



Maddie's
Fund

Foster Plea Survey Report

SURVEY RESULTS 2022

Background

The Foster Plea Survey (Survey) provides information about requests made by animal shelter organizations to their current foster volunteer base. The Survey goal was to learn more about the communication methods being used by animal shelters and rescue organizations to place pets into their current foster caregiver homes, and to collect feedback about the size of foster programs from respondents.



Methods

The Foster Plea Survey was launched and distributed in November 2021 by Maddie's Fund. The Survey's objective was to establish baseline data on how and when internal foster pleas are being sent to foster volunteers. Internal foster pleas are non-public queries to an organization's existing foster base to acquire foster homes for specific pets or groups of pets. This survey did not collect information on pleas directed to the general public (external).

Animal shelters and rescue organizations are interested in placing more pets into foster homes. Various methods have been used to communicate pleas and connect pets with foster caregivers, however no data exists about the which types of pleas are used the most, work the best, or the optimum frequency to use.

The Survey audience was comprised of animal shelter and rescue organizations that had active foster programs. A total of 355 eligible submissions were included in this report. Respondents filled out a 13-question, multiple-choice survey about the methods and frequency of their internal foster pleas.

One question asked respondents to indicate how often they used each method of foster plea using a 6-point scale, from "never" to "daily or more." The scale was weighted, with "never" equal to 0 and "daily or more" equaling 5 points. This way, we could measure the average number of methods used by low, medium and high-volume foster programs to see what, if any, differences existed.

The Survey asked respondents about the following general topics:

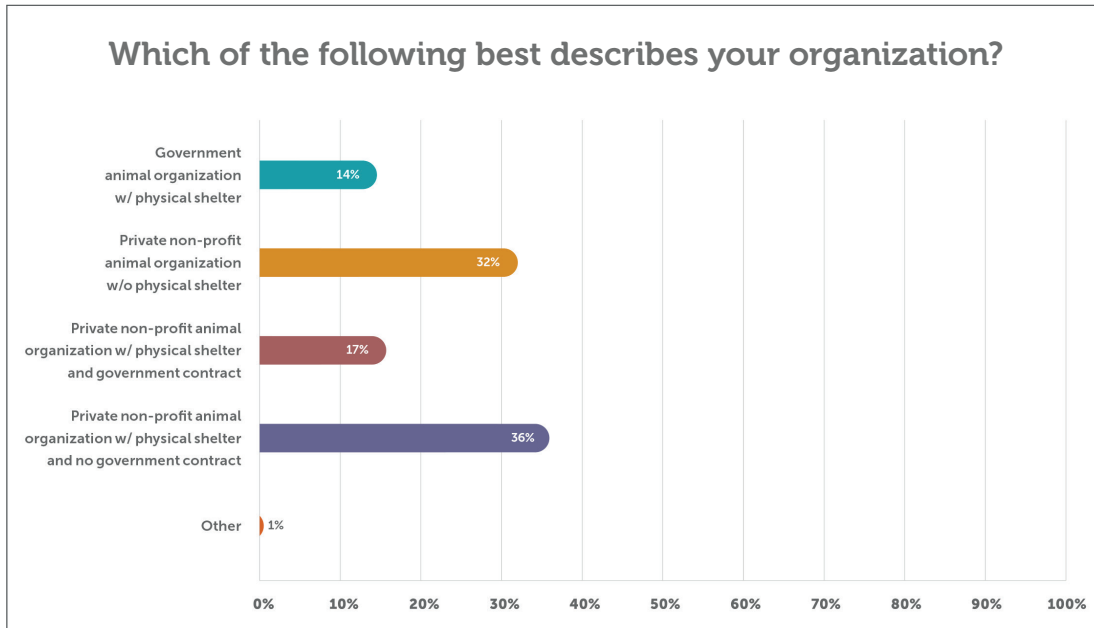
- The methods and frequency of their internal foster pleas
- To whom internal foster pleas are sent
- Organization type, yearly intakes and foster placements
- The information most often contained about pets in their pleas
- How often they include photos or video of the pets in their pleas

The data collected was correlative, meaning one can correlate methods and strategies to organizations that have low, medium and high-volume foster programs, but it's not possible to determine if any of the methods *cause* increased foster placements.

