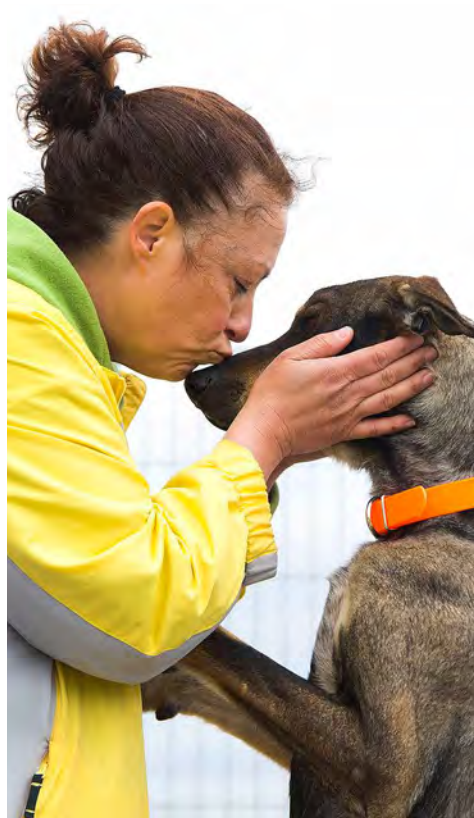


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IMPROVING OUTCOMES  
IN HOMELESSNESS:

# Keeping People *and* Pets Together



## **ABOUT THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE TO END HOMELESSNESS**

The National Alliance to End Homelessness (the Alliance) is a leading voice on the issue of homelessness in the U.S. The Alliance analyzes public policies to develop and deliver pragmatic, customized, cost-effective, and implementable solutions. It collaborates with organizations and providers in public, private, and nonprofit sectors to build state and local capacity, leading to more effective programs and solutions that help communities achieve their goal of ending homelessness. The Alliance provides data and research to policymakers and elected officials in order to inform policy debates and decisions and educate public and opinion leaders nationwide. Through its Center for Capacity Building, the Alliance helps communities turn policies and proven best practices into viable, sustainable, on-the-ground programs. To learn more visit: [www.endhomelessness.org](http://www.endhomelessness.org).

## **ABOUT PETSMART CHARITIES®**

PetSmart Charities, Inc. is committed to finding lifelong, loving homes for all pets by supporting programs and thought leadership that bring people and pets together. Through its in-store adoption program in all PetSmart® stores across the U.S. and Puerto Rico, PetSmart Charities helps to find forever homes and families for nearly 600,000 shelter pets each year. PetSmart Charities also provides grant funding to nonprofits aligned with its mission. Each year, millions of generous PetSmart shoppers help pets in need by donating to PetSmart Charities using the PIN pads at checkout registers inside PetSmart stores. In turn, PetSmart Charities efficiently uses more than 90 cents of every dollar donated to fulfill its role as the leading funder of animal welfare in North America, granting nearly \$400 million since its inception in 1994. Independent from PetSmart Inc., PetSmart Charities is a 501(c)(3) organization that has received the Four-Star Rating from Charity Navigator, a third-party organization that reports on the effectiveness, accountability and transparency of nonprofits, for the past 16 years in a row — placing it among the top one percent of charities rated by this organization. To learn more visit [www.petsmartcharities.org](http://www.petsmartcharities.org).

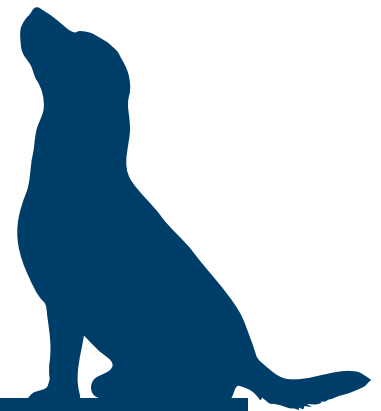
## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*The National Alliance to End Homelessness and PetSmart Charities® would like to acknowledge and thank the numerous organizations and stakeholders who have contributed their time and resources to inform this publication. They include:*

- ASPCA, *Washington, DC*
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- City of Sacramento, Homeless Coordination, *Sacramento, CA*
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- County of Santa Clara, Office of Supportive Housing, *San Jose, CA*
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- Father Joe's Villages, *San Diego, CA*
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- Homeward, *Richmond, VA*
- Hope House Women's Shelter, *Spokane, WA*

*continued »*

- Humane Rescue Alliance, *Washington, DC*
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- Korean Women's Association, *Tacoma, WA*
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- Maricopa Association of Governments, *Phoenix, AZ*
- Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless, *Lynn, MA*
- Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust, *Miami, FL*
- Miriam's Kitchen, *Washington, DC*
- My Dog is My Home, *Milwaukie, OR*
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- New Horizons, *Seattle, WA*
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- Noah's Animal House, *Las Vegas, NV*
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- Operation Dignity, *Oakland, CA*
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The Alliance would also like to thank the 346 respondents who completed its survey to identify and learn more about communities and organizations providing services to people experiencing homelessness with pets. This survey was sent to all 400+ Continuums of Care (CoCs) as well registrants of the Alliance's Emergency Shelter Learning Series.

The Alliance would like to particularly thank Ms. Rebecca Koppel and Mr. Alec Vandenberg for their work as interns with the Alliance to identify, research, and interview people experiencing homelessness with pets, homeless service providers, animal welfare organizations, and philanthropic institutions. Their work has contributed greatly to this resource and the work of the Alliance.



# Introduction

*In communities around the United States, a significant number of people experiencing homelessness own pets.<sup>1</sup> Evidence shows that animal companionship is fortifying<sup>2</sup> and contributes to the emotional well-being of people experiencing homelessness, including encouraging owners to obtain sobriety, leave abusive relationships, and avoid incarceration. Still, many pet-owning individuals and families face limited access to shelter, services, and housing.<sup>3</sup>*

Evidence also reveals that despite policies and attempts by homeless service providers to encourage and/or require people experiencing homelessness with pets to separate from or surrender them in order to improve their chances of accessing shelter, they rarely do.<sup>4</sup> Instead, people experiencing homelessness with pets purposely seek out pet-friendly services.<sup>5</sup> At best, homeless service providers who ensure pet-friendly programs increase opportunities for engagement with some of the most vulnerable individuals and families in their communities; at worst, providers who do not provide pet-friendly services risk perpetuating homelessness in their communities.<sup>6</sup>

While no empirical national data exist on the number of people experiencing homelessness with pets, some CoCs<sup>7</sup> have begun collecting data. If these local numbers are indicative of national trends, approximately 10% of people experiencing homelessness do so with service animals, emotional support animals, or companion animals.<sup>8</sup>

The human-animal bond is so strong that many people experiencing homelessness will not live separated from their pet,<sup>9</sup> and consequently cannot or do not access services like emergency shelter if their pets cannot accompany them.<sup>10</sup> A formal, system-wide strategy to collect data is key to understanding how many people experiencing homelessness have pets, how to determine their associated housing and service needs, and the scale of this need.





