MADDIE'S®
MILLION PET
CHALLENGE

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Operational Consult
Montgomery County Animal Services & Adoption Center

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Executive Summary

Maddie's Million Pet Challenge (MMPC) is a partnership between Team Shelter USA, the University of Florida, the University of California at Davis and Open Door Veterinary Collective. The MMPC team awarded the Montgomery County Animal Services and Adoption Center (MCASAC) a pro bono consult that includes a one-year mentorship program to assist with the implementation of recommendations. (maddiesmillionpetchallenge.org)

Prior to the onsite visit, the state law, local ordinance, Standard Operating Procedures, table of organization and historical field and shelter statistics were reviewed as well as feedback from stakeholders. In addition, consultants met with shelter leadership in preparation for the onsite visit.

Recommendations are based on research and/or successful programs and in line with all national reputable animal welfare organizations. In addition to the Maddie's Fund partners, these include the Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV) updated *Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters* and *Veterinary Medical Care Guidelines for Spay-Neuter Programs*, the National Animal Control Association (NACA), the ASPCA, the Humane Society of the United States, Best Friends and Fear Free Sheltering (see **Resources**).

This report should be considered an addendum to *The Best Practice Playbook for Animal Shelters* (the playbook), written by an MMPC consultant, where additional research and detailed information can be found. The updated ASV guidelines checklist can also be used to track recommendations and progress: https://www.sheltervet.org/assets/guidelines/2022-ASV-GL-Checklist.pdf

The main objectives of this consult include:

- Identify proactive pathways such as Safety Net and targeted spay/neuter that will keep pets and people together and therefore reduce shelter intake
- Address barriers to live outcome in a timely manner that include improving program efficiencies, updating job duties and Population Management that will reduce the length of stay for shelter pets

Recommendations are intentionally repeated throughout to emphasize how decisions and processes are interdependent and intertwined. Although this summary report will highlight areas in need of improvement, there are a plethora of positive attributes that must be acknowledged and celebrated first. These include but are not limited to:

- The Maryland State Statute requires that shelters follow the Association of Shelter Veterinarians *Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters*
- MCASAC recently became an independent department under the Public Safety Committee
- 49,000 square foot, LEED certified facility on 7 acres
- ±32,000 Facebook followers with excellent promotions across social media channels that include Twitter, TikTok and YouTube that balance needs with happy adoption stories
- Leadership, staff, volunteers and the Montgomery County Animal Services Advisory Committee dedicated to helping pets in need and improving overall operations
- Safe Keep program in place to provide temporary emergency boarding

- Partnerships with several non-profits that include the Friends of Montgomery County Animals, Inc. (FMCA), Montgomery County Partners for Animal Well-being (MCPAW) and the Montgomery County Cat Coalition (MC C^3)
- 60% return to owner rate for dogs in the last fiscal year
- 40% of dispatch calls resolved by dispatch staff

Technology Statistics and Trends

MCASAC - Cat Intake and Outcome

Year	Intake	Live Release	Adoption	Transfer	RTO	Euthanasia	LRR
FY 2019-2020	1,636	1,422	1,009	318	95	155	86.92%
FY 2020-2021	1,665	1,426	792	528	106	156	85.65%
FY 2021-2022	1,866	1,633	1,309	187	137	145	87.51%
FY 2022-2023	1,949	1,745	1,417	167	161	159	89.53%

MCASAC - Dog Intake and Outcome

Year	Intake	Live Release	Adoption	Transfer	RTO	Euthanasia	LRR
FY 2019-2020	1,505	1,430	473	245	712	93	95.02%
FY 2020-2021	1,189	1,078	299	162	617	87	90.66%
FY 2021-2022	1,665	1,518	674	104	740	132	91.17%
FY 2022-2023	1,978	1,787	759	187	841	161	90.34%

MCASAC - Combined Dog and Cat Intake and Outcome

Year	Intake	Live Release	Adoption	Transfer	RTO	Euthanasia	LRR
FY 2019-2020	3,141	2,852	1,482	563	807	248	90.80%
FY 2020-2021	2,854	2,504	1,091	690	723	243	87.74%
FY 2021-2022	3,531	3,151	1,983	291	877	277	89.24%
FY 2022-2023	3,927	3,532	2,176	354	1,002	320	89.94%

Note: LRR is calculated as live release/total intake

Note: FY begins July 1st

Figure 1: RTO= Return to Owner; LRR=live release rate. LRR is calculated as live release divided by total live intake.

Positives:

- Euthanasia has been reserved for large dangerous dogs and medical cases (canines/felines) beyond hope in the timeframe analyzed
- Exceptionally high return to owner rate for stray dogs of 60% that exceeds the national average of 22%
- Great potential to reduce shelter intake by helping pets and people in different ways

Opportunities:

- Between 2019 and 2022, most shelters in the United States have decreased intake for both dogs and cats, yet the intake has increased at MCASAC. Strategies to address these trends are the subject of this report and solutions will be discussed in detail regarding a formal Safety Net program that includes targeted spay/neuter.

- Tracking data via the Asilomar Accord reporting matrix is considered outdated. The Shelter Animals Count matrix is recommended in addition to tracking the return of community cats to their home location (See **Community Cat Program**). (https://www.shelteranimalscount.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/BasicDataMatrix_SAC.pdf)

- Length of stay should be tracked from the point of intake to the point of permanent placement separated by dogs, puppies, cats, kittens for shelter pets and foster pets. All pets should have a plan of action started on intake with a target goal of less than 14 days in shelter. For those pets in shelter past 14 days, staff need to identify barriers and brainstorm to expedite live outcome through marketing, foster, networking, etc.

- Minimize Length of Stay (LOS). Even the nicest shelters are stressful places for animals and long lengths of stay lead to negative impacts on physical and behavioral health. Every effort should be made for each animal to have as short a length of stay as possible. There needs to be a sense of urgency among the medical and adoption staff for animals to move quickly through the shelter to the adoption floor, in order to make room for the next wave of animals awaiting intake. It is imperative that the self-imposed barriers to live outcome in a timely manner are resolved.

- Since the majority of dogs reunited with their owners is well within 3 days, the state mandated stray hold of 3 days should be honored. If dogs are not reclaimed by the end of the third day, they can be scheduled for surgery on the fourth day and potentially adopted on day 5 or 6, thus reducing the overall length of stay but still within the timeframe for reunification in the last fiscal year.

Total # Stray Dog RTO	# RTO in 1-3 days	# RTO day 4	# RTO day 5	#RTO >6 days
664	621	10	11	22
Percent	94%	2%	2%	3%

Figure 2: Shows the number of days it took for dogs in the 'stray' category to be reclaimed by their owner during FY22-23

Capacity for Care

Goal: Operate under Capacity for Care using the recommendations in this report based on proactive and lifesaving programs. Capacity for Care refers to the ability of an organization to provide appropriate double compartment (or larger) housing for each pet, ample enrichment, care, etc. in a Fear Free Environment. Staff and volunteers work extremely hard to provide the best care but when a shelter is over that capacity, it reduces the ability of the staff to provide appropriate space and enrichment and there remains a high risk of infectious disease outbreaks.

To remain under or within Capacity for Care, there must be:

- Proactive Safety Net and targeted spay/neuter to productively drive down shelter intake while helping pets and people in better ways
- Robust Foster Finder and Foster on Deck program

- Removing self-imposed barriers to live outcome
- Active advocacy starting on intake and while in foster care
- Intentional enrichment in and out of the kennel for canines and in cage/free roam room for felines

The recommendation is to stay within 80% of the maximum physical pet spaces through proactive and lifesaving programs in order to have space for pets with no other options, emergencies, enforcement cases, etc. The idea of 'open admission' should be replaced with Triaged Coordinated Intake, below, as accepting all pets into the shelter overwhelms the system, leads to overcrowding, etc. and the associated negative consequences.

Again, operating over the Capacity for Care correlates with inability of the staff to provide a Fear Free environment, appropriate housing and care, increase risk of infectious disease transmission and outbreaks, higher levels of stress for pets and therefore negative behaviors, Compassion Fatigue for people and wasted resources. All lifesaving strategies presented will lead to operating within Capacity for Care.