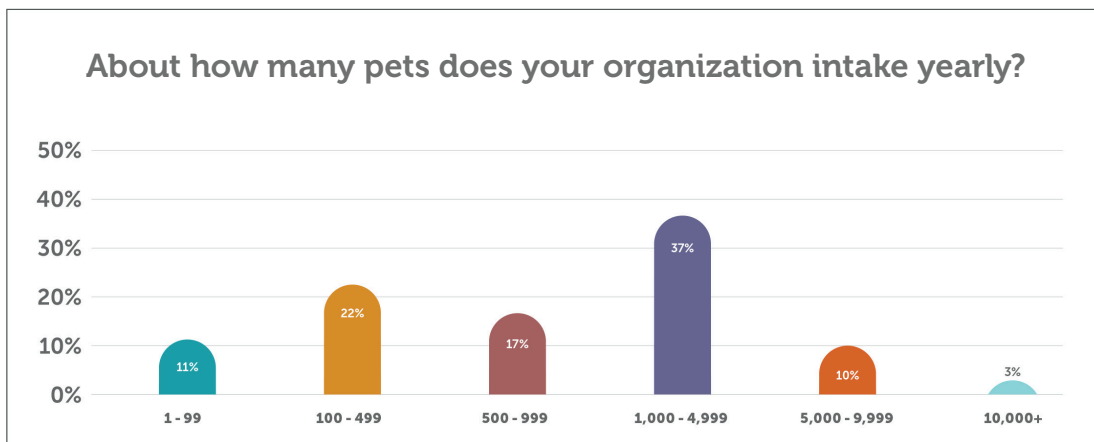


About the Respondents

Of the 355 qualified respondents, 99% work or volunteer at a shelter or rescue organization. Of this, 14% of respondents work with government animal organizations and 85% work for private non-profit animal organizations. 32% of respondents' organizations do not have a physical shelter and thus have foster-only programs. One percent (three total) work in other types of organizations such as spay/neuter clinics that have foster programs.

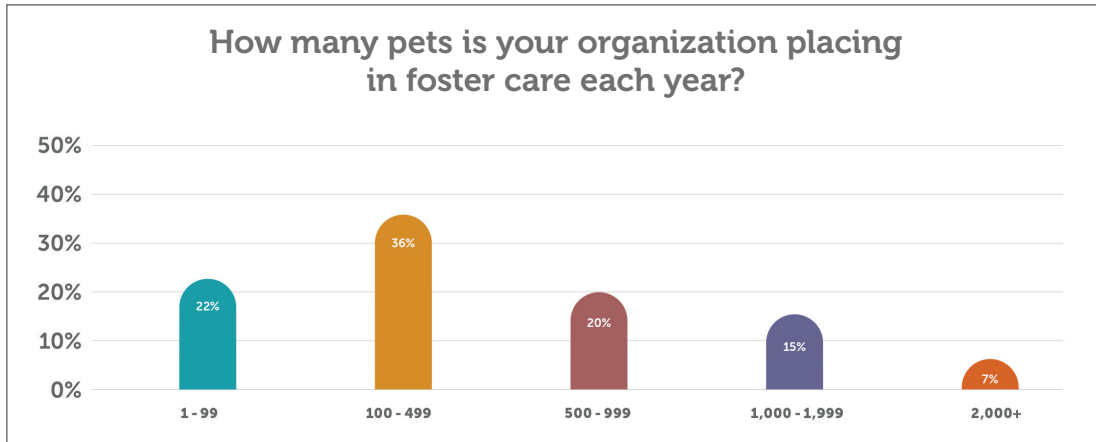


The organizations vary in size from less than 100 to more than 10,000 intakes. The majority of the respondents, 37%, were organizations that ranged from 1,000 - 4,999 intakes.



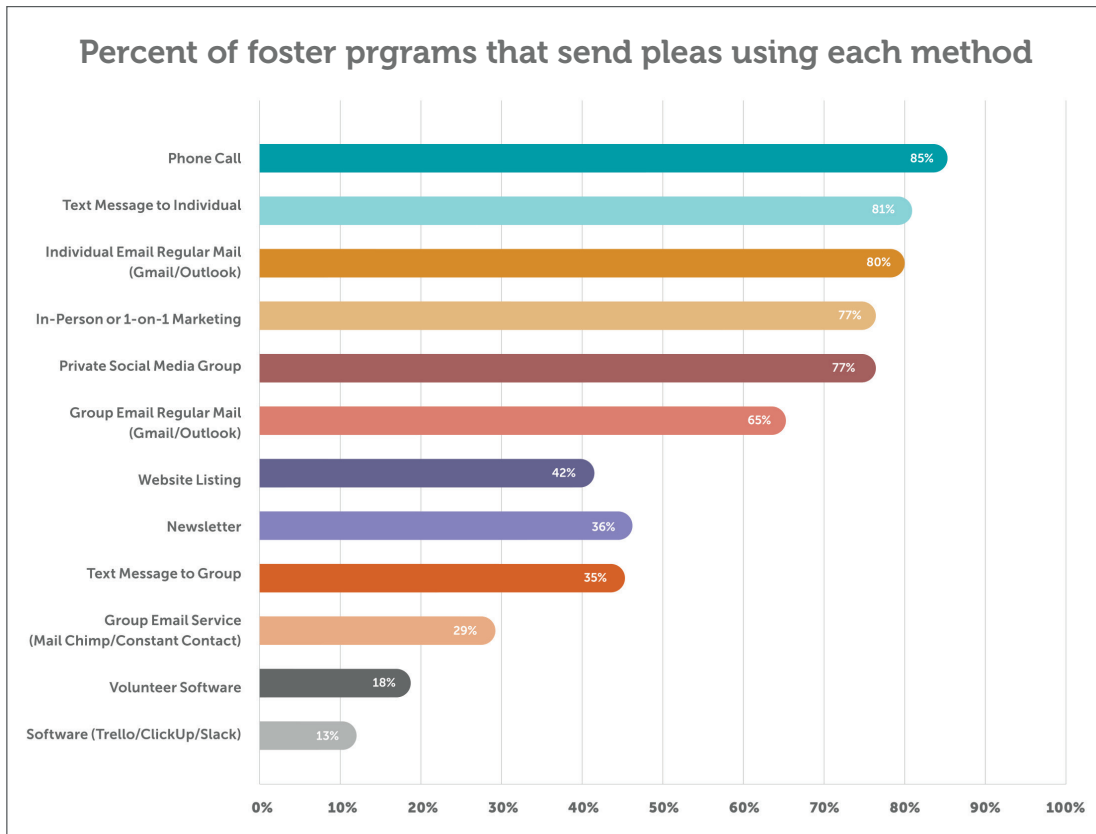
About the Respondents

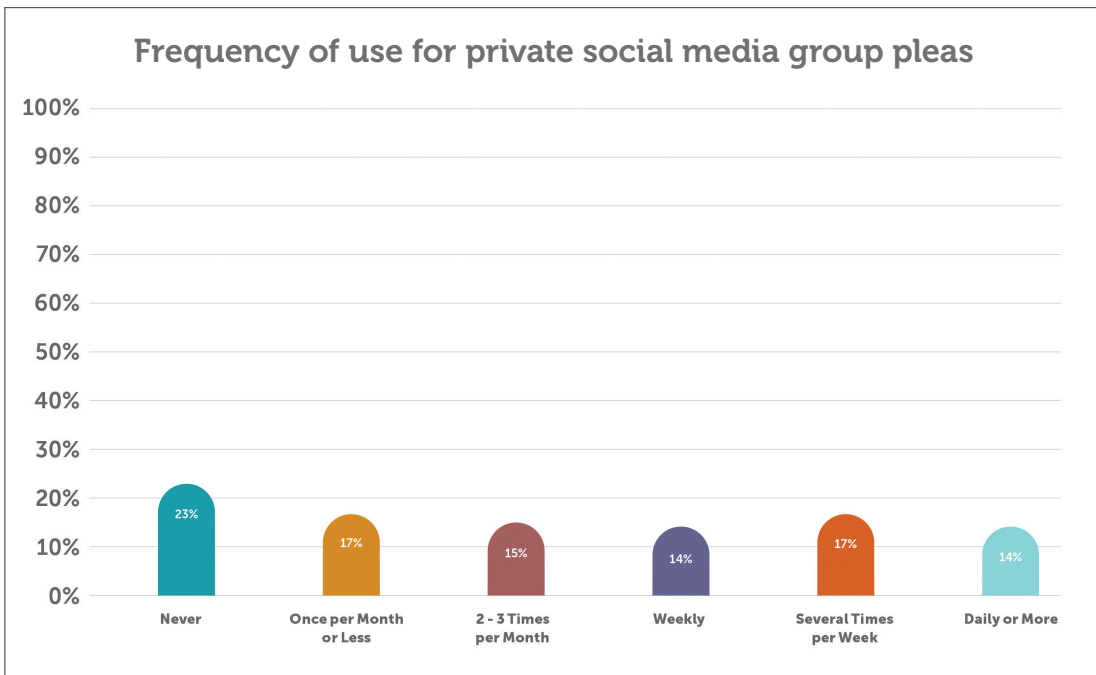
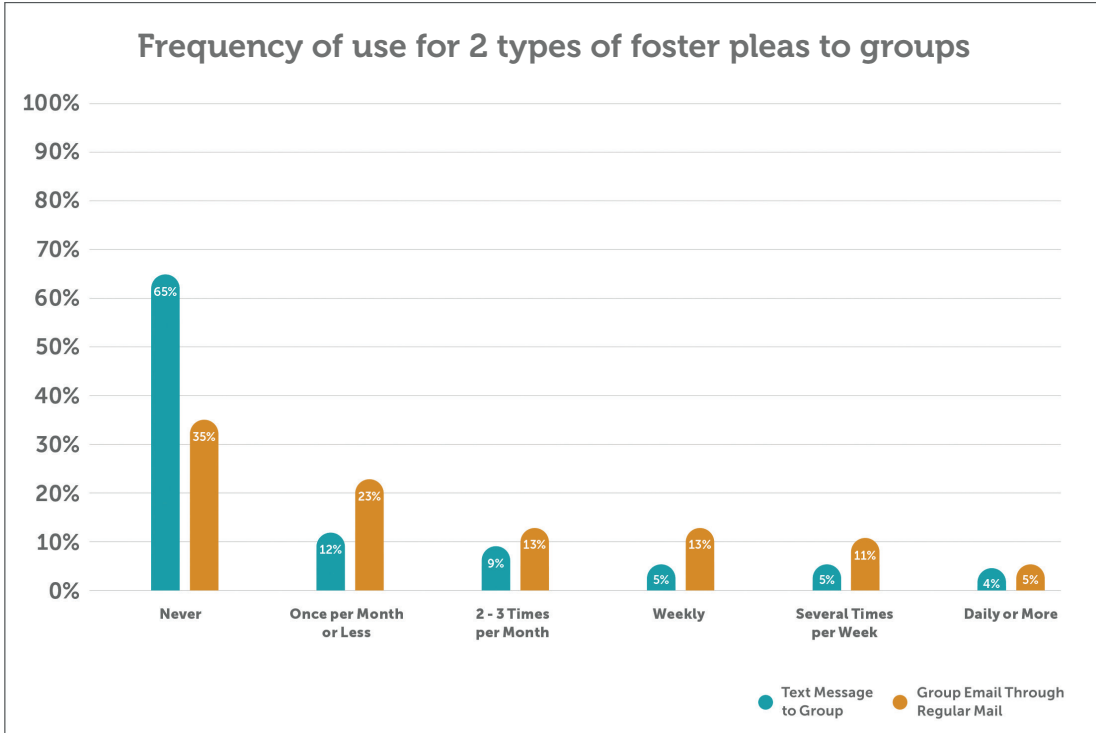
The number of pets being placed in foster homes each year varied from less than 100 to more than 2,000. The largest percentage of organizations, 36%, placed between 100 and 499 pets in foster. The smallest percentage of organizations, 7%, place 2,000 or more pets in foster care.



