

Animal Care Services Review Phase One

The City is at a critical juncture. It must determine what kind of an animal shelter it wants ACS to be and ensure the Bureau has the resources and operations necessary to provide desired services and programs.



Independence you can rely on



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Background

Animal Care Services (ACS) is a Bureau under the Department of Parks, Recreation and Marine and is responsible for providing sheltering and veterinary services for lost or homeless animals, pet licensing, responding to animal-related emergencies, and enforcing laws pertaining to animals and their care. For the past 16 years, ACS has partnered with the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals, Los Angeles (spcaLA) to jointly deliver adoption services to Long Beach and four contract cities: Cerritos, Seal Beach, Signal Hill, and Los Alamitos.

Objective and Scope

In January 2017, Mayor Robert Garcia requested that the City Auditor's Office (CAO) conduct an operations and management review of key Animal Care Services Bureau (ACS or Bureau) functions. As a result, the CAO has been evaluating ACS operations to determine the extent to which policies and procedures are effective when compared to industry standards and best practices. This review is comprised of two components:

- 1. Phase One:** The CAO retained JVR Shelter Strategies (JVR), a management consulting firm, to review various ACS shelter operations, including animal intake processing and flow, veterinary services and care of animals, and programs designed for positive animal outcomes. JVR specializes in large open-intake municipal shelters, like ACS, and is made up of a team of experts in the animal sheltering industry. JVR's past and current clients include the City of Irvine and County of Orange. This report summarizes the Phase One review and incorporates the consultant's comprehensive, Bureau-wide list of recommendations for improvement.
- 2. Phase Two:** The CAO is conducting additional work to assess ACS staffing and resources, including licensing and field services. Once Phase Two is completed, a second report will be issued discussing the Office's results and recommendations. Early indicators from the work in this phase show that staff levels in many areas of ACS operation are below industry recommended levels.

Summary

A Unique and Challenging Operating Environment

Both ACS and spcaLA are housed on the same campus at the P.D. Pitchford Companion Animal Village (Village); however, they maintain separate leadership and identities. The current agreement between the City and spcaLA is a 55-year lease-back agreement set to expire in 2053. The agreement allows ACS to lease a portion of the Village from spcaLA for daily shelter operations, with the City paying spcaLA fifty percent of the total facility operating expenses. The success of both organizations is intimately linked to one another; however, the lease-back agreement does not contain terms related to key operating functions, such as animal adoptions, for which both organizations are responsible.

ACS operates an open intake shelter, which means that no animal under its jurisdiction can be turned away, impounding approximately 8,000 live animals each year. All animals impounded are under the care of ACS until the animals are reunited with their owners or the mandatory holding period is up. At the end of that period, spcaLA has the option to select animals it wishes to assume responsibility for care and prepare them for future adoption. This informal arrangement is not covered by the lease-back agreement between ACS and spcaLA, and does not require that spcaLA take a designated number of

animals. Animals that are not selected by spcaLA remain under ACS' care; many of these animals, mainly cats and dogs, have challenging behavior or medical issues. Long Beach's co-habitation and operational arrangement with spcaLA is unique and challenging among municipal shelters.

Strong Staff Committed to Saving Lives

Based on the consultant's observations, ACS, when compared to many other open intake municipal shelters in the country who focus on animal control, is performing above average when it comes to recognizing the need for programming aimed at saving animal lives. ACS has taken progressive steps to shift existing resources and dedicate staff to working closely with rescue organizations and running various programs surrounding adoptions, animal enrichment, and behavior. Examples of these programs include trap-neuter-release and *Dogs Play For Life*, which is in its infancy. In addition, the consultant found that ACS staff in all areas of the shelter, when compared to many other municipal shelters, is highly dedicated to the welfare of the animals under its care. The emphasis on these programs, along with a staff that wants the best for every animal, is reflected in ACS' improved Live Release Rates (LRR) and impound statistics.

From 2011 to 2016, ACS has continuously shown improvements in reducing animal impounds and increasing positive outcomes (i.e. adoptions, rescues, etc.), as reflected in the table below.

**Table 1
ACS Statistics¹
2012-2016**

Live Saving Statistics	2012	2016
Impounds	9,643	6,372
Euthanasia	5,075	1,662
Live Release Rates	50%	69%
Live Release Rates - Dogs	71%	85%
Live Release Rates - Cats	24%	62%

Downside of Going Beyond Capacity

While LRRs have increased over the years, this review found that ACS faces a number of challenges that impact its ability and capacity to provide animal care and continue its progress. These LRR and impound improvements have been accomplished without the addition of resources to fully support new programs. These programs have strained already limited ACS resources, spreading thin the shelter staff and other resources and affecting service effectiveness and efficiency. Based on the consultant's observations in Phase One as well as preliminary resource analysis in Phase Two, ACS has been attempting to provide service levels that are beyond what the Bureau's staffing and resources would allow, straining the Bureau's existing resources and impacting overall service effectiveness and efficiency. Generally, this means animals in a shelter could potentially suffer when a shelter tries to provide services beyond its capacity of resources.

Standard Operating Procedures Are Necessary

However, this does not necessarily mean that additional resources are the solution to all of ACS' challenges. Many recommendations in this report address the more immediate needs to standardize

¹ The Live Release Rate is the percentage of animals that come into the shelter and leave with a positive outcome, such as return to owner, adoption, or transfer to a rescue organization. These statistics were pulled from ACS press releases. The method used by ACS for calculating LRR is one that meets best practices.

shelter procedures and practices, incorporate industry standards and best practices, and ensure accountability and management controls. ACS has very limited standard operating procedures, which have resulted in inconsistent decision-making and conflicting shelter practices, as well as in changes being implemented without proper direction and explanation. The consistency and predictability that standard operating procedures can provide help make life less stressful for both staff and animals, and are integral to maintaining shelter health and wellness. Clearly defined operating procedures provide a consistent, documented standard of care that is transparent both internally and externally. ACS should be constantly striving to improve and streamline its processes and practices, and the Bureau must address many of these recommendations while making sure, moving forward, that it operates within its available resources.

Opportunity to Develop a Shared Vision and Plan

This review underscores that improvements to day-to-day shelter operations are possible and necessary. However, the success of ACS should not lie solely on the Bureau alone. Currently, there is not a clear, shared vision for the animal shelter, creating a misalignment between stakeholder expectations and ACS' capacity of care. As a result, the City is at a critical juncture with respect to animal care services. City stakeholders – elected officials, management, employees, and community – must determine what kind of an animal shelter it wants ACS to be and then ensure that the Bureau has the resources and operations necessary to provide desired services and programs to operate accordingly. Stakeholders must clarify and solidify a vision and then develop a strategic plan with goals and action steps that would allow ACS to execute that vision. This review represents an opportune time for stakeholders to deliberate critical questions surrounding the future direction of ACS:

- Where are we today?
- What are the strengths and weakness of the organization?
- Where do we want to be and how do we get there? (i.e. specific live release rate targets, reducing animal's length of stay by a specific percentage, etc.)
- Are there obstacles to reaching our goals?
- What additional resources are needed to accomplish our goals?
- Is the shelter's current capacity of care meeting the expectations of stakeholders?
- What future opportunities are there to pursue the mission?
- How can the shelter and spcaLA work together to maximize outcomes and improve operational efficiencies through a formal operating agreement?

