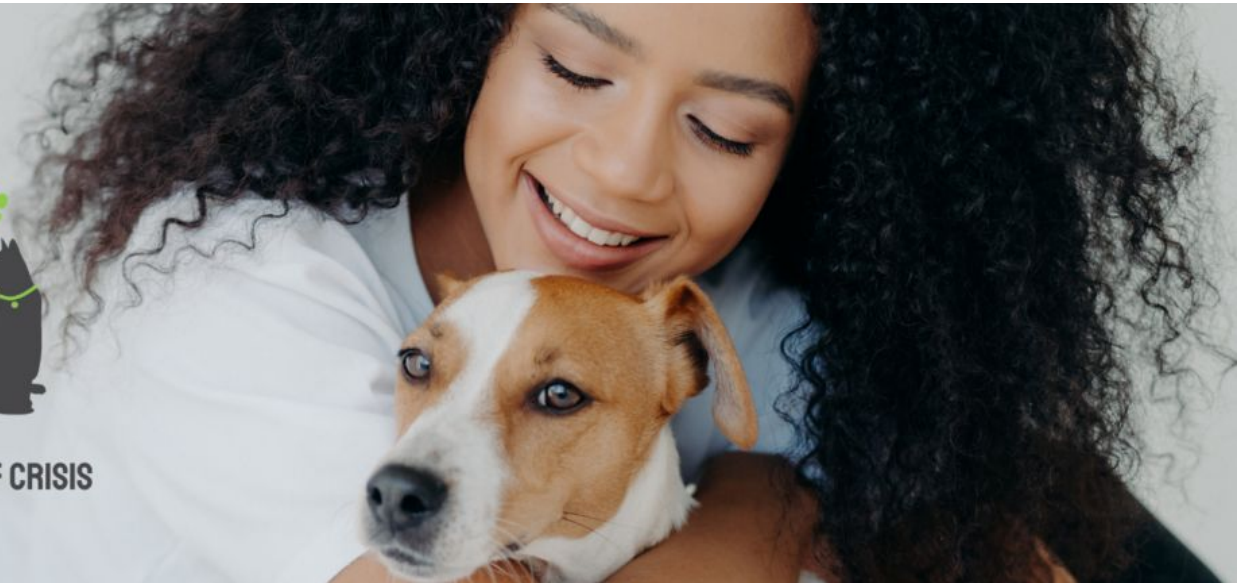


# STRONGER *Together*



PRESERVING THE HUMAN-ANIMAL BOND THROUGH TIMES OF CRISIS



The Stronger Together Crisis Boarding program provides temporary boarding for individuals and families experiencing short-term hardship.

These hardships include, but are not limited to, victims of domestic abuse, human trafficking, housing crises, medical procedures or emergencies, or house fires.



# Why is Crisis Boarding Important?

- Pets provide comfort and support to people in crisis.
- People consider pets to be a part of their family.
- Pets are in a safe environment. Families can visit their pets, providing comfort for both the pet owner and the pet.
- Knowing that their pets are being cared for allows people to focus on resolving their crisis.
- While it is unclear how many animals are surrendered due to housing crises on a national level, we know that 4.1 million pets are adopted from shelters each year. Crisis boarding allows CHS to focus on finding homes for animals who are most in need, rather than on rehoming animals who already have loving families.





The human animal bond is “a mutually beneficial and dynamic relationship between people and animals that is influenced by behaviors that are essential to the health and well-being of both.”

-Human Animal Bond Research Institute



# Understanding Homelessness with Pets:

- Homeless people often care for their pets before they care for themselves.
- Between 5-10% of homeless people in the United States own pets.
- Homeless people often attribute their pet with saving their lives by helping them stay sober, increasing socialization, etc. Having a pet decreases the use of drugs and alcohol as well as other high risk behavior. Pets give people a sense of purpose and accountability.



# Domestic Violence and Pets

- 20-40% of women stay in dangerous situations because they fear for their pet's safety.
- 71% of women in domestic violence shelters report that their abuser threatened, injured, or killed a pet.
- Nearly half of domestic violence survivors choose to stay in abusive relationship rather than leave their pet behind.
- As many as 25% of domestic violence survivors report returning to an abusive partner out of concern for their pets.
- An estimated 1 million animals are abused or killed each year in connection with domestic violence.



# Requesting Crisis Boarding Assistance

1. People experiencing a housing crisis will request services from CHS by filling out a Program Request Form. This form is on our website and is submitted electronically. Clients or case managers can also call the shelter directly to request assistance.
2. CHS staff will call the person in need of assistance to discuss program requirements.
3. If animals seem appropriate for the program, CHS will make an appointment to fill out necessary paperwork while their pet(s) are assessed to ensure that CHS can handle any special needs.
4. The client will sign their Boarding Agreement, transfer of ownership form, and pet personality profile.



# Program Guidelines

- The typical maximum length of stay will be 45 days. Extensions will be considered based on the needs of the client.
- CHS will provide food, water, daily exercise, and vet care while the pet(s) are in our care.
- All pet(s) in this program must be spayed/neutered, vaccinated and microchipped.
- Pets can be turned down for this program if they exhibit behaviors that indicate that they can not be safely handled by our staff.
- If an animal is not doing well in our program, CHS will give clients 72 hours to pick up their pet.
- All client information or information that identifies the pet(s) will be kept confidential.



# Program Guidelines

- Clients are asked to contact the Community Engagement Manager once every two weeks.
- Clients surrender their pets and then adopt their pet back at the end of the program. The adoption fee is waived, but we do request a fee for boarding. The fees are \$25 for cats and small animals and \$75 for dogs for the length of their stay. We will never keep someone's pet due to an inability to pay the fee.
- If no reasonable communication is made by the client at the end of the boarding agreement, the pet(s) will be made available for adoption, transfer, or euthanasia.
- Visitation will be allowed for animals that are boarded at CHS. CHS will try to arrange, but can not guarantee visitation for animals in foster homes.



# Pet Assessments

In addition to considering our available space, CHS must be able to handle a pet safely to accept them into our crisis boarding program. We ask about a pet's bite history and information about a pet's behavior before bringing the animal in for an assessment.

Our assessment is very short and is designed to determine if our staff will be safe working with the pet. We also assess the pet's reactivity to other animals.

Pets with a bite history or who are reactive to other animals will still be considered for the program if we have appropriate space for them and we believe that the staff can handle them.

Pets with a bite history or who are reactive to other animals are hard to place in foster homes. The shelter can be a stressful environment for pets, so animals who have to stay at the shelter may not be able to stay past 30 days, depending on how they are adjusting to living at the shelter.



# Our Crisis Boarding Space

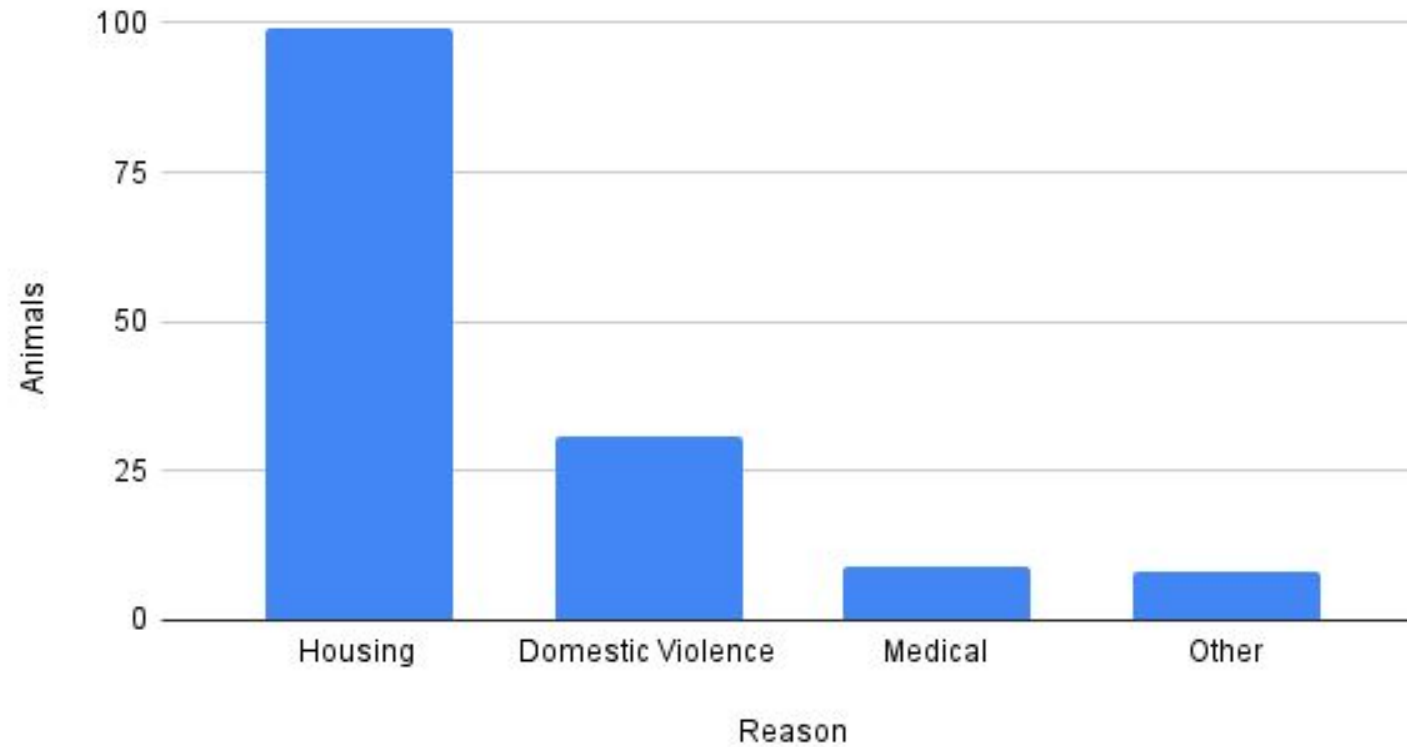
All domestic violence cases are kept in a locked section of the shelter and are not available for public viewing. Other crisis boarding animals may be kept on the adoption floor if other space or foster homes are not available. Any animal on the adoption floor will have a sign that indicates that they are not available for adoption. All foster caregivers have gone through additional training and signed confidentiality agreements. They are given no information about the pet owners.

- Six to eight cat spaces at the shelter
- Six to eight dog spaces at the shelter



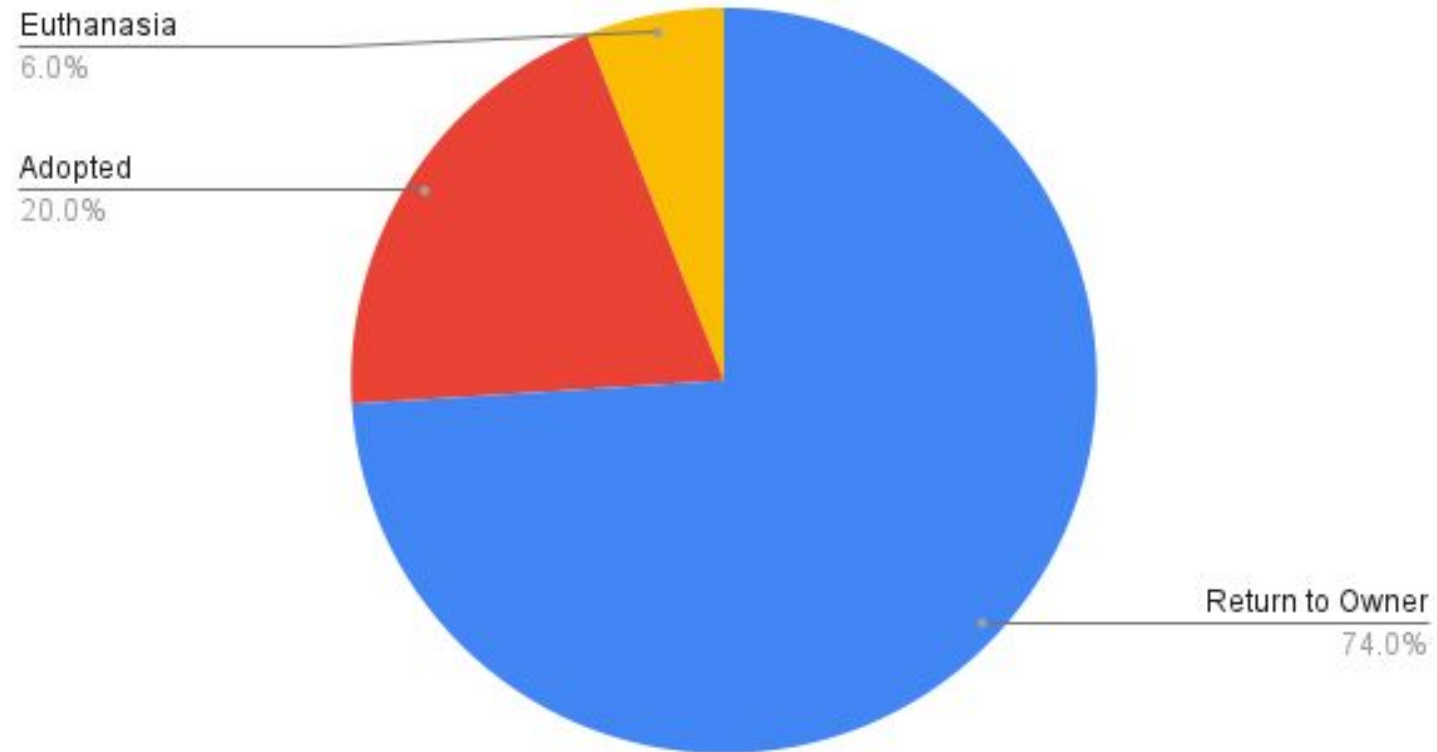
# 2022 Data

Reason For Crisis Boarding Request



# 2022 Data

## Crisis Boarding Outcomes



# Pet Food Pantry

CHS also has a pet food pantry that provides food once a month for community members that need food for their pets. People can get food once a month and we try to give enough food to last a month.

All pets in this program must be spayed or neutered. If a pet is not spayed or neutered, we will work with them to get their pet fixed. Clients can get food for the first month, but by the second request for food they must have an appointment for spay or neuter scheduled.

CHS can also provide other supplies, such as crates, beds, toys, food bowls, etc.



# Low-Cost Veterinary Care

The Chesapeake Humane Society has a low-cost veterinary clinic that our community outreach clients can be referred to. We are able to help with spay/neuter, heartworm treatment, dental care, and soft-tissue surgery. We can also provide illness exams for families with an annual income of \$60,000 or less. We sometimes have grant money available to help community members with their veterinary care.



# Community Outreach Values

Working with community outreach clients is both challenging and rewarding. It is important look at our own beliefs and values before working with clients who may be in a crisis situation. Please take a moment to ask yourself if you can do the following things before signing up to work with our community outreach program.

- Treat all clients with respect and dignity.
- Treat all clients as individuals.
- Do not blame or shame clients.
- Identify your personal biases.
- Put aside your personal biases so they do not influence how you treat clients.



# **Your Role**

Please remember when you are working with community outreach clients that you are not a counselor or therapist.

It is not our job to evaluate, diagnose, or treat people with emotional or mental disorders.

## **What Is Our Job?**

Our job is to assist our clients with their pet's needs in a respectful, nonjudgmental manner. We want clients to feel safe and supported.



# Confidentiality

Any client utilizing a service at CHS has the right and expectation of privacy. In some cases, this could be a matter of life or death for the client.

Any information pertaining to animal records including names, addresses, phone numbers, etc. of staff, volunteers, and customers, is confidential and should not be discussed with others, nor removed from the shelter. All volunteers are expected to maintain confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information to which they are exposed while serving as a volunteer.

Any violation of this policy can result in termination of volunteer employment at CHS.



# Trauma Informed Care

CHS will be utilizing the Trauma Informed Care model when working with clients of our Crisis Boarding Program.



# What is Trauma?

Trauma is physical or emotional harm caused by an event, a series of events, or a set of circumstances. Trauma causes lasting effects on an individual or groups physical, emotional, social, and spiritual wellbeing.

## Potential Traumatic Events:

- Abuse
- Bullying
- Witnessing Violence
- Death
- Abandonment
- Neglect
- Eviction
- Unemployment
- Hospitalization
- Natural Disaster
- Accidents
- Terrorism
- War
- Racism
- Poverty
- Family Member with Substance Abuse Disorder
- Historical or Community Trauma



# Prevalence of Trauma

Trauma Informed Care is a framework for collaboration with survivors of trauma that acknowledges the prevalence of trauma and understands the impact of trauma on physical and emotional health.

Every client that we work with may have experienced trauma. Trauma comes in many forms, such as a violent relationship or a life-threatening illness.

We can not know if someone is impacted by trauma or gauge how trauma may have impacted their life. People cope with and adapt to trauma in different ways. The principles of Trauma Informed Care guide us as we strive to work with clients in a respectful, compassionate way.



# Recognizing Trauma

It can be hard to recognize signs of trauma. Signs can often be as subtle as a change in behavior. Signs are also easily misinterpreted.

Clients may lash out at you or have trouble concentrating on what you are saying. They may exhibit self-destructive behaviors or feel hopeless. There are also physical indicators of trauma, such as headaches or difficulty sleeping.

With so many varied indicators, how do we recognize a trauma survivor? When working with outreach clients, it is best to work with every client as if they have been impacted by trauma.



# Avoiding Retraumatization

The Trauma Informed Care approach is committed to not re-traumatizing survivors of trauma as they seek services. Asking for help can be difficult. Our interactions with clients must not cause additional trauma.

- Don't have clients continually re-tell their story
- Treat clients as a person, not a number or label
- Give choices
- Allow clients to give feedback



# Crisis Communication



# Five Active Listening Skills

1. Pay attention
2. Withhold judgement
3. Reflect on what is being said
4. Clarify things that you don't understand
5. Summarize what you are being told

Remember to be patient and use verbal and nonverbal feedback to show that you are listening.

**Do not interrupt or rush the speaker.**



# Tips for Talking with Clients

## What To Do

- Listen more than you speak
- Use empathic statements
- Use open questions
- Be mindful of non verbal cues
- Simple phrases that express your condolences.
  - I am so sorry that this happened to you.
  - This must be so difficult.
  - I am thinking of you.
- Offer practical support.
  - Let them know what you can do to help.
  - Do not over-promise



# What Not To Do

- Don't give unsolicited advice.
- Don't invalidate their crisis by comparing it to one of your own. Their crisis is not about you.
- Do not make assumptions.
- Do not use platitudes (Everything happens for a reason).

# Creating Healthy Boundaries

Working with clients in crisis situations is incredibly satisfying work, but can also be stressful. When we are worried about a person we are trying to help, it is easy to take on that person's burdens.

Remember, our role is to help with a client's pets to the best of our ability. We are not acting as therapists and we can not solve all of our client's problems. We are a part of a team that includes human service organizations and other members of the community that are all working together to improve the lives of our clients and their pets.

If you notice signs of stress (insomnia, irritability, headaches, etc.) and believe that working with clients is a contributing factor, please reach out to your manager to discuss solutions.



# Stories From Our Program

## Phoenix

Sandra and her daughter were being evicted from their home and were living in a hotel where they could not have their cat. She placed her cat in a boarding facility, but was not able to keep up with the payments. CHS helped her pay to get her cat from the facility and she brought her cat to us for crisis boarding while she was looking for housing.

After 51 days, she asked us to put Phoenix up for adoption, because she was not any closer to housing and she wanted Phoenix to be in a home. Phoenix was still at the shelter when she found housing, so we were able to transfer her back into the crisis boarding program until Sandra's move-in date.

While Phoenix was with us she needed to have all but 2 of her teeth removed, which was covered by our program.





# Draco

LaToya's lease was not renewed and she was able to move in with family, but she could not take her dog Draco. We boarded Draco while she was looking for housing. She and her son came to visit Draco several times while he was with us. He quickly became a staff favorite and even got to attend some pack walks at parks with our volunteers. CHS has volunteers that are specifically trained to work with our crisis boarding animals. Draco was with us for 54 days.





## Gigi and Lupin

Gigi and Lupin were at a boarding facility for 45 days before coming to us. Their owner spent over \$1000 on boarding during that time. Sarah and her boyfriend found housing and were able to come and pick up her cats. Gigi and Lupin were in a foster home with us for 55 days.





## Xena

Xena was in the crisis boarding program twice. The first time that Xena left the program her owner was living with a friend. She had to leave that home and she requested to have Xena come back to the shelter. We did not have space at the time, so we coordinated with a local animal control. They agreed to keep her for 2 days while we worked to make space. Two weeks later Xena's owner moved into a shared house and was able to bring Xena home with her.