Results

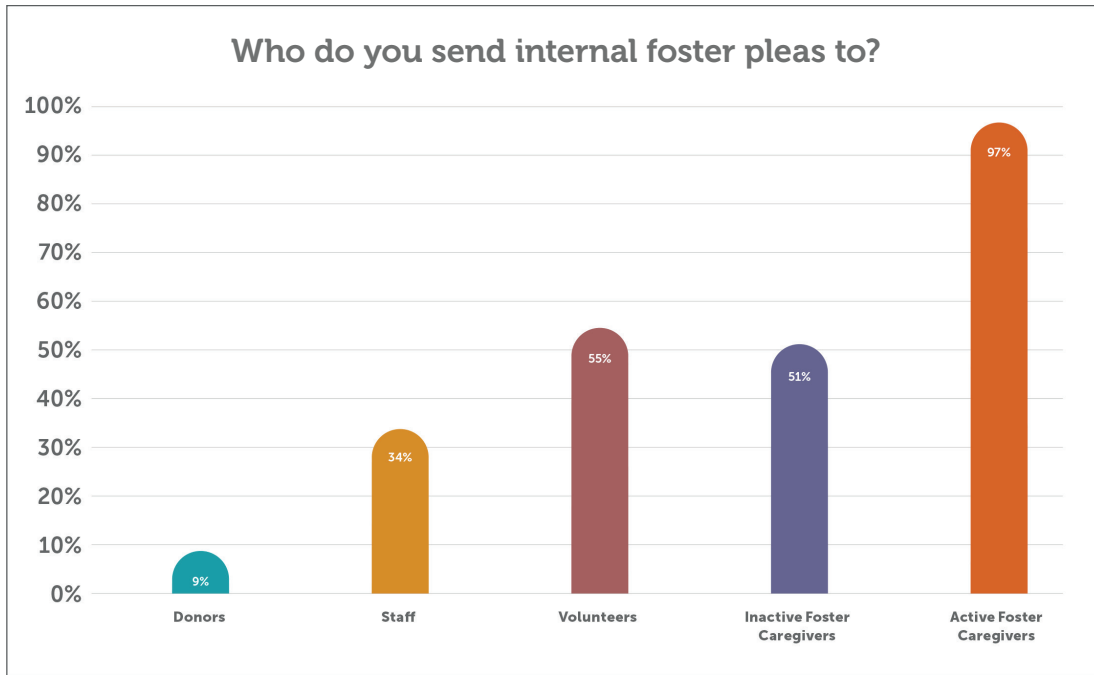
The Survey examined which foster plea methods are being used, and how often, by animal shelters and rescue organizations. Respondents were asked to fill in the frequency of use for 12 different methods. The methods most used are phone calls (85%), text messages to individuals (81%), and individual emails through regular email services such as Gmail or Outlook (80%). The least commonly used methods of sending pleas are software such as Trello, ClickUp or Slack (13%), volunteer software such as Better Impact (18%) and group emails through a paid service such as MailChimp or Constant Contact (29%). The graph below summarizes the percent of organizations using each method.