CoCs are ideally situated to collect data and information on homeless service programs and community partners that restrict access to services, shelter, and housing for people who have pets. This can help to ensure an effective system response to these individuals and families. An effective homeless response system must provide access to homeless services for everyone experiencing homelessness, including those who own pets. By not doing so, homeless response systems risk ineffectively serving many individuals and families who should be prioritized as the most vulnerable in their communities. This results in longer experiences of homelessness and higher numbers of people living without shelter.

### **BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE FOR CREATING AND STRENGTHENING PET-FRIENDLY HOMELESS SERVICES**

This resource is divided into three sections:

- The first section provides an overview of an effective and coordinated homeless response system and of how the animal welfare system is structured around the country. This section also discusses the importance of effective relationships between these two systems to end homelessness for people with pets.
- The second section includes steps that homeless service provider agency leadership can take to improve agency-wide culture and effectiveness in serving people experiencing homelessness with pets.
- The final section includes recommendations for outreach workers, case managers, program managers, facilities staff, and others to improve the outcomes of people experiencing homelessness with pets when accessing services.

The recommendations are informed by the experiences of CoC leadership and homeless service providers, animal welfare organizations, and people experiencing homelessness who have pets, as shared with the *National Alliance to End Homelessness*, *PetSmart Charities*, and *My Dog Is My Home*.

CoC leadership and homeless service provider agencies can use this document to help determine policies and practices they need to improve services for people experiencing homelessness with pets. Additionally, this document can serve as the foundation for a larger system-wide action plan or new initiatives that actively respond to the needs of people experiencing homelessness with pets.

**“I don’t think I’ve ever had a dog that I could just give away because I became homeless. However, you have to make that a priority. Every single second of the day he has to be top of the list. You have to worry about his food, his health, his safety and where everything is coming from next. And then, you know, it’s definitely not easy. I’ll be glad to be off the streets when I do get off of them with him.”**

**—ADAM & CHIEF/UW CENTER FOR ONE HEALTH**

*Through a grant from the University of Washington Population Health Initiative, UW’s Center for One Health Research pop-up galleries feature autobiographical photographs made by people experiencing homelessness with pets. [Learn more](#) about One Health’s pilot clinics for including animals in health care services for people experiencing homelessness.*

# How to Use This Publication



**HOMELESS SERVICE PROVIDERS** can use this publication to design and/or improve their homeless prevention and diversion strategies, street outreach, shelter operations and program design, and permanent housing interventions. This publication provides guidance on the goals and purpose, program policies, and staff activities of effective programs and can be used to train staff and improve organizational practices.

**ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANIZATIONS** can use this publication to determine optimal ways to engage with and build partnerships with social services partners and deliver coordinated service provision to both people and pets.

**COCS, FUNDERS, AND LOCAL LEADERS** can use this publication to design and standardize practices across programs to ensure that programs lower barriers for those needing to access services and increase the effectiveness of interventions such as homeless prevention and diversion, street outreach, shelter, and programs working to permanently house people experiencing homelessness with pets. This publication can serve as a resource when developing Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for a variety of funding streams to support a low-barrier, Housing First approach to homeless services. CoCs can also use this resource to support data collection on the number of people experiencing homelessness with pets as well as how pet-friendly homeless services are being implemented within the CoC.

CoC leadership should use this resource to consider how to incorporate pet-friendly services and relationships with animal welfare organizations to inform and improve provider practice as well as system strategies. Examples include:

- Recruit animal welfare organizations for membership in the CoC, participation in governance subcommittees, and representation on the Governance Board.
- Work with appropriate CoC Governance Committees and/or subcommittees to develop questions for the Point-In-Time counts and Coordinated Entry assessments that will assist in collecting data on the number of people experiencing homelessness with pets.
- Amend CoC written standards and/or policies and procedures to include pet-friendly services to standardize practice.



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## OVERVIEW

# Homeless Response Systems and Animal Welfare Organizations

*To understand how homeless service providers can build meaningful partnerships with animal welfare organizations, it is essential to understand how homeless response systems and animal welfare organizations are typically structured across the nation to reduce and end homelessness for both people and pets.*

### HOMELESS RESPONSE SYSTEMS

The National Alliance to End Homelessness identifies the following as essential to a high-functioning system that ends homelessness:

- A systems response to ending homelessness
- Housing first orientation
- Coordinated entry system
- Homeless prevention
- Diversion and rapid exit strategies
- Housing-focused outreach
- Low-barrier and housing-focused emergency housing and crisis services
- Permanent housing solutions, including rapid re-housing (RRH) and permanent supportive housing (PSH)
- Outcomes-focused system





An effective homeless response system brings together all the resources, supports, and interventions within a community, including homeless-specific resources like shelters and re-housing programs, as well as adjacent systems like health care, criminal justice, and social services. It aligns these efforts with the goal to make homelessness rare, brief, and one-time. All federal, state, and local resources are allocated and aligned around efficient and effective interventions with the goal of quickly ending a household's experience of homelessness by rapidly connecting them to permanent housing.

The system must be right-sized, have efficient flow, and engage households across the continuum of supports. To maximize flow through the system, these interventions must be strategically focused. This begins by preventing or diverting households from homelessness whenever possible. Those individuals and families that do become homeless are rapidly identified, engaged, and provided with efficient and accessible pathways back to permanent housing.

*An effective homeless response system brings together all the resources, supports, and interventions within a community...The system must be right-sized, have efficient flow, and engage households across the continuum of supports.*

***Key indicators of successful outcomes across a homeless response system include:***

- Reductions in overall homelessness.
- Reductions in first time homelessness.
- Reductions in the length of time people are homeless.
- Increases in exits from homelessness to permanent housing.
- Reductions in returns to homelessness following connection to permanent housing.

## ANIMAL WELFARE PROVIDER SYSTEMS

Animal welfare providers across the country work within a complex, multi-departmental system to coordinate the housing and care of homeless or abandoned pets. Significant efforts on the part of animal welfare organizations have resulted in annual decreases in the number of animals entering shelters since the first humane society opened in 1866. Many organizations have expanded their programming to provide resources that help under-resourced populations keep their pets instead of relinquishing them because owners cannot afford proper care. A growing number of animal welfare organizations have aligned with agencies that provide resources and services to people experiencing homelessness. This alignment and collaboration creates an access-to-care model that not only increases the efficiency and effectiveness of each service, but allows people to keep their pets.

