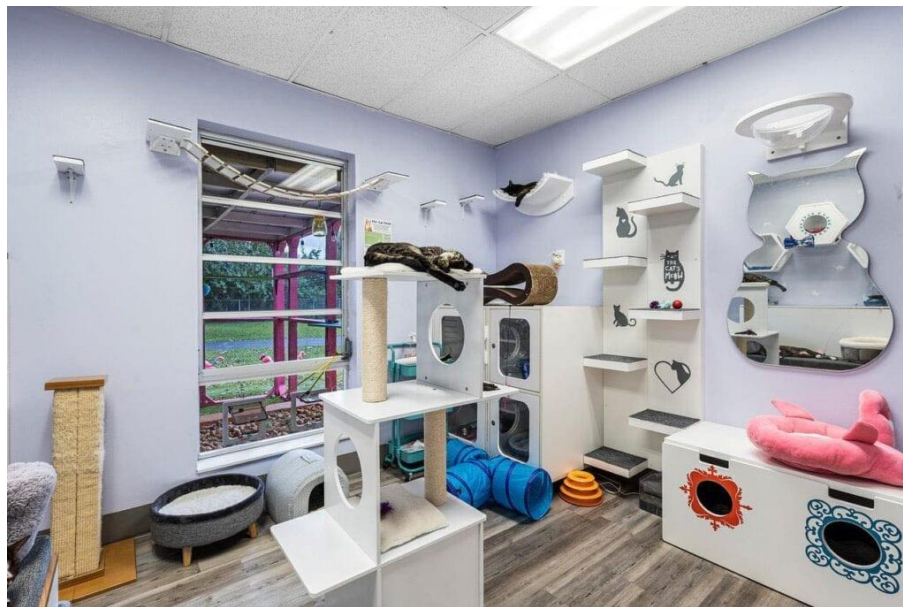


# Pet Friendly Homeless Shelter Plan



**Transforming The Way Our Community Cares for Pets and Their People**

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August 2024

Version 1.0



# Pet Friendly Homeless Shelter Plan

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## Pet Friendly Homeless Shelter Plan

### ***Executive Summary***

It's not uncommon to see people experiencing homelessness accompanied by a pet. The National Coalition for the Homeless estimates that 10% of the total population of people experiencing homelessness have a pet that they care for. Other groups, especially social service providers, estimate that as many as 25% of all people experiencing homelessness care for a pet. Given the hardships that people experiencing homelessness face, some might ask: "Shouldn't people experiencing homelessness give up their pets? Wouldn't life be easier for both the person experiencing homelessness and their pets?"

Pets contribute an additional level of responsibility in the lives of people facing homelessness — and in many cases, pets can create additional pain points in everyday life for this population. Some of these pain points include:

***Inability to Access Shelter:*** According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, 1 in 5 people experiencing homelessness don't accept shelter because their pet can't join them. Many congregate shelters prohibit pets, making it incredibly challenging for people experiencing homelessness with a pet to find a warm place to sleep at night. According to a study by Seattle University's School of Law, "no-pet policies perpetuate homelessness by excluding and limiting access to necessary housing, shelter, and services."

***Difficulty Accessing Services:*** If someone facing homelessness is able to find a pet-friendly congregate shelter, what options do they have for pet care while they access the services they need to reintegrate into society? How can someone access job training, mental health services, and other needs without a safe place to leave their pet? Unfortunately, their options are few, creating another barrier between their current situation and reintegration into society and permanent housing.

***Strain on Limited Resources:*** For people who can sometimes barely find food for themselves, pets add an additional challenge as their owner's search for funds or donations to acquire pet food.

***Public Criticism:*** People experiencing homelessness who keep pets are disproportionately impacted by the reporting and enforcement of animal control laws. According to a study by Seattle University, "up to 90 percent of people experiencing homelessness report being harassed or witnessing harassment for owning a pet." Callers from the general public cite concerns for animal safety or potential animal abuse as they alert law enforcement or animal control of people who keep pets while experiencing homelessness.



Given these pain points, why would someone experiencing homelessness take on the burden of pet ownership? In addition to the list of pain points that this population experiences, pet ownership provides an equally long list of benefits which may outweigh the challenges associated with keeping a pet.

Some benefits include:

*Relationship:* For many people experiencing homelessness, their dog is the only source of unconditional love that they've ever received. How could someone give up their companion, who unconditionally stays by their side when so many others in their life have left?

*Responsibility:* Pets offer a sense of responsibility and purpose for people experiencing homelessness and can positively influence the decisions these individuals make. For example, a person struggling with drug addiction may consider the consequences of their addiction on their pet and may subsequently make choices that reduce those consequences (such as avoiding drugs). Similarly, someone experiencing homelessness may aspire to find housing for the benefit of their pet.

*Social Interaction:* People experiencing homelessness are often ignored by the general public, but their pet can enable social interaction as people interact with the dog or cat — sometimes the only human interaction a person experiencing homelessness may receive all day.

*Protection and Safety:* A full night of rest is vitally important for mental health and personal productivity during the day, but it's difficult to sleep soundly on the sidewalk when you're worried about someone stealing your belongings or harming you. Pets can act as both an alarm and deterrent to theft, alerting their owners of danger.

Ultimately, there is no data that points to widespread animal abuse or neglect on the part of people experiencing homelessness. In fact, the contrary seems to be true, with "social scientists, law enforcement, animal advocates, and pet owners experiencing homelessness asserting that pet owners take better care of their pets than they do themselves."

*Given the number of animals who are euthanized in shelters each year, and the care that people experiencing homelessness provide for their pets, it doesn't make sense to separate individuals and their pets.*



### *Goal*

The goal of this document is to provide guidelines and simple-to-follow strategies for developing and maintaining community pet programs that include gaining community support, program documentation development, safety plans, space designs, and funding options.

#### *This plan includes:*

- The importance of developing and maintaining pet programs to help people and pets in crisis
- The role of the human-animal bond on recovery, child welfare, and PTSD sustainability
- The role that pet programs can play in homeless shelters
- How to design pet space within your shelter
- Pet program documents and SOP's
- Grants and funding information

### *Vision*

The vision of this plan is to assist in creating community pet programs that will provide:

- A place for domestic violence survivors and their pets to find safety and begin healing together.
- A place where people who are experiencing homelessness can gain access to supportive services that includes their pets.
- To provide support and education to Human Services organizations that will reinforce the human-animal bond and its role in the healing process.
- A place where pets can receive the compassion and care that they need.
- Support for people experiencing crisis.





### ***The importance of developing and maintaining pet programs to help people and pets in crisis***

Pet care within Human Services shelters and organizations is much more than simple sheltering. It is important to develop pet care programs to include sheltering and pet welfare so that families in need can provide the care needed to keep their companion animals healthy and happy.

These programs include:

- Pet Intake Program
  - Providing a safe place for the pet while the parent completes intake paperwork
  - Intake veterinary exam and providing basic care (flea and tick medications, vaccinations, etc.)
  - Pet behavior assessment program
  - Pet history evaluation process
- Agreements and Guidelines
  - Expectations of pet parents
  - Expectations for pets
  - Pet care standards for the pet parent
  - Pet interacting guidelines
  - Pet abandonment rules and guidelines
- Case Worker Program
  - Guidelines for case workers
  - Protocols for case workers and pet parents
  - Continuing care during the stay and after
    - Free vaccine clinics
    - Low-cost veterinary care
    - Behavior and training programs
- Staff Training Program
  - Information on proper human-pet introductions and interactions
  - Information on the importance of the human-animal bond
  - Animal care and best practices
  - Animal handling
  - How to understand pet behaviors and actions
  - Animal body language
  - First aid for pets
- Shelter Insurance Programs
  - Property damage
  - General liability



## ***How to design pet space within your shelter***

When designing your space, there are countless factors to consider and more than one way to do everything. This document will describe “Pet Plans” to help determine the best for your program and situation. Be flexible and understand what your particular community needs and how you can provide the best and most practical space for families and pets in need.

Some considerations include:

- Intake space
- Quarantine space
- Addressing allergies to other guests staying at the shelter
- Noise and stress reduction
- Outside enrichment
- Keeping kids and pets safe
- Storage needs

### ***Plan 1: Pets in individual rooms***

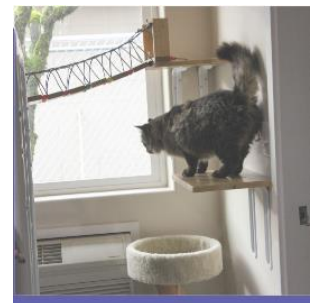
This is one of the best ways to provide space and care for pets and their families. It is the easiest, the fastest, the least expensive, the least work for staff and the best way to preserve the human-animal bond.

Planning for Co-sheltering

- Identify the room
- Remove carpeting
- Add sound-deadening, water-proof flooring or tile with polymer grout
- Add cat shelves, bridges, and window hammock
- Add litter box hider
- Add dog bed
- Add dog door to pet relief area
- Add toys
- Add portable HEPA filter to Pet-Free rooms



Pros	Cons
Least expensive	Hard to assure pet safety behind closed doors
Best for human-animal bond	Allergies
Less burden of shelter staff	Noise complaints
Pet parent is primary pet caregiver	Complaints if pets are left alone too long



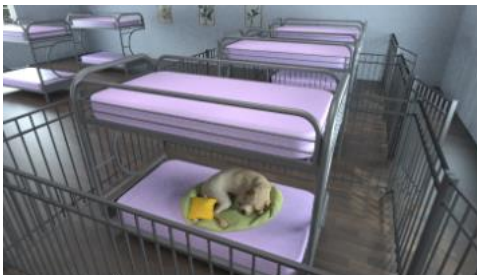
## Plan 2: Communal Housing

Many homeless shelters have communal living plans. It's important to stay creative and work with your current operations, bed style and divider types as much as you can. We recommend placing pet areas as far from common spaces as possible to minimize the flow of traffic and stress on pets. The dividers outlined below are designed to keep people from straying into pet areas. They are NOT designed to keep pets safe if left alone. All pets should be crated if they are left alone.

Planning for communal housing:

- Create dividers between beds to contain pets. Fence panels and cubical dividers are great options.
- Include a wire crate in each area for dogs or 3-tier cat cage for cats. Add a cover to be used as needed for pet comfort
- It is strongly recommended to set up kennels and cat cages to serve as daycare space for while the resident is away at work, for an appointment, etc.
- Consider adding a cat room
- Create or designate space where dogs can get off leash. Happy, tired dogs are quiet dogs!

Pros	Cons
Reasonably priced housing method	May be challenging to mitigate pets getting left alone behind an insecure barrier
Highly adaptable to changing needs	Harder to assure human safety
Less burden on staff because pet owner has primary care	Allergies
	Noise complaints





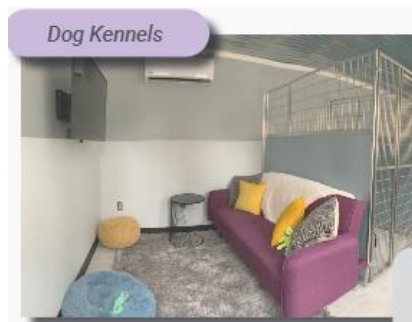
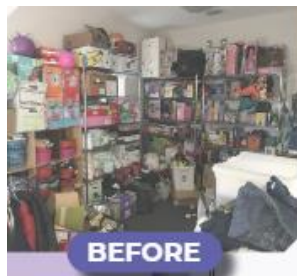
## Plan 3: Convert an Existing Space

Using existing space to provide for pet housing and care.

Planning for converting existing space for housing pets

- Most stored items don't need to be kept in an environmentally controlled space. Move them to a shed to make room for pets
- Use prefabricated dog kennels or chain link fencing if needed
- Dog kennels should be indoor/outdoor if possibly to maintain house-training and to keep dogs mentally healthy
- Dog kennels must have a visual barrier between them
- Cat spaces need to be designed with their behavior and healing in mind. Add high perches and hiding places
- It is crucial to provide visitation spaces for pet families to visit with their pets.
- Exercise is a must. Create fun play yards

Pros	Cons
More cost-effective than building a new space	Human-animal bond disruption
Easier to keep pets and children safe	Must create secondary space where families and spend time with pets
Easier to manage allergy issues	Noise complaints
	Out of sight, out of mind. It's easier for pet owners to deprioritize pet's well-being, placing more work on shelter staff



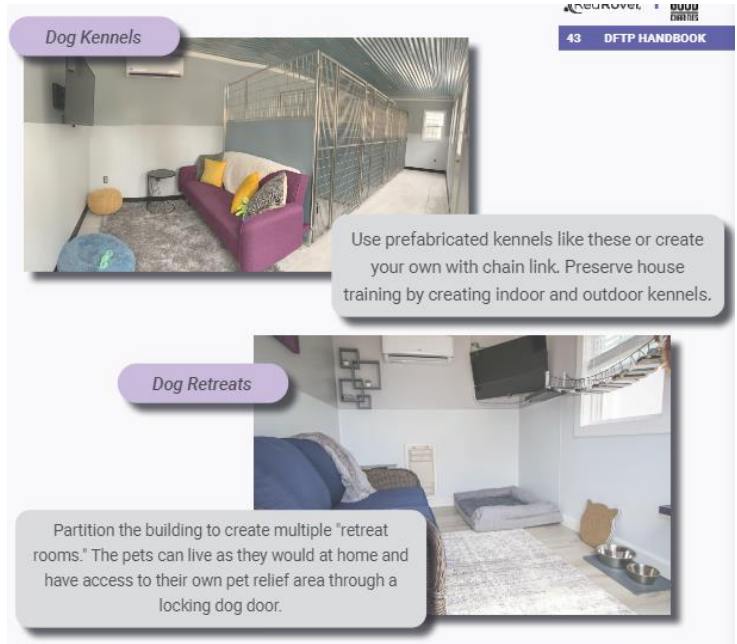
## Plan 4: Build a New Space

Whatever your needs are, there is a plan for you. Perhaps you only want to allow cats in resident's rooms, or you don't want cats in a room because they keep sneaking out their door. Maybe you are going to let all pets stay in the rooms, but you need extra space to function as the human-animal bond living space.

Whatever situation you have, there is a plan that can work for you!

Planning to build a new space:

- Step one: Choose your housing style



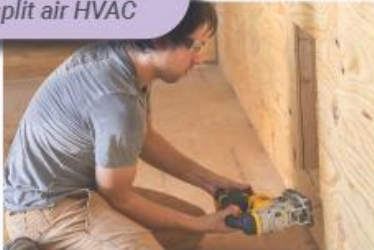
- Step two: What size building do you need?
  - We recommend a dog kennel be a minimum of 4'x6'. The buildings housing the kennels should be at least 12'x24' to accommodate kennels and a living room area. Dog retreat rooms are usually 10'x8'. A 10'x16' structure would allow for two retreat rooms.



- Step 3: Building placement
  - Buildings will need to be heated and cooled, so it will need electricity and water. Ideally, the building will be placed close to the shelter building or in a location that lowers the cost of running electricity and water.
  - Building placement should be out of flooding areas
  - Building should be easy to get t

- Step 4: The inside of the building

Install dog doors & split air HVAC



Insulate

Sheetrock ceilings and upper half of walls

Add FRP to bottom of walls

Ready for paint!



Install kennels

- Step Five- Design the outside
  - Be flexible! There are limitless design features



Outdoor kennels also play an important role in maintaining housebroken status and the mental well-being of dogs



If you build a Catty Shack, consider adding a Catio! These cool outdoor enclosures are filled with enrichment and benches so cats can get fresh air while spending time with their human!







# Pet Friendly Homeless Shelter Plan

## Grants and funding information

Grant Contact Information	Grant Intention
<p>Red Rover  <a href="https://redrover.org/relief-dv/dv-safe-housing-grants/">https://redrover.org/relief-dv/dv-safe-housing-grants/</a></p>	<p>Grants of up to \$60,000 are offered to nonprofit domestic violence and animal organizations across the United States. Funding may be used to build or renovate spaces dedicated to housing survivor's pets, begin a foster program to care for survivor's pets, pay for temporary boarding for survivor's pets, or a combination of services that will best serve your community. Grant funds may also be used for routine veterinary care, emergency veterinary care, and pet deposits.</p> <p>Funds requested to pay for boarding, medical care, and pet deposits are intended to help with program costs for a maximum of two years. It is expected that your organization will use that time to work on a funding plan and cover those costs after RedRover's funds have been used. The funds requested must also be based on a researched or demonstrated need for the number of animals expected to use the pet program. Preferably, a minimum of six months of data on the actual need for boarding should be collected before applying. This would include both the number of families needing help and the number of animals. Suggestions on how to collect this information include talking about pets during intake or crisis calls, or from how often our Safe Escape program is used.</p>
<p>Greater Good Charities  <a href="https://greatergood.org/rescue-rebuild">https://greatergood.org/rescue-rebuild</a></p>	<p>Rescue Rebuild is a shelter renovation program that recruits volunteers from all over the country to help shelters in need. Our team travels to selected shelters to take projects from concept to creation to improve both the lives of humans and animals. We help animals in need in a variety of different settings: animal shelters, wildlife facilities, domestic violence shelters, and homeless &amp; veterans housing.</p>
<p>Fundraising/Donations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sponsorship of pet spaces</li> <li>• Amazon wish lists</li> <li>• Local business campaigns</li> <li>• Partner with local restaurants and breweries</li> <li>• Supply drives</li> <li>• Branded merchandise</li> </ul>