Opportunities

- Understanding Capacity for Care (C4C) is critical to an organization, and it will fluctuate as staffing levels shift.
    - Functioning well below maximum allows development of upstream interventions to improve performance and outcomes
    - Mostly-empty kennels and cages, most of the time, should be a goal
    - When proactive programs are in place along with effective Population Management, there will be empty kennels. This does not mean that pets in need are not being helped. This is a challenging concept for some people to embrace since shelter intake has been the traditional and only way the organization operated prior.
    - Have staff review the capacity score chart to better understand C4C: https://www.californiaforallanimals.com/resources/capacity-score-chart/
- Apply for the next Population Management and Daily Rounds Bootcamp offered through UC Davis Learniverse: https://www.sheltermedportal.com/population-management-bootcamp-info-page/
- Create a community cat brochure with pertinent information for citizens about what to do if they see outdoor cats.
    - Consultant will share sample brochures from other municipal shelters
    - Until MCASAC brochure can be created, download handouts to help citizens with viable solutions for living with outdoor cats. Resources can be found at: https://www.alleycat.org/resources/how-to-live-with-cats-in-your-neighborhood/)
- Discontinue intake of healthy underage kittens and instead encourage the public to stop kit-napping kittens.
    - Neonatal kittens should not be removed from the environment unless the resident absolutely knows the mother cat has died or kittens are sick or injured.
    - Include information on the website to educate the public about what to do if they find kittens. Here are some great sources for information:
        - ✓ Don't Kit-nap Kittens https://www.azhumane.org/events/dont-kit-nap-kittens/

- ✓ Found a Kitten Outside? Here's how to determine what to do http://www.kittenlady.org/FPACa
- ✓ Identifying Kittens That Need Help (https://ocgainesville.org/kitten-shelter-diversion

Public Policy

Positives:

- Maryland State Statute requires that shelters follow the Association of Shelter Veterinarians
- Cities of Rockville and Gaithersburg must follow county ordinance because of the sheltering contract

Opportunities:

- Ordinance revision recommendation summary (see redlined document attached separately and Foundational Infrastructure on page 57 in the playbook for justifications):
  - Add community cat language regarding management
  - Consider requiring veterinarians to sell licenses when giving rabies vaccinations
  - Abide by the state mandated 3-day stray hold for dogs
  - Eliminate stray hold for felines and consider eliminating the stray hold for puppies (since the state statute is for dogs)
  - Provide a financial incentive for reclaims to spay/neuter/microchip in lieu of fees and fines

Community Programs

Targeted Spay Neuter

Positives:

- County contributes $17,000 to pay for the Montgomery County Animal Welfare League rental property and considers that the contribution to subsidized spay/neuter
- Metro Ferals are planning to build a spay/neuter clinic in Frederick County
- MCSnip is working to secure the Fido Fixer mobile unit lease for $1 a year

Opportunities:

- Targeted spay/neuter groups include those pets at risk of entering a shelter and/or a long length of stay if they do. These groups include cats with access to the outdoors, pets belonging to socioeconomically challenged individuals and large breed dogs. Access to spay/neuter correlates with reducing shelter intake (see page 1 in the playbook).

- Research by Peter Marsh (see **Resources**), suggests that at least 5 subsidized surgeries for pets belonging to socioeconomically challenged individuals per 1,000 constituents will help reduce shelter intake. For Montgomery County with ±1 million people that means 2,500 feline and 2,500 canine surgeries per year. This need far exceeds the current $17,000 allocation that provides approximately 400 surgeries a year. Cats allowed access to the outdoors are in addition to that number and will be discussed in the **Community Cat Program** section.

- Several non-profit organizations are considering pooling resources to purchase a mobile clinic but this is not recommended. Mobile clinics are a large investment, an asset that depreciates, are logistically challenging to programmatically operate and limits surgery capacity especially for large breed dogs, which is an important target population. It is a common misconception that bringing the unit into a lower income neighborhood will eliminate any transportation issues. However, pet owners still need to get to the mobile unit.

  The best use of resources to build capacity if it cannot be done through private clinics and local non-profit spay/neuter clinics close enough to the constituency in need, is a brick and mortar facility with transport vehicles that bring pets to the facility from meeting points.

  Having said that, if the Fido Fixer can be secured at the lease price of $1 per year, consideration should be made to park the unit at MCASAC so shelter space could also be used for recovery space, and staff and volunteers can help throughout the surgery day.

- For a subsidized program to help the pet owners in need, the cost of the spay/neuter must be very low with some suggesting no higher than $20. Discounting a surgery a small percentage that costs $100, $200 or more will still outprice those in need.

Rabies Clinic

Positives:

- Once weekly rabies clinic

Opportunities:

- Hosting a once weekly rabies clinic is an excellent public service, however, this program is utilizing 1 veterinarian and 1 technician so shelter surgeries are limited on that day. There are many opportunities to streamline the medical and surgical programs and host the rabies clinic on Wednesdays. But until surgery is not delayed for shelter pets the options are to use a per diem veterinarian and assistant or postpone the program until such time that there is no spay/neuter backlog.

Triaged Coordinated Intake/Safety Net

Positives:

- Non-profits collect food for cat colony caretakers
- MCPAW has a limited pet food bank
- SafeKeep program
- Customer Service staff are scheduling owner surrenders by appointment using Acuity
- Behavior team may answer email inquiries about owners struggling with training issues
- Relationship with non-profit Your Dog's Friend trainer
- Staff reports they are working on pet help hotline and home-home.org

Opportunities:

- Triaged Coordinated Intake means that as many intakes as possible should be scheduled and or intercepted to control intake. That is because MCASAC faces many unknowns with respect to enforcement and emergency cases and should be prepared to handle them. This may mean

scheduling optional intakes when there is surgery capacity or a large spay/neuter event, for example.

- A formal Safety Net program should be developed to ensure that all options are exhausted prior to intake. For stray dogs this means asking if the finder can foster (Foster Finder). For owned pets this means helping people keep or find a placement for their pets. Some excellent examples of informative websites include:
    - Palm Valley Animal Society (TX) https://www.pvastx.org/rehome
    - City of Rochester Animal Services (NY) https://www.cityofrochester.gov/PetAssistance.aspx
    - El Paso Animal Services (TX) https://elpasoanimalservices.org/resources/petresources/

- There is currently a 3-4 week wait time for an owner surrender which proves that most are not emergencies. An important part of Safety Net is to continue to require appointments but staff must connect with owners ahead of time in an effort to intervene and assist. The appointment should always have that lag time of one month and posting on rehome.adoptapet.com and home-home.org required. And finally another consideration for Montgomery County is questioning the obligation of accepting non-emergency owner surrenders as a municipality charged with public and animal safety. Helping with resources for pet owners and not include the option of surrender should be considered.

  Part of the counseling must include spay/neuter services for the parents of puppies or kittens. It is crucial to capture all information so resources can be allocated appropriately and progress tracked. In FY 22/23, there were 713 feline and 866 canine surrenders. Successful programs can reduce owner surrender intake anywhere from 30-80% which again, highlights the potential to reduce overall surrender and the number of pets housed at the shelter at once.

- MCASAC is currently closed for adoptions on Wednesdays but open for intake. This by definition works against the idea of Population Management with the ultimate goal the shortest length of stay as the live outcome hours should exceed the hours for intake. Adoption staff is already scheduled to work on Wednesdays so adoptions should happen 7 days a week.

- The SafeKeep program is an excellent way to help owners in crisis, however, MCASAC should advertise the need for foster volunteers for these pets. The second-best option would be to negotiate a contract with a variety of boarding facilities who can provide a more home-like experience and the last option housing at the shelter. The average length of stay for the SafeKeep pets was 30 days in the last fiscal year that generated 6,805 animal care days. This highlights the great potential to reduce animal care days, staffing and volunteer needs and the benefit of utilizing foster volunteers where pets will be more comfortable. Steps to consider include:
    - Analyzing reunification statistics to determine success of program and to redefine parameters since the staff impression was that a high percentage are not reunited (These statistics were not available at the time of the consult)
    - Requiring spay/neuter when accepting pets into program and provide sterilization quickly so the pet can proceed into foster care (Staff reported it was difficult to find foster homes for intact pets and while spay/neuter is offered, it is not required. Tracking down the owner after intake wastes valuable and finite staff time.)

- Consider reducing the hold time to 30 days and extend care days if owner is on track to reunification (average LOS for SafeKeep pets in FY22/23 was 30 days)

Finder Foster, Foster on Deck & Transfer Partner Program

Positives:

- Full time foster/transport coordinator
- Background checks for foster volunteers was discontinued
- Supplies are provided for foster volunteers

Opportunities:

- A key piece of a Safety Net program is Foster Finder and Good Samaritan foster care. That simple proactive measure just requires asking people if they could foster on the spot. When the 2 foster coordinators at the city of Jacksonville, Florida started to do that they increased their foster number from around 300 to over 3,000 in the first year. The same 2 coordinators managed the program including scheduling all prevention care rechecks and spay/neuter surgery.

  As per Maddie's Fund, most pets entering foster care are placed in that home or another home so foster is considered the most important pathway for adoption. Foster parents should be encouraged, empowered and equipped to find permanent placement so the pets do not have to return to the shelter.

- Consider utilizing the foster care program for all animals as a pathway to adoption with a priority still being given to those who are underage or have a medical or behavioral issue. Maddie's Pet Assistant and Doobert's Space should be researched as they are excellent tools that can help streamline the program.

- Invite the entire community to foster animals in your care. There are ±1.051 million residents living in Montgomery County according to the US Census Bureau (2020), so this is virtually an untapped market for MCASAC.

- Consider empowering all staff and volunteers to act as foster ambassadors. Consultants can connect MCASAC team with the Jacksonville Humane Society who have seen increased success in their foster program since moving away from a single foster coordinator and transitioning to a team approach.

- All avenues to foster must be streamlined and a simple, easy process in an effort to engage the most help. A handout with a QR code to a quick video are excellent tools to accomplish that.

- There are a wide variety of online webinars and training available at no cost. Maddie's University alone has many: https://www.maddiesfund.org/topic-foster-programs.htm.

- Communication efficiencies are crucial for this program especially since there is only one person managing the foster volunteers and pets. The Chameleon postmaster feature should be used to

communicate needs with groups of foster volunteers and should replace individual emails and phone calls. The more efficient communication is, the easier it will be to serve more pets, and expand foster care beyond underage kittens.

- Retrain intake staff to estimate ages of underage kittens. Many kittens on the foster inventory are listed as 11-15 weeks which means they should have been eligible for spay/neuter surgery weeks ago, yet the pictures show a much younger kitten. This will help expedite flow of kittens through foster to surgery and ultimately adoption.

- The average length of stay for SafeKeep pets in FY 22/23 was 30 days with some in shelter for more than 150 days. Advocating for foster volunteers for these pets is important for their mental well-being and care and to reduce the number of pets staff and volunteers have to care for in confinement.

- Having Fosters on Deck is the quickest way to move pets out of the shelter that did not go through Foster Finder.

- Encourage the public to foster or adopt sick animals. Upper respiratory infections in cats in shelters can develop when there is inappropriate housing and long lengths of stay, both of which lead to stress and illness. Asking the public if they have a spare bathroom or room on their couch for a cat or dog to hang out while he gets over a cold works wonders (consultant can share examples or connect you with other shelters who are doing the same).

- Encourage the public to foster healthy dogs, especially those who have been in the shelter for more than 2 weeks. Sample Facebook message below regarding shelter capacity and need for adoptions or foster homes:

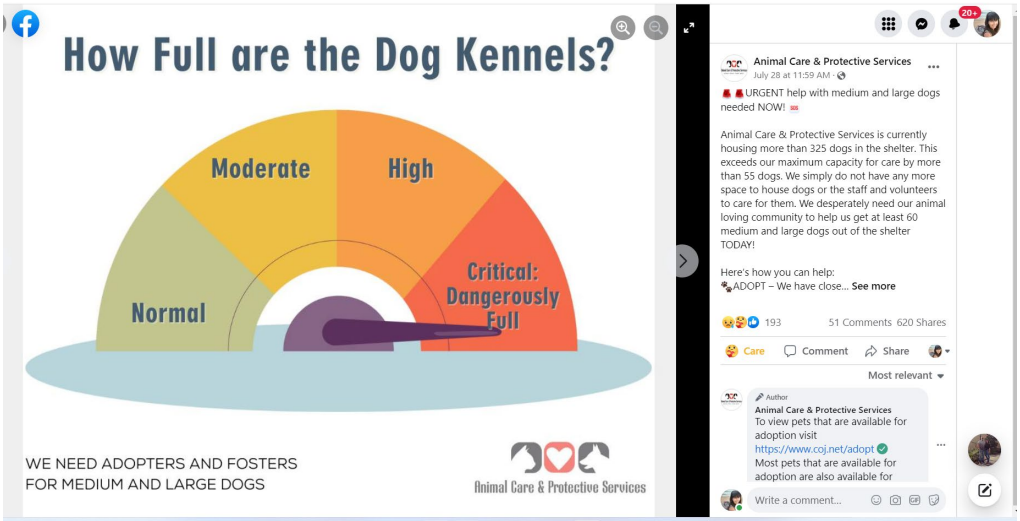

Figure 3: Sample Facebook post from Jacksonville Animal Care & Protective Services

- Ask the public to help foster dogs who are scared or stressed. A sample Facebook plea for dog experiencing stress in shelter and in need of a foster home can be found here: https://www.facebook.com/CitrusCountyAnimalServices/posts/342236441280391

- Add a link to the website for Kitten Lady's Orphan Kitten Booklet (which can be downloaded free) and provide to finders along with supplies http://www.kittenlady.org/booklet.

- Information about finding kittens and leaving neonates when not in distress should be a pop up on the website, especially in the spring and summer months. Here is a great example from El Paso to use as a reference: https://elpasoanimalservices.org/resources/savethekittensep/

- Strategically place kittens needing foster in a cage bank in the lobby so that visitors can see them and foster. Many fosters turn into adoptions so this is a win-win.

- In FY22/23 167 cats and 187 dogs were transferred to other groups for adoption representing 9% of shelter intake. There is great potential to develop this program by building relationships with nearby organizations who have robust adoption programs. Hosting in person or on-line meetings for transfer partners and rescue groups to learn more about MCASAC can build relationships and partnerships.

- Rescue groups and transfer partners could be invited for an open house or to tour to forge relationships and compel them to want to transfer animals from MCASAC.

- The foster/rescue coordinator should participate in daily rounds to identify pets that may need immediate placement as well as follow up with rescues who have tagged animals but not yet picked up

- All animals should be available for rescues and adopters on a first come/first serve basis with the ultimate goal of the shortest length of stay.

Community Cat Program

Positives:

- Montgomery County Cat Coalition (MC C^3)
- Freelance Felines Program

Opportunities:

- Community Cat Programs are now the norm in animal welfare and strategic use of the spay/neuter budget can drive the shelter intake number down by focusing on sterilizing the parents of kittens surrendered.

- Nationally, less than 2% of stray cats entering shelters are reunited with their owners and of the 1,217 stray felines entering MCASAC in FY23/23, 91% were *not* reunited with their owners and had to be rehomed even though they were already cared for. This is a waste of resources as the

focus should be on cats (friendly or unsocialized) who ***are in need*** of assistance and rehoming. Community Cat Programs are proven to dramatically decrease intake of cats, neonates and kittens, decrease complaints around cats, and increase community immunity against rabies. Cat intake can decrease by many hundreds of felines in the first year alone when this program is designed appropriately.

- An overwhelming amount of evidence supports the practice of keeping visually healthy sterilized community cats in their original home location as the most effective cat management program for all stakeholders. Resources about these programs include:

    - An article summarizing the latest research by Dr. Kate Hurley and Dr. Julie Levy (Front. Vet. Sci., 08 March 2022 | https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fvets.2022.847081/full)
    - A webinar by the Million Cat Challenge team: https://youtu.be/9FVHcYTXrgI
    - Best Friends Animal Society (https://resources.bestfriends.org/advocacy/community-cats)
    - The National Animal Control Association(https://www.nacanet.org/animal-control-intake-of-free-roaming-cats/)
    - The Humane Society of the United States (https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/community-cat-program)
    - Human Animal Support Services (https://www.humananimalsupportservices.org/?s=community+cats)

- Update the website with information about assistance for community cats. See these examples:
    - https://www.petcommunitycenter.org/community-cats-metro-page
    - https://www.charlottenc.gov/cmpd/Animal-Care-and-Control/Resources/Community-Cats
    - https://www.hsoyuma.com/community-cats.html
    - https://elpasoanimalservices.org/resources/community-cats/
    - https://www.greenvillecounty.org/ACS/CommunityCats.aspx

- Other benefits include reducing:
    - Complaints around feral cats and colonies
    - A negative impact on wildlife
    - The number of felines entering the shelter
    - The number of cats entering the Freelance Feline Program
    - The need to spend money on Feline Leukemia Virus and Immunodeficiency Virus (FeLV and FIV) testing

- The proper pathway for community cats (friendly or unsocialized) is spay/neuter/vaccinate/ear tip and return to their home location and not a shelter intake.

Field Services

Positives:

- Dispatch staff is able to resolve 44% of the incoming calls reducing the number of calls requiring an officer response (4% increase from prior fiscal year)
- The Montgomery County emergency center handles field services calls overnights and weekends
- ACOs are certified to handle wildlife but work with local rehabilitation center if housing is required
- ACOs are attempting to reunite dogs in the field
- Court case pets may be fostered on a case-by-case basis
- Dispatch staff under the guidance of field supervisors are tracking court cases weekly to monitor potential disposition deadline
- Montgomery County has 311 system

Opportunities:

- The Montgomery County emergency center handles field services calls overnights and weekends which can be challenging when there are training issues with call takers. However, since this and the 311 call center are already in place, leadership should capitalize on the assistance.

- Consideration should be given to have ACOs respond to all calls weekdays from 9am to 5pm, for example, leaving evenings, overnights and weekends for emergencies, investigations, etc. Should that decision be made, several positions could be reclassed so staff could be utilized in more productive ways (see **Staffing**). These hours are in line with the busiest call volume between 8am and 6pm.

- Once a formal Safety Net Program is created, the field services team should be provided with a handout as they are likely facing many issues having to do with lack of access to care. In the meantime, asking Good Samaritans to Foster Finder in the field is the best way to ultimately get dogs home and bypass the shelter system. Currently only 9% are reunited in the field according to data provided for FY22/23. The field team may then consider a community-minded approach in the districts with the highest call volume (4, 5 and 6) by rotating ACOs to provide constituents with needed resources to be compliant and responsible pet owners, thus reducing call volumes.

- The MMPC team will introduce field supervisors to colleagues with programs that include immediate disposition (within 10 days) for court cases and a Humane Hold Volunteer Program when foster care for court cases is not an option.

- The field supervisors should determine the percentage of dogs at large who are captured and admitted to the shelter. Depending on the percentage, consideration should be given to picking up confined dogs (and those part of an enforcement action). Recent research shows that dogs at large taken to a shelter were very close to their homes so likely to return home without intervention.

- If the field team had a mobile printer in their vehicles, there would be opportunity to print a warning or citation in the field and potentially prevent an intake.

- Identify, label and/or discard the barrel in the garage holding an unknown disinfectant and use Rescue accelerated hydrogen peroxide throughout the shelter and for vehicles. Review sanitation

practices of field services vehicles to ensure that all holding areas are being disinfected in between animals.

Population Management

It is crucial for MCASAC to control intake and outcome through appropriate Population Management in order to stay within capacity for care. Population Management begins once the pet enters the shelter and is intertwined with the length of stay and the number of animals leaving to the best possible outcome. The number of pets entering the shelter and their length of stay (LOS) to a live outcome must remain balanced with the goal of the shortest length of stay for a shelter operation to work within their capacity to care for those pets.

MCASAC can help the most pets with no other alternatives when the intake and outcome is balanced with a short length of stay. Length of stay in a shelter is the biggest risk factor for overcrowding, infectious disease spread, elevated Fear Anxiety and Stress (FAS) in pets and therefore high levels of Compassion Fatigue for people. When capacity for care is exceeded, staff lose the ability to care properly for pets and cannot provide a Fear Free environment.

Daily Population Rounds

Daily Population Rounds are a means of assessing animals in the shelter and ensuring that there is a plan of action for each. The key is to identify high level needs that are addressed later.

To be effective, population rounds requires:

- A system to communicate decisions and follow up on action steps
- Prompt actions on decisions
- Clear lines of authority, responsibility, and accountability
- During population rounds the staff physically walks through the shelter and asks for each animal:
    - Who are you?
    - How are you?
    - Are you where you should be?
    - Do you need something today?
    - Do you need something scheduled for later, such as spay/neuter?

Positives:

- Some individual staff are doing rounds
- Pathway planning meeting held weekly
- Kennel inventory once weekly

Opportunities:

- A key point of Population Management and Daily Rounds is to identify and prevent bottlenecks in flow of pets to the best outcome.
    - Use shelter software to generate reports for pets who need medical care, foster, and/or surgery, and to identify pets in the shelter longer than 14 days who may need enhanced marketing.
    - Dogs should be released on a first come/first serve basis with reunification to their original home the first preference, then foster, adoption or transfer.

- Eligible community cats should be sterilized and returned to their home location with a 3-day turnaround process or as quickly as spay/neuter can be arranged.

- Create surgery reports to monitor how many are getting done on a daily basis versus how many are awaiting surgery and adjust medical team and surgery goals accordingly. This is critical as surgery capacity is currently the limiting factor to lifesaving (this recommendation intentionally repeated).

- Make most animals available on intake so they are listed on the website and visible to the public. Limit how long animals can be unavailable or in an 'evaluate' status.
  - At the time of the consult, there were **7** felines posted on the website but yet **119** in the shelter along with **31** canines posted but **95** in the shelter (15 of which were SafeKeep or bite holds). This represents a fraction of the shelter pets pending a live outcome opportunity. This was also the case when spot checking the website during the consult research phase.

- Consider expanding the shelter area visible to the public so more animals can be seen and only limit bite quarantine, medical or SafeKeep pets.

- Self-imposed barriers that increase wasted animal care days must be addressed and these strategies are discussed throughout the report:
  - Change 5-day stray hold for dogs to 3 days
  - Eliminate the stray hold for felines, puppies and pocket pets that are silent in the state statute
  - Create a formal Safety Net-Supportive Self-Rehoming program. In FY22/23, the average length of stay for cats in this category was 24 days and dogs 26 days. With 1,598 owner surrendered pets, that equaled 39,950 days that has potential to be dramatically reduced.
  - Address the spay/neuter bottleneck that could add 3-4 weeks to the pet's stay at the shelter
  - Replace SAFER behavior evaluation with a backlog that could take 1 week or longer with recording importance behavior observations
  - Discontinue holding pets for the purpose of decompressing when moving them to a foster, Foster to Adopt or adoptive home is the best way to help them

- Effective Population Management rounds ensures there is a dynamic plan of action for each pet, bottlenecks are addressed and prevented and results include the shortest length of stay and reduced wasted animal care days (see page 33 in the playbook). Leadership should appoint a team to be responsible for this and that team should strategize regarding how they will accomplish this. Some teams designate the same time every day for a walk through together where issues are highlighted then assigned and resolved after the walk through. This can also happen with only part of the team. Some teams do a combination of both group walk-throughs and communicating via a shared document but the communication piece is the most important.

- However the rounds teams decides to ensure a dynamic plan of action, that plan must begin at the point of intake with all pets available on the website and for viewing.

Intake Protocols

Positives:

- The state of Maryland recently passed a law stating that lay staff could vaccinate pets against rabies under the supervision of a veterinarian
- Vet assistants and admissions staff can vaccinate pets
- Standard Operating Procedures include preventive care on intake

Opportunities:

- Preventive care is not consistently provided at the point of intake since the admissions team are responsible in addition to moving pets and dealing with the public. But vaccinations are the first line of defense to mitigate infectious disease transmission and must be done *at the point of intake*, without delay. The rabies vaccination should be added to the preventive care protocol and given at the time of intake to pets over 4 months. This will avoid a bottleneck and outcome delay. Leadership needs to embrace the 'one touch' idea, meaning that whatever the pet needs at the point of intake (or throughout the stay), there is an attempt to take care of those items at that time since follow up at a later time is less efficient.

- Another area shelter has been facing canine influenza so when the vaccine is available again, it is recommended at this time. Even though the vaccine is more expensive than the booster, it is less expensive than dealing with an influenza outbreak not to mention the potential loss of life, suffering and stress for both pets and people.

- Consideration should be given to discontinue screening for FeLV/FIV after communicating the change to local veterinarians as the recommendations have changed. It is estimated that less than 5% of cats are infected, the screening test is not consistently valid and when cats are sterilized there is little risk of transmission. For these reasons, many experts now recommend that shelters use their resources in other ways. There is no reason to test community cats unless there is a medical concern.

  The 2020 American Association of Feline Practitioners Guidelines can be found here: Download - 2020 Feline Retrovirus Guidelines and a helpful summary webinar regarding the recommendations by Dr. Julie Levy from the Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program at the University of Florida and MMPC team can be found here: https://youtu.be/KdsMiZjwdpo.

Feline Housing Husbandry and Enrichment

Positives:

- Spot cleaning cats
- Feeding dry and canned food in separate bowls
- Kuranda beds with area to hide under bed
- Provided with toys and scratchers
- Some oversized cages and showcase rooms
- Natural light in adoptions

Opportunities:

- When Safety Net and Community Cat Programs are further developed, there will be far fewer cats housed in the shelter, including the number in the Freelance Feline Program.

- Freelance Felines are unsocialized and should be moved to a quieter area. Their advocacy occurs online so it is not important for them to be in a front showcase room and that adds to their stress in confinement. The front rooms should be used to showcase highly adoptable cats or those needing more room such as large, bonded pairs.

- When fewer cats are in the shelter, a higher percentage can be housed in the showcases and larger cages. Cats are usually a combination of stressed and curious in new environments so should stay in their enclosures for adoption visitors. Likewise, putting them in a visiting room for exercise is not necessary when they are provided adequate space and a short length of stay. The best scenario for cats who are confined is to be kept in their spacious enclosure.

- For any stainless steel cages (with the exception of the large bottom cages), portals should be installed to provide a more spacious environment while separating litter and food/water/bed (https://www.sheltermedicine.com/services/facility-design/portals-opening-the-door-to-lifesaving/).

Canine Housing Husbandry and Enrichment

Positives:

- Volunteers and staff with a deep desire to provide the best enrichment
- Double compartment runs
- Many runs with outside access
- Outside play yards
- Volunteers can take dogs out of the shelter with the Lucky Break program

Opportunities:

- Behavior temp tests are done after the stray hold period so dogs and puppies may wait a week or longer after intake to be approved for adoption. 16 canines were in that category at the time of the consult. The ASPCA, creators of the SAFER tests, now recommend capturing behaviors as opposed to a formal test since results are not correlated with behavior in the home.

  Instead staff should be required to enter helpful observations (positive or negative) in the pet's record while volunteers can write a note on the back of the cage card as opposed to a notebook. That way, during Population Management rounds or before a pet is adopted, any helpful information can be shared and recorded in the record.

- Leadership should consider replacing the job title 'Behavior' with 'Enrichment Coordinators' with the focus on out of kennel and in-kennel enrichment for dogs.

- When the requirement for a SAFER behavior temp test are lifted, the Enrichment Team can focus on playgroups and other meaningful enrichment. Playgroups are an effective way to provide enrichment for dogs in confinement (see dogsplayingforlife.com) for dogs who enjoy the company of other dogs. Playgroup training should be considered for both staff and volunteers. In some shelters, daily playgroups are run exclusively by volunteers. That is because shelters rarely have the appropriate dog to person ratio to provide them the benefits of group play on an individual basis. Leash walking is another form of restriction but still an important part of the enrichment plan as dogs have one on one human time.

