

Highlights of

The Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters, Second Edition (2022)



1. Management and Record Keeping

1.1 General

Shelters must have a clearly defined mission or mandate, adequate personnel, up-to-date policies and protocols, a system for training and supervising personnel, and management practices aligned with these guidelines. A community needs assessment can help identify what services are most needed. Strategic planning is also helpful. Administrators are encouraged to consult industry-specific professional organizations for guidance on best practices and to learn from the experience of others in the field.

1.2 Management structure

Shelters must have a clearly defined organizational structure that outlines accountability, responsibility, and authority for management decisions; this is essential for understanding roles and responsibilities and supporting clear communication. Because animal health and welfare is woven into every facet of shelter operations, veterinarians should be integrally involved with this process. Decisions involving the allocation of resources should only be made by those with the appropriate knowledge, training, and when applicable, credentials.

A formal relationship with a veterinarian, preferably with training or experience in shelter medicine, must be in place to ensure oversight of medical and surgical care in the shelter. In the United States, veterinary practice is defined by state or territorial practice acts that generally cover the diagnosis and treatment, prescription of pharmaceuticals, surgery, and the tasks that other personnel may perform under direct or indirect veterinary supervision. Shelters can maximize capacity for medical services by using veterinary technicians and other personnel to the extent of their capabilities and as regulations allow, and by providing veterinary care via telemedicine.

1.3 Establishment of policies and protocols

Organizational policies are a framework of high-level decisions that ensure operations remain consistent with the shelter's mission and priorities. Shelter policies help ensure that animal needs do not overwhelm available re-sources (see Population Management). Important shelter policies include intake, treatable conditions, euthanasia, adoption, transport, and community animal services.

Shelter protocols are critical tools that ensure consistent daily operations in keeping with organizational policies. Protocols must be developed and documented in sufficient detail to achieve and maintain the standards described in this document (see Appendix B) and should be reviewed and updated regularly. All personnel

must have access to up-to-date protocols and management must routinely monitor and ensure compliance with protocols.

Shelters are obligated to comply with all local, state, and national regulations, which need to be reviewed regularly. Existing regulations may represent outdated practice or lower standards of care and can restrict or even conflict with current best practices. When implementation of these Guidelines does not align with government regulations or policies, shelters are encouraged to support endeavors for legislative change.

1.4 Training

Effective training of paid and unpaid staff and volunteers is necessary to ensure safe and humane animal care and the safety of people. Shelters must provide training for each task, and personnel must demonstrate skills and knowledge before proficiency is assumed. Documentation of training should be maintained and reviewed regularly, with ongoing feedback. When licensing or certification is required to perform specialized duties, personnel performing these tasks must be credentialed. Continuing education must be provided for all personnel to improve skills and maintain credentials. Shelters must provide all personnel the information and training needed to recognize and protect themselves against common zoonotic conditions (see Public Health), as well as proper training in basic animal handling skills, animal body language, and bite prevention strategies.

1.5 Record keeping and animal identification

Animal identification and maintenance of animal records are essential for shelter operations and must adhere to regulatory requirements. Software systems designed for animal shelters should be used for record keeping to better manage resources, schedules, and shelter processes. The software should be able to generate basic population level reports as well as individual animal records. Each animal must have a unique identifier and individual record established at or prior to admission. Shelter software programs typically generate a 'kennel card' that can be displayed on the animal's primary enclosure for easy reference. A means of identification also should be physically affixed (e.g., collar and tag) or permanently inserted (microchip). Records also must be maintained for animals in foster care and other off-site housing locations. Essential elements of an animal shelter record are shown in Table 1.1.

*See the full guidelines for references and supporting documents:
<https://jsmcah.org/index.php/jasv/issue/view/2>*