



## Pet Support Services Short-Term Emergency Boarding/Foster for Pets

### Direct Program and Service Offerings

#### Temporary Foster Placement For Owned Pets

Providing temporary housing with a foster parent can be extremely helpful while an individual or family is in crisis. Knowing a pet will return safely can reduce fear and increase the likelihood of more people utilizing the program. Set clear expectations including parameters of visitation and communication, length of stay\*, and relinquishment terms so the shelter minimizes challenges in the unfortunate situation relinquishment is the only option.

*\*When establishing length of stay for temporary foster placement, we recommend starting with 30 days and offering an option to extend as needed.*

#### Provide Temporary Foster Placement for Owned Pets

##### Tasks for Staff and High-Level Volunteers

- Connect with existing foster networks about ways they can help families stay together during a crisis.
- Replicate existing temporary housing programs, such as safe haven programming.
- Establish clear expectations and lines of communication for all temporary fosters and pet owners.
- Build a specific team of volunteers that provide support for temporary foster homes and the pet owners they serve.

##### Tasks for Any Volunteers

- Connect with existing foster networks about ways they can help families stay together during a crisis.
- Assist in providing support for temporary foster homes and the pet owners they are working with through follow-up communication.

#### Recruit New Foster Parents

##### Tasks for Staff and High-Level Volunteers

- Check out [this presentation on foster recruitment](#) by the HASS Foster Working Group for recruitment tips.
- See [this resource](#) on how to quickly get more pets into foster and [this resource](#) on creating a community culture that values fostering.

### Tasks for Any Volunteers

- Assist staff in recruitment efforts using the tips above.
- Consider temporarily fostering an owned pet

### Additional Fostering Resources

For general tips and tools on foster programs:

- [Maddie's Fund](#)
- [Bad Rap](#)
- [Jackson Galaxy](#)

In addition, [Doobert](#) has great new features on their website, called [Fosterspace](#) that allows you to better communicate with fosters, keep track of their needs, recruit new foster homes, as well as an "[Instagram](#)" style [Ambassador page](#) that allows fosters to update their foster animal's page with stories, pictures and videos.

**Tip:** The key to success for temporary fostering of owned animals is to identify community members who understand the need to support people going through a crisis and believe in extending [compassion and non-judgment](#). The shelter should be the liaison between the permanent guardian and foster home to support the temporary fostering process with the ultimate goal of reunification.

### Temporary Boarding for Owned Pets

When necessary, consider using shelter kennel space to house owned animals with the same agreements provided below in place. While not always as cost-effective, partnering with local boarding facilities for temporary housing is another option. During slow travel seasons, most boarding facilities have available space and may be willing to provide a discount.

### Use Available Shelter Kennel Space to Provide Temporary Housing

When starting a temporary boarding program, a straightforward, simple safekeeping agreement. Animal Welfare League of Arlington, All About Animals Rescue, Pima Animal Care Center, and Greenville County Animal Care have examples shared in [additional resources](#).

For more in-depth paperwork, Paws Between Homes has great sample documents to use when structuring your program in this way. They can be found in [additional resources](#):

- Agreement for Services
- Pet Information Sheet
- Permanent Guardian Sheet
- Foster Home Agreement

See Greenville County Animal Care's Temporary Hold for Pet Owner Agreement and Cincinnati Animal CARE Humane Society's comprehensive documents for their SAFE Coalition to "Save Animals From Eviction" in [additional resources](#):

- SAFE Coalition Explanation of Benefits
- SAFE Emergency Assistance Request Form
- SAFE Owner Agreement and Release of Liability
- SAFE Public Flyer

**Note:** Consider adding to your foster home agreement that posting photos of animals on social media is not allowed. With the pets being owned, public sharing could create misunderstandings.

#### Tasks for Staff and High-Level Volunteers

- Reach out to local boarding facilities and discuss the importance of offering temporary housing in order to keep more families together during crisis.
- Set clear expectations for visitation, length of stay, and relinquishment terms within your partnership.

#### Tasks for Any Volunteers

- Identify and create a list of local boarding facilities that personnel can reach out to.

### Human Social Services

There is a significant need for human and animal services to learn from each other and collaborate on ways to better support families. Pets are finally being widely [recognized as members of the family](#) and social service agencies are embracing how the human-animal bond impacts families. Experiencing a crisis is one of the many challenges people and their pet(s) face, so being able to connect them to local social services can result in a better outcome for the entire community.

### Connect Community Members With Local Social Services

Connect community members with local social service agencies using sites such as [findhelp.org](#), [pets.findhelp.com](#), and [justshelter.org](#). You may also find that other local agencies have created resource lists of local services. If you have not already done so,

consider connecting with local service providers to confirm if they have a public-facing resource list or are able to be shared through developing a partnership.

## **Create a List of Local Social Service Resources to Share With Community Members**

### Tasks for Staff and High-Level Volunteers

- Complete an [Ecosystem Map](#) of your community
- Create a shareable spreadsheet with contact information accessible on your website. Check out Nashville Humane Society's directory of resources in [additional resources](#).
- Create a flyer with resources to be shared at your organization, on social media, with other community agencies, and at community bulletin boards. Take a look at Nashville Humane Society's COVID-19 resource flyer, located in your resources.

### Tasks for Any Volunteers

- Identify social service agencies in your area.
- Assist staff in sharing the directory and resource flyer with community members.

## **Build Partnerships With Local Social Services**

### Tasks for Staff and High-Level Volunteers

- Reach out to potential social service partners and discuss the importance of collaborating so that human-animal families have access to all the resources they need during a crisis. Make sure to emphasize how keeping families together can benefit their clients and not just their animals.
- Co-create action plans and resource kits for people being evicted who have pets, that can be shared in the shelter and by social services agencies. Resource kits may include a care package with supplies, instructions on next steps, housing solutions, and other supporting items.

### Tasks for Any Volunteers

- Make a list of social service agencies in the area.

## **Fundraising**

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

## Ecosystem Mapping and Community Partnerships

People and pets in your community are going to need support when unexpected or complex situations arise. You will be better equipped to prevent pets from being surrendered to shelters, if you know which support programs and services are available in your community. You can build that knowledge and identify gaps that show the need for new programs or community partnerships by mapping your local ecosystem.

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](https://pets.findhelp.com) by zip code and category to find support in your community!

**Tip:** You may be asked for support—say, access to pet food—that you are able to provide. Sounds simple! But make sure you aren't leaving other important 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.

## Supporting Research

- [Human Animal Support Services \(HASS\) Releases Community Values Survey Results](#) (HASS, 2023)
  - “A core principle of HASS is that an animal shelter should be among a community’s options for pet care, rather than the first and only line of defense. In agreement of this principle, 81% of one community’s respondents indicated overwhelming support for care provided in foster homes versus in-shelter care when asked their preference if they had to relinquish their pet.”
- [Emergency Animal Boarding: A Social Return on Investment](#) (Ma et al., 2023)
  - “The most valuable changes were being able to keep their companion animal and improved mental health and wellbeing. **We estimate that this program results in social value worth AUD 8.21 for each AUD 1 invested into running the program.** This study shows the importance of considering companion animals as part of the family unit and supporting people experiencing a crisis to keep their companion animal.”
- [The Impact of Pet Care Needs on Medical Decision-Making among Hospitalized Patients: A Cross-Sectional Analysis of Patient Experience](#) (Polick et al., 2021)
  - “**Respondents (n = 113) expressed interest in a low/no-cost pet-boarding or foster program for adult patients struggling to find pet care assistance.** The majority of respondents (n = 71; 63%) reported challenges securing pet care during a prior hospitalization, and/or knew someone who encountered similar challenges. Respondents also indicated that these challenges had a negative impact on health,

recovery, or their own decision to receive medical care. Pet care challenges during hospitalization are likely common and have the potential to hamper medical decision-making and health outcomes of inpatients.”

- [Human-Animal Relationships and Social Work: Opportunities Beyond the Veterinary Environment](#) (Arkow, 2020)
  - “This article identifies **six reasons why social workers should be cognizant of human-animal relationships** and introduces nine ways, with action steps, in which social workers can include these relationships into training and practice outside the more developed field of veterinary social work. These venues include: agencies working in child protection and child sexual abuse; children’s advocacy centers and courthouse facility dogs; animal shelters; domestic violence shelters; public policy advocacy; clinical practice; agencies working with older and disabled populations; veterinary sentinels for intimate partner violence; and pet support services for homeless populations.”
  
- [The PALS Report and Survey - National Survey on Domestic Violence and Pets: Breaking Barriers to Safety and Healing](#) (Urban Resource Institute & National Domestic Violence Hotline, n.d.). Also see the [Executive Summary](#).
  - This is the first study of its kind to interview survivors in a moment of outreach and decision-making, in contrast to studies of survivors already settled in a shelter and removed from their abusive environment. The results confirmed and expanded upon numerous such studies of survivors in shelters who similarly reported harm and threats to their pets had kept them from leaving an abusive situation.
  - “**97%** of respondents said that keeping their pets with them is an important factor in deciding whether or not to seek shelter.”
  - “**91%** indicated that their pets’ emotional support and physical protection are significant in their ability to survive and heal.”