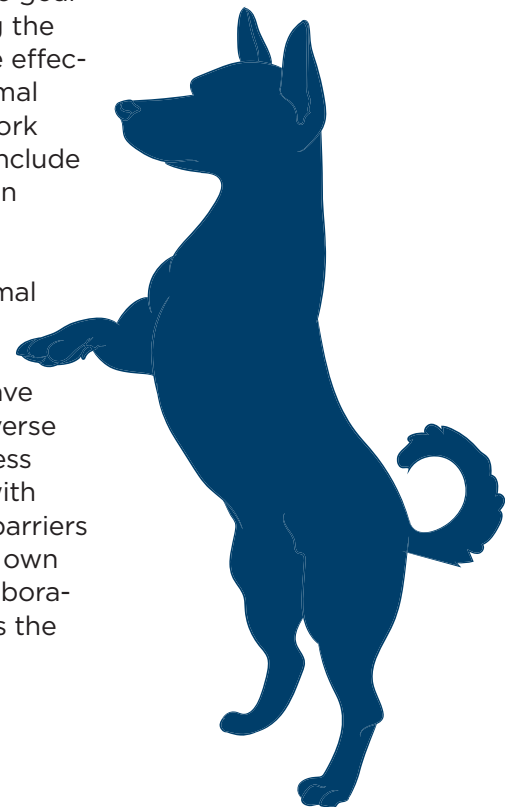
The current animal sheltering system is structured with a mix of service provider models. Municipal agencies provide for public safety from possible risk posed by loose animals, such as communicable diseases. These agencies are called open-admission facilities because they are required to take all pets presented to them for surrender. This often causes situations in which the influx of animals is larger than the capacity for care and can result in the euthanizing of pets to make room for incoming animals. Non-profit organizations (NPOs) supplement the needs of these agencies by serving pets in need of medical attention, behavioral modification, re-homing or any other services not provided through the municipality. These NPOs often operate with a limited-intake model and are not required to take every pet presented to them for surrender,

allowing them to offer expanded programming that can focus on keeping pets in homes.

The idea of keeping people and pets together, regardless of living situation, is a recent thought-model in animal welfare, a field that traditionally created extremely high expectations for pet ownership. Advances in the study of the human-animal bond and the relationship with the human homeless populations have led to collaborative programming aimed at keeping people and pets together. These larger, coordinated systems provide outreach, shelter, and temporary housing for people with pets, and in doing so improve outcomes for all involved.

Aggressive spay and neuter campaigns, increased marketing of pets for adoption, and changing societal norms have allowed the animal welfare industry to demonstrate success in managing the number of homeless animals. These agencies are now adapting to the needs of owned pets in crisis situations, with the goal of keeping them from entering the animal sheltering system. To be effective, homeless service and animal welfare providers must now work together across disciplines to include the needs of people and pets in their programming.

As fewer animals enter the animal welfare system and collaboration across sectors continues, modern animal shelters now have programming that provides diverse preventative resources. Homeless response providers can work with these agencies to remove the barriers to pet-friendly services in their own programs, and to create a collaborative environment that advances the mission of both agencies.



## **EXPLORING SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS WITH ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANIZATIONS**

Whether designing a new program or re-aligning an existing program to ensure access and quality of service to people experiencing homelessness with pets, homeless service providers should not go it alone. They should seek out, establish, and leverage formal partnerships with animal welfare organizations to ensure greater effectiveness.

*The benefits of partnerships with animal welfare organizations are well documented. These include:*

- assistance with establishing on-site and/or off-site sheltering and fostering;
- reduced-cost or free veterinary services, pet food, and pet supplies;
- education and training for staff on animal behavior and care, disease control, and facility configuration, as well as animal behavior training for program clients; and
- access to legal training and education addressing liability concerns when co-sheltering people and animals together.

*Homeless service providers should seek out, establish, and leverage formal partnerships with animal welfare organizations to ensure greater effectiveness.*



Animal welfare organizations also benefit from formal partnerships with homeless service providers. These benefits include opportunities to understand the causes of and solutions to human homelessness, combine outreach efforts, reduce the number of animals surrendered to animal care and control, and expand animal welfare clinics and services to underserved populations.

Successful partnerships between homeless service providers and animal welfare organizations allow for increased opportunity for both to understand the human-animal bond, the reasons why people experiencing homelessness consider their pets as family members and are unwilling to separate from or surrender them, and how that bond impacts their ability to access homeless services and permanent housing.<sup>11</sup>



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## LESSONS LEARNED

# Increasing Organizational Capacity to Serve People Experiencing Homelessness with Pets

*The organizational culture of homeless service providers has significant impact on the lives of people experiencing homelessness with pets. Organizational leaders can decide everything from whether a person experiencing homelessness with a pet can access services to how hiring, policy adoption/implementation, and training affect program service delivery. Board members, executive leadership, managers, and supervisors must develop and demonstrate knowledge about the human-animal bond, and how supporting efforts to keep people and their pets together improves efforts to permanently re-house people experiencing homelessness.*

### **PROGRAMMATIC DESIGN:**

#### **CREATING A PET-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT**

People experiencing homelessness with pets can quickly determine whether a homeless service provider is interested in the well-being of both themselves and their pet(s). This is revealed by whether the program's approach recognizes and affirms the human-animal bond, demonstrates a comfort level with animals, and is willing and able to connect them and their pet to services and/or pet-friendly permanent housing.







***My Dog Is My Home*** created an exhibition featuring stories from “The Experts” – people with lived experience of being homeless with pets. Take time to learn about the bond between **Brigitte and Nubeian** and **Spirit, Kyya, & Miniaga**.

Also check out the documentary film, **Dirty Paws**, which introduces viewers to the human-animal bond among people experiencing homelessness with pets in Wichita, KS, and explores how local homeless service providers respond to their needs.

Organizations should be aware of and assess the way staff engage people experiencing homelessness with pets, the appearance and/or design of their facilities, how well policies and procedures create a pet-friendly approach and environment, and the staff’s knowledge of local organizations that provide services for pets. The design and implementation of these programs should strive to create an environment of non-judgmental acceptance of people’s relationships with their pets, and focus on how leveraging a person’s relationship with their pet can promote engagement with services and/or housing. To create this programmatic culture, organizations can do the following:

- Create a pet-friendly environment within the program’s workplace, whether on-site or in the field. Have pet supplies, toys, food/water, leashes/harnesses, bedding, flea and tick prevention, and transport kennels available when doing outreach/in-reach. This also includes displaying images of people with their pets, staff buttons, signage, etc., to convey to people experiencing homelessness that they and their pets are welcome.
- Demonstrate knowledge through program design, policies and procedures, and staff engagement with program participants of the importance of the human-animal bond and issues confronting people experiencing homelessness with pets and offer support and leadership in implementing competent, pet-friendly services.
- Develop and use community outreach materials throughout the CoC to communicate and build awareness of an organization or program’s pet-friendly approach and services.



**In 2016, Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Santa Rosa, CA, began a three-part transition: first to a low-barrier model, then to accommodate service animals, and finally to accept pets at their shelter for individuals experiencing homelessness. [Learn more](#) about their transition, how they partner with street outreach to communicate their services to people experiencing unsheltered homelessness with pets, their facilities configuration, and partnership with local animal welfare organizations.**



**“A young lady by the name of Sonya, she allowed me to stay at the shelter and she made it very clear that we were all to be treated as guests in the shelter just like everyone else, and it meant so much to me. So, I made it my best effort to make sure there would be no problems. Now trying to access services for myself was the hardest part because I had to find a place to leave my animals. Once we were able to get into the emergency shelter, then I was able to leave them there in a room that is comfortable. They have a fan, they have three fans actually, just like Beyoncé, she’s gotta have a fan all in the hair. I feel secure that they will be okay, and I can go do what I need to do, to necessitate getting to the next level.”**

**—SPIRIT/MY DOG IS MY HOME**



## **DEVELOP MEANINGFUL AND EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANIZATIONS**

To effectively serve people experiencing homelessness with pets, homeless service providers do not have to become de facto animal welfare organizations. Homeless service providers interested in designing and developing pet-friendly programs and services or seeking to improve current practices can learn from animal welfare organizations and from examples of successful relationships between animal welfare and homeless service provider organizations.

Based on interviews with homeless service providers and animal welfare organizations that have created successful partnerships, both organizations should consider the following:

- Establish a common goal between homeless service providers and animal welfare organizations: to provide services and supports that will quickly end homelessness for people and their pets.
- Demonstrate that each organization is engaged with people living on the streets with pets in order to provide safeguards to both people and their pets.
- Make clear each organization's mission, who they serve, the number they serve, where each organization's operations are located, the programs and services offered, and the need each organization is seeking to meet. Determine if the missions and programs align.
- Learn about the requirements of owning a pet in the local jurisdiction. For example, what are the licensing and vaccination requirements, municipal or state-wide breed-specific legislation, laws concerning abandonment, and laws pertaining to service animals, emotional support animals, and reasonable accommodations?

*continued »*



***The Interfaith Hospitality Network of Greater Cincinnati (IHN of Greater Cincinnati) developed a Pet Program Coordinator staff position focused on removing barriers to shelter and supporting multi-agency, housing-focused case management services for people experiencing homelessness with pets. The Pet Program Coordinator also works to support the same people and their pets once they are housed by connecting them to diverse pet-friendly resources in the community. This position communicates along the spectrum of services in the region to navigate pet boarding and pet/owner reunification for families moving into and exiting shelter. Through partnerships with veterinary services, the Pet Program Coordinator has additionally established priority referrals for spay and neuter services in order to keep pets together with their owners.***

***Using the expertise of the Pet Program Coordinator, IHN of Greater Cincinnati partnered with Ohio Alleycat Resource & Spay & Neuter Clinic, SPCA Cincinnati, and UCAN Nonprofit Spay & Neuter Clinic to form the SAFE (Saving Animals from Eviction) Coalition. The coalition works in areas with a higher likelihood of owner surrender to target resources to pet owners in unstable housing situations before they become homeless. By providing free vaccines, pet supplies, and referrals to physical and behavioral health services for pets, the SAFE Coalition works to prevent homelessness for households with pets.***



*In collaboration with the **San Diego Housing Commission and Veterans***

***Village of San Diego, the San Diego Humane Society** brings pet services to people experiencing homelessness with pets during annual homeless services and housing resource fairs. People experiencing homelessness with pets attending the resource fairs may leave their pets in the care of the Humane Society while engaging in services and resources inside the fairs. The Humane Society works with local animal welfare partners such as **San Diego County Animal Services** to provide on-site pet care services such as shots and microchipping.*

- Make clear the concerns and challenges that must be overcome to provide access and services to people experiencing homelessness with pets; be open to problem-solving solutions together. Many animal welfare organizations are equipped themselves or through a larger network to address many challenges of pet ownership.
- Seek to develop and nurture a long-term relationship by ensuring that communication is consistent between organizations and is part of a designated staff person's job description. Avoid relationships where assistance from an animal welfare organization is only sought when emergency boarding for a pet is needed. Ensure there are processes and protocols in place when urgent requests arise.
- Engage in regular cross-training so that knowledge is consistent even as staff change. Topics should include:
  - › overview of both organizations' program descriptions and service
  - › motivational interviewing
  - › structural racism, implicit bias, and cultural competencies
  - › myth-busting about people experiencing homelessness as well as animal-related issues such as:
    - spay and neuter
    - addressing disease control
    - abandonment
    - animal care
    - supporting animals' behavioral needs based upon the temperament and history of the animal rather than the breed.

There may be many animal welfare organizations within a community, and it can be difficult to maintain meaningful relationships with all of them. However, it is important for homeless service providers to regularly review all local resources to ensure they include updated and newly available information, and to be a part of the local network of organizations concerned with animal welfare. By developing relationships with animal welfare organizations, homeless service providers are better equipped to serve people experiencing homelessness with pets.



## **ADOPT AND IMPLEMENT WRITTEN POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Policies and procedures provide essential standards for working with people experiencing homelessness with pets. Policies and procedures that are clear, transparent, widely disseminated, and enforced provide not only a foundation for an organization's commitment to being pet-friendly but also assist the organization in creating a safer pet-friendly environment.

A program's design or facility configuration may often serve as the starting point when developing policies and procedures to successfully serve people experiencing homelessness with pets. There is no perfect "pet-friendly program" policies and procedures template; homeless service providers are discouraged from adopting another organization's pet-friendly policies and procedures wholesale. *My Dog Is My Home*, a national organization dedicated to preserving the human-animal bond in the circumstance of homelessness, advises that homeless service providers take the following into consideration when developing their pet-friendly policies and procedures:

### **General Considerations**

- Knowledge of landlord-mandated pet deposits, liability and/or renter's insurance, and actions to take to mitigate risk.
- Knowledge of local laws regarding companion, emotional support, and/or service animal ownership and care, including laws on animal abuse, neglect, and abandonment.
- Ways to secure participant consent to follow policies and procedures.
- Program participant emergency contact information for addressing an emergency with their pet and/or consent to authorize an organization to make decisions if there is no emergency contact.

- Identification and notice of individual(s) within an organization with authority to make final decisions in execution of policies and procedures.
- Minimum animal care requirements and veterinary care records required for services, to include established responsibility for who provides animal food and supplies.
- Working with animal welfare organizations to ensure organizational and program participant compliance with local laws on vaccines, spay and neuter, and animal licensing.
- Clear and specific policies and procedures that address:
  - › Pet abandonment (including time period determining abandonment and differing policies for service animals).
  - › Public safety concerns, liability, ownership disputes, or legal concerns.
  - › Who makes decisions regarding animal care.
  - › Handling of situations in which animal euthanasia may become necessary.
  - › Circumstances governing animal surrender.
  - › Involvement of animal rescue/re-homing agencies.
  - › Communication with animal law enforcement agencies.

### **Animal Behavior Considerations**

- Supporting appropriate behaviors based upon the temperament and history of the individual dog, not the breed.
- Obedience and behavior modification training:
  - › Obtaining and proper use of appropriate supplies — leashes, harnesses, crates, etc.
  - › Identifying and establishing relationships with knowledgeable, science-based trainers or animal behavior professionals.

*continued »*



- › Facility considerations, including possible modification of space to allow for separation to accommodate animals' behavioral needs.
- › Progressive program participant education (literature and referrals to meet the varying needs and abilities of program participants).

The Alliance encourage organizations to consult with other homeless service providers and local animal welfare organizations for experience, expertise, and lessons learned to create the most effective policies and procedures tailored to their individual programs. In addition, organizations should consider joining My Dog Is My Home's *Co-Sheltering Collaborative*, a national community of homeless service providers and government agencies actively working on the implementation of co-sheltering models.<sup>12</sup>



Policies and procedures work more effectively when the organization ensures implementation, accountability, and periodic evaluation and updating. Assessing and updating policies, procedures, and accompanying documentation requires input from staff, volunteers, program participants, and key stakeholders (outside partners) to ensure agreement between policy and practice. To further supplement the effectiveness of pet-friendly policies and procedures, organizations can also conduct regular training with staff and leadership on all policies and procedures. Organizations should also ensure grievance procedures are developed and that they allow for confidential complaints from other staff or program participants who may have concerns that a pet owner is not in compliance with agreed-upon pet policies. Finally, organizations should develop accountability standards to assess their performance in supporting people experiencing homelessness with pets and track complaints of policy and procedural violations.