Understanding the Recommendations

Recommendations provided in this report are broken into short-term, long-term, and best practices that should be considered:

- Short-Term – These recommendations relate to ACS' current operation as an open intake shelter and are improvements that ACS can begin to implement as soon as possible with its current resources and structure.
- Best Practices – These recommendations may not be possible in all circumstances; however, they would enhance care for animals and are ideal for a shelter to excel.

- Long-Term – These recommendations are improvements that should be based on the results of the visioning and strategic planning process for the organization and, therefore, are more likely reliant on decisions regarding service priorities and resource allocation. A degree of flexibility should be allowed when considering long-term recommendations.

Because of the breadth and depth of the consultant’s recommendations, the CAO encourages the assistance of outside expertise to assist ACS with developing and implementing a formal strategic plan, as well as various standard operating procedures that can incorporate Phase One recommendations.

We thank ACS’ staff for their dedication and assistance, patience and cooperation during the review process.

Observations and Recommendations

Leadership and Staff

Key Observations

In recent years, without additional resources, ACS has implemented new solutions aimed at saving more animal lives by reassigning existing staff to key live release functions, such as rescue coordination, volunteers, and enrichment. While increasing live release rates is an admirable goal and ACS has been successful at increasing these rates, making this a priority without a broader vision and plan for the organization will hinder future success. As mentioned above, the Bureau needs an updated vision, mission and strategic plan that can outline initiatives and programs, guide policies and practices, and marshal and prioritize resources.

While ACS is operating without a clear, shared vision and strategy, staff generally appeared to be very dedicated and have a wide range of expertise that can be utilized in planning for the future of ACS. However, there were several areas that lacked clearly documented policies or procedures for critical animal care activities. Where policies did exist for certain functions, at times staff completed tasks inconsistently, which demonstrates the need for additional training and accountability.

Short-Term Recommendations

<p>Mission, Vision and Strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate the mission of the organization so that the lead and direct supervisors are aware of how their areas of responsibility meet this mission. This mission should also be articulated to staff so a better understanding exists on how current policies and practices meet these goals. • Work to improve clear direction and communication to staff, including regular staff meetings.
<p>Organizational Structure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set clear expectations that staff should not overstep their immediate supervisors, and that the Manager reinforces the chain of command/organizational structure. • Rather than utilize the City’s standard job classifications for some of the positions at ACS, develop clear, written titles and job descriptions that accurately describe the work responsibilities and expectations to hold staff accountable. Examples of positions that need aligned formal job descriptions

	include all Rehoming Team positions, some Medical Team positions, and the Animal Care Team.
Accountability and Staff Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update existing standard operating procedures (SOPs), as well as establish new SOPs for daily procedures. Any new procedures that are implemented should also have a matching SOP to guide staff. Hold staff accountable to these SOPs. Areas that need new SOPs or updated SOPs include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Daily cleaning and feeding ○ Medical SOPs ○ Pre-euthanasia handling/sedation • Create a daily walk-through process for lead or direct supervisors where they observe their teams performing various tasks. • Conduct annual performance reviews for all employees on a consistent basis following City guidelines and practices.
Staff Levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze intake staffing hours and ensure that there is adequate coverage. • As indicated in ACS' improvement plan and approved in the FY 2018 budget, hire a full-time Registered Vet Tech (RVT) to conduct intake exams.
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop standardized training that incorporates continued education and professional development for all aspects of ACS to ensure every staff member receives proper training for his/her role, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Basic level of infectious disease control and common signs of illness (e.g. diarrhea, sneezing, lethargy) for all staff. ○ Continue to invest in training for the medical team in areas such as shelter medicine and internal medicine for veterinarians to continually grow expertise and improve care. ○ Disease recognition in exotic/small mammals for the vet tech staff. ○ Animal care procedures, such as nutrition, housing environment, and sanitation. ○ Proper rabbit husbandry and monitoring of medical conditions so that they are aware of signs of stress in this species since it can often be subtle. ○ Euthanasia procedures as necessary, including euthanasia of exotic species.

Long-Term Recommendations

Mission, Vision and Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ACS along with City stakeholders (elected officials, management, employees, community, and spcaLA) should create a strategic plan for the organization that clearly articulates future goals and priorities of ACS, actions that each ACS unit takes to meet established goals, and required resources. This will create a unified sense of mission/goals and enable the organization to create accountability and structure around their policies and practices. The strategic planning process is lengthy and would best be conducted by a consultant to assist ACS in planning and execution.• Work with spcaLA to develop a formal operations agreement.
Staff Levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Determine staffing hours for daily care (feeding and cleaning) by analyzing shelter data such as daily population by month.²• Additional staff are needed for medical coverage and daily cleaning.• Change the night shift to an on-call basis, since this position does not seem to be an efficient or effective utilization of time. This should be long term as it will require a re-negotiation with contract cities.

² Phase 2 will be analyzing staffing needs for daily care and intake.

Animal Intake and Flow

Key Observations

Planning and monitoring animal flow through the shelter is essential to providing the appropriate services to support animal health and timely outcome. Currently, ACS does not systematically identify or track animal pathways through the shelter toward a particular outcome. As animals come into the shelter they are processed through a dedicated intake area near the public entrance, which has adequate supplies and equipment. In addition, ACS' intake protocol (i.e. vaccination, deworming, photo and identification) meets the industry minimum guidelines. To ensure animals move as quickly as possible to the best outcome, additional emphasis needs to be placed on creating a plan for each animal upon intake and throughout its stay at ACS.

Short-Term Recommendations

Animal Flow Through	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strive to operate within ACS' Capacity for Care based on existing resources.• Determine roadblocks for movement to adoption, and develop strategies to address them. Key noted barriers include behavior assessment, medical exams, and delays in contacting transfers.• Create community partnerships with contracts/agreements to decrease animal length of stay to transfer.• Perform population rounds at least once a week (ideally on a daily basis) to ensure all animals have a flow-through plan, and utilize a daily shelter rounds action list.³• Review Length of Stay (LOS) data to all outcomes and develop solutions to decrease LOS to transfers including incentives.⁴• Make outcome decisions (i.e. transfer out or euthanasia) promptly to prevent suffering, while obeying existing laws such as the Hayden Law.• With current resources ACS should not be taking on long term medical cases. Animals with long-term medical conditions should be found a medical foster or rescue. Housing animals long-term-in a shelter (typically beyond a two-week LOS) can lead to deterioration of behavior. If medical foster or rescue cannot be located, treatment decisions should be based on the ability to safely and humanely provide relief, prognosis of recovery, likelihood of placement, duration of treatment, expense and resources available. When adequate pain relief cannot be achieved, transfer to a facility that can meet the animal's needs or humane euthanasia must be provided.• Shelter-neuter-return (SNR) eligible cats are experiencing longer lengths of stay than necessary. Create a plan for SNR cats to expedite their flow through the system, including determining eligibility, communication needs, scheduling surgery, scheduling release, and documentation.
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³ Daily Rounds: <http://www.sheltermedicine.com/library/resources/daily-shelter-rounds> , <http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/files/2012/07/Daily-Rounds-Action-List.pdf>

⁴ Incentives can include reduced fees when animals are picked up by a certain time, provide spay/neuter and vaccination, give a highly adoptable animal with another one that is more challenging, and recognizing the organization publicly.

Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An animal’s behavior should be noted on intake and through the course of the shelter stay using terminology that describes the animal’s actions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Veterinarians should input behavior notes within a standard medical SOAP (Subjective, Objective, Assessment, Plan) in the subjective section. Consider having the veterinarian work with the Behavior Team to determine appropriate terminology. ○ Create a guideline for describing behaviors that focuses on descriptive terminology of behaviors as opposed to subjective terminology. • Continue to perform the current best practice of allowing friendly animals to move to the adoptions-open selection process rather than holding for a behavior evaluation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Both the intake exam and medical exams can often reliably demonstrate if an animal is easy to handle, particularly during basic procedures such as vaccination and physical examination. In the case of friendly animals, adding an additional behavior assessment prior to allowing public viewing may be a poor utilization of staff time and resources. ○ Continue to perform the current best practice of completing quick behavior exams on the cats, rather than extensive exams when it is clear that a cat is friendly. • There are many behavior assessment tools available for animals but often the best test is how the animal relates in social settings, such as playgroups. Traditional assessments may not be the most reliable indicators of behavior in home environments, so modifications and variations to assessments should be considered.⁵
Holding Periods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to fast track feral cats and move them through the SNR process as quickly as possible.
Animal Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly define each status in Chameleon (record keeping system) and create statuses for all necessary actions, such as “rescue may be needed.” Clearly define when an animal’s status can be changed and by whom and the expectations for each status. • Develop a system of regular animal evaluations which includes review of animal status during the daily rounds process. Chameleon can be utilized to see why an animal has been in a particular status for an extended period of time.
Intake Treatments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review posted/published protocols to ensure all staff have access to up-to-date information. • Vaccinate all cats greater than one pound or 4 weeks of age every 2 weeks until 20 weeks of age (similar time frame for puppies).⁶

⁵ Behavior Evaluations: <http://www.maddiesfund.org/behavioral-assessment-in-animal-shelters.htm> and [http://www.journalvetbehavior.com/article/S1558-7878\(16\)30069-7/pdf](http://www.journalvetbehavior.com/article/S1558-7878(16)30069-7/pdf)

⁶ Aging kittens resource: <http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/files/2011/11/aging-kittens.pdf>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the basic intake form on intake that includes vaccine information, microchip scan, and basic behavior/medical.⁷ • All animals should be vaccinated immediately on intake including those in the 101 room. • When performing intake treatments, develop a process that does not increase risk of disease spread. For example, place a new syringe on the <i>Strongid</i> dewormer bottle after use if animal contact occurs.
Scanning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform a thorough scan at intake, with a separate scan performed at outcome. The second scan process does not appear to be effective utilization of time or staff resources. If a second check occurs, it should include an exam or other information that would be useful to the Medical/Behavior Team. • Track if microchips are found at outcome. The initial intake form should specify who completed the initial scan. Ensure that if a microchip is found at outcome that the intake staff member is informed and trained on how to properly scan. • Develop a clear system with written protocols for determining which staff member contacts the owner when a microchip is found.

Best Practices

Animal Flow Through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a <u>managed intake</u> process to efficiently utilize staff (both Intake and Animal Care). Components of managed intake include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appointment-based owner surrender where all owner surrenders are scheduled during set hours and based on availability of staff. ○ Create a diversion program and assistance program to minimize owner surrenders. ○ Offer resources to keep animals in homes, such as vaccines, food, spay/neuter, or behavior training.
Holding Periods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider reducing holding times for animals with microchips so they can be quickly released. The current 14-day hold period is too long. • Consider placing adoption holds/interest on animals during stay holds. Create a true "<u>open selection</u>" process which would greatly reduce length of stay by assisting with the creation of a prioritized list of animals that have interest place on them (i.e. fast track). • Reconsider hold times of 72 hours on feral cats and other hold periods that lead to cats getting ill in shelter due to upper respiratory infections/stress.
Animal Intake Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the "vaccinate and go" policies for owner surrenders to keep animals out of the shelter when staff and resources are low. In this situation, the shelter will vaccinate the animals that return home with the owner for two weeks, prior to coming back to the shelter. This allows the vaccine time to gain effectiveness and gives the shelter time to prepare for the intake.

⁷ Basic intake resources: <http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/files/2012/07/Cat-Intake-and-Examination-Form.pdf>

	Additionally, in the event of shelter outbreaks, it protects the animal from risk of contracting disease when entering the shelter.
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Long-Term Recommendations

Animal Flow Through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine ACS' Capacity for Care based on current resources, staffing, space and priorities. More specifically, ACS should focus on adoption driven capacity for dogs, puppies and kittens, as well as transfer driven capacity. Use these numbers when establishing intake parameters. Knowing your current capacity for care will allow you to better understand additional resources (i.e. staffing, space, funding) needed depending on goals determined in the strategic planning process.⁸ • Create a population plan for animals entering the shelter. Determine pathways for animals immediately upon intake. To be effective, the plan should include a Fast Track/Slow Track system for animals.⁹
Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACS holds animals with challenging behavior concerns for rescue placement. Housing animals long-term in a shelter (typically beyond a two-week LOS) can lead to deterioration of behavior. To improve the likelihood of these animals being placed in a rescue or an adopter's home, a behaviorist with experience in working with these animals should be on staff or serve as a consultant to develop a program to work with these cases. This can help minimize the chances that these animals deteriorate in the shelter's care, as they await placement. Behavior modification, fosters, and socialization/playgroups are examples of other programs that should be considered concurrently while finding long-term placement.¹⁰ <p>During the strategic planning process, stakeholders should decide if investment in behavior modification is a future priority. Until resources are allocated for behavior modification, fosters, or socialization, placing animals with a rescue should be a focus. If placement cannot be achieved, humane euthanasia should be considered to ensure the animals do not further deteriorate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with spcaLA to develop a standardized system throughout the two organizations (ACS and spcaLA) so that behavior terminology is consistent and criteria understood between the transfers.

⁸ Capacity for Care: <http://aspcapro.org/resource/4-guidelines-calculate-your-capacity-care>
Phase 2 will be reviewing staffing and capacity for care.

⁹ Flow-through planning: <http://www.sheltermedicine.com/library/resources/fast-track-slow-track-flow-through-planning>

¹⁰ Behavior Modification: <http://www.aspcapro.org/resource/saving-lives-adoption-programs-behavior-enrichment/behavior-modification>

Animal Care

Key Observations

There were a number of positive observations related to animal housing, including the availability of feral dens for community cats, two-sided dog runs with access to the outdoors, most cat housing containing portals, and most animals having access to natural light. While the available housing generally meets the guidelines for providing animals with space that allows for an environment conducive to maintaining animal health, a more comprehensive housing plan and upgrades are needed. Currently, placement of animals is not divided by initial intake status, but rather animals are placed in any open kennel. In addition, steps need to be taken to ensure that all animals at ACS have appropriate housing as space is available. For example, not all cats were housed in cages with portals, and not all dogs were provided with a bed or soft resting place. It was also noted that housing for exotics and rabbits need improvement. These improvements should include appropriate lighting, heating, and bedding for exotics, and more appropriate cages, lighting, and accessibility for rabbits.

ACS has dedicated a part-time staff for animal enrichment activities, which includes a “Pet Literacy” program that provides reading and cage-side socialization to dogs, as well as making frozen and stuffed treats. There is space available that can potentially be used for further enrichment activities, such as numerous large play areas and a “catio.” A greater emphasis has been placed on enrichment in recent years; however, there is still a need for a comprehensive enrichment program available to all cats and dogs to ensure each receives daily social contact, mental stimulation, and physical activity.

