

# Intake Less; Serve More

Serving the Animals (and People!) That Need You Most

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# Agenda

- What are we doing here?
- Managed Intake
- Surrender Prevention
- Lowering Adoption Barriers

# Mission, Vision & Measure of Success

- **Mission**

- Why does your organization exist?

- **Vision**

- Mission realization (i.e. your “going out of business” statement)

- **How does your organization measure success?**

# Adoptions = Success... right?

- No incentive to prevent animal intake
- Intakes become “failures”
- Maintains “martyr” status
  - (i.e. “there’s no end in sight! Thank goodness we exist!”)
- Increases compassion fatigue
- Increases judgment (i.e. “Why can’t everyone just spay and neuter!?”)
- Encourages “us” vs. “them” mentality
- Operates as a “closed” system
  - Limited interaction with, and minimally influenced by, the environment in which they exist
  - All knowledge is transmitted within the closed system
  - Hampers growth - the flow of information stays within the system and can’t build on knowledge from the outside environment

# What if we focus on vision?

- Requires creative, strategic problem solving
- Pro-active not reactive
- Helps establish need-based programming
- Develops holistic understanding of your role in the community
- Avoids value judgments
- Lowers compassion fatigue
- Focuses on the problem
- Recognizing our part in an “open” system
  - Dependent on and interact frequently with external environments
  - External resources increase capacity
  - New information creates growth
  - Client’s needs and reactions matter
  - Multiple ways to accomplish goals with different conditions and operations
  - Continuous feedback and response results in better understanding

# Solution: Work Smarter; Not Harder

No organization – no matter how big – has enough resources to do EVERYTHING that they want. There's never enough:

- Fosters
- Volunteers
- Space
- Money
- Or time!

We have to be responsible and decide where we can make the most impact with the resources we do have.

- Managed Intake
- Surrender Prevention
- Lower Adoption Barriers

# Managed Intake – What it looks like

- Trap Neuter Return programming
  - Community cats that do not come into the shelter
  - s/n and vaccinations provided as community outreach and to control population
- Return to Field
  - Cats brought in as stray to shelter are fixed; vaxxed; and returned to where they were
  - On average, 3% of cats are returned to owner when brought into the shelter
  - Lost pet cats were over 13 times more likely to be reunited with their owners by non-shelter means than by a visit or call to a shelter, with "*returning home on their own*" accounting for over 66% of found cats.
- Encourage citizens to stop “stealing” community cats
- Return to Owner in the field

# Managed Intake – What it looks like

- Scheduled intake for owner surrenders
  - Adjust staffing to accommodate specific timeframes
  - Individualized attention and focused care
  - Transactional vs. case management
  - Increases positive community interaction; honest information; ongoing engagement
  - Market it as a benefit, not a reduction of services
- Pet Support Hotline
- Web-based resources
  - Make information easily accessible; include links
  - Don't reinvent the wheel!
  - Responsible rehoming guidance (start a FB group!)
- Safety Net programs
  - Access to veterinary care; pet rent deposits; housing advocacy; temporary housing; fencing
- Partnerships!
  - Pet food donations at people food shelf
  - Vaccine clinics
  - Access to care partnerships
  - Animal behavior professionals



# Managed Intake

- What it DOESN'T mean:
  - Picking and choosing intake based on perceived adoptability
  - Not honoring contractual and municipal obligations for stray and abandoned pets
  - Avoiding intaking pets that are manageable and rehabilitatable; or ill/injured; to keep up appearances (length of stay; live release rates, etc.)
  - Constantly shifting priority for “yes” vs. “no” based on season, budget, or capacity

# Managed Intake

- How do we make it happen?
  - Pick a start date
  - Update website; phone menus; signage
    - Minimize the use of the term “surrender” as a primary reason for contact
      - “Pet Resources”
      - “Need Help for Your Pet?”
    - Create a dynamic where surrender is just one of several potential solutions
  - Can be a quiet shift; less is more
    - Average citizen doesn’t know the surrender policy until they need to
  - Expect a ramp up period while staff and community adjusts