In conjunction with the development of policies and procedures, *My Dog Is My Home* encourages organizations to consider some of the following documents and forms to support pet-friendly programs:

- Contract/Waiver forms for pet owners/animal intake, volunteers, external partners, insurance, etc.
- Animal care forms (health records, animal care observations).
- Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with outside partners (e.g., veterinary clinics, animal welfare organizations).
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).
- Statements concerning limitations, liability, legal review of documents, and local laws and regulations.

**“Having animals on-site is a challenge; let’s not pretend. If you have animals on-site there will be bites and scratches. However, there are ways to mitigate that risk, and having clear policies and procedures and on-going staff and volunteer training is a way to show insurers how risk can be reduced. As homeless services providers, we are trained to expect the unexpected.”**

**—STACEY BURGE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, INTERFAITH HOSPITALITY NETWORK OF GREATER CINCINNATI**



*John Cicolella is the founder of **Rescue Pit**, a 501(c)(3), in Rochester, NY, whose mission is to help pit bulls live their best lives in safe, loving, forever homes. John partnered with **Willow Domestic Violence Center** to provide staff and volunteer training for the Center's pet-friendly facility.*

*The training focused on animal learning and behavior, enrichment, and day-to-day information on working with dogs. The training also included a hands-on demonstration.*

*For a closer look, view the presentation [here](#). Used with permission.*

## **EDUCATE AND TRAIN STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS TO SERVE PEOPLE WITH PETS**

Understanding and valuing the human-animal bond is critical for successful engagement of people experiencing homelessness with pets. Homeless service providers see more successful service engagements when they accept and embrace the reality that people do not want to or will not separate from their pets to receive services. Embracing this understanding, implementing the applicable policies and procedures, skills, and resources to effectively serve people and their pets, and maintaining ongoing connection with community providers all require that staff and volunteers be trained to ensure ongoing competence and professionalism. Organizations should:

- Provide initial and on-going training on the importance of creating and sustaining pet-friendly organizations and programs for all staff (i.e., executive leadership, program managers, front line, support and facilities staff, volunteers).
- Consider including topics such as:
  - › Human-animal bond and how to support and leverage these relationships.
  - › Pet-friendly program design.
  - › General overview and topic specific areas of policies, procedures and required documentation (e.g., local laws regarding companion, emotional support, and/or service animal ownership and care, including laws on animal abuse and neglect).
  - › Funding opportunities/support for pet-friendly programs.
  - › Animal behavior training for staff, volunteers, program participants.
  - › Ethical issues.
  - › Cross training with animal welfare organizations to include:
    - Populations served.
    - Programs/resources offered.
    - Learning each other's languages.
    - Myth-busting (on both homeless and animal populations).
    - Motivational interviewing, implicit bias, structural racism, cultural competencies.
- Street outreach staff training by animal welfare organization on basic animal care and how to support it.

### COLLECT AND EVALUATE DATA

Quality data on the number and needs of people experiencing homelessness with pets is critical to designing and/or expanding services to meet those needs. Data also informs organizational leadership such as board members, funders, and key decision makers when deciding on the creation and expansion of programs. To obtain accurate data, organizations can do the following:

- Encourage CoC leadership to add a question(s) to the PIT count to assist in determining the number of people with pets. Encourage animal welfare organizations to participate in the PIT count.
- Encourage animal welfare organizations to collect data on animal surrender caused by housing instability.
- Incorporate questions about pet ownership status and history into homelessness demographic data and evaluation tools to assist in determining need, access, and outcomes specific to this population.
- Compare data and outcome measures to determine if there are disparities in homelessness between pet owners and non-pet owners.
- Ensure data is collected by staff trained in the importance of providing pet-friendly services in order to leverage early engagements or requests for services.



Another example of an animal welfare organization and shelter partnership includes training opportunities provided by *San Diego Humane Society*, *RedRover* and *GreaterGood.org* to domestic violence shelters, emergency shelters run by homeless service providers, and animal shelters interested in collaborating to support people in crises and pet-friendly programs. The training focuses on:

- Ways to create and sustain pet-friendly programs.
- How to apply for funds from GreaterGood.org and RedRover.
- How to design a pet-friendly program.
- The importance of the human-animal bond on recovery, child welfare, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) treatment sustainability.

## LESSONS LEARNED

# Serving People Experiencing Homelessness with Pets

*Once homelessness systems and organizations decide to lower barriers and begin serving people with pets, a number of practicalities must be considered throughout all parts of the crisis response system. This section includes considerations for homelessness systems and providers as they tailor street outreach, temporary housing, and permanent housing interventions to better serve people experiencing homelessness with pets.*

### STREET OUTREACH

While there is no reliable national data on how many people experiencing homelessness do so with pets, one study found that people experiencing longer-term, unsheltered homelessness were one of the two homeless subpopulations that were more likely to be caring for pets.<sup>13</sup>

More recently, some communities interviewed for this project that have experienced growth in larger, longer-term homeless encampments report that people living in encampments seem more likely to experience homelessness with pets, including multiple pets. Accordingly, street outreach workers should develop productive and trustworthy relationships with people experiencing homelessness with pets. To prepare, street outreach organizations and their staff should do the following:

- Street outreach workers should receive training on understanding the human-animal bond along with other critical trainings like cultural competency, motivational interviewing, trauma-informed care, harm reduction, etc.
- Street outreach workers should receive training on understanding animal behavior and how best to ensure their own safety when making connections with people experiencing homelessness with pets.
- Communities can consider including local animal welfare organization staff and/or volunteers on outreach teams.
- When discussing their needs with unsheltered people, street outreach workers should include the needs of their

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***Downtown Dog Rescue Pet Resource Center (PRC) on Skid Row is a public/private partnership between Downtown Dog Rescue, the Inner City Law Center, and Los Angeles Animal Services to provide monthly services to people experiencing homelessness with their pets.***

***People living on Skid Row can get services (like vaccinations) and supplies (like leashes or crates) for their pets in addition to getting referrals for human social services to help them end their homelessness.***





pets and be aware of the animal resources available in their community. Connecting unsheltered people with the resources needed for their pets is key to building trust and confidence in homelessness programs.

- Animal welfare outreach programs can be non-traditional points of contact for unsheltered people who are dubious about connecting with outreach workers from homelessness programs (referred to as the One Health model in the animal welfare field).
- Partnerships with animal welfare organizations can facilitate the connection of staff in their community programs (like mobile spay and neuter clinics) with the homelessness service system. An example is working together during Point In Time homeless counts, or as part of teams doing coordinated assessment with unsheltered people (including those living in encampments).



***The Indianapolis-based S.O.A.R. (Street Outreach Animal Response) Initiative promotes health and access to services for both unsheltered humans and pets through street outreach, pet fostering, service navigation, and housing stabilization. With a street outreach team that includes and partners with veterinarians, nurses, doctors, law enforcement, mental health professionals, social workers, and other homeless service providers, S.O.A.R. works to connect unsheltered individuals with human services through the coordinated entry system and supply pet owners with pet food, medicine, and access to veterinary care for their furry loved ones. Understanding the importance and positive impact of the human-animal bond, S.O.A.R. prioritizes keeping pets and owners together. S.O.A.R.'s health fairs include health services for both people and pets, with housing specialists on site to help fill out or check on existing housing applications.***

***One of S.O.A.R.'s most effective tool for lowering barriers to accessing services is their pet fostering program. There are many access points – S.O.A.R. may receive referrals from doctors, social service providers, or city pet shelters working with an individual who cannot or will not access important services (anything from hospital visits or treatment programs to acquiring identification documents) because they have no one to care for their pet. S.O.A.R.'s in-home pet fostering prevents the need for owners experiencing homelessness to surrender their pets, while offering a healthy environment for animals that supports the human-animal bond. S.O.A.R. also supports soon-to-be and newly housed individuals with updated vaccines for their pets and supplying anything pets need for the first year after being housed.***



**Noah's Animal House (NAH)** is a full-service animal boarding facility on the grounds of **The Shade Tree** domestic violence shelter in Las Vegas, NV.

*Victims of domestic violence sometimes stay in abusive situations to avoid abandoning beloved pets. A board member of The Shade Tree recognized the importance of ensuring that the shelter did not create that barrier to survivors accessing their life-saving shelter and services. NAH found that rates of return to shelter were much lower for survivors with pets.*

*NAH is now partnering with the **Domestic Violence Resource Center** in Reno, NV, to ensure the same low-barrier access for survivors in northern Nevada, and has found that survivors will drive from all over the country just to access pet-friendly shelter services.*

## **EMERGENCY SHELTER**

As discussed previously, one reason some unsheltered people refuse to enter shelter is because shelters will not let them bring their pets.<sup>14</sup> As shelters around the country shift to becoming low-barrier, many of them are also becoming pet-friendly. Consider the following when making this shift:

- Shelters receiving federal funding must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Fair Housing Act (FHA). The ADA requires that guide or service dogs be allowed entry into public buildings and public-access areas, and the FHA allows people with disabilities to request accommodations for assistance and emotional support animals. Therefore, federally-funded shelters are required to accept service and emotional support animals.
- Meeting their legal obligation to accept service and support animals can ease the transition for shelters to accept all pets; the infrastructure, protocols, and staff will already be in place.
- The preferred way to co-shelter people and their pets is for pets to sleep in the same room as their owners. This decreases negative animal behaviors and increases the opportunity for therapeutic contact. If this is not possible, pets may also be housed in an indoor or outdoor kennel as appropriate. Keeping pets on the same property helps maintain the human-animal bond and the therapeutic benefit of the animal. As a last resort, if keeping pets on-site is not an option, shelters can partner with animal welfare organizations to create boarding or fostering opportunities removing the risk of pet relinquishment.
- Rules for pets, as for people, should be based on behavior and local laws, where applicable. If an animal acts aggressively, shelter staff can assess to determine if resources can be provided to resolve the situation or if other arrangements should be made for sheltering the animal.
- Shelter staff should be trained on the ADA and the FHA to better assist clients with reasonable accommodation requests. They should also be trained on how to approach animals in a non-threatening manner, how to build relationships with animals, what the responsibilities of owners are, and how to handle situations when those responsibilities are not being met.
- Shelters can protect other residents who have allergies or fears of animals by adding a few simple questions to intake and strategically placing people and their animals in specific areas. Additionally, the installation of dedicated HVAC systems in shelters can mitigate the risks associated with allergies. Shelter policies should be transparent and state that these situations are dealt with on a case-by-case basis. It should be noted that

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**LA Family Housing (LAFH) Bridge Housing: After ensuring its temporary**

**housing program was ADA and FHA compliant for guests with emotional support animals, LAFH shifted their organizational operations and culture to ensure that all people experiencing homelessness with pets would be able to access their Bridge Housing program. Learn more about how LAFH made that shift on the Alliance’s Low-Barrier Shelter: How to Become Pet-Friendly webinar.**

**Access the webinar slides and related resources on the Alliance’s Emergency Shelter Learning Series page.**



experienced pet-friendly shelters typically do not find these steps to be necessary.

- A key goal of low-barrier shelter is to quickly provide crisis housing. Because local laws and insurance policies may require pet vaccination, licensure, or being spayed/neutered, where they do, shelters should ensure immediate access to veterinary care so that these matters can be handled immediately and do not become a barrier to entry.
- Partnerships are crucial in becoming a low-barrier shelter. Shelters can receive food and pet supply donations from local animal welfare organizations, food banks, pet stores, and from donors selecting items from an in-kind donation wish list. Shelters can also apply for grants and targeted donations to purchase items or procure gift cards for pet supplies.

To assist with vaccines, spay and neutering services, flea and tick medication, and general animal behavior and protocol concerns, shelters and associated outreach teams can partner with their local Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), Humane Society, etc., and/or veterinarians in their community. Many animal welfare organizations have these services in place and can be accessed by homeless services providers through formalized partnerships.

Research indicates that between and 18 and 48 percent of victims of domestic violence delay decisions to leave abusive situations out of concern for their pets or livestock.<sup>i</sup> Abusers may also use threats to animals to coerce victims,<sup>ii</sup> and animal cruelty and domestic violence are often linked.<sup>iii</sup> Accordingly, domestic violence shelters have been at the forefront of the movement to create pet-friendly shelters, and the *National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (NRC DV)* hosted a webinar on the development of the *Sheltering Animals & Families Together (SAF-T)* program to highlight the special considerations shelter providers must understand when it comes to serving survivors of domestic violence with pets.

Access the webinar and associated resources and learn more about how to become a SAF-T shelter on *VAWNet*, an online resource center facilitated by NRC DV:

*Sheltering Animals and Families Together: Expanding safety and support services for survivors while helping to protect their pets*

<sup>i</sup> Ascione, F. R., Weber, C. V., Thompson, T. M., Heath, J., Maruyama, M., & Hayashi, K. (2007). Battered pets and domestic violence: Animal abuse reported by women experiencing intimate violence and by non-abused women. *Violence Against Women*, 13, 354-373.

<sup>ii</sup> Simmons, C.A. & P. Lehmann. (2007). Exploring the Link Between Pet Abuse and Controlling Behaviors in Violent Relationships. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 22:9.

<sup>iii</sup> See the “*Power and Control Wheel*,” for example.

**“We can’t make it this hard for a woman  
to leave an abusive relationship just  
because she has a pet.”**

**—STACI ALONSO, NOAH’S ANIMAL HOUSE FOUNDER  
AND 2019 CNN HERO**

*Watch and read Staci’s full CNN Heroes interview [here](#).*





***At the Humane Society Silicon Valley, John Cicolella worked with Kylie Reed and Lori Nanan, graduates of [The Academy for Dog Trainers](#), in partnership with [Second Street Studios](#) (135 unit permanent supportive housing project newly opened in 2019) to present a training to residents called “Keeping Companions Together,” which focused on dog behavior, body language, and training.***

***The training focused on rearranging a dog’s environment to avoid problem behaviors and encourage desired behaviors, house training, and muzzle training. It also included etiquette around other dogs, including reading a dog’s body language, dog-dog interactions, training tips, etiquette around other people, and how to greet.***

***For a closer look, view the [presentation](#) and these [helpful handouts](#).***

### **UNDERSTANDING ANIMAL BEHAVIOR**

Part of being an effective pet-friendly homelessness program or system is understanding and navigating animal behavior. Training on animal behavior for both program staff and participants benefits everyone involved, including program participants without pets. Consulting with local animal welfare organizations on trainings can provide the following benefits:

- Training can help managers of congregate facilities understand how to modify the shelter environment to reduce the risk of problem pet behaviors and encourage desired behaviors.
- Trainings can also help both staff and participants learn how to encourage appropriate animal etiquette around other animals and people. This may include implementing risk management techniques like muzzling to reduce the risk of fights, bites, and scratches.
- Training can improve the confidence of outreach, shelter, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing case management staff in expanding their services to people experiencing homelessness with pets.
- Including behavior management training for both staff and participants can address the risk concerns of insurance companies. It can also demonstrate to future landlords that concerns they may have about renting to pet owners have been addressed.





Two universities in Washington have partnered with an existing homelessness healthcare provider in the Seattle area to implement “**One Health**” clinics for youth experiencing homelessness with pets. Veterinary, human health, and social work students from Washington State University and the University of Washington come together with Neighborcare Health two nights a month at the New Horizons shelter to co-locate healthcare services for youth experiencing homelessness and their pets.

### **CARING FOR PETS: FOOD, SUPPLIES, AND VETERINARY CARE**

Best practices for becoming a pet-friendly homelessness program or system necessarily include ensuring adequate veterinary care for the pets of people experiencing homelessness. This care can and should be accessed at all points where people experiencing homelessness with pets touch the homelessness system. The best way to ensure this access is to partner with your local animal welfare organization. (See above section about partnering with animal welfare organizations.) Partnerships with animal welfare organizations can also ensure that people experiencing homelessness with pets have adequate food and other supplies for their pets. Homelessness providers and systems can maximize these partnerships to improve care for pets in the following ways:

- Invite local animal welfare organizations and veterinarians, including mobile spay and neuter/wellness clinics, to regular community outreach events that connect people experiencing homelessness with resources. Make sure that outreach workers let people experiencing homelessness with pets know about the available veterinary services.
- Depending on local laws, additional veterinary resources like vaccinations or microchipping may be required. This may impact people both while they are homeless and after they get into permanent housing.
- Connect with animal welfare organizations and pet stores to request donations of pet supplies like leashes, muzzles, cat litter and litter boxes, bedding and crates, and appropriate cleaning and sanitation supplies necessary to make shelters pet-friendly, clean, and safe for all participants. These supplies will also be important for participants in rapid re-housing or permanent supportive housing and will help them maximize their financial resources.

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- Some people experiencing homelessness shared that they will make sure their pets have food before they do.<sup>15</sup> It is important for homelessness programs to provide adequate pet food for the pets of unsheltered people. This allows them to focus their meager resources on ending their homelessness or maintaining stable housing. Again, animal welfare organizations and pet stores are vital partners in meeting this important and ongoing need.

- › To find local animal welfare organizations, donation centers, and veterinary clinics in your area, search the following online resources:

- [Pets of the Homeless](#)
- [PetSmart Charities and Meals on Wheels partnership](#)
- [ASPCA Spay & Neuter Clinics](#)
- [Program for Pet Health Equity](#)
- [PetSmart Clinic Locator](#)



***To build the best pet-friendly program possible, LA Family Housing partners with Bark Avenue Foundation's Unsheltered People & Pets program.***

***The partnership gives LA Family Housing access to food and supplies, and provides support to homeless participants who own pets. It also facilitates staff trainings on the important role that animals play in human mental health and how to most effectively and safely live and work with animals.***

***Learn more about the Unsheltered People & Pets program [here](#).***

## **PERMANENT HOUSING IDENTIFICATION AND STABILIZATION**

Improving a community's response to people experiencing homelessness with pets does not stop with street outreach and emergency shelter. To maintain all the therapeutic benefits of the human-animal bond, people experiencing homelessness with pets can and should become *housed* pet owners. Communities and programs should consider the following to ensure that people experiencing homelessness can both find and maintain permanent housing that includes their pets:

- While people are experiencing sheltered or unsheltered homelessness, outreach and shelter staff can identify the extra barriers that animal owners face when moving to permanent housing.
  - › For example, staff should assist program participants in obtaining documentation or legal assistance to show that their animal is a service or emotional support animal, if applicable.

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**Through a grant from PetSmart Charities, the Washington, DC Interagency**

**Council on Homelessness (ICH) and the CoC lead agency, The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness (TCP), can pay for pet deposits when working with households to secure permanent housing. Through this pet deposit program, the household is also connected to the Humane Rescue Alliance (HRA) for access to pet food, supplies, and low cost veterinary care.**

**In addition to assisting with housing stability efforts for formerly homeless persons with pets, the ICH, TCP, and the HRA also partner to provide services to permanent supportive housing tenants at The John and Jill Ker Conway Residence, a 124-unit, mixed-income residence for chronically homeless veterans and low-income residents. The partnership is a response to data collected through a Cooperative Agreements to Benefit Homeless Individuals (CABHI) grant that showed how clients, especially seniors, struggle with isolation. The partnership is designed to bring HRA pets once a week to visit older individuals to combat experiences of loneliness and isolation and support service engagement.**

- › Additionally, staff should know the local legal requirements for pet ownership, including vaccinations, spaying/neutering, breed-specific legislation, and licensure, and make sure those requirements are met before participants move into housing. (This also can be an important reassurance for hesitant landlords.)
- › Housing program staff should then work with landlords to encourage them to accept a program participant's service or emotional support animal according to the law (and also to accept animals that are "just" pets) as part of their larger landlord recruitment and engagement strategies.<sup>16</sup>
- Shelters and housing programs should ensure that they factor in and have resources to cover the cost of pet deposits and other extra pet-related fees as they calculate move-in costs for people who have been homeless.
- Because many formerly homeless clients in permanent housing will still have low or even fixed incomes, case managers or housing stabilization workers should make sure that program participants are connected to community or program resources that can provide pet food and other supplies.
- Similarly, housing stabilization services should include connections (including transportation) to animal welfare organizations to provide ongoing veterinary care that is targeted to low-income neighborhoods and communities.
- It is important to note that some funders of housing and services for humans may prohibit the use of those funds for anything related to animals. Programs will need to secure flexible funding to provide the above-mentioned pet-related stabilization services or partner with local animal welfare organizations to provide them. As the issue of keeping people experiencing homelessness and pets together continues to garner attention, however, many traditional animal welfare funders are expanding their grants to homeless services organizations just for this purpose. Development staff for homelessness programs and systems should expand their usual funding searches to include these nontraditional funding partners.



