Community-Based Behavior Support

What is Community-Based Behavior Support?

A crucial part of the HASS initiative is the collaborative effort to keep families together. When a community member has a behavior concern about an animal, our goal is to ensure the well-being and safety of the family (people and pets) and the community, and to reduce the possibility of the animal being surrendered to a shelter.

Community-Based Behavior Support aims to keep families together and reduce relinquishment by providing:

- Preventative support (e.g., training, webinar, workshop opportunities)
- Specific issue-based support (e.g., individual counseling, workshops, webinars)
- Post-adoption follow-up and support
- Temporary caregiver/Foster follow-up and support (e.g., person who finds a roaming animal, community cat caregiver)
- Supply support (e.g., training equipment)
- Fencing support (building or repair)
- Lost pet reunification (for shy animals who are difficult to locate or catch)
- A Case Management approach (liaison supports the family and their animal)

What problem are we trying to solve with Community-Based Behavior Support?

We need a community-based approach to animal care where the behavioral well-being of companion animals is supported through all phases of their lives. A preventative, proactive focus allows animals to remain with their families whenever it's possible and appropriate.

This perspective aims to support our communities, protect public safety, and keep animals in homes whenever possible. It aims to use shelter-based housing for only those animals who require - or are clearly benefiting from - treatment or temporary care. Behavior support with a community focus should prioritize families most in need, and help

communities better understand that animal welfare organizations can serve as a beneficial, non-threatening and non-judgemental resource.

Likely Benefits of Community-Based Behavior Support

- Improve customer satisfaction
- Build community engagement
- Grow volunteer support
- Improve morale within shelter
- Increase marketing and media engagement
- Increase fundraising
- Keep more people and animals together
- Reduce the number of animals housed in the shelter
- Reduce intake
- Increase public safety
- Promote diversity, equity and inclusion
- Support human health and wellness
- Pet owner education and support

Before You Begin

- Your organization should already have or be developing the framework for basic [pet support services](#).
- Develop partnerships with existing community engagement programs and services, to help reach people and animals who are most in need.

How to Start or Grow a Community-Based Behavior Program in your Community

1. Identify a person or core group of people (staff and/or volunteers) to lead behavior support efforts for your organization.

2. Collaborate with other people/teams at your organization who will also be involved in providing support (e.g., medical, community outreach, intake, field services officers)
   a. How will behavior support work with or supplement other support services? Aim for consistency in record keeping and program management

b. When will cases be referred to behavior support? For example, community members are initially triaged by customer service and then sent to behavior support when a behavior concern is identified.

3. Identify your community's biggest needs through data collection, analysis and/or research article review.
   a. *What are the most common behavior-related reasons for animal relinquishment in your community? What are the most common behavior concerns in or before foster care placement? Any reasons why animals are coming back from foster care?*
   b. Check out these articles about relinquishment:
      i. Coe, et al., [A Scoping Review of Published Research on the Relinquishment of Companion Animals](), Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science, 2014.
      ii. Lambert, et al., [A systematic review and meta-analysis of the proportion of dogs surrendered for dog-related and owner-related reasons](), Preventative Veterinary Medicine, 2014.

4. Begin with a support program for behavior concerns that are common and easy to fix. Refer more complicated cases to experienced behaviorists until you have sufficient internal resources.

Phase 1: Beginner or Intermediate Community-Based Behavior Support

Create a wishlist of behavior support elements, and then whittle it down - prioritize based on your community's need and feasibility, starting with a [pilot program](). Think about *what* should be provided first. And then, think *how* it can be best provided for the easiest access and understanding. ***Resource**: Watch [this webinar]() to learn more about operational setup, data tracking, and more for implementing a process to receive and respond to behavior help inquiries.*

Example *what* (content):

- Feline elimination issues
- Dog destructive behavior
- Dog housetraining

Example *how* (tools):

- Phone-based support or behavior helpline.
    - Create a volunteer team to respond to calls.
    - How will volunteers be scheduled for shifts?
    - Will calls be answered live, and if yes, what hours?
    - If an answering service, when should a community member expect a live response?

Email-based support: Consider creating a volunteer-led email team to filter through common concerns and elevate higher level ones. Some initial questions may include: Is this to be proactive follow-up or reactive response (or both)? Who will manage the inbox? What is your expected response time?

Online/website support: Articles and handouts: collect existing web-based resources from other organizations, to guide volunteers and share with community members.

In-person support like behavior workshops (e.g. housetraining), live/on-demand online classrooms (e.g., Doggy Geeks), and one-on-one appointments.

