



Breaking Down Barriers to Positive Outcomes

Why Focus on Breaking Down Barriers to Positive Outcomes?

Individuals can face a multitude of shelter-specific barriers when trying to adopt or foster pets. These barriers may range from overly-long applications, home visits, references, and other practices that are all too common in the animal welfare industry. When faced with at least 385,000 shelter pets being euthanized in 2022 alone ([Shelter Animals Count, full and partial data sets](#)), the necessity of creating inclusive, accessible, and supportive processes to help families bring pets home is an impactful solution.

What Is the Breaking Down Barriers to Positive Outcomes Toolkit?

This toolkit highlights low-lift, immediate, and actionable steps to removing barriers to adoption and fostering and best practices for sharing public-facing information to promote these initiatives. Interested in learning more? See more information on the 27 commonly identified barriers [here](#).

Potential Benefits

- Increase positive outcomes for pets in care
- Improve community engagement
- Improve customer satisfaction
- Save staff time
- Support diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Increase marketing and media engagement

Getting Started

1. Reference the checklist on page two, or create a copy of the [HASS Breaking Down Barriers to Positive Outcomes Checklist](#) template. Save a copy of this document in a location accessible by others at the organization that may be implementing changes.
2. Select the check box of any items that have already been completed.
3. Prioritize which remaining checklist items your organization will complete next. Consider [creating a strategy document](#).
4. Need resources or research to support the implementation of this checklist? Review the Supportive Resources section!



Breaking Down Barriers to Positive Outcomes Checklist

Applications/Interest in Adoption or Foster

- The following requirements have been removed
 - Landlord calls
 - Home inspections
 - Income verification
 - Vet reference
 - Background check
 - Age restrictions (Ex: No college students, older adopters only adopt senior pets)
 - Military or frequent/long-term traveler restrictions
 - Application fees
 - Minimum time spent at home during the day
 - Vaccination status of resident pets
- Forms are accessible
 - Available in multiple languages
 - Paperless options available
 - Printed forms are not longer than one page
 - Mobile-friendly (*if applicable*)
 - There is an easy-to-find and easy-to-understand process for how to fill out an interest form available

Matchmaking

- Strict home environment requirements have been removed (Ex: Yard or fence required)
- Specific breed or general pet ownership experience is not required
- Shelter-facilitated pet introductions are offered as a service, not a requirement.
- Pets can go home the same day they are adopted
- Pets can go home without in-person meetings with all members of the household
- Fosters are not required to keep the animal for a minimum time to be considered for fostering. (Short-term and emergency fostering is available)
- Behavioral needs of pets are communicated positively. “Can’t/Must go home with/without” language is not utilized. (Ex: “Frankie is looking for a relaxed furry friend about his size” instead of “Frankie can’t go home with large high-energy dogs”)

Marketing

- All available pets are viewable online
- All pets in care have a biography within 48 hours of arrival
- All pets in care have a clear photo taken and added to their file on the day of arrival
- Public marketing emphasizes and highlights the positive qualities of a pet.
- Breed labels are not public-facing



Supportive Resources

The following toolkits, standalone resources, blogs, videos, slide decks, and more are available to support the implementation of the barrier-busting recommendations. For a more in-depth look at the **research** behind this breaking down barriers toolkit, [view our list here](#).

Applications/Interest in Adoption or Foster

- [Offering Services in Other Languages - HASS](#)
- [Adopters Welcome Toolkit](#) - HumanePro by HSUS
- [Sample Cat Adopter Questionnaire](#)
- [Animal Welfare Is Turning Away Good Adopters While Animals Die in Shelters](#) - HASS
- [Barrier Busting Basics for Busy Animal Shelters](#) - HASS
- [Adoption Requirements vs. Open Adoptions: a Conversation](#) - HASS
- [Proven Barrier-Busting Strategies That Send Animals Home - Fast Track for Spring 2023 Shelter Summit - Maddie's University](#)
- [Adopter's Welcome DIY Action Plan](#) - HumanePro by HSUS
- [Pet adoption policies: More red carpets, fewer roadblocks, empty animal shelters](#) - Best Friends Animal Society
- [Pet Adoption: Barriers and Solutions | Network Partners](#) - Best Friends Animal Society
- [6 Tips for Building a Barrier-Free, Inclusive Foster Base](#) - HASS
- [Open Fostering: It's Time to Make Fostering Inclusive](#) - AmPA! and HASS
- [Adoptions Training Playbook](#) - Best Friends Animal Society

Matchmaking

- [Client Services and Adoptions Best Friends Course](#)
- [Reduce Adoption Barriers & Get Pets Into Homes! An FAQ to Making It Happen](#) - HASS
- [Getting to Yes! Making Great Matches Between Pets and People](#) - AmPA!
- [Big Dog Master Class Block 7 - Get Dogs Into Great Homes Faster - Big Dog Master Class Sessions](#) - Maddie's University
- [To find adopters and fosters for pets who are more difficult to place, start with your language](#) - Chew On This
- [No pets, no kids, no problem! Why your harder-to-place pets don't need to languish in the shelter](#) - Chew On This
- [Marketing and Adopting Hard-to-Place Pets](#) - Best Friends Animal Society
- [Increasing the Odds of a Successful Adoption](#) - ASPCApro

Marketing

- [Ethical Standards for Marketing Shelter Pets](#)
- [Marketing FUNDamentals](#) - Maddie's University
- [Bio Writing, Photography, + Marketing Resources](#) - HeARTs Speak
- [Shelter Pet Marketing is Not Adoption Counseling](#) - Maddie's Fund
- [Refresh Your Marketing for Long-Term Shelter Animals](#) - ASPCApro
- [Removing Breed Labels](#) - Animal Farm Foundation