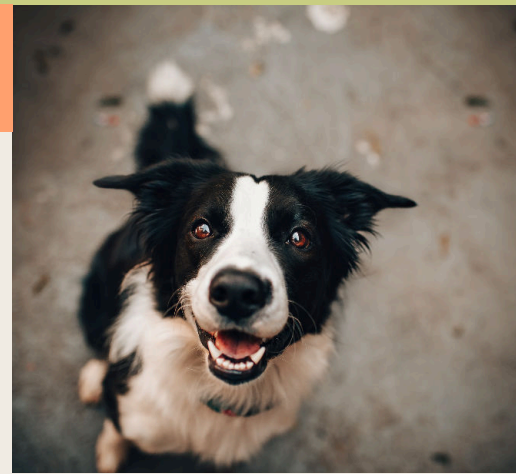


# Shelter Breaks & Overnights

Dogs who are eligible for shelter breaks and overnights may be taken off-site by a staff member or volunteer with an appropriate walker level. Dogs must be picked up between 10:00am – 11:00am and returned to the shelter by 5:00pm for shelter breaks and 11:00am for overnights.



## WHAT IS A SHELTER BREAK?

A shelter break gives our dogs the opportunity to leave the shelter and experience a variety of rewarding activities with the humans that they trust. Studies show that shelter dogs who go on an outing are 5x more likely to get adopted! Shelter breaks lower stress, help us learn about the animal, provide training and positive experiences, public exposure, and the chance for great pictures for their profiles!

## GUIDELINES & REQUIREMENTS

### Eligibility

- Staff members and volunteers who have at least 20 hours of dog walking are eligible to take a dog on a shelter break. Volunteers can only take dogs that are at or below their current walker level.
- Staff and volunteers interested in taking a dog for multiple overnights can apply for fostering or temporary fostering at [hshv.org/foster](https://hshv.org/foster). Staff interested in taking home an animal in a non-available stage can talk to the behavior department and consider temporary fostering by emailing [fosters@hshv.org](mailto:fosters@hshv.org).

### Requirements

- Request a shelter break by filling out the [shelter break form](#) prior to the outing. All shelter break requests must be approved. Requests are not guaranteed and may be denied by HSHV adoptions or behavior staff.
- Requests may take up to 24 hours for approval, so prior scheduling is recommended.
- Thoroughly read the dog's adoption profile, restrictions, and walker notes before the outing.
- The person taking the dog must remain with the animal throughout the shelter break and may not leave them in anyone else's care.
- The person must always be available by cell phone during the break.

### Restrictions

- Follow all restrictions and recommendations for that animal.
- Follow the plans outlined in the shelter break form.
- Avoid dog parks and public spaces where dogs are not allowed.
- Completely avoid interactions with other animals. If you are interested in having the dog interact with your animals, you may inquire about temporary fostering with the foster department!
- Avoid any activities that cause the dog FAS (fear, anxiety, and stress) and return the dog to the shelter if they are unable to settle or are struggling on the shelter break.

- We are unable to do shelter breaks for holidays, but staff and volunteers can inquire about temporary fostering by emailing [fosters@HSHV.org](mailto:fosters@HSHV.org) and filling out an application on our foster page or by clicking [here](#).

## Emergencies

- In any situation where you need assistance, call the Cruelty & Rescue Department (734-661-3512)
- The shelter CR team should be contacted in any situation where the dog becomes loose, missing, or injured.
- When leaving a message with CR: identify yourself as an HSHV volunteer with a dog on a shelter break and state your location and emergency.

## SHELTER BREAK SUPPLY CHECKLIST

- ID tag added to collar
- Proper walking tools and “I’m adoptable” vest
- “I’m out of office” card on cage
- Toys, treats, and food
- Poop bags
- Water bowl
- HSHV business cards
- Medication and supplies for medicating (if needed)

## SHELTER BREAK TIPS

### Locations and Activities

- Dogs benefit from relaxation time during shelter breaks just as much as the fun activities. While it's exciting to take a shelter dog out, be mindful of not overstimulating them with too much activity and commotion.
- If you interact with someone that is interested in the dog, please give them an HSHV business card with the dog's name on it. Encourage them to call the shelter if they have additional questions or would like to place a hold.
- Recommended locations:
  - Your home
  - Parks and nature trails
  - A walk around your neighborhood
  - Stores that allow animals (for our more confident dogs)
- Recommended activities:
  - Leisurely walk or hike with plenty of sniffing opportunities.
  - Practicing basic training (working on sit is a great time for pictures!)
  - Play and relaxation time around your house
  - Enrichment games like treat search and find.
  - Activities in the back yard like playing fetch (keep high arousal games brief and pair them with decompression breaks)
  - Long car rides (only for dogs who enjoy them and dogs who have limited mobility)

## Pictures

- Studies show that pictures of shelter dogs interacting outside of the shelter setting increases their visibility and decreases their length of stay. These pictures stand out from the others and can give them more publicity and attention.
- Good quality pictures show the dog in a relaxed or happy state, showing little FAS (fear, anxiety, and stress).
- Try using a squeaker or a fun noise to get the dog to look at the camera when taking a picture. Using exciting sounds can also make them offer a cute head tilt.
- Pictures of dogs relaxing around the house can be a great way for a future adopter to picture the animal in their own home! You can upload pictures [here](#) and view uploaded pictures [here](#).

## Medicating

- If medication needs to be administered while the dog is in your care, please follow the tips below.
  - Offer the medication in high value food such as: Chicken, cheese, wet food, hot dogs, etc.
  - Split pills up into multiple “meatballs” of treats
  - Try offering empty meatballs before the ones with pills inside.
  - Avoid using watery food and letting the pill dissolve into it. It’s best to have the pill in the middle of a meatball so the dog does not taste the medicine.
  - Please refrain from opening the dog’s mouth and placing the medications inside with your hand.

## TRAINING TIPS

### • Play and fun

- Playing high arousal games like fetch and tug can be great but we want to pair that kind of play with decompressing activities so our dogs don’t become overly aroused.
- During fetch we want to toss the ball a couple of times then allow the dog to take a break for just a minute or two by tossing treats for them to find or working on basic cues and then we can toss the ball again and repeat.
- For tug we recommend playing for a few seconds then working on “drop it” or trade. Overly engaging in tug can cause high levels of arousal.
- Be sure to give the dog plenty of opportunities for down time, in addition to the play

### • Taking walks

- Just like at the shelter, we want to avoid leash pressure and allow the dog to sniff around and engage with the environment. Encouraging sniffing and following scent trails during a walk is both physically and mentally stimulating.
- Keep the dog under threshold. If the dog is reacting to a trigger (people, other dogs or animals, bikes) we want to keep them at a distance where they are comfortable and not being reactive. This is how to keep a dog “under threshold”. It’s very important to not let animals rehearse reactivity or be placed in situations that cause FAS. Many shelter dogs are working on their confidence, and we don’t want to set them back.

- **Use positive reinforcement**

- When we work on cues such as “sit” we mark the behavior with “yes” (or a clicker) and then provide a high value treat afterwards.
- Remember to keep reactive dogs under threshold. When they are relaxed and not being reactive, we can train by saying “yes” and giving a treat, when they look at the trigger. This is how we create positive associations and reward the behaviors we want while keeping the animal comfortable.
- We only train with science-based positive reinforcement. Staff and volunteers are strictly prohibited from aversive training such as yelling, hitting, leash corrections, or any aversive equipment. These outdated and harmful techniques can cause stress and worsen behavior concerns.

- **Give breaks**

- Studies show that dogs relaxing in a home environment on a shelter break can be just as beneficial as an outing.
- Remember, we can overdo it with too much stimulation. Giving them time to decompress and relax with you is important too.

Thank you for reading through these helpful tips and guidelines for taking a shelter dog off-site. We appreciate the work that you do to keep our dogs happy, healthy, and safe. We hope you enjoy your “break”. Don’t forget to provide feedback on how your visit went once you return back to the shelter.

## **Shelter Break Form**



## **Foster Animals and Application**