  Of course, recruiting volunteers to walk dogs, in particular those who do not enjoy playgroup, is essential but in a 24-hour period with the number of dogs housed at the shelter, it is not possible to give them free play individually for long periods of time. The Lucky Break program is excellent and should be expanded for the public. At the city of Jacksonville, Florida shelter, anyone can go to the shelter and check out a dog simply by showing their license. In Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina, more than 50% of the dogs that go out on this type of field trip are adopted during that time.

  When playgroups are scheduled at the beginning of the day, dogs can relieve themselves on the way to the play yard and animal care attendants can then clean their kennels and have fresh food and water waiting for their return. Some shelters build staff/volunteer teams large enough to do playgroups twice daily. Ideally all dogs are walked at the end of the day as well since they are left overnight in their kennels.

  There are many benefits and significant positive impact of playgroups. Research has shown that 45 minutes in playgroup reduces the stress hormone cortisol for 24 hours, cage reactivity and length of stay decreases and adoptions increase. Some shelters are now hosting adoption events during play groups since dogs show their best happy selves while out of their kennel and socializing.

- Dogs are social creatures and need human contact and interaction. A treat program is an important part of Fear Free Sheltering. However, the solid kennel doors prevent that interaction and should be replaced with cage doors. This should be considered a priority.

- In-kennel enrichment and food puzzles such as food in a paper bag should be reserved for during the day with supplemental treats and meals fed in a regular bowl.

- Ideally, all shelter pets should be kept and fed in a clean kennel but since dogs are left overnight for 12 hours, there will be dogs who relieve themselves. It would be ideal to walk all dogs in the morning so they could relieve themselves but while the shelter is overcapacity and until appropriate playgroup/enrichment is in place, dogs with dirty kennels could be moved into the outdoor kennel first thing in the morning and fed there. Otherwise, it could take many hours to walk all the dogs prior to feeding the first meal. It cannot be overemphasized that once a formal Safety Net program is in place and bottlenecks to live outcome are minimized there will be far fewer dogs housed at once and individual walks by staff and volunteers would become more manageable first thing in the morning.

- Another benefit of housing less dogs at the shelter is that staff and volunteers can keep up with spot cleaning runs and the runs used as they were designed. One dog should have full access with the divider door closed only for sanitation. Many dogs will then choose one section (especially when they have an outdoor part of the run) to relieve themselves which leaves the area where their bed, food and water are placed free of waste.

- All dogs should be treated equally whether in stray hold or adoptions equally, provide enrichment, walks, etc. (with the exception of aggressive dogs). Volunteers are typically only allowed to walk dogs in the adoption side but should have access to those housed in the non-public area with the exception of aggressive dogs.

- Leadership should sign up for the shelter bed donation program with Kuranda and promote the donation program on the website and through social media so supporters can donate beds to MCASAC and replace all plank platform beds in dog kennels with appropriate sized elevated beds. https://shelterbeds.org/.

Small Mammal Housing Husbandry and Enrichment

Positives:

- Small mammals housed in and provided species-appropriate enclosures
- FMCA secured spay/neuter grant money and helped facilitate rabbit adoptions and hosted a small mammal adoption event at PetSmart in July

Opportunities:

- Since not all rabbits are accustomed to the water bottles, they should also be offered a water bowl.

- MCASAC is in the process of signing up as a PetSmart placement partner. Once that is completed, local stores should be contacted about adopting out rabbits and other pocket pets on behalf of the shelter. The MMPC team can also help facilitate this.

- Consider partnering with local libraries to host a rabbit for their children's reading program where libraries act as a foster to the rabbit and provide care and enrichment until they are adopted.

- Consider partnering with elementary school teachers to foster/adopt rabbits as a classroom pet or 4H learning projects.

Shelter Medicine and Surgery Summary

Shelter Medicine

Positives:

- Recently added third veterinarian so 7 day a week coverage
- On site X-ray machine
- Animal Care staff helps dispense morning medicine
- Using Chameleon bar code scanner for meds list, vaccines pending, etc.
- One veterinary assistant is a Registered Veterinary Technician (RVT)
- Admissions and foster care staff can administer vaccines
- No known distemper in the shelter for the last 10 years

Opportunities:

- Registered Veterinary Technicians (RVTs) are in high demand and just as difficult to hire as shelter veterinarians. One veterinary assistant on staff is a Registered Veterinary Technician (RVT) so should be reclassed as soon as possible. This is important since it is easier to find, hire and train a veterinary assistant who does not require the certification.

- It is crucial that the veterinarians are focused on doctor-only tasks as they are the highest paid and have the unique skills that no other category of staff have. As a general rule, each veterinarian should have 3 support staff made up of at least 1 RVT and 2 veterinary assistants. Currently there are only 2 RVTs and 2 veterinary assistants on the table of organization so 4 additional support staff are needed.

- Currently, when a non-medical staff person or volunteer notice a medial issue with a pet, they write the problem on a piece of paper and leave it for the medical team. The problem is that because of this system, duplicates are often submitted which wastes the valuable time of staff and volunteers. Staff should be required to enter the issue in the pet's record so the medical team can view the issue on the vet check list. For volunteers a white board in the hallway that can be seen from the medical suite can be used to record issues. In an effort to avoid duplication and to ensure volunteers that the issue is being addressed, the medical team could also print and post the vet check list on the same board.

- Staff and volunteers report that medications in meatballs are not always consumed. Coordination of meals can help resolve this when the meatballs are given first thing in the morning and just before the second meal of the day so the dogs are hungry. Attention must also be paid to pets with e-collars to ensure they can reach their food and water bowls.

- At least one area shelter has had a recent outbreak of canine influenza. As soon as the vaccine is available, it is recommended until such time that there have been no local outbreaks. Preventing influenza is crucial so the investment in the vaccine that is more expensive than the core vaccines is well worth it.

- Shelter medicine protocols are updated from time to time and American Pets Alive! has excellent ringworm protocols which consultants can share as does kittenlady.org/ringworm. Ideally, pets

suspected or confirmed with ringworm can be placed and treated in a foster, Foster to Adopt or adoptive home.

- The use of foot baths is contraindicated as per the Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV) updated *Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters* so these should be discontinued.

- Since appropriate disinfection practices are in place, there is no reason to close on Wednesdays to deep clean. Minimizing the number of pets entering the shelter and focusing on the shortest length of stay to live outcome are most important.

Shelter Surgery Program

Positives:

- On site surgery suite with 2 operating tables, natural light and 2 prep areas
- Surgeries done 3-4 days per week
- Searching for contract RVTs

Opportunities:

- These recommendations are in line with the Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV) *Veterinary Medical Care Guidelines for Spay-Neuter Programs.*

- The MMPC team was encouraged to learn that a third veterinarian was recently hired, as that position is exceptionally challenging to fill. Although there will still be a training period for the new veterinarian, there are current opportunities to increase spay/neuter flow as this has causes a bottleneck resulting in shelter and foster pets waiting for surgery for as much as 3-4 weeks. At the time of the consult, there were 77 shelter cats, 48 dogs and 30 pets in foster care pending surgery and not available for adoption. A surgery day (10am to 4pm) completing 30 surgeries per trained veterinarian with appropriate support staff is reasonable to accomplish, especially on Wednesdays.

- Until spay/neuter efficiencies are addressed and resolved, pets should be made available and leave as a Foster to Adopt with a surgery appointment. Of course, a system to ensure the spay/neuter is completed in the future must also be in place but with text reminder systems, etc. but this is possible with the current staffing. Many shelters since the pandemic have been forced to do the same and are not facing issues of non-compliance.

- Create surgery reports to monitor how many are getting done on a daily basis versus how many are awaiting surgery and adjust the medical team and surgery goals accordingly. This is critical as surgery capacity is currently the limiting factor to lifesaving (this recommendation is intentionally duplicated as it touches various departments).

- Review sample surgery report shared by Jacksonville ACPS which automatically calculates drug dosages for each animal on that day's surgery list. This Chameleon report will be a tremendous time saver!
    - Utilizing this report will allow the technician to pull up anesthetic drugs in 30-60 minutes depending on the number of surgeries for that day, while also allowing time to check each

pet's records for additional vet services needed such as booster vaccinations or other services noted.
    - Once anesthetic drugs are pulled up for each animal, the technician can transition to another role within the surgery team so the overall team more efficient.
    - MMPC consultants can share the Jacksonville ACPS Chameleon Crystal report so that only minor editing and mapping would be needed by MCASAC' in-house IT staff member.

- Consider utilizing both prep tables outside of the surgery suite simultaneously so that the veterinarian is not waiting in between patients. The technician can gauge timing based on the speed of the veterinarian and procedure and the flow should be seamless.

- Fully stock each table with appropriate supplies so that the technician does not have to search for items needed while prepping an animal for surgery.

- Review the current surgery technician roles and responsibilities to ensure each person understands their responsibilities during their shift (see surgery technician duties page 254 in attached ACPS SOPs as an example of roles and responsibilities)

- Work with the Volunteer Coordinator to recruit volunteers to assist in surgery. Volunteers can be trained to help with cleaning instruments, preparing surgery packs, recovery, runners for animals to and from kennels as well as a variety of other tasks.