**Community Access, a supportive housing program in New York, NY, partners with local shelters to implement the Pet Access program for its tenants. Pet Access allows and supports tenants to adopt their own pets, to have shared "house" pets, and to have regular visits from "therapy" pets even if they do not own their own pets. Community Access has found that having access to pets has reduced hospitalizations and relapses for participants in the program.**

**Learn more about the Pet Access program and access its tenant resource guide [here](#).**

**“There’s really not enough funding that bridges both human homelessness and animal welfare; it’s usually rooted in one box or the other. The PetSmart Charities grant was a real gamechanger because we could use it to support the health of both humans and pets, without compromising our services to fit in a funding box.”**

**—ANGELA HOPSON, FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
S.O.A.R. INITIATIVE**



# Conclusion

*Across the nation, there are many people experiencing homelessness who cannot access homeless services or housing because of their pets. Some will choose to stay with their pets rather than access services and separate from them. This is often to the detriment of their physical and mental health. Given this reality, homeless service providers and CoCs should leverage the human-animal bond and its effect on a person's emotional well-being to more successfully engage and serve people experiencing homelessness with pets.*

These recommended best practices can be adopted by homeless service providers and systems to more effectively serve the needs of people experiencing homelessness with pets. Homeless service provider organizations can use this resource to assess current practices, adopt new approaches, improve organizational culture, and build the capacity of their programs.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness and PetSmart Charities are grateful to the numerous individuals who gave of their time, experience, and resources to share what has worked and not worked in their communities when serving people experiencing homelessness with pets and/or receiving homeless services, specifically pet-friendly services. The Alliance hopes these recommendations and resources will be viewed and studied by many, disseminated to others, tried, and tested, to improve the lives of people experiencing homelessness with pets.





## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> For purposes of homeless prevention and diversion strategies, references to people experiencing homelessness with pets should also include persons at imminent risk of homelessness.
- <sup>2</sup> Cronley, C., Strand, E.B., Patterson, D.A., & Gwaltney, S. (2009) Homeless people who are animal caretakers: a comparative study. *Psychological Reports*, 105, 481-499.
- <sup>3</sup> Aliment, R; Rankin, S; and Lurie, K. (2016). “No Pets Allowed: Discrimination, Homelessness, and Pet Ownership”, Homeless Rights Advocacy Project. 3. 9 <https://digitalcommons.law.seattleu.edu/hrap/3>
- <sup>4</sup> Id., p. 7
- <sup>5</sup> Id., p. 18
- <sup>6</sup> Id.
- <sup>7</sup> The Continuum of Care (CoC) Program is designed to promote communitywide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness; provide funding for efforts by nonprofit providers, and state and local governments to quickly rehouse homeless individuals and families while minimizing the trauma and dislocation caused to homeless individuals, families, and communities by homelessness; promote access to and effect utilization of mainstream programs by homeless individuals and families; and optimize self-sufficiency among individuals and families experiencing homelessness. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, HUD Exchange, <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/>, accessed December 11, 2019. For more information on CoC’s visit Continuum of Care (CoC) Program Law, Regulations, and Notices at <https://www.hudexchange.info/coc/coc-program-law-regulations-and-notice/#laws>.
- <sup>8</sup> In the United States, there is little research or study on the number of people experiencing homelessness or at-risk for homelessness who have a service animal, emotional support animal, or a pet. Data often cited from *Pets of the Homeless* to denote the number of people experiencing homelessness with pets, states that 10 to 25% of people experiencing homelessness own pets. If true, in 2018, 552,830 people experienced homelessness in the United States, leaving 55,283 to 138,208 people experiencing homelessness who own pets.

CoCs like the Greater Richmond Continuum of Care began to collect data on the number of people experiencing homelessness with pets in their July 2018 Point-in-Time (PIT) count and found that 15.2% of people indicated they had a pet, service animal, or emotional support animal before staying in their current location. 21 of the 59 (35.6%) were unsheltered on the night of the PIT count. In their current location, only 13 people (a 78% decrease) reported still having a pet, service animal, or emotional support animal.

The Maricopa Regional CoC (AZ) added a new question to their 2019 unsheltered PIT count, “Number of Pets?” Of the 3,188 persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness, 182 persons (5.7%) were counted as having pets. In the Southern Nevada CoC, data reported within the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) from October 2018 to September 2019 showed that 9.84% of individuals and families reported owning a pet at the time of assessment. 291 of the individuals and families were unsheltered and 61 were sheltered. Given that these assessments are administered to individuals and families who affirmatively seek assistance or are engaged by street outreach, the CoC believes that the 9.84% does not fully capture the number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness with pets.

- <sup>9</sup> Cronley, *supra*, 485.
- <sup>10</sup> In 2016, the National Alliance to End Homelessness conducted a survey in a large West Coast city to assess why people avoid shelters. The Alliance received more than 1,050 unique responses by individuals experiencing homelessness. 22% of respondents indicated they avoided shelter because “they don’t accept my pet.” The survey was supplemented by six targeted focus groups, held with approximately 80 individuals representing different subpopulations of homelessness within the city. Recruitment was designed to reach subpopulations identified by the city including youth, families, those who stay in sanctioned and unsanctioned encampments, persons in emergency shelter, and those who sleep in vehicles.
- <sup>11</sup> Access to Veterinary Care Coalition. (December 17, 2018). *Access to Veterinary Care: Barriers, Current Practices, and Public Policy*. 2, 55, 56–57.
- <sup>12</sup> My Dog Is My Home defines “co-sheltering” broadly to cover any arrangements where animals and people are sheltered together, at the same facility, in a temporary housing setting. This includes on-site kenneling and in-room arrangements where pets are allowed in sleeping areas.
- <sup>13</sup> Cronley, C., Strand, E.B., Patterson, D.A., & Gwaltney, S. (2009) “Homeless people who are animal caretakers: a comparative study.” *Psychological Reports*. 2019 105, 481-499.; see also *Exploring Shelter Access Among Animal Guardians Experiencing Homelessness in New York City*.
- <sup>14</sup> NAEH survey, *supra*; Aliment, R; Rankin, S; and Lurie, K. (2016). “No Pets Allowed: Discrimination, Homelessness, and Pet Ownership”, Homeless Rights Advocacy Project. 3. 9 <https://digitalcommons.law.seattleu.edu/hrap/3>; Rhodes, H., Winetrobe, H, and Rice, E. (2015). *Pet Ownership Among Homeless Youth: Associations with Mental Health, Service Utilization and Housing Status*. *Child Psychiatry & Human Development*. 46:2.
- <sup>15</sup> Irvine, L. (2012) *My Dog Always Eats First: Homeless People and Their Animals*. Lynne Reinner Publishers.
- <sup>16</sup> To learn more about the most effective landlord recruitment and engagement techniques like risk mitigation pools that can be tailored to address specific concerns landlords may have about renting to people with pets, see the Alliance’s Rapid Re-Housing Toolkit: <https://endhomelessness.org/resource/rapid-re-housing-toolkit/>

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