

Dog Respite Project - Proposal

September 2022

Mental Health Association of Portland

www.mentalhealthportland.org

PROBLEM

An estimated 20 to 25 percent of people who are homeless in Portland have pets - primarily dogs. There are several private nonprofit agencies which provide animal services for people who are homeless, including veterinary care and food. But people who are homeless are often also in crisis, and can quickly become unable to care for their pet.

Hospitals and shelters turn to Multnomah County Animal Services (MCAS), which can provide up to six days of kenneling. But if the owner is not able to collect the animal, ownership of the animal shifts to the county, which can then put the animal up for adoption or, in the worst case, euthanize the animal.

Crisis resulting from homelessness and its correlating issues of addiction, alcoholism, mental illness, and trauma, is unpredictable and human. And homelessness in Portland is likely to continue to grow for the foreseeable future. Each crisis is different. With over 10,000 people who are homeless in the Metro area - managing the crisis of both the humans and animals is a huge burden on our social service system and on county animal services.

SOLUTION

The Mental Health Association of Portland proposes to organize a respite program for dogs owned by people who are both homeless and in crisis. Our goal is to divert animals from abandonment or expensive county-based services through mutual aid and donor-support. We believe most crises can be resolved within a short duration of respite, and that a compassionate and caring approach will be met by cooperation by both agencies referring to the respite program and by dog owners whose animals are often critical to their emotional health and well being. This partnership of outside referring agency and pet respite is essential; the human remains the client of the referring agency. At all times the welfare of the dog is our primary concern.



DOG RESPITE
HELPING HOMELESS DOGS

Referral

Animals and their owners will be referred by online application from participating members of the Homeless Alcohol and Drug Intervention Network (HADIN). There are over 400 members of HADIN representing dozens of agencies and organizations, each providing direct care to people who are homeless in the Metro area - Clackamas, Clark, Multnomah and Washington counties. HADIN operates through a private listserv and a weekly Zoom meeting where individuals can ask questions about the service system on behalf of their clients. The listserv averages forty to fifty questions per week which are read and answered almost instantly. The weekly meeting has a guest speaker and more questions and answers from the hive mind.

HADIN has acted for over 40 years as the sole gateway for people leaving detoxification services to access transitional housing. Organizations such as Kaiser, Unity Hospital, Transition Projects, and Providence Hospital are some of the 50 plus participating members of HADIN.

Referrals for Dog Respite will be open to members of HADIN, and so limited to the Metro Portland area. To make a referral, a HADIN member will complete an online application to determine ~

- Name and agency and contact information of person making the referral
- Identified client contact information, including name, Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) number, cell phone or other contact information.
- Name of dog and duration of respite needed (maximum ten days)
- Size and condition of dog
 - Behavioral details
 - Care needs
- Signed agreement by the dog owner that if the animal is not retrieved after ten days, and other arrangements are not made, that the animal becomes the property of the organization to determine disposition including possible surrender to a public shelter.

Applications will be reviewed and responded to within one business day.

Care Coordination

MHAP will raise funding for staff to recruit, train, and coordinate volunteers to provide case management for animals.

Upon acceptance for care coordination, a dog respite Care Coordinator will contact the person making the referral - not the animal owner - to initiate coordination and offer services or service navigation.

At all times an end to care coordination is underscored by the volunteer. Care can be extended but a plan must be in place to return or rehouse the animal must be in place in order for care to be extended.

Transport

MHAP will recruit, train, and deploy volunteers to transport dogs from their owner or temporary guardian to a volunteer boarder, a paid boarder, or a professional kennel.

If an animal is accepted for care coordination, the MHAP volunteer - a Care Coordinator - will source a respite service and arrange for transportation of the animal to the respite service. Services may be in individual homes or from professional kennels - depending on the need of the animal and the best judgment of the volunteer. If the initial arrangement needs to be changed, the volunteer will make the arrangements and inform the person making the referral afterward.

At the conclusion of service for a dog, the Care Coordinator will arrange for the dog to be transported back to its owner.

Boarding

MHAP will recruit, train, and steward volunteers to board dogs in their own homes. If a volunteer Respite Provider is not available or appropriate, MHAP will pay for residential boarding. Some dogs may not be suitable or safe in a residential setting. In these cases MHAP will pay for professional kennelling.

Resolution

The primary interest of the Dog Respite Program is to return an animal to its legal owner, in a timely manner and in good health.

If the legal owner is not available to receive the animal after care has ended, MHAP will seek, but not fund, further options for the animal, including legal adoption or transferring the animal to a non-profit shelter, or rescue, or Multnomah County Animal Services.

PHASE ONE

MHAP will raise funds from private individuals to hire a part-time volunteer coordinator (20 hours per week / \$25 per hour - \$26,000 per year) and funds to pay for dog respite (100 animals per year, \$50 per day with a ten day maximum - \$50,000) to meet ongoing need for service. Once funding to sustain the project for a year has been raised or pledged, Phase Two can begin.

During Phase One additional resources and services will be recruited - such as veterinary services, owner training, adopting and re-housing resources.

Three resources will take more effort to develop: volunteers who can provide transportation and respite for animals, individuals who can provide respite for a fee, and professional kennels

which can provide respite for animals which need more help. We hope to expand services without much additional fundraising by growing our list of volunteers who can themselves take animals for a duration.

MHAP will administer the dog respite program. Administration includes promotion and validation within the service system, recruitment, hiring, training, and supervision of part-time staff, insurance, online services, legal and financial oversight, fundraising, reporting. MHAP will charge the project a flat 8% administrative fee. All funds raised for dog respite will be categorized within the organization account and reported to funders separately. Board secretary Jason Renaud will supervise the project.

PHASE TWO

With funding, MHAP will hire a part-time volunteer coordinator for the dog respite project. This remote / flex time staff member will recruit, train, and coordinate volunteers to review applications and contact referring agencies, arrange for respite and transportation, coordinate owner training and additional services as they are available, and help re-home dogs which can't return to their owners.

MHAP will be recruiting and training several types of volunteers.

- **Referrers** - employees of agencies who provide direct case management services for people who are homeless and who own dogs.
- **Care Coordinators** - working by telephone to coordinate care between dog owners and Respite Providers. Care Coordinators also assure quality of care at respite.
- **Transporters** - to move dogs too and from respite.
- **Respite Providers** - giving shelter to a dog for a planned duration of time.
- **Ambassadors** - those who can promote the service and find additional resources.

Some respite will need to be paid for from private professionals in private homes or kennels, especially for dogs with special needs. Paid respite will be the substantial cost for year one - or longer, until volunteer respite providers can be recruited and trained.

Portland is a dog town, and people here whether they are owners or not, appreciate and care for dogs. With a variety of segmented, specific, and time-limited volunteer tasks, we expect volunteer recruitment to be fairly easy for **Referrers**, **Transporters**, and **Ambassadors**. **Care Coordinators** will require more training and support. **Respite Providers** may require quite a bit of experience with dogs and, hopefully we'll also find people who can quarantine dogs as needed.

Current MHAP volunteers will develop an online application, a case management database, and a brief training video about the program and completing the application. The online application and video will be shared with members of HADIN.

Flow of Service

Applications for service will be completed by employees of agencies (referrers) who are members of HADIN and who represent dog owners in need of dog respite. The applications contain a service agreement from both the referrer and the dog owner, and are submitted online for review. MHAP volunteers and staff will have little or no direct contact with dog owners.

Applications will be reviewed by volunteer care coordinators, who will then contact the referrer by telephone. If the application is not approved for service the care coordinator may be able to send the referrer to another service provider.

If the application is approved for service, the care coordinator will verbally explain the additional process to the referrer, and provide a complete explanation of the additional service and the timelines available. The volunteer coordinator will make sure all contact information is secured in a case management database.

With a service agreement secured from the referrer and their client (the animal owner), a transportation volunteer will pick up the animal and transport it to a respite location. The specific location is not given to the applicant or animal owner.

Respite ends in one of two ways. The first way is the referrer contacts the care coordinator to arrange for the animal to be returned to the owner within the agreed upon time. Second, if the owner is not available or still in crisis the care coordinator can negotiate an extension of service. Extensions are not guaranteed and determined on an individual basis. When animal owners cannot receive their animal the care coordinator will provide options to the applicant and give two business days for a response. Without a response, the care coordinator will arrange transportation for the animal to a shelter or animal control.

PHASE TWO BUDGET

Respite fees	\$50,000
Staff (.5 FTE)	\$26,000
Administrative	<u>\$6,080</u>
	\$82,080

Administrative costs include insurance, bookkeeping and payroll, supervision and reporting, online services and telephone, promotion & social media, case management database, volunteer training. Funds and expenses will be separately categorized within the MHAP statement of accounts.

UNKNOWNNS AND GROWTH

The project is, we think, unique but there are two important unknown factors which will inform the development and future of the project.

First and foremost is that we don't know the amount of service needed from the community. Again, Portland has a large and growing number of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and who are dog owners. Need for support with dog ownership - including veterinary care and food - are provided to some degree by other organizations. Respite is provided by the MCAS for up to six days, but the location is remote and is not mentioned on the MCAS website or materials or promoted in any way. We're surveying the HADIN group now to get a better understanding but we're unlikely to have a steady number until the project has been open for several months.

Second, we don't know how many dogs will be abandoned during respite by their owners and need to be rehomed with a new owner. Rehoming can be a time-intensive process, especially with an animal which has been traumatized or is in need of extensive veterinary care. We hope that by working in partnership with the HADIN agencies, the number of abandoned dogs can be minimized - but we don't truly have an understanding of this factor today.

Full funding is essential to launch this project. MHAP does not have the capacity to sustain the project itself. But we believe that once the service is available additional funding can be found through private donors and family foundations, but funding to get started is both competitive and expensive to raise. MHAP is seeking early donors to engage with the project and fully fund the Phase One and Phase Two for one year so that staff can focus largely on developing the service.

ORGANIZATION

The Mental Health Association of Portland is an independent 501 C 3 non-profit organization, active in advocacy and community education since 2003.

PROJECT HELPERS

Jason Renaud
Tara Candela, JD, MSN, PMHNP-BC