- Several training opportunities are recommended:

    - The chief veterinarian will attend the free online Shelter Clinic Management course through Maddie's University (90-minute Zoom weekly for 4 weeks beginning October 5) to improve clinic and surgery flow recommended by the MMPC team beginning October 5.
    - Leadership should engage with Clinic Mentorship Services who do private 1.5 day virtual consults at a cost of $1,000 cost (clinicmentorshipservices.com)
    - Visit other high-volume surgery programs in the area connected through the MMPC team
    - See ASPCA Spay Neuter Alliance training materials: https://www.aspcapro.org/resource/training-materials-spayneuter-clinic-staff
    - Consider having the entire surgery team watch the following video from Heather Sartorelli which illustrates how a team of 1 doctor, 1 tech and 2 assistants can run surgical flow and use good communication techniques: https://youtu.be/tbFc6A2K7gM
    - Consider having surgery staff review the following dog and cat patient prep videos from the ASPCA
        - Patient Prep – Canine: - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aESC0VrWIZA
        - Patient Prep - Feline: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llj564LLhy0
    - Develop a training list and test for new surgical staff members. This will keep trainers and new staff on track, and it will ensure all staff are learning the same things. This will also help management decide if the new staff are ready to be on their own. The ASPCA has several training resources available https://www.aspcapro.org/resource/training-materials-spayneuter-clinic-staff

- Review the ASPCA Spay Neuter Alliance Dog Induction and Perioperative Care https://www.aspcapro.org/resource/dog-induction-perioperative-care-spayneuter-clinics

- Key and essential points include but are not limited to:
  - Veterinarian duties must be limited to doctor-only tasks
    - RVTs and assistants should be prepping and intubating pets, not veterinarians
    - As discussed, the current veterinary assistant who is an RVT should be reclassed to an RVT
    - Doctors should change gloves and packs and move on to the next surgery without delay
    - Lay staff, not veterinarians, should be scheduling surgery electronically based on the chief veterinarian's instructions regarding types and numbers (cat neuter, cat spay, dog neuter, dog spay/weight)
  - Pets should be recovered on a heat source on the floor in surgery or the medical treatment area so groups can be monitored together and the RVTs can anesthetize the next pet so the surgeon is not waiting between surgeries
  - Scheduling foster pets at the time they leave the shelter so they do not stay in foster weeks longer than originally agreed
  - Schedule 2 surgeons for Wednesdays to address the current backlog and prevent a future backlog

Return to Owner (Dogs)

Positives:

- MCASAC should celebrate a 60% RTO rate for dogs entering the shelter in the stray category, far higher than the national average of 22%
- Lost pets at shelter posted online

Opportunities:

- There is still opportunity to return a higher percentage of dogs in the field (only 9% reunited in field in FY 22/23).

- Healthy dogs at large (non-aggressive, etc.) whose owners have been identified in the field should not be transferred to the shelter for admission. If a warning or citation must be issued, they should be mailed or printers added to the vehicles.

- Most dogs were reclaimed when their owners came to the shelter and in FY 22/23, only 4 were from tracking a license, 1 from an identification tag but 146 from a microchip. Registered microchips are the proven way to increase reclaims even more. Opportunities for access to low-cost vaccines and spay/neuter should always include a microchip and registration at the time of the appointment.

- Recruit volunteers with online Lost and Found Facebook groups to cross-post the animals from your website to their page.

- Recruit volunteers from high intake neighborhoods around the city and ask to post lost or found animals from their area to their specific Nextdoor neighborhood. Nextdoor typically will not give shelters access to all of the specific neighborhoods, but shelter can easily recruit individuals from those neighborhoods who are willing to help.

- Leadership should consider hosting free vaccination and microchip clinics in high intake areas using per diem veterinarians to increase reunification opportunities. Petco Love grants are available which have provided free vaccines to municipal shelters around the country for this purpose.

- Consider having field services officers post yard sale type signs in areas where lost dogs are picked up to increase reunification.

Figure 4: Sample yard sign from Metro Animal Care & Control in Nashville, TN

- Print Guide for Lost & Found Pets poster (which show most dogs are found less than 1 mile from their home) and other info graphics from HASS toolkit and hang prominently in the Admissions lobby. These can be framed for a more professional look. They are invaluable and will assist the admissions staff when speaking with finders.
  https://www.humananimalsupportservices.org/blog/5-kits-infographics-tools-lost-pets-home/

Figure 5: Sample info graphics available from HASS toolkits

Adoptions

Positives:

- 55% of animals entering the shelter in FY22/23 were adopted
- Successful NBC Clear the Shelter Event with 101 fee waived adoptions
- Maryland Veterans Service Animal Program and fee waived adoptions for veterans
- Recently allowed volunteers to assist in adoptions with meet and greets
- Scheduling appointments and seeing walk-ins
- Working on Foster to Adopt for intact pets
- Can do a 14-day Foster to Adopt trial to see if the pet is a good fit
- FMCA helps with adoptions (sponsors, medical cases, etc.)
- FMCA secured spay/neuter grant money and helped facilitate rabbit adoptions and hosted a small mammal adoption event at PetSmart in July
- Partnership with Montgomery County Fire and Rescue to promote dogs for adoption
- Adoption includes a free veterinary visit and Adopter Workshops for post adoption support

Opportunities:

- A Best Friends survey showed that 76% of those purchasing at a pet store or breeder had already visited a shelter or rescue group and because it was too difficult, cumbersome or they were denied, they chose to purchase. MCASAC leadership must work to remove barriers to adoption (see below).

- All staff volunteers and advisory committee members who are involved in adoptions should read and embrace *Adopters Welcome* by the Humane Society of the United States: https://humanepro.org/page/adopters-welcome-manual.

- All visitors should feel welcome and every effort made to match them with the right pet. Several staff, stakeholders and the MMPC team observed poor customer service in this area and subsequent missed adoption opportunities.

- Many self-imposed barriers are limiting the number of adoptions and contributing to overcrowding and long lengths of stay. These crucial processes that must be rectified include:

    - Only a small percentage of the pets in the shelter needing placement are posted on the website. This was noted during the research phase and at the time of the consult there were 119 felines in the shelter yet only 7 on the website and 95 canines in the shelter yet only 31 on the website.
    - Make sure all visitors can spend time with pets they are interested in regardless of their status (with the exception of aggressive pets, court cases, severe medical cases, etc.)
    - Only 6 adoption appointments are scheduled per adoption staff and walk-ins were often discouraged by customer service staff due to lack of appointment availability
    - Allow volunteers to act as adoption ambassadors for both dogs and cats
    - The shelter is closed for adoptions on Wednesdays even though adoption staff is scheduled to work and intake is open. Adoptions should be open Wednesdays.

- Discontinue requiring adopters to provide proof of rabies vaccination and licensing at time of adoption and instead encourage them to visit shelter's upcoming free rabies clinic
- Stated adoption fees are high and that correlates to longer lengths of stay that yields wasted animal care days. Adoptions should be fee wavied on a regular basis.
- Until spay/neuter flow is improved, all pets should leave in the Foster to Adopt category with a surgery appointment. With the Foster to Adopt program, the stop signs on the cages should be removed.
- Staff reported that kittens are not currently eligible for Foster to Adopt program since they move quickly; however numerous kittens were waiting over 3 weeks on the adoption floor for spay/neuter in an unavailable status during the consult week. Until there is no spay/neuter backlog, all pets should be eligible for Foster to Adopt and leave as soon as possible.

- As discussed, use the cat showcase rooms for highly adoptable cats and move Freelance Felines to a quiet back area.

Volunteer Program

Positives:

- Dedicated volunteers who help daily
- Full time volunteer coordinator
- Volunteers can help 7 days a week from 9am to 7pm, including Wednesday and holidays
- Volunteers can take dogs off the property as part of the Lucky Break program

Opportunities:

- Volunteers are the backbone of animal sheltering and provide an exponential amount of care that limited shelter staff cannot. Just as with adoptions, shelters must make it easy for volunteers to onboard and help.

- Staff reports that with the last 800 background checks required prior to volunteering, there were no felony or criminal concerns, yet MCASAC spends thousands of dollars completing background checks prior to volunteering. This is not required in most municipal shelters unless operated by police, like MCASAC was in the past. The MMPC team recommends discontinuing background checks for volunteers.

- Review HASS Volunteer Integration program https://www.humananimalsupportservices.org/toolkit/volunteer-integration/

- Fear Free Sheltering Certification provides excellent training for staff and volunteers and while it should be required, should not prevent a volunteer from starting.

- Create a user-friendly, easy and simple onboarding process for volunteers so that people interested in helping can do so with minimal barriers:
  - Provide helpful information on the spot that volunteers need to know to start helping while staying safe such as the basic dos and don'ts, map of the facility, etc.
  - Consider posting a video orientation on the website for volunteers to review in lieu of attending an in-person training

    - Create a buddy system to partner a new volunteer with an experienced one for the first several shifts until they are comfortable

- Call out the need for volunteers to help with dog playgroups. Just 40 minutes in playgroup per day can lower the dog's stress hormones for a full 24 hours and playgroups have shown to decrease length of stay and increase adoptions. Some shelters have playgroups run exclusively by volunteers with minimal reliance on shelter staff which allows staff to focus on daily animal care (intentionally repeated).

- Discontinue requiring dog walkers to go through extensive time-consuming training in order to walk dogs and instead set up a shadow training program after volunteers have a tour and watch a video about the program.

- Recruit volunteers to lead weekly pack walks to get dogs out and about. Some municipal shelters have pack walks led by the director or medical director (Walk the Director & Doc in Citrus County Animal Services) which invites people to get to know leadership, opens the line of communication and lowers stress for both pets and people (Anne Arundel ACC is another good example). At the Montgomery County Animal Shelter in Conroe, Texas has a volunteer lead pack walk every Wednesday evening which results in ±200 dogs getting out for a robust and enjoyable walk.

- Recruit reliable volunteers to assist in surgery. Volunteers can be trained to help with cleaning instruments, preparing surgery packs, beach recovery, acting as runners for animals to and from kennels as well as a variety of other tasks. Many shelters and high-volume surgery providers enlist volunteers and can provide additional feedback, consultants can connect MCASAC leadership team (intentionally repeated).

Staffing

Positives:

- Many dedicated and caring staff
- 77 employees
- Leadership reported good working relationship with the union
- Animal Care staff works until 7:30pm

Opportunities:

- For the number of shelter pets handled, MCASAC has a healthy budget and staffing. The issue is that many hundreds of pets can be helped in other ways and do not have to enter the shelter and when self-imposed barriers to outcome are resolved, there will be a more appropriate person to pet ratio. Having said that, there are several recommendations around job duties and pathway processes that will further improve efficiencies. The productivity and effectiveness of each staff person is as crucial as the number of staff on a team.

- Consider providing regular field services Monday through Friday from 9am to 5pm, for example, reserving evenings, overnights and weekends for emergencies. Several positions could then be reclassed into other needed areas that include a second cruelty investigator for 7 day a week coverage.

- Other needed positions are for Animal Care Attendants. According to the Humane Society of the United States, 23 staff are needed *per day,* just to clean and feed 4,000 dogs and cats a year with an average 25 day length of stay based on the FY 22/23 statistics (https://www.nacanet.org/determining-kennel-staffing-needs/). If the intake number and length of stay are reduced then that requirement is reduced.

Formula for Determining Kennel Staffing Needs

_____ (Incoming Animals Per Year)	Divided by 365 (days per year)	_____ (Incoming Animals Per Day)
_____ (Incoming Animals Per Day)	Times Four* Day Holding Period =	_____ (Animals in Shelter Per Day)
_____ (Animals in Shelter Per Day)	Times fifteen minutes** per animal =	_____ (Number of Minutes Needed)
_____ (Minutes Needed)	Divided by 60 (minutes) =	_____ (Number of Hours Needed)
_____ (Number of Hours Needed)	Divided by 3*** (hours for cleaning/feeding) =	_____ (Staff Needed Per Day)

- As discussed, reclass the current veterinary assistant to an RVT and add 4 support staff. Based on decisions to reclass other positions this could happen within the current staffing numbers.

- When staff is assigned light duty longer than one month, hire temps to fill their positions that is less expensive than paying current staff time and a half (and reduces the risk of burn out).

- Rename the 'Behavior' team to Enrichment Team and replace the responsibility of behavior temp tests with playgroups.

- The job description for the front desk Customer Service staff includes socialization, exercise and animal care needs for shelter pets but this is not included in the job duties or happening. Customer Service staff should be assisting in dog enrichment that includes walking and playgroups.

- Add a second staff person to assist with foster/transfer program to increase the number of pets placed in foster homes and streamline flow to live outcome (while still trying to recruit foster volunteer ambassadors)

Recommended Priorities for the Advisory Committee

1. Safety Net and supportive self-rehoming program
2. Create budget and develop infrastructure for community targeted spay/neuter (5,000 spay/neuters a year) and identify funding sources, grants, etc.
3. Community Cat Program
4. Dog Enrichment-Dogs Playing for Life Program playgroups, replacing kennel doors, walking programs, etc.
5. Support ordinance revisions

Moving Forward

The Maddie's Million Pet Challenge team appreciates the willingness of MCASAC leadership and staff to learn and implement recommendations to help more people and pets. The intent and purpose of this report is to identify key systems and strategies to help staff streamline the operation. At the core of this mission is transitioning from a shelter-centric animal control and sheltering system to a community-foster centric system. There are many encouraging opportunities that will productively decrease shelter intake and solve constituents' problems, while providing a healthy and Fear Free environment for the animals in the shelter.

The Maddie's Million Pet Challenge program includes one year of coaching, mentorship and networking, all pro bono. The team is available to provide training virtually and host regular follow up meetings with the MCASAC team and looks forward to even more lifesaving progress in Montgomery County.

#ThankstoMaddie

Action Step Checklist for MCASAC Leadership Team

For all steps listed, MMPC consultants are willing and able to provide guidance on how to move forward. It is important to remember that many other organizations have taken these steps before, so there are people and resources available to assist you as you continue implementing Best Practices.

MCASAC ASSESSMENT SEPTEMBER 2023	PROGRESS UPDATE
General Recommendations	
Read *The Best Practice Playbook for Animal Shelters*	
Use the ASV Guidelines to track progress: https://www.sheltervet.org/assets/guidelines/2022-ASV-GL-Checklist.pdf	
Data and Trends	
Track length of stay from the point of intake to the point of permanent outcome separated by dog/puppy/cat/kitten and shelter vs foster care	
Discontinue using the Asilomar Accord matrix	
Capacity for Care	
Establish 80% capacity for care and monitor closely	
Make owner surrender appointments with the disclaimer that the appointment will be delayed if the shelter is at or over capacity	
Public Policy (see Redline Ordinance Revisions)	
Add community cat program language	
Abide by the 3-day stray hold for dogs	
Eliminate the stray hold for felines	
Reduce or eliminate reclaim fees in lieu of spay/neuter/microchip and vaccination	
Targeted Spay/Neuter	
Consider partnering with the Fido Fixer and park at the shelter	
Ask the advisory council to determine the number of surgeries at or under $20 in Montgomery County	
Establish budget, funding and delivery plan to offer 2,500 cat and 2,500 dog surgeries per year for targeted groups	
Rabies Clinic	
Postpone or use contract staff for weekly rabies clinic until surgery bottleneck resolved	
Triaged Coordinated Intake	
Create a formal Safety Net program and ensure all options are exhausted prior to intake	

Create handout or brochure with QR code for easy access to any needed information	
Require both rehome.adoptapet.com and home-home.org for one month prior to intake	
Capture all Safety Net work and numbers of pets/people who are helped in ways other than shelter intake	
Ensure all parents of puppies/kittens surrendered have access to spay/neuter	
Finder Foster and Foster on Deck	
Add a second foster coordinator for 7 day a week coverage	
Create formal Foster Finder program	
Provide a plan to encourage, empower and equip foster volunteers to find permanent placement	
See online training at : https://www.maddiesfund.org/topic-foster-programs.htm	
Use Chameleon Postmaster feature to streamline communication with foster volunteers	
Advocate for foster volunteers to care for Safe Keep pets	
If not fosters available for SafeKeep, pay for boarding	
Have dynamic Foster on Deck program for quick placement options	
Community Cat Programming	
Discontinue accepting healthy community cats not part of an enforcement case (friendly or unsocialized) unless surgery day 2, and Good Samaritan returns them day 3	
Create pathway for community cats to instead have spay/neuter surgery, rabies vaccination, ear tip and return to their original location the day after surgery	
Appoint a community cat coordinator	
Review research and samples, page 8	
Field Services	
Consider responding to regular calls M-F, 9am-5pm	
Set up for immediate disposition (within 10 days) for court cases so pets do not have to be held long-term	
Connect with other field teams regarding the 10-day disposition introduced by the MMPC team	
Determine percent of dogs at large captured by the field team	
Add a mobile printer for warnings and citations for field vehicles	
Identify, label and/or discard the barrel in the garage holding an unknown disinfectant	
Population Management	
Create rounds team	
Create rounds team and communication schedule	

Ensure all pets are posted on the website in real time with the exception of enforcement cases	
Remove self-imposed bottlenecks (page 10)	
Intake	
Ensure all preventive care is provided at the point of intake without fail	
Provide canine influenza vaccination on intake as soon as it is available	
Educate local vets and discontinue screening for FeLV and FIV	
Feline Housing, Husbandry and Enrichment	
Move Feline Freelance cats to a quiet, non-public location	
Use showcase and visiting rooms for housing cats as opposed to visiting rooms	
Portalize smaller stainless-steel cages throughout cat holding areas	
Canine Housing, Husbandry and Enrichment	
Replace SAFER tests with recording of key behaviors	
Change behavior staff title to Enrichment Team	
Implement Dogs Playing for Life play groups and advocate for volunteers to join the program	
Engage more volunteers to walk dogs, contact running groups, ROTC, etc. to do regular group runs with dogs	
Replace dog kennel doors with cage doors then create treat program	
Join Kuranda donation program and/or order Kuranda beds for dogs if do not receive adequate donations	
Small Mammal Housing, Husbandry and Enrichment	
Provide water bowl for rabbits	
Adopt rabbits and other small mammals at PetSmart	
Shelter Medicine and Surgery	
Discontinue paper med issue sheets and replace with swipe board (volunteers) and have staff enter issue into pet's record	
Give meds before feeding so dogs more likely to eat meatballs	
Update ringworm protocols (page 16)	
Discontinue the use of foot baths	
Discontinue deep clean on Wednesdays and open for adoption	
Shelter Surgery Program	
Review the Association of Shelter Veterinarians (ASV) Veterinary Medical Care Guidelines for Spay-Neuter Programs	

Create system to schedule Foster to Adopt and fosters for surgery at the time of release with a system of checks and balances	
See training opportunities (page 17)	
Reserve veterinarians for doctor-only tasks and reorganize surgery flow	
Enlist volunteers to help sanitize packs, clean cages, move pets and monitor recovery	
Ensure each pet has a heat source during surgery and recovery	
Schedule 2 surgeons each Wednesday until back log resolved	
Return to Owner (Dogs)	
Discontinue intake of dogs at large (non-enforcement otherwise) when the owner is known	
Increase opportunities to microchip at low cost	
Adoptions	
Read and follow *Adopters Welcome* guidelines	
Ensure excellent customer service with staff who welcome adopters	
Welcome walk-in adoptions and reduce or discontinue appointments	
Open Wednesdays for adoption	
Create formal Foster to Adopt program to avoid any increase in length of stay pending surgery	
Sign up as PetSmart Charities Pet Placement Partner and host adoption events on site, inquire about partnering with them to place pocket pets	Application in process
Volunteer Program	
Discontinue background checks	
Allow volunteers to start pending Fear Free training	
Allow volunteers to interact with animals not yet available (excluding unsafe animals)	
Staffing	
Meet with the MMPC regarding reclass ideas	
Add additional Animal Care Attendants	
Reclass the current veterinary assistant to an RVT	
Consider using Animal Care Attendants in veterinary services to assist with surgical flow	
Hire temps for staff on light duty	
Train the Customer Service front desk staff to facilitate adoptions, walk dogs, provide enrichment and assist with Safety Net program	

General Resource List

National Animal Welfare Organizations

- Association of Shelter Veterinarians (sheltervet.org)
- Best Friends (bestfriends.org)
- Companions and Animals for Reform and Equity (careawo.org)
- Fear Free Shelters (fearfreeshelters.com)
- Human Animal Support Services - HASS (humaneanimalsupportservices.org)
- Humane Society of the United States (hsus.org and animalsheltering.org)
- Jessica Dolce Compassion Fatigue (jessicadolce.com)
- Maddie's Fund (maddiesfund.org)
- Maddie's Million Pet Challenge team (maddiesmillionpetchallenge.org)
- National Animal Control Association (naca.net)

National Statistics

- Best Friend Dashboards (https://bestfriends.org/no-kill-2025/animal-shelter-statistics)
- Shelter Animals Count (https://www.shelteranimalscount.org/)
- American Pet Products Association Survey 2021-2022: https://humanepro.org/page/pets-by-the-numbers FFACessed 3/29/22

Guidelines

- *Adopter's Welcome,* by the Humane Society of the United States https://humanepro.org/page/adopters-welcome-manual
- 2020 American Association of Feline Practitioners guidelines (Informational webinar by Dr. Julie Levy, Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program, University of Florida, https://youtu.be/KdsMiZjwdpo)
- Humananimalsupportservices.org https://www.humananimalsupportservices.org/toolkits/)
- Shelter Care Checklists: Putting ASV Guidelines Into Action https://www.aspcapro.org/sites/default/files/aspca-asv-checklist-2014_0.pdf
- The Association of Shelter Veterinarians' 2016 Veterinary Medical Care Guidelines for Spay-Neuter Programs https://avmajournals.avma.org/view/journals/javma/249/2/javma.249.2.165.xml
- The Association of Shelter Veterinarians Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters https://www.sheltervet.org/assets/docs/shelter-standards-oct2011-wforward.pdf

Surrender Prevention and Safety Net

- Those surrendering needed temporary help (https://www.aspca.org/about-us/press-releases/more-1-million-households-forced-give-their-beloved-pet-each-year-aspca)
- Home to Home (https://home-home.org/)
- Rehome by Adopt-A-Pet (https://rehome.adoptapet.com/)

- Rehoming Comparison Tool (https://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/wordpress/files/2021/03/Rehoming-Tool-Comparison-1-27-21.pdf)
- PetPoint.com, Points of Care for tracking Safety Net data (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vBvr9XF42FA)

Foster Care

- HASS Intake to Placement Tool Kit https://www.humananimalsupportservices.org/toolkit/intake-to-placement/
- Doobert/FosterSpace (https://www.doobert.com/)

Community Cat Programming

- Informational webinar by the Million Cat Challenge team: https://youtu.be/9FVHcYTXrgI
- by Dr.'s Kate Hurley and Julie Levy entitled Rethinking the Animal Shelter's Role in Free Roaming Cat Management
- Best Friends Animal Society (https://resources.bestfriends.org/advocacy/community-cats)
- The National Animal Control Association(https://www.nacanet.org/animal-control-intake-of-free-roaming-cats/)
- The Humane Society of the United States (https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/community-cat-program)
- Humane Animal Support Services (https://www.humananimalsupportservices.org/?s=community+cats)

Managed Admission; Appointment Based System

- Best Friends Managed Intake or Admissions Training Playbook https://network.bestfriends.org/education/manuals-handbooks-playbooks/managed-intake-or-admissions-training-playbook)

Portal instructions

- Puppies https://shor-line.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Puppy_Portal-1.pdf
- Cats https://www.sheltermedicine.com/library/resources/?r=cat-portals-order-information-and-instruction-for-installation

Canines (How to help large dogs in shelters)

- Big Dog Master Class https://maddiesmillionpetchallenge.org/big-dog-master-class/#1648138892891-049ac83b-f195

Dog Play Groups

- Dogs Playing for Life (dogsplayingforlife.com)
- Shelter Playgroup Alliance for small playgroups (sheltedogsplay.org)

Adoptions

- Adoptapet (adoptapet.com)
- Adoptimize (adoptimize.com)
- The 2021-022 American Pet Products Association Survey showed that only 40% of dogs and 43% of cats are adopted from an animal shelter or rescue group
- https://humanepro.org/page/pets-by-the-numbers
- Why people went to breeders after shelter/rescue https://moderndogmagazine.com/articles/best-friends-animal-society-survey-exposes-why-people-opt-adopt-or-not/108382.
- Conversations from the Field: Journey to Open Adoptions by Chrissy Sedgley https://youtu.be/TAYAoqjDH4o
- Is Your Adoption Process Really Working by Sue Cosby https://aspca.zoom.us/recording/play/NAvZ9CltEOsAAhmE-V_TcWq1TSn5kAa6n4HgPJMixYyMKBSINpAuxfWSlWPxfnm6?continueMode=true
- Petfinder.com

Shelter Donation Programs

- Kuranda dog and cat beds (Kuranda.com)
- Kong (https://www.kongcompany.com/kong-cares-application/)
- Cat Scratchers (https://imperialcat.com/giveback.php)

Recommended Reading

- The Best Practice Playbook for Animal Shelters
- Animal Behavior for Shelter Veterinarians and Staff
- BSAVA Manual of Canine and Feline Shelter Medicine: Principles of Health and Welfare in a Multi-animal Environment
- Every Nose Counts: Using Metrics in Animal Shelters
- Field Manual for Small Animal Medicine
- High-Quality, High-Volume Spay and Neuter and Other Shelter Surgeries
- Infectious Disease Management in Animal Shelters
- Infectious Disease Control https://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/shelter-services/disease-management/
- Shelter Medicine for Veterinarians and Staff
- Replacing Myth with Math, Peter Marsh (http://www.shelteroverpopulation.org/Books/Replacing_Myth_with_Math.pdf)
- Reference for Large Scale Social Change Switch by Dan and Chip Heath

Return to Owner (RTO) Research

- Dallas, Texas: https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fvets.2021.669428/full

Rescue/Transfers Research

- Pasco County, FL https://www.humananimalsupportservices.org/blog/county-shelter-transfer-partners/

Staffing

- Field Services https://www.nacanet.org/determining-field-staffing-needs/
- Kennel cleaning and feeding https://www.nacanet.org/determining-kennel-staffing-needs/

Volunteers

- HASS Volunteer Integration https://www.humananimalsupportservices.org/toolkit/volunteer-integration/

Networking and Information

- ASPCApro Newsletter and Blog
- Association of Shelter Veterinarians Private Facebook Group
- Greater Good
- Human Animal Support Services - HASS (https://www.humananimalsupportservices.org/) sign up for weekly Zoom calls and working groups
- HSUS Animal Sheltering Blog
- Maddie's Fund Chew on This Blog
- Maddie's Pet Forum (https://forum.maddiesfund.org/home)
- Shelter Medicine Veterinarians Private Facebook Group
- UF Shelter Medicine Newsletter

Education and Certification

- Compassion in Balance Program (https://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/education/continuing-education/compassion-in-balance-cib-program/)
- Fear Free Shelter Certification (https://fearfreeshelters.com/)
- National Animal Control Association (https://www.nacanet.org/)
- Maddie's University (https://university.maddiesfund.org/)