App-based support: Consider using broadly available industry resources for providing behavior support through apps (e.g., GoodPup, Maddie's Pet Assistant, PetCoach).

Peer-to-peer support: Online groups or meetings to allow pet people to connect with and support each other.

Training classes: These can be offered in-person or virtually, in-house or through local partnerships. For example, San Diego Humane Society partners with a handful of certified trainers and behaviorists to provide community-level support to families. **Develop a list of resources for support and make it easily accessible**

- Focus on community behavior needs that you don't have resources to support.
- Referral for more complex problems (e.g., private trainers, applied animal behaviorists, veterinary behaviorists, etc.)
    - How to choose a dog trainer
- Services to help people keep their pets (e.g., daycare, pet sitters, groomers, vet clinics)
- Develop a list of recommended training supplies, enrichment materials, etc.
- Get to know providers to ensure that they align with your policies and practices (e.g., Least Intrusive Minimally Aversive training, inclusivity)

- Investigate whether there's opportunity for discounted services or a free first exam in exchange for your publicizing their service.

Create or update your budget to include community-facing behavior support and decide which aspects will have the most impact and not break your budget.

Decide how support will be documented and accessible by your pet support services team.

- Does your shelter software allow for case management?
- Other options include spreadsheets, Salesforce, and other data management programs.
- Check out the [HASS Community Request Tracking White Paper](#) developed by the HASS Tech & Tools Working Group. This document provides information on different tools that can be used for tracking.

Building your team and getting started

- Develop training materials for staff and volunteers
- Recruit, build, and train a staff/volunteer team to provide support
  - Your team should be representative of the community you support, with a focus on areas of your community with highest need
  - Define when to refer to someone more knowledgeable and who to refer to
- Let your community know that the service is available.

Phase 2

- Develop a promotions (marketing) plan to increase awareness of your behavior support programs in the areas of highest need in your community.
  - Internet ads
  - Local Radio channels, TV stations and/or online media outlets
  - Fliers, posters, or canvassing priority neighborhoods
- [Build a network of service providers](#) interested in and willing to partner with you and support your organization's mission.
  - For example, dog trainers, cat behaviorists, Fear Free® veterinarians, pet sitters, boarding facilities, human services, etc.
  - As described above, focus on services/people that align with your policies and practices and potentially offer inexpensive or discounted services.

- - Reach out to [human service providers](#) to expand your reach and provide more comprehensive support to their customers.
  - Ensure that support services are provided in a way that a variety of customers can use (multiple languages, avoid use of jargon, etc.)
  - Develop a system to measure the effectiveness of support programs
  - Develop a special fund for providing support to those who can't afford it
    - Alternatively, utilize existing funding opportunities (e.g. [Red Rover's Relief](#) program)

Phase 3

- Expand your program.
  - Revisit your 'whats' and 'hows' to decide what additional support or services you can provide.
  - Revisit your network of service providers.
    - What's working and what isn't?
    - Are there new providers to add to your list?
- Providing ongoing education for staff and volunteers to expand their knowledge
- Provide incentives for training and document adherence to educational requirements.
- Cross-train other organizational staff, who interact with the community (e.g. field services staff, customer service representatives), about the behavior support program
  - When to refer (e.g., roaming dogs, dog bites)
  - How to refer
  - How to resolve common problems
- Utilize data about your program's success to attract funding to support more people.

Personnel and Technology Needs

Technology

- Track behavior support data regarding the people and animals supported, what challenges they have, how they were helped, what resources were shared, if/when follow-up will occur.
  - [HASS Community Request Tracking White Paper](#)
  - [San Diego Humane Society's tracking sheet](#)
- Train staff/volunteers.
  - [Denver Animal Protection's Behavior Series](#)

- ○ [Maddie's University](#) is a free learning management system and provides a catalog of courses, resources and training materials for various audiences. Contact [maddiesuniversity@maddiesfund.org](#) to learn about setting up training recommendations for shelter personnel and track compliance.
  - ○ [ASPCA Pro webinars](#)
  - ○ [Better Impact](#) to track your team's compliance.
- Communicate with clients.
  - ○ Email, phone (e.g. [Google Voice](#)), text, social media groups, etc.
- Develop a system so that clients can support one another.
  - ○ Social media groups, Google Group (email list), etc.
- Track and automate scheduling and reminders for support services.
  - ○ Example: Pima Animal Care Center uses [Acuity Scheduling](#)
  - ○ Check out this presentation re: [Geauga Humane Society's use of Full Slate](#)
  - ○ Some animal management software offers client scheduling services.
- Create an online location where clients can find the information they need such as education on specific topics and availability of training classes.
  - ○ Example: [Pima County resources page](#) on their website
  - ○ Example: [Austin Pets Alive!'s foster caregiver resource webpages](#)
  - ○ Open access page or group on a social media platform, like Facebook, to share resources.
- Use existing behavior support technologies
  - ○ Examples: [GoodPup](#), [Maddie's Pet Assistant](#), [PetCoach](#)
  - ○ San Diego Humane Society's [QR code flyer](#)
- Use existing training videos to support clients
  - ○ Examples:
    - ■ [San Diego Humane Society](#)
    - ■ [The Family Dog](#)
    - ■ [Dog Training by Kikopup](#)
    - ■ [Pam's Dog Academy](#)
    - ■ [Zak George](#)
    - ■ [Grisha Stewart](#)
    - ■ [Dr. Sophia Yin](#)
    - ■ [Dunbar Academy](#)
    - ■ Humane Rescue Alliance
      - ● [Head Halter Desensitization](#)
      - ● [Crate Training](#)
      - ● [Cat Behavior](#)
- Develop training videos if needed
  - ○ Quick video tip: Host a Zoom video conference and record it

○ Example video editors: FilmMaker Pro, Imovie, Splice, Video Editor,

People

Factors to consider:
- Decide how behavior support will fit within overall support for adopters and your community.
  - Do you have an existing community support team? How will inquiries be routed to the behavior support team? How will this program work in conjunction with field services?
- Number of hours: The number of hours required to provide support every week will be dependent on your community, your adoption numbers, awareness of the program, and how many resources are already available in your community.
  - When starting a new program, use backup volunteers who can provide support when call volume exceeds expectations.
- Decide on the personnel structure for providing behavior support.
  - What work will be managed by staff vs. volunteers?
  - How many staff and volunteers do you need to meet current demand?
- Create job descriptions for staff and/or volunteers.
- Consider using [independent contractors](#) for additional support (e.g., dog training classes or in-home training)
- Monitor the quality of support provided
  - Provide educational opportunities to improve quality of support

Success Story

Gail and her husband, Tom, adopted a dog during the pandemic. Dolly came via a rescue group from the streets of Tijuana and they were surprised and shocked to see how reactive she was to other dogs on walks. Desperate for answers, they spent $2,000 on a training program that didn't prepare them to leave their yard. They had hoped to take road trips, like they had done with their dog who had recently passed away. Friends encouraged them to return the dog to the rescue. That's when they contacted San Diego Humane Society and found out that our help is available to help all pet families — regardless of whether the pet was adopted from us. Gail talked with one of our trainers through our Behavior Helpline and then signed up for our Reactive Rover class.

After the class, Gail sent us this follow up: "Because of your teaching, every day and every walk got easier. We finally knew what to do, and her behavior started to change. You will never know how much we appreciate your encouragement and confidence that we can indeed change her behaviors. Please know that your skills and encouragement have been invaluable to us!"

Resources:
- [Maddie's Fund Behavior Resources](#)
- [San Diego Humane Society Behavior Resources](#)
- [ASPCA Pet Care](#)
- [HASS: Behavior Advice and Trainer Referrals](#)
- [Humane Rescue Alliance: Independent Contract Agreement for Group Classes and In-Home Private Training](#)

Document References
- [HASS: Pet Support Services](#)
- [HASS: Creating a pilot program](#)
- [Doggy Geeks courses](#)
- [How to choose a dog trainer](#)
- [Least Intrusive Minimally Aversive](#) training principles
- [HASS Community RequestTracking White Paper](#)
- [HASS: Developing community partnerships](#)
- [Finding human service providers to partner with](#)
- [RedRover Relief program](#)
- [Denver Animal Protection's Behavior Series](#)
- [San Diego Humane Society's tracking sheet](#) for behavior support efforts
- [San Diego Humane Society: Behavior and Training Webpages](#)
- [San Diego Humane Society: Recommended Behaviorists and Training Partners](#)
- [PetCoach](#)
- [GoodPup](#)
- [Maddie's Pet Assistant](#)
- [Pima Animal Care Center: Acuity Scheduling](#)
- [Geauga Humane Society: Presentation on Full Slate](#)
- [Austin Pets Alive!: Foster Caregiver Resource Web Pages](#)
- [San Diego: YouTube Playlist and Other Training Videos](#)
- [San Diego: QR code flyer](#)
- [Maddie's University](#)
- [ASPCA Pro webinars](#)