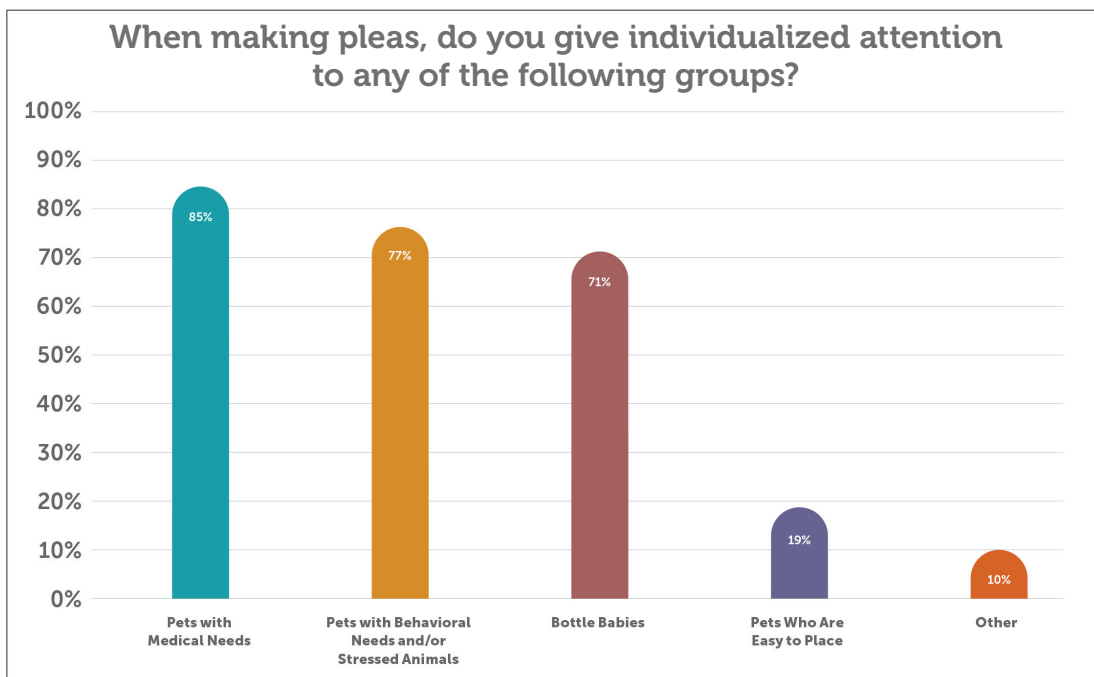


Results

The majority of organizations are sending foster pleas to their active foster caregivers (97%), and are including additional populations as well, as shown in the following chart.

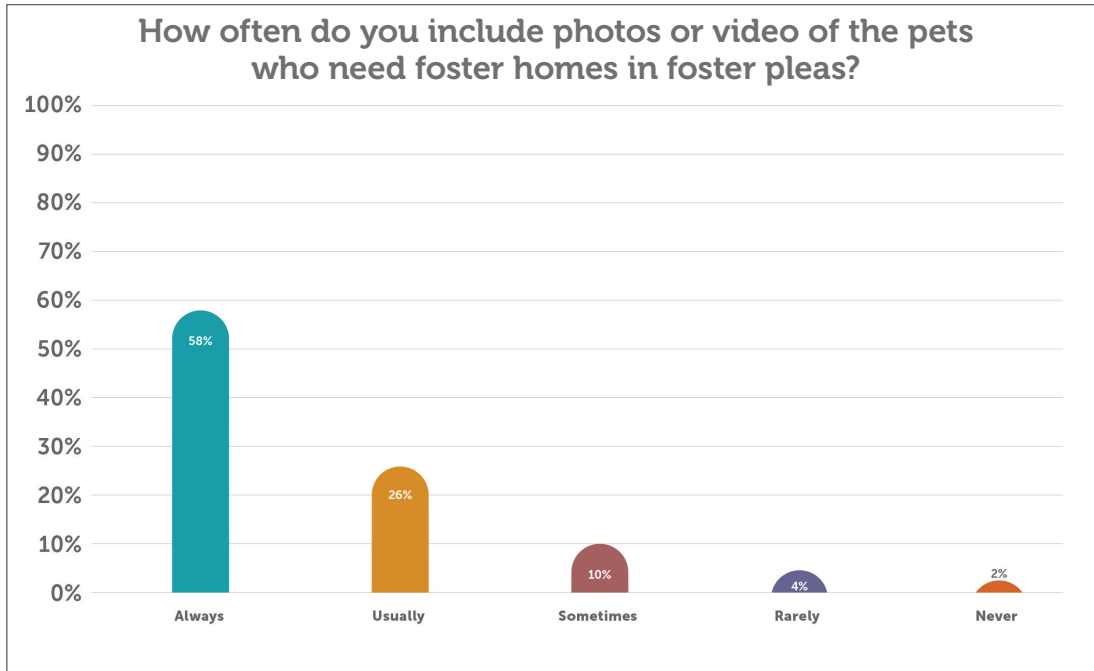


Most animal shelters and rescue organizations appear to be giving individualized attention to certain types of pets in their foster pleas. Pets with medical needs are getting the most individualized attention from respondents (85%). Ten percent of respondents chose "other" and indicated they give individualized attention to a variety of populations including senior/hospice pets, puppies, pets with long shelter stays or they give individualized attention to all pets.



Results

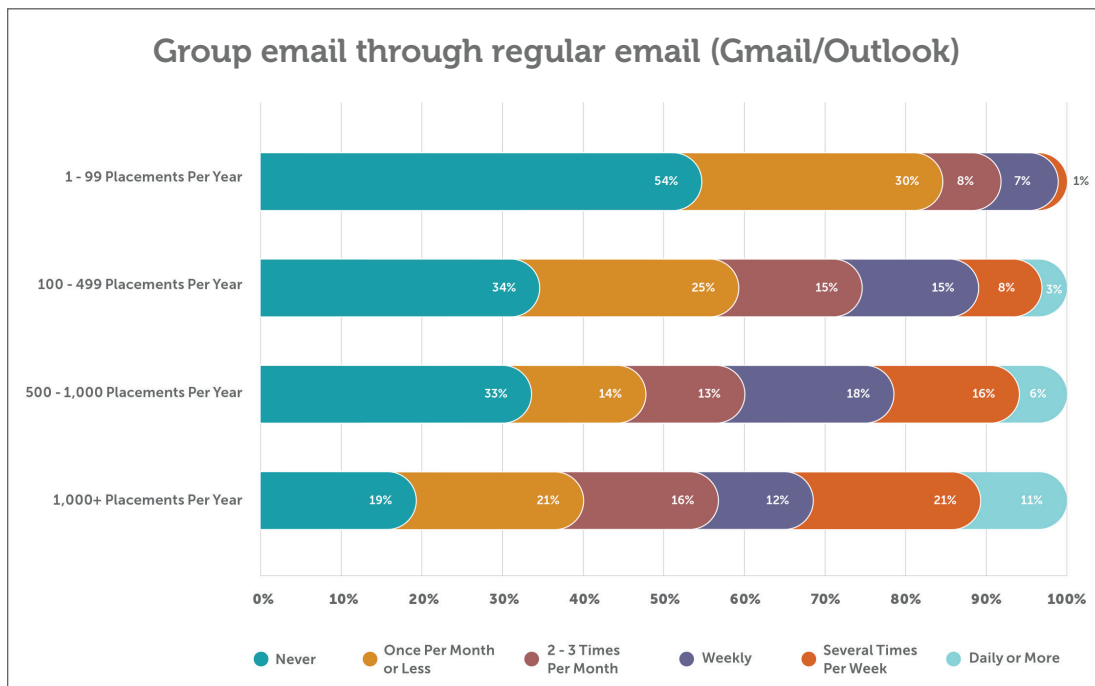
Photographs and videos are often included in pleas to make the pets who need foster homes real and help people make emotional connections. Most respondents indicated they always or usually (84% combined) include photos and videos in their foster pleas.



Low-Volume vs High-Volume Foster Programs

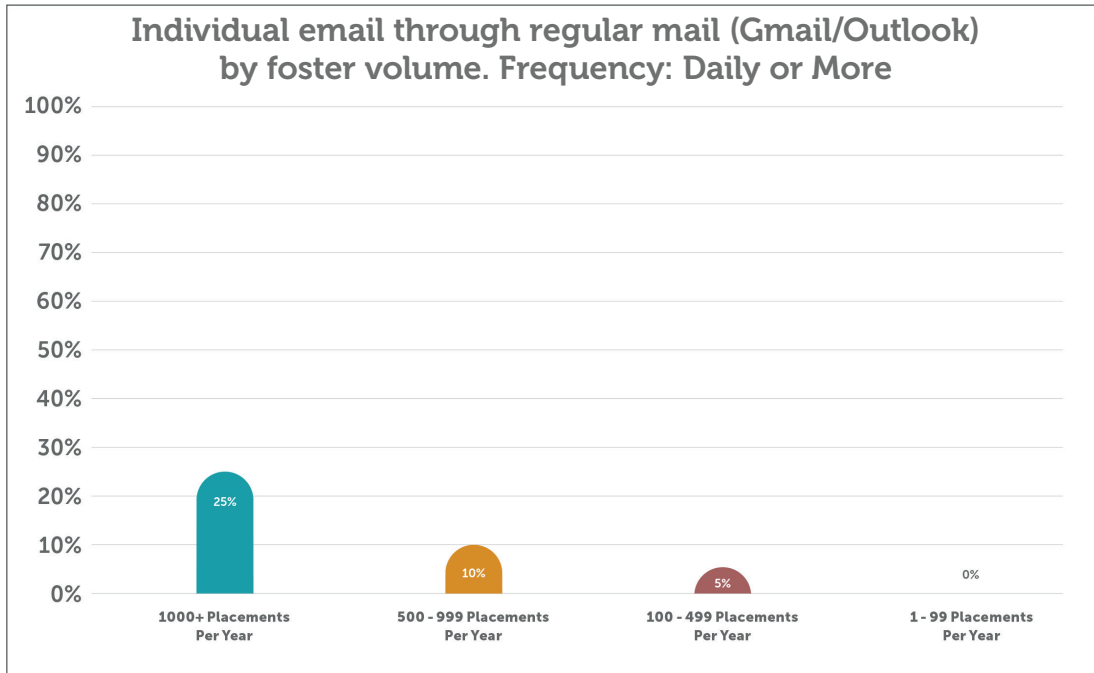
There are some significant differences in the methods and frequency of foster pleas sent from low-volume (1-99 placements per year) and high-volume (1,000+ placements per year) foster programs. Survey analysis of the methods used by foster programs placing various numbers of pets into foster per year (1-99, 100-499, 500-999 and 1,000+) was done to try to answer the question, "What are the animal shelters and rescue organizations with the largest foster programs doing differently, which may be impacting their success?"

There were significant differences between high- and low-volume foster programs that send group emails via their in-house email systems. High-volume foster programs are sending foster plea emails more often. They are also using multiple methods to reach their internal foster base. And using methods that provided fosters more individual attention, such as one-on-one matchmaking.

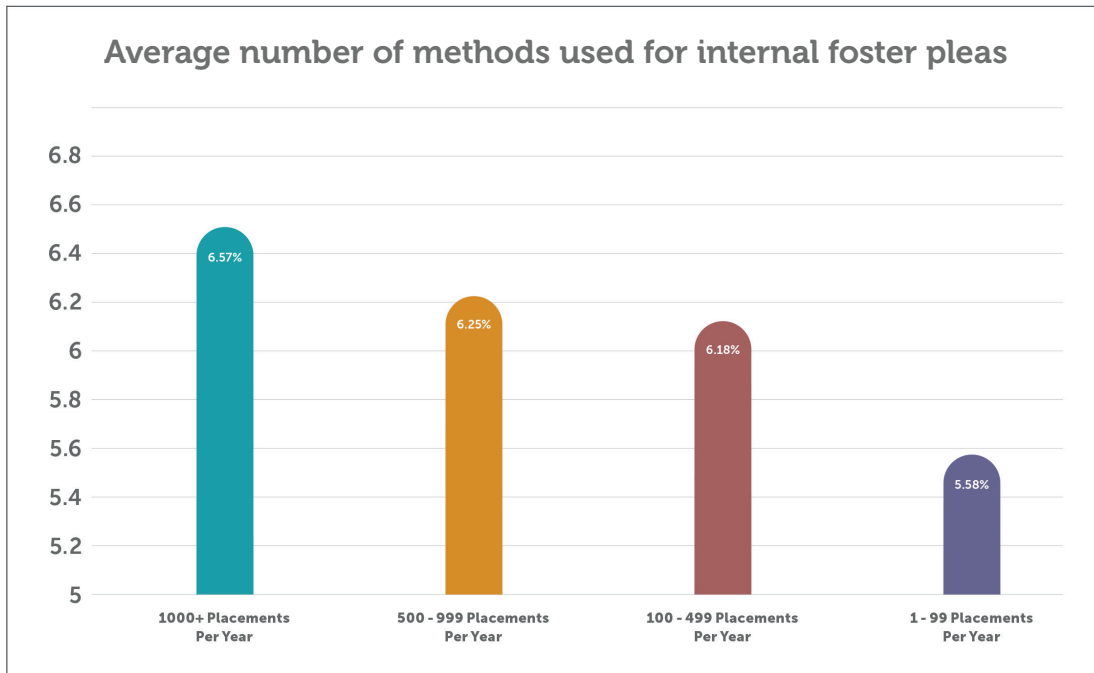


Low-Volume vs High-Volume Foster Programs

Higher-volume foster programs are sending more individual foster pleas, more often.



The number of methods being used to send foster pleas increased with the volume of the foster program.



There were no significant differences between groups for newsletters, no matter the frequency.

Summary and Conclusions

Survey results revealed a wide variation in communication methods for foster pleas, the frequency at which they are sent and the groups of supporters they are sent to. Survey results, while not definitive in which methods are the most effective, demonstrate a correlation between foster programs and the number of pets placed.

Was an answer provided to the question, *"What are the animal shelters and rescue organizations with the largest foster programs doing differently, which may be impacting their success?"* Survey report concluded that high-volume foster programs are sending more pleas to their foster caregivers, using multiple methods, with more frequency.





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