# Managed Intake

- Why is it GOOD to take in FEWER animals?
  - Move from being a repository for animals to being a true community resource
  - Staff has capacity and time for
    - Surrender Prevention case management
    - Animal Enrichment
    - Increase in intake of treatable/manageable or ill/injured
  - Improves morale and lowers compassion fatigue
  - Improves shelter reputation & rapport w/ community

# Surrender Prevention

“I love animals; but I hate people.”

- The pets you serve are attached to the citizens in your community.
- To reach pets; you have to reach people.
- Honor your vision
- I love animals; I hate people
  - Compassion Fatigue
    - Obligation
    - I’m working harder than everyone else
    - Thank GOODNESS for me!
  - Language matters and can permeate the culture of an organization; driven by leadership (got rid of, dumped); Body Language
    - Why returns aren’t the literal worst; why surrenders aren’t either
    - Number of animals SAVED – thank goodness for us; everyone is the worst. Almost BEGS for adoption barriers
    - Number of animals SERVED; way more powerful – and in theory, unlimited!

# Surrender Prevention

Key elements to a successful program:

- Data – don't assume what your community needs
- Empathy
- Active Listening
- Language Choice
- Challenge Assumptions (hold each other accountable!)

# Surrender Prevention

## Data

- How do you know what programs are needed in your community?
- How do you build relationships with vulnerable populations!
- Don't reinvent the wheel
  - Community Action Partnerships
    - Community Needs Assessment
  - Nonprofits
- Demographics

# Regional Demographics

County	Population	% in Poverty	Unemployment
Cape Girardeau	77,606	16.4	3.5%
Scott	38,541	18.4	4.4%
Stoddard	29,369	19.1	5.0%
Perry	19,100	11.1	2.7%
Ste. Genevieve	17,990	10.9	3.6%
New Madrid	17,582	25.0	6.6%
Mississippi	13,586	28.4	5.0%

- Cape Girardeau County
  - population: 77,606
  - 88% White
  - 17% of households in poverty
  - 3.9% unemployment rate
  - 10.5% uninsured
  - \$18.14 avg. hourly wage
  - 83.6% drive alone to work
  - 32% high school diploma
  - 16.4% 4-year college degree
  - 6% lacking literacy skills
  - 24% homeowners



# Living Wage

- The living wage shown is the hourly rate that an individual must earn to support their family, if they are the sole provider and are working full-time (2080 hours per year). The Minimum Hourly Wage for Missouri is \$7.70.

Report Area	One Adult	One Adult One Child	Two Adults	Two Adults One Child	Two Adults Two Children
Cape Girardeau	\$9.25	\$20.07	\$8.10	\$11.25	\$13.37

# Housing

- The National Low Income Housing Coalition reports each year on the amount of money a household must earn in order to afford a rental unit based on Fair Market Rents in the area and an accepted limit of 30% of income for housing costs.

Report Area	Avg. Renter Hourly Wage	Hourly Wage 0 bedroom	Hourly Wage 1 bedroom	Hourly Wage 2 bedroom	Hourly Wage 3 bedroom
Cape Girardeau	\$10.62	\$9.04	\$9.48	\$12.65	\$17.31

**Rent Paid > 50% of Total Household Income**

**Cape Girardeau: 23.87%**

# Surrender Prevention

## Empathy & Active Listening

- People do the best they can with what they know
- We have a lot of industry knowledge that we consider common knowledge – but it's not!
- “I am so sorry you're going through this.”
- “Tell me more about what's going on.”
- Ask clarifying questions
- Determine accessibility to care/services

# Surrender Prevention

## Language Choice

- Language is powerful!
  - Shapes culture
    - When someone surrenders a pet; how do you tell that story to a colleague?
      - “got rid of”; “dumped”; “gave up”; etc.
    - “Save” vs. “Serve”
    - “Rescued”
  - Determines outcomes
    - Reactive vs. aggressive; feral/fractious vs. shy/unsocialized
  - Makes or breaks community trust
    - “Educate” – teacher/student dynamic; condescending (try information sharing – includes opportunity for you to learn as well)
    - “Responsible” – calling a behavior responsible when the person hasn’t done it makes them feel judged and can make them defensive
    - “At-risk” – use for qualified, specific situations only; don’t apply in a broad-sweeping manner to an area; group of people, etc.

# Surrender Prevention

## Challenge Assumptions

- We make a lot of assumptions based on anecdotal data, story telling, third-hand examples; etc.
  - Often hyperbole to make us feel better about the work we do, or to justify our restrictive and judgmental behavior
- What does your data say?
- What is your community saying they want or need?
  - Assuming what we decide “they” “need” could damage our relationships and prevent us from living our mission

# Lowering Adoption Barriers

- **Does NOT mean you automatically say “yes” to every adoption**
  - But you should approach every adoption from a place of “yes”
  - Set adopters up for success, instead of assuming they’ll fail
  - Open-Ended Questions (more honesty than extensive applications)
    - Tell me about the other pets in your home
    - What are you looking for in a pet?

# Lowering Adoption Barriers

- **Consider the impact of every “no”:**
  - on the pet to be adopted
  - to other homeless pets needing our help
  - on the adopter
  - on our organization
  - on the animal welfare community
- Will your “no” drive someone to purchase from a backyard breeder? A puppy mill? Free puppies from a nearby farm that aren’t fixed or vaccinated?

# Lowering Adoption Barriers

## Why it works:

- Lowers length of stay, which increases capacity
  - Want to help tough cases? Want to help the pets in your community that need you most? Then you have to lower adoption barriers.
- Creates long-term community relationships – we WANT them to succeed, because it keeps animals out of the system
  - Give them all the resources!
  - Don't assume they know what you know (pssttt... they don't)
- Establishes trust instead of us vs. them mentality – so when they need help with rehoming or surrender prevention, we are the trusted resource
  - Contract shouldn't REQUIRE return to shelter under penalty of death or dismemberment
  - Language matters – contract should encourage adopters to reach out



# Where do we start?

What population do you want to prioritize?

Which animals are dying in shelter? Is that a factor?

What population do you want to keep out of shelter?

What population do you absolutely want to serve?

What animals do you want to keep with their people?

Are you able to commit funds to vet care to keep animals out?

Are you interested in recommending responsible rehoming?

What resources do you need to get going?

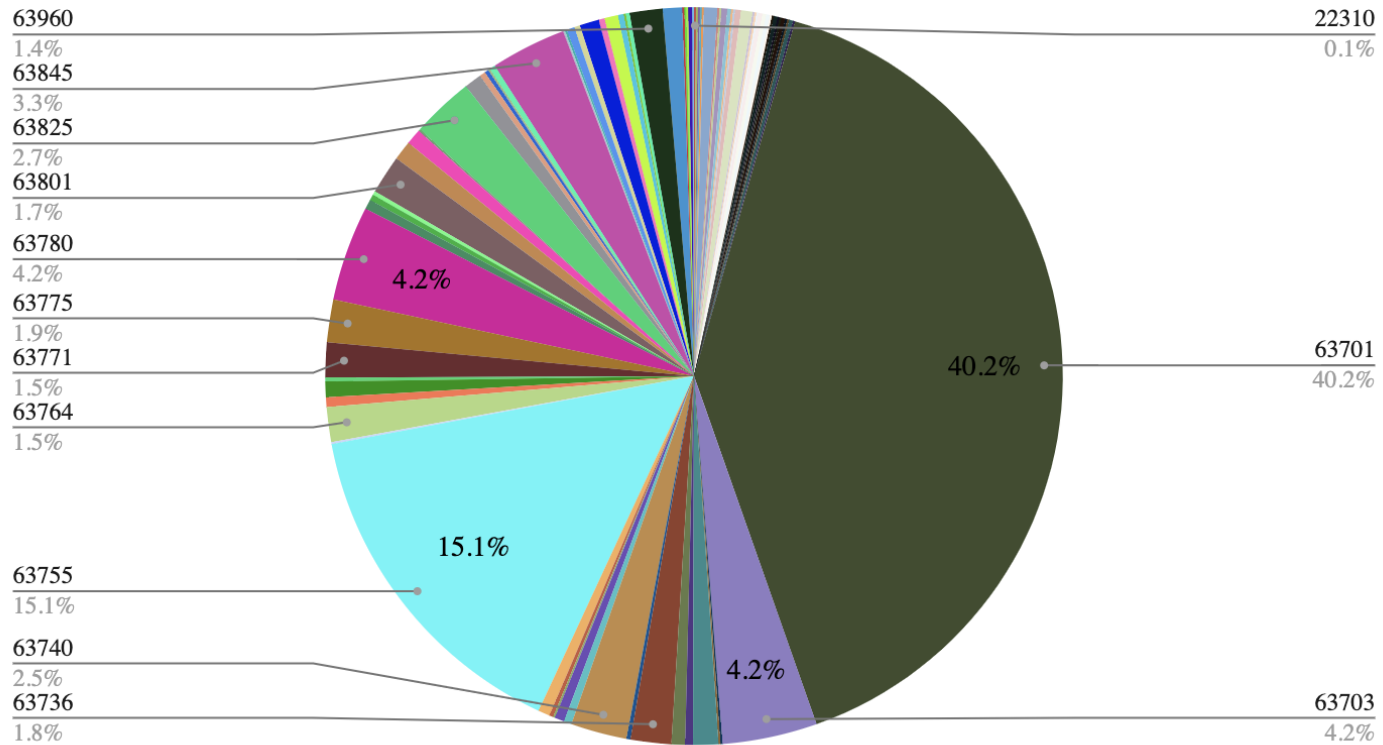
# 2019 Data - Dogs

Adult Dogs (over 6 months)		
Intake Type		
<b>Owner/Guardian Surrender</b>		<b>270</b>
No Longer Wants Pet	96	
Landlord/Housing Issues	47	
Owner Health	52	
Financial Issues/Can't Afford	42	
Behavior Issue	32	
<b>Stray</b>		<b>404</b>
Found by non-owner	341	
Left at Shelter	5	
Animal Control Pickup	54	
<b>Transfer In</b>		<b>243</b>
Best Friends Sanctuary	1	
Cape County ACO	16	
Scott City ACO	33	
HSMO Chesterfield	3	
City of Chaffee	33	
Piedmont Paws	7	
City of Cape Girardeau	146	
City of Miner	2	
Stray Angels	1	
<b>Return</b>		<b>87</b>
Behavior of resident pet	40	
Cannot afford basic care	21	
Moving	10	
Destructive Tendencies	15	

Adults Dogs (over 6 months)		
Outcome Type		
<b>Adoption</b>		<b>506</b>
<b>Euthanasia</b>		<b>42</b>
Need subtypes!		
<b>Died</b>		<b>16</b>
Died in Shelter	2	
Illness	1	
Accident	2	
Failure to Thrive	11	
<b>Returned to Owner</b>		<b>310</b>
<b>Transfer</b>		<b>122</b>
Best Friends	1	
HSMO - Chesterfield	92	
CARE St. Louis	12	
Companions Forever	1	
MAC's Mission	10	
CSBP	1	
Wiggle Butts	2	
Puppy 911	2	
Weim Rescue	2	

# Dogs – Intake by Zip

Dogs by Zip





Best Friends®

**SAVE  
THEM  
ALL®**