



Pet Support Services

Providing Financial Support for Pet Medical Emergencies

Overview

Providing financial support for owned pets that are experiencing a medical emergency in the event a pet owner cannot afford care achieves three primary functions:

- Prevent the unnecessary surrender of a pet who has a caretaker
- Improve community relationships through an established support system
- If your organization cannot directly provide financial support, you can create a network of community partners that can

Ecosystem Mapping and Community Partnerships

People and pets in your community are going to need support in times of crisis. Ecosystem mapping allows shelters to prevent pets from being surrendered to shelters unnecessarily by outlining support programs and services that are available in your community that help keep people and pets together and identify service gaps. Establishing a strong network of community partners provides a more holistic support approach to the public.

Our [HASS Pet Support Services guide, Establishing Partnerships for Pet Support](#) outlines how to map your local ecosystem and begin establishing partnerships. Don't forget to search pets.findhelp.com by zip code and category to find support in your community!

Tip: You may be asked for support—say, financial support for an owned pet emergency—that you are able to provide. Sounds straight-forward! But make sure you aren't leaving other important human-service-oriented support options on the table that will address a current situation or even root causes. The [HASS Pet Support Guide and Worksheet](#) can help get you started with this type of problem-solving. This worksheet works best if you fill one out in advance so you can pre-identify programs and services.

Collaborating With Local Veterinary Hospitals

HASS data shows that two of the primary reasons animals are given up are their health and the lack of access to affordable and available veterinary care.

[Working with local veterinary practices](#) can be the most efficient way to address that issue, without the expense of running your own public-facing clinic or managing a crowdsourcing

page. Start by collaborating with veterinarians to bridge the accessibility gap, discuss [incremental care](#), and implement financing options.

Use this [letter](#) and this [insert](#) to reach out to veterinarians in your community!

Payment Resources for Private Veterinarians

- [AVMF Veterinary Care Charitable Fund Information](#)
- [Veterinary Care Foundation](#)
- [Increasing Access to Veterinary Care Ideas](#)
- [Open Door Veterinary Collective Expanding Care Project](#)

Direct Program and Service Offerings

Looking for support with fundraising to create a new program? See the [HASS Philanthropy Toolkit for Development and Fundraising](#).

External-Facing Medical Care

[This resource](#) highlights multiple ways your organization may establish an external-facing medical care program through partnering with existing veterinary practices, establishing in-shelter care programs, and creating an external-facing medical facility from scratch.

Supporting Research and Resources

- [Access to Veterinary Care—A National Family Crisis and Case for One Health](#) (Blackwell & O'Reilly, 2023)
 - “Due to the significance of the human–animal bond in our society, the lack of veterinary care negatively influences both human and nonhuman members of communities.”
 - **“More than 1 out of 4 families struggle to access veterinary care in the United States.”**
 - “Barriers to veterinary care are human-related, requiring a One Health solution.”
 - “Access to veterinary care is the social justice call to action of veterinarians”
- [Assessment of canine health and preventative care outcomes of a community medicine program](#) (Mueller et al., 2018)
 - The study hypothesizes that “the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic disparities that exist with regard to access to high quality human health services, especially related to preventative care,” are likely similar in regard to access to preventative vet care for the dogs of underserved communities.
 - “Existing research exploring the impact of affordability in veterinary care has found that pet owners with lower incomes (less than \$35,000 a year) or who are unemployed were less likely to have taken their pet to a veterinarian within the previous year. . . (Volk et al., 2011).”

- “Capitalizing on **low-cost, community health models** that have been successful in human healthcare settings may be an effective **method of addressing access to veterinary care** (particularly preventative care) in underserved canine populations”
- [Goodbye to a Good Friend: An Exploration of the Re-Homing of Cats and Dogs in the U.S.](#) (Weiss et al., 2015)
 - “**Services that might have helped pet retention** were examined for the lower income category since the services listed were all described as free or low cost. **The service that was selected most commonly as something that might have helped respondents was free or low cost veterinary care (40%).** Other service options were free or low cost training or behavior help (34%, more common for dog owners), access to pet friendly housing (33%), free or low cost spay/neuter services (30%), free or low cost pet food (30%), free or low cost temporary pet care or boarding (30%) and assistance in paying pet deposits (17%).”
- [The Impact of the Social Determinants of Human Health on Companion Animal Welfare](#) (McDowall et al., 2023)
 - “In a study of rehomed companion animals, **40% of the participants identified that free or low-cost veterinary care could have prevented relinquishment [57].**”
 - “The proposed integrated framework considers the interconnection between the social determinants of health, One Health, One Welfare and the five domains of animal welfare, providing a model for a more comprehensive approach to better outcomes for companion animals, their guardians and the community.”
- [More Than a Pet](#) (The Humane Society of the United States, n.d.)
 - “20M+ pets live in poverty and that's three times more than the number who enter animal shelters every year.”
 - “70% of pets living in poverty have never seen a veterinarian.”
 - “28% of pet owners are unable to access veterinary care.”
- [Human Animal Support Services \(HASS\) Releases Community Values Survey Results](#) (Human Animal Support Services, 2023)
 - “In fact, **71% of pet owners could not afford nor had access to the means necessary to meet their pets’ needs with the largest barrier being accessibility to affordable veterinary care of all types.** These results point to communities in distress and in agreement for the prioritization of offering direct assistance when care grows beyond the capabilities of pet owners.”