Short-Term Recommendations

Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Empower kennel staff to move animals based on status changes. Currently the Medical Team moves sick animals and the Rehoming Team moves to/from adoption.• Create a housing plan to establish which animals are placed in each cottage and their general location. For example, create a map that clearly shows the location of adoptable animals, feral cats, friendly animals, kittens, owner surrenders, and those in need of transfer. Separate these animals from those undergoing medical treatment or behavior evaluation.• Increase communication between rehoming and animal care (especially regarding animal behavior) so that staff are proactively making good housing choices for animals.• Do not house animals that cannot be humanely and safely kept in the shelter. <p><u>Cats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ACS has recognized the need for improvements to cat housing, and in late 2016 UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine group reviewed the cat cottages and provided recommendations for improved housing. ACS has plans to implement recommendations made by UC Davis that were in line with recommendations from this review, some of which include housing cats in double-sided enclosures when feasible by converting all cat cages to having portals. This creates a separation between food, litter, and bedding. In
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	<p>addition, every attempt should be made to open the portals by utilizing more rooms rather than housing cats in single-sided housing units. ¹¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide cats with a place to hide, either through a box or blanket covering part of the cage. • Remove carpeted items from communal space to prevent infectious disease (i.e. ringworm) spread. • Improve air ventilation in cat areas. Large fans should not be used in isolation areas where ringworm is present since this can spread ringworm spores. <p><u>Dogs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a system to ensure all dogs have a soft resting area (unless there is a medical reason; e.g., dog eats blankets).
<p>Isolation Procedures and Facilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine general numbers of medical cases and number of housing units to set aside for animals under medical care by reviewing medical statistics. • Designate specific areas for sick animals that are separate from unvaccinated animals since these two populations should not mix. • Minimize the use of rooms without natural lighting for housing animals (medical cases in 101 room and in medical area). If animals are housed in these areas, create a plan for regularly checking in on them and ensuring that they are taken out of their enclosures.
<p>Daily Cleaning & Feeding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a check-list of items to complete and sign off for cleaning and daily feeding to ensure tasks are done consistently and meet protocols. • Establish written protocols, including feeding charts, for feeding animals which also specify which team is responsible for feeding, along with feed frequencies and amounts. These protocols should take into consideration underage and senior animals to ensure each animal has clean water and food daily.¹² • Develop new training on using <i>Rescue</i> Disinfectant.
<p>Animal Identification and Tracking</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a standardized kennel card system that clearly indicates whether the animal is adoptable or not, as well as whether the animal has a medical or behavior condition, is undergoing medical treatment, and is under bite quarantine. • Require staff to place a kennel card on the cage at the time of impound. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When possible (if priority calls are not queuing), consider having animal control officers print cards when bringing in animals, as opposed to waiting for the night shift to complete them.

¹¹ Guidelines for Standards of Care on Facility <http://www.sheltervet.org/assets/docs/shelter-standards-oct2011-wforward.pdf>

¹² Nutrition: <http://www.aspcapro.org/resource/shelter-health-animal-care-intake/good-nutrition-shelter-animals>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kennel card and other documentation on animals should move with the animals through the shelter stay. • Kennel cards should be removed immediately if an animal is leaving the cage and not returning (e.g., spcaLA pulls, euthanasia, adoption). • Create signs that can be hung on a cage where staff can write the reasons that the animal is not in the kennel (i.e., surgery, grooming, or meeting with potential adopters). Signs can also be used to more easily communicate common diseases or reasons for medical attention to staff and the public.
Disease Surveillance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACS staff uses a red card system to record animal observations and alert the medical team of an animal in need of review. Prioritization of red card cases must occur; a trained tech should review all cases daily and utilize chameleon to create priorities.
Stress Reduction and Enrichment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-kennel enrichment must be a priority; every animal should receive some form of daily enrichment. A reading program exists for animals that seems to be effective but could be broadened. • ACS has already begun to implement the <i>Dogs Playing for Life</i> (DPFL) enrichment program.¹³ Once the program is fully implemented, the following should occur: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Develop a process that ensures that adoptable dogs get outdoor exercise in the play yards on a regular basis (daily as volunteers and playgroups increase, but weekly at minimum). • Create accurate and detailed logs of animal interactions. • Create a clear system of tracking which dogs are allowed to use play yards. There should be signs on cages to indicate that healthy dogs are eligible for play yards.
Exotics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expedite exotics being transferred out of the shelter. • Ensure that exotics are being housed with appropriate lighting, heat and bedding, and that they are being provided proper nutrition for their species.
Rabbits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve housing for rabbits by obtaining better cages for the housing area that do not have wire bottoms. • The rabbit housing areas should be clearly identified and staff should monitor rabbits throughout the day.

Best Practices

Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find ways to utilize the outdoor communal space more effectively. Remove unnecessary items and storage items from this area. This area could be considered for feral cat kennels since they do better in outdoors or as an exercise area for adoptable cats. • Provide protection from rain for the outside portion of kennels.
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¹³ Dogs Play for Life: <https://dogsplayingforlife.com/dpfl-manual/>

Daily Cleaning & Feeding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor food intake over time and consider reducing overall food usage. • Consider purchasing pre-made Rescue Disinfectant in bottles and replace with squeeze tips. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Purchase dilution stations to refill bottles. • Discard foamers that are A through E. Purchase foamers that are color coded - one color (such as green) for 1:16 and one color (such as red) for 1:32. Use this color system throughout the shelter.
Animal Identification and Tracking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a stamp or sticker to indicate status as an alternative to reprinting cards, which appears to require a significant amount of time. Stickers can also be used at the time of vaccination with a date/initial to indicate the vaccines that have been administered. • Consider placing daily care logs in binders in each room to be updated by staff and volunteers. Include information on feeding, walking, medical issues, etc.¹⁴
Disease surveillance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current red card system may not be the most efficient utilization of staff time and may lead to missed issues. Instead, create a system for the reporting of findings to vet staff (e.g., use a common clipboard and ensure that all notes are also recorded in the Chameleon system).

Long-Term Recommendations

Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discontinue random co-housing or commingling of dogs, unless they enter together, as this can cause increased stress, food guarding, poor behavior and disease spread. Focus on managed intake and capacity for care to reduce the number of animals in the shelter, which would reduce the need for this practice. • Develop a process for neonates, including feeding kittens multiple times and placing whelping boxes.
Stress Reduction and Enrichment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase volunteer program to create more opportunities for animal enrichment. • Review enrichment programs and determine which programs are the best utilization of staff time and resources based on the strategic planning process.¹⁵

¹⁴ Daily Care Logs:

http://s3.amazonaws.com/sheltermedicine/ckeditor_assets/attachments/312/canine_treatment_sheet.pdf
<http://www.sheltermedicine.com/library/resources/instructions-for-daily-monitoring-of-animal-health-and-behavior>

¹⁵ Enrichment resource for dogs: <http://bestfriends.org/resources/for-shelters-and-rescuers/enrichment-dogs-shelters>

Spay/Neuter

Key Observations

Beginning in 2016, ACS implemented a return-to-field program that is designed to reduce the number of cats and kittens in the community and impounded at the shelter. The primary challenge for this program is the limited staffing available to perform surgeries, which has resulted in extended lengths of stay for cats waiting to be spayed/neutered before release. With additional staffing, along with the medical suite and surgical room, ACS will have the ability to increase its spay/neuter capacity. In addition, it was communicated that some cats were not released back to their origin since a full address was not provided.

Short-Term Recommendations

Return to Field Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Release all return-to-field cats back to the area where they were found. A full address is not typically required.
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Long-Term Recommendations

Spay/Neuter for adoptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a clear strategy to spay/neuter animals for adoption.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Fast-tracked animals should be altered prior to adoption.○ Determine surgical capacity based on current numbers and future projections.
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Veterinary Services

Key Observations

As previously mentioned, a new veterinary surgical suite and office area allow for more extensive medical and surgical care. However, the Medical Team is understaffed, which has resulted in a heavy reliance on contract veterinarians and technicians who may be difficult to schedule. With limited staff, the Medical Team encounters many barriers, including huge workloads, long-term medical cases and inability to keep up with rounds or input information into the Chameleon record keeping system.

Short-Term Recommendations

Rounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a rounds process that examines each animal and ensure that the staff is noting appetite, medical status, whether the animal is alert (basic BAR medical terms), etc. ¹⁶• Rounds checklists can be created so that technicians know what systems to focus on (check eyes, movement, positioning, etc.).• Define “walk-throughs” and who does it each day for the rounds process. Clarify the process so that multiple “walk-throughs” are not conducted unnecessarily. Different Units should assist each other by sharing information regarding animals.• Evaluation meetings should continue to occur as a group with team members from appropriate divisions present.
Diagnosis and Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitor animals post-treatment and ensure that they are placed in a location where they can easily be observed.
Revaccination	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish SOP regarding timing of vaccinations.

Best Practices

Medical Record Keeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider having a designated and trained clerical staff input red card information into records to free up medical staff time. These notes serve as a medical record and demonstrate that staff are aware of issues arising.
Diagnosis and Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider purchasing perforated shields to be used with feral dens or a squeeze box/isolator for safer injection technique. ¹⁷

Long-Term Recommendations

Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hire a full-time veterinarian to serve as chief medical officer or lead veterinarian. This person should revise all protocols and create new SOPs for staff, as well as be charged with ensuring a high-level of medical care. The position would allow for effective mentoring of other medical staff.
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¹⁶ Daily Observations Sheet: <http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/files/2012/07/Daily-Observation-Sheet.pdf>

¹⁷ Example of perforated shields: <http://www.animal-care.com/product/aces-cats-small-animal-shield/>

Examples of isolator/boxes: <https://www.alleycat.org/resources/traps-and-humane-animal-equipment/>

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|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Modify medical staffing so that contract vets and techs are less heavily relied on. |
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Euthanasia Procedures

Key Observations

During the consultants' observations, ACS staff were found to be compassionate when performing euthanasia, and animals were appropriately sedated. Currently, the Medical Team and Field Officers perform most of the euthanasia procedures, even though staff members from other units in the shelter are certified to perform these tasks. It may be beneficial to have other staff members perform euthanasia to relieve the Medical Team.

Short-Term Recommendations

Animal Selection for Euthanasia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Clearly define who is responsible for euthanasia. Update SOP on euthanasia to outline which ACS unit is responsible for performing procedures and the conditions/criteria to perform euthanasia.
Pre-euthanasia Handling and Sedation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Create and post SOPs in euthanasia room.<ul style="list-style-type: none">Include decision trees and drug dosage charts, so that technicians and officers can easily conduct procedures without needing to contact the veterinarian.
Confirmation of Death	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Established SOP that requires staff to check pupillary and corneal reflexes; toe withdrawal; pulse; respiration; and heartbeat by stethoscope or cardiac stick.Review euthanasia guidelines and update them as necessary.¹⁸Place stethoscope in euthanasia room.

Long-Term Recommendations

Animal Selection for Euthanasia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Define reasons for euthanasia, including bites and history. Reasons should be reevaluated after the strategic planning process is complete to ensure they align with ACS' vision and goals.
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¹⁸ Euthanasia Guidelines: <https://www.avma.org/KB/Policies/Pages/Euthanasia-Guidelines.aspx>

Facilities

Key Observations

Overall, the facility meets the minimum requirements for standards of care; however, the lobby areas could be improved to provide a more welcoming environment. Currently, the lobby area can become cramped on busy days with incoming and outgoing animals being processed in the same location. It is acknowledged that it will be challenging to remedy this problem given the current space constraints.

Short-Term Recommendations

General	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a system to approve maintenance requests and expedite issues that need to be immediately addressed with spcaLA, who is responsible for building maintenance.
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Best Practices

General	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider conducting a facility-needs or space-utilization assessment that analyzes and determines the best utilization of space. Some areas to consider include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ New options for the intake lobby that includes a warm, welcoming environment, separation of intake and outcome functions, a separate processing area to expedite rescues taking animals, and more space to improve overall functionality and public experience.○ Relocating exotics so they are more accessible to the public.○ Relocating rabbits to a different location or modify to be temperature controlled with better ventilation.¹⁹○ Moving the small dogs from the front lobby and replacing them with cats to showcase them for adoption. That area is not ideal for dogs or puppies. A possible alternative is moving small dogs to the middle dog runs in cottage 7.
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¹⁹ Rabbit housing: <http://rabbit.org/resources-for-animal-shelters-2/>

Cleaning and Disinfection

Key Observations

ACS uses high quality, effective products (Accel/Rescue) to clean the dog and cat kennels, which are made of durable and easy to clean materials. Improvements are needed to ensure that proper cleaning techniques are consistently used among the staff. For example, not all cat kennels were spot cleaned and water bowls were not removed prior to cleaning dog kennels.

Short-Term Recommendations

<p>Dog Kennel Cleaning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update SOP for cleaning of dog runs as well as provide staff training on SOP. • Discuss with Ogena, the manufacturer of the accelerated hydrogen peroxide product, the proper concentrations to be utilizing and how to set the nozzles appropriately. • Purchase test strips to test the effectiveness of the accelerated hydrogen peroxide product. • When cleaning dog runs, close all transfer doors with dogs on one side before cleaning opposite side. • Deep clean runs between dogs. • Thoroughly clean all drains at minimum weekly to prevent backup and reduce pests and odor.
<p>Cat Cage Cleaning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institute spot cleaning for healthy adult cats which are staying in the same cage. Close cat in one section of cage by closing the portal door, spray disinfectant on rag, then clean.
<p>Other Areas (e.g. vehicles, getting acquainted areas, outdoor areas, intake rooms, walkways)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drain mop bucket between uses. Create standardized instruction sheet for dilution of mop bucket disinfectant concentration. • Routinely check and fill soap dispensers. • Restock gloves regularly.
<p>Other Objects (dishes, litter pans, carriers, toys, other)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instead of having staff hand wash dishes, use volunteers when available for this task or purchase an industrial dishwasher. • Remove water bowls from runs prior to cleaning them so disinfectant does not get sprayed into them.
<p>General Cleaning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACS should use <i>Rescue</i> disinfectant on trucks which is more effective against pathogens than alternatives. • Label all chemicals. • Do not use bleach in areas with accelerated hydrogen peroxide. Discontinue the use of bleach buckets.

Adoptions

Key Observations

ACS takes a lot of pride in the adoptions they facilitate, and want to see as many animals adopted as possible. Adoptions observed were very positive and staff clearly went out of their way to celebrate with the family. While ACS can adopt out animals, there is confusion between the roles of spcaLA and ACS that need to be more clearly defined to allow better promotion of the ACS adoption program. ACS has been able to run adoption specials, which move animals out of the shelter environment and into homes more quickly, saving staff time and animal lives. But more flexibility is needed to fully promote these specials.

Short-Term Recommendations

Adoption Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stop requiring dog-to-dog meetings and landlord checks. As practiced in <i>Adopters Welcome by the Humane Society</i>, landlord checks are a drain on time and send a message to adopters that ACS does not trust them.²⁰ Also, dog-to-dog meetings take time, can cause stress and do not predict success or failure in a home. Instead, offer guidance on how to successfully and gradually introduce new pets.
Adoption Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide ACS with the flexibility to offer discount pricing and specials to help more animals get adopted when there is a need.
Offsite Adoptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase collaboration and opportunities with offsite adoption venues, like Pet Food Express. Increase flow to off-site venues by fast tracking animals through the process. Prioritize animals for spay/neuter so that there is a constant flow of animals to off-site locations. Calculate adoption driven capacity for offsite locations to best anticipate how many animals will require surgery weekly to fill off-site locations.

Best Practices

Adoption Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor adoption statistics to see how the adoption process can be targeted to certain key areas. For example, this could involve determining which communities adopt specific breeds and target advertisements to these areas to showcase specific animals. Alternatively, this could be determining which communities do not regularly adopt and focusing campaigns on those areas. Review and consider implementing Open Adoptions and Adopters Welcome approaches. Consider extending adoption hours at least one evening mid-week until 7 pm.
Adoption Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To expand reach of adoption publicity, consider using a system such as www.rescuegroups.org to pull information on adoptable animals from the

²⁰ Adopters Welcome is an approach to adoptions that embraces community members, encourages them to adopt, and helps them and their pets succeed. <https://www.animalsheltering.org/programs/adopters-welcome>

	shelter’s database and distribute to a large number of other websites that promote animals for adoptions beyond <u>petharbor.com</u> .
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Long-Term Recommendations

Adoption Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create clarity around the process of adoptions by clearly defining the roles of ACS and spcaLA. Part of this should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reviewing the adoption process and fee structure, and clarifying to the public when adoptions occur through spcaLA versus ACS. Currently, there is no distinction made in fees or processes between ACS or spcaLA. ○ Establishing a standard process that allows for the shortest length-of-stay for animals. ○ Maintaining ACS’ flexibility in placing animals itself if ACS can do so more quickly, rather than waiting for spcaLA to take the animals. ○ Verifying that highly adoptable kittens receive surgery as quickly as possible prior to adoption. ○ Improving advertising for cats and offer more cat-specific programs to encourage adoption.
Adoption Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After hiring the full-time marketing position that was approved in the FY18 budget, have that person focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Updating the website regularly. Removing at-risk and red alert animals from the “available” list if they are no longer available to the public. ○ Featuring adoptable pets prominently on the website. ○ Creating a schedule that includes the updating of Shelter Me as regularly as ACS website.²¹

²¹ Shelter Me is a social network for shelter pets used to increase the visibility of animals available for adoptions.

Rescue Groups

Key Observations

ACS clearly recognizes the important role rescues play and attempts to accommodate rescues. Rescue organizations working with ACS voiced concern over the processes in which they are notified of available animals in need of rescue. To ensure the relationship between the rescues and ACS is positive as they work together to remove animals from the shelter, a defined process for contacting and interacting with rescues is needed.

Short-Term Recommendations

Rescue Group Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define criteria and protocols for rescue organizations. • Define the process for notifying rescue groups of animals needing to be placed and define the roles of ACS and rescue groups in this process. • Establish clear chain of communication for rescues and keep it consistent. • Work collaboratively to set expectations for the relationship between ACS and rescues.
Animal Selection and Process for Rescue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop clearly written protocols to assess animals for suitability for rescue. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clarify purpose of various statuses (“red” vs “at risk,” etc.) to ensure everyone involved has a clear understanding of the process and can work together collaboratively. • Inform rescue groups as soon as possible about an animal. Ideally, ACS should notify rescues before an animal is “Available” to provide time for a rescue to make arrangements. • Provide rescues with clarity surrounding the process of how animals are placed on “at risk” or “in need of rescue” lists, as well as which animals can and cannot be safely or humanely placed, and when the list is sent to the rescues. • Maintain detailed notes in Chameleon about animal transfers to rescues, and the discussions and decisions made to track the animal’s history.

Best Practices

Rescue Group Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider discontinuing the requirement of being a 501(c)3 non-profit. • Consider a code of ethics or “ways to treat one another” agreement. • Consider regular roundtable discussions with rescues to keep communication open and continue to improve processes for all involved.
Animal Selection and Process for Rescue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore if lists of animals in need of rescue can be automated through Chameleon.

Volunteers & Fosters

Key Observations

ACS has existing volunteers who are dedicated, professional, and perform at a high level. During the consultants' observations, volunteers making animal treats were very positive about their role and experience at the shelter. While ACS utilizes volunteers, a more robust volunteer program could provide needed support to almost all functions of the shelter. However, a full-time Volunteer Coordinator is needed to build a large and well-functioning volunteer program. In addition, ACS does not have an active foster program to place animals requiring longer stays in homes. Like the volunteer program, a full-time Foster Coordinator is necessary to build and maintain an effective foster program.

Best Practices

Volunteer Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider if there are efficiencies with combining the volunteer programs of ACS and spcaLA in some aspects.• Change the name of “rescue partners” for volunteers to eliminate confusion.
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Long-Term Recommendations

Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hire a full-time Volunteer Coordinator to manage training and coordination of volunteer activities.• Once hired, the Volunteer Coordinator should work to implement the following:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Developing the job description for volunteer “mentors” and each type of volunteer, including requirements (age, mental, physical, emotional).○ Developing and offering a “Learn about Volunteering at ACS” session for people who are interested in joining the program. This session should be no longer than an hour and include a tour of the shelter and overview of ACS, roles of volunteers and the process to become a volunteer. The session can be taught by mentors.<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Utilize the ACS website and social media to publicize the “Learn about Volunteering at ACS.”▪ Use system such as signupgenium.com to allow the public to register for sessions.○ Defining selection criteria and policies for the volunteer program, including reasons an existing volunteer may be removed from the program. Be clear that not all applicants who go through the training processes will be accepted in to the program.○ Developing a training platform with various levels that volunteers can progress through. Training should focus on the absolute essentials, such as doing laundry and how to report veterinary issues, quarantines, how to report an injury while volunteering, and how to work with the public.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Utilizing a system like signupgenius.com to allow mentors to post their availability to train potential volunteers and for volunteers to sign up for training. ○ Developing a schedule to track the training of each applicant and when they have met the requirements. ○ Developing a training manual and handbook. ○ Selecting a small group of proven, motivated and positive volunteers to serve as mentors. These volunteers have shown that they have good judgement and work well with staff. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Set up a comfortable, welcoming volunteer space in a central area of the shelter with a computer for easy sign in/out.
Volunteer Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clearly define staff roles in managing the volunteer program. ● Obtain better tools, such as gentle leaders and easy walk harnesses for dogs, and provide training on these items.
Volunteer Onboarding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Check with the City Attorney’s Office to determine if LiveScans can be reserved for more advanced volunteers such as mentors.
Volunteer Identification and Tracking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create a system for how to determine when a volunteer should become “official.” At that point, the volunteer should sign forms, including volunteer agreements and a liability release form that stays on file and entered into a volunteer database. ²² ● Have a way to identify volunteers in training and official volunteers, mentors, etc. utilizing aprons or t-shirt/name badges. ● Recommend requiring volunteers to sign up for a regular, weekly schedule and follow up with volunteers who do not meet their schedules. A regular schedule also helps identify holes in the program and identify recruitment needs for those specific time slots.
Fosters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hire a full-time Foster Coordinator to develop the foster program. Fosters are essential for increasing the overall live-release of an organization when undertaking challenging medical and behavior cases. ● The Foster Coordinator would work closely with the Medical Team and Behavior Team to set up trainings for fosters including orphan kittens, medical fosters, and behavior or special-needs fosters.

²² Volunteer management: www.animalsheltering.org/volunteermanagement

Community Outreach & Engagement

Key Observations

ACS is interested in increasing its social media presence. The FY18 budget approved the hiring of a full-time public relations (PR) position. With this new position, there are various public engagement activities that can be performed to increase awareness and outreach.

Best Practices

Communication Planning / Staffing / Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Once the full-time PR staff member is hired, the following areas should be considered:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Create a communications team. Recruit a team of skilled photographers, editors, writers, designers for this team. Many shelters utilize skilled volunteers for these roles. The PR person on staff then supervises the process.○ Create a communications/PR plan. Develop specific goals and objectives, and metrics to measure effectiveness of PR campaign.○ Create a process for regularly updating the ACS website, particularly the “Latest News” section of the homepage.○ Add a section to the website for people at risk of surrendering their pets.<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Many pet owners would be willing to take steps to keep their pet or rehome their pet themselves if they understood how.▪ Describe the surrender process.○ Include alternatives pet owners can perform or execute themselves, including behavior information, finding a new home for their pet, etc.○ Consider starting an internal Facebook group for volunteers, fosters, and staff to share photos and ideas. It is important to have someone monitor the content of the Facebook group.
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Long-Term Recommendations

Communication Planning / Staffing / Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to utilize Shelter Me, which is a volunteer based, non-profit organization that helps shelters take better, more eye-catching photos of animals for adoption to publicize them.
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Fundraising

Key Observations

ACS receives donations without a significant amount of resources or formal planning, pointing to a high potential of raising additional funds if more staff resources are focused on this goal.

Best Practices

Fundraising	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider developing a donor database with an integrated email system.• Consider activities such as a direct mail campaign, a focused email campaign, and end-of-the-year campaign.• Consider using a new online donation system that can be promoted and maximized. In the meantime, take advantage of every opportunity to direct the public to www.longbeach.gov/acs to consider donations to programs currently maintained by ACS.
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Long-Term Recommendations

Fundraising	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a formal fundraising development plan.• Funds could be increased with the creation of a non-profit “Friends of ACS” organization.• Create a gift acceptance policy.• Continue to maintain a relationship with Maddie’s Fund for future funding. PetSmart Charities also offers grants to sheltering organizations, as do other national organizations, such as ASPCA.• Determine the most effective course of action for increasing fundraising efforts by reviewing how donations come into the organization (via website, direct mail, etc.); examining how the donations are being allocated, tracked, acknowledged, and deposited; and reviewing how funds are being utilized.
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Signage & Customer Service

Key Observations

The current signage at the shelter is limited and can be confusing for the public to find the shelter or animals they are looking for. It should be noted that staff is engaged and friendly when interacting with the public and many resources are available for the public such as lists for local veterinarians, are available at the front counter.

Best Practices

Customer Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve the customer experience by having volunteers assist at the front to take visitors to animals.• Consider making a bilingual map of the campus that clearly marks areas.• Explain the importance of keeping microchips up to date to the public. Create a handout for owners to take home and review.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Consider moving to a “community policing” as opposed to heavy “enforcement” way of resolving issues. This engages the community and may lead to more success in resolving problems.
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Long-Term Recommendations

Signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve signage in the front of the shelter and throughout the facility to clearly show people where to look for adoptable animals, stray animals, exotics and rabbits.
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Management Comments



City of Long Beach

Working Together to Serve

Memorandum

Date: December 15, 2017

To: Patrick H. West, City Manager

From: Marie Knight, Director of Parks, Recreation and Marine

For: Laura L. Doud, City Auditor

Subject: Animal Care Services Review

The Department of Parks, Recreation and Marine appreciates the work of the City Auditor's Office to review the functions of our Animal Care Services Bureau (ACS) and to identify best practices for future operations. We thank them for recognizing the complexity of our operation and for partnering with a subject matter expert consultant to assist with identifying areas of success, improvements, and efficiency. We particularly want to thank Jennifer Rethwisch for her professionalism, diligence and commitment to integrity in the process while understanding our operations and basic shelter management as she worked to review and evaluate ACS.

We also greatly appreciate the invaluable input from Dr. Robertson and the JVR Shelter Strategies team, who also recognized our dedicated staff and their commitment to saving animal lives and for operating efficiently. Additionally, the observations of Dr. Robertson and her team have put into perspective many of the challenges facing ACS, including how important it is that we do not operate beyond our current resources, and that, in her words, we should not be taking in critical long-term medical cases that stretch beyond our resources. Finally, I want to thank the caring, dedicated, and professional women and men of the ACS team for demonstrating they truly care about the welfare of the animals in their charge.

ACS originally started as a public safety operation with a focus on Animal Control. Through the years, due to a variety of factors such as increased needs, community requests and, in some cases, outside pressures, the operations at ACS have been expanded to include increased shelter operations such as adoptions and medical care. However, the resources provided have not kept pace with the increased need and expectations, and a formal strategic plan for this growth was not undertaken. This review recognized that (1) staff has been pressed into service beyond their means, and (2) there is a need to establish a capacity for care within our current resources, which is in the best interest of the animals in our care.

In recent years, ACS has taken the initiative to become more progressive to reduce the shelter population and euthanasia, while simultaneously increasing positive outcomes for shelter animals. In 2017, the Live Release Rate for cats and dogs combined is expected to be over 80 percent, with dogs having a live release rate over 90 percent. Recognizing that staff and budgetary resources are limited, the focus has

been on service delivery and identifying community partners to assist with these goals. We recognize this focus on saving animals has resulted in some deficiencies related to administrative oversight and policies and procedures. We also recognize that, to continue this positive direction in services, we will need additional resources. Prior to this review, during the FY 18 budget preparation process, the Department identified several additional resource needs, many of which are called out in this review, which indicates the Department was headed in the right direction. We look forward to the outcome of the Phase 2 review of our staffing and resources compared to industry standards. We have been told that the preliminary results of this review indicate what we have known for a long time, that we are below the standard staffing levels in many areas. This provides great insight into many of the short-term recommendations in the Phase 1 review.

As we would anticipate with any outside review, recommendations for improvement have been identified. We value the efficiencies we will be able to achieve through their implementation. Attached is our response to the short-term recommendations. With respect to the Best Practice recommendations, we will work with our team members in the identified areas to research the suggestions provided and will implement those that are achievable within current resources.

Regarding the long-term recommendations provided, we completely agree that a strategic planning process, one that includes appropriate stakeholders, is necessary before we can address them. It is my recommendation that the \$50,000 identified in the FY 18 budget to further the recommendations from the review be used to secure the services of a consultant to begin this process.

Again, we greatly appreciate the partnership with City Auditor Laura Doud and her team, as well as the expertise of JVR Shelter Strategies, as we work towards a common goal of the best operation our ACS can achieve and positive outcomes for the animals in our care.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 570-3170.

Attachment

cc: Tom Modica, Assistant City Manager
Kevin Jackson, Deputy City Manager
James Lam Assistant City Auditor
Stephen Scott, PRM Deputy Director

MK/vhd

PARKS, RECREATION AND MARINE RESPONSES TO SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

Leadership and Staff

- We appreciate that the dedication, ingenuity, and resourcefulness of our staff has been recognized, as well as the difficulty we will have in increasing positive outcomes for the animals in our care without additional resources.
- We are in full agreement that a strategic planning process should be conducted that includes the appropriate stakeholders. This process can be very involved and we will be seeking funding in the FY19 budget process for a consultant to assist in this area. The Animal Care Services Bureau's current mission statement is to:
 - Serve, protect and shelter homeless companion animals
 - Place animals into humane environments
 - Promote responsible pet ownership and reduce animal overpopulation
 - Celebrate the human-animal bond

Until the strategic planning process has been completed, we will continue to operate under this mission and continue to articulate the roles and responsibilities of each staff member to successfully achieve mission.

- We have already taken steps to strengthen our organizational structure, chain of command, and the enforcement of the expectations already in place in this area and will continue working in this direction.
- Currently our job descriptions are dictated through the City's HR and Civil Services Departments. We will work with those Departments to create new specific job descriptions for those positions that are more specialized and work through the approval process for these new descriptions that includes a meet and confer process with the appropriate labor bargaining groups.
- Standard operation procedures (SOPs) do exist for many of the areas identified. However, we fully agree they need to be reviewed and updated, as well as new ones created for services and programs that have been added in recent years. We will also work to create additional opportunities for supervisory staff to observe the work of their team with clear accountability expectations.
- We continually monitor the intake process and adjust our staffing accordingly. However, with our limited resources, it is difficult to ensure there is always adequate coverage in this area. This is one of the reasons we identified the need for an additional Registered Veterinary Technician (RVT) assigned to our intake process last year during the FY 18 budget process. The recruitment for this position has already begun and, once filled, it will greatly improve our intake process.

- We spend thousands of dollars a year on training for various positions in the Bureau, however we have not had the resources to develop a comprehensive training plan for all staff (such as infectious disease control for every staff member at the center even dispatchers and clerks). We will work towards the creation of a more comprehensive plan and identify the additional resources that may be needed to accomplish this goal.

Animal Intake and Flow

- As ACS has grown both in the scope of our operation and public expectations in recent years, a formal Capacity for Care study has not been performed. This is a long-term goal identified in this review. Until a formal study has been completed, we absolutely agree we need to make all necessary adjustments to our current operations to manage our shelter within our current resources. We are also in full agreement that given our limited resources, we should not be taking on long-term medical cases. A shelter is not meant to be a place where an animal receives either long-term or critical care on a regular basis. When adequate pain relief cannot be achieved, transfer to a facility that can meet the animal's needs or humane euthanasia will be provided. We will also work to increase our already extensive network of partners in the community who may be able to take on these kinds of critical cases and who are better equipped to do so.
- During the FY18 budget process we identified a need to improve the intake of animals. We were successful in getting approval for a full-time RVT position to meet this need. The addition of this position will allow us to improve in this area and meet the recommendations related to intake process, behavioral assessments, scanning, population rounds and monitoring. In addition, there are other recommendations in this review that speak to the consideration of a managed intake process and a more robust tracking system which, upon incorporation into the shelter, will also help us improve the great work we are already doing in these areas.
- The Re-homing and Medical teams have been working collaboratively towards creating a standardized vocabulary of objective terms for describing and recording animal behavior. Staff will review the suggested information provided on the Maddie's Fund website and incorporate as appropriate into the final policies and procedures in this area. We will also work with our partners at spcaLA to see if it would be feasible to coordinate this effort and have standard language between both operations.
- We have already implemented changes to the hold times for all cats to a standard 72 hours before positive outcome can be made. However, negative outcomes will still only be considered after a six-day hold time, unless needed for humane reasons. Staff will strongly consider reducing hold times on animals with ID/microchips and any changes will be documented in our policies and procedures. In addition, the recommendations pertaining to handling long term medical cases and length of stay for SNR cats can be implemented quickly.
- We agree that the practice of holding animals with challenging behavior should be looked at thoroughly with the understanding this should be a part of the overall strategic planning process as additional resources identified in other sections of this report under long term recommendations will likely be needed.
- Some of the other recommendations in this area may be dependent on increasing staffing and we look forward to the results of the Phase 2 staffing analysis to be able to properly address them.

Animal Care

- We appreciate the acknowledgement that there were positive observations in this area as we have dedicated resources in the past year towards improvements in this area.
- We agree that the housing for cats can be improved. As indicated in the review, in 2016 we put forth a project for Measure A funding consideration. The project was designed to improve the entire cat housing building by improving the environmental conditions, the outdoor cat area and purchasing all new housing systems. In addition, we hired a consultant team from U.C. Davis to assist us in formulating our plans for this area. This project is currently underway and will address the recommendations from the UC Davis team as well as those made in this review.
- All policies and procedures for housing, care and feeding, cleaning, will be reviewed and updated to include the short-term recommendations in the review.
- We will research the various types of kennel card systems proposed and work toward implementation of a system that will serve the shelter under our current operational system.
- We agree that we can improve in the area of disease surveillance. The additional RVT position that the Department requested during the FY 18 budget process should help with intake and staff will look to create and implement new procedures in this area.
- We agree that enrichment programs are absolutely necessary and staff has been working towards improving in this area. Given our current space challenges, this year we received approval to encroach into another City Bureau's operational area and a new 4,800 square foot play yard area has been constructed and staff is currently in the process of finalizing an agreement with Dogs Playing for Life to implement play groups for dogs.
- We have already taken steps to improve the housing of the exotics. Capital improvements, installation of additional electrical outlets and capacity, and policies and procedures have been created.
- New housing systems will be purchased for the rabbit enclosure in the 1st quarter of 2018.
- It is our current practice that every dog is provided a Kundra Bed so they have a soft resting place. The recommendation for housing dogs individually in each kennel will be visited as a long-term goal after the strategic plan and space planning process. If we were to implement this recommendation immediately, it would significantly impact the number of dogs we can house at the shelter, resulting in a negative outcome for quite a few animals. Although we understand the recommendation, and agree with the overall approach, we will not be implementing it at this time.

Spay/Neuter

- We will continue to streamline our very successful return-to-field program and implement the short-term recommendations in the review.

Veterinary Services

- We agree that additional veterinary and medical staff are needed and would drastically improve the overall care that can be provided to the shelter animals. There was unfortunately not capacity in the FY 18 budget to supplement the current medical team to address the high workload and minimize our reliance on contract veterinary services.
- The medical team has been working on creating a process for daily rounds and is evaluating the most efficient method of doing so given our limited resources in this area and will have a proposal to the leadership team to review in the first quarter of 2018.
- The medical team has already created an area to monitor animals post treatment within the new medical suite.

Euthanasia Procedures

- We appreciate the recognition of the compassion with which our staff carry out this very difficult part of their roles.
- The current euthanasia policy, associated procedures, and assigned staff responsibilities will be reviewed and updated per the recommendations.

Facilities

- We agree that the space in the current lobby does not allow us the flexibility to provide separate functions. Eventually, as a long-term goal, a facility space planning assessment should be completed in the future following the strategic planning process that looks at all of the facility space and identifies the most efficient uses for all of the space the City has access to.

Cleaning and Disinfection

- We agree that all the current SOP's for cleaning and disinfection should be reviewed and updated to include the recommendations. This will include changing the current practice of completely cleaning the cat cages for those who are staying in their cage, and instituting a practice of only spot cleaning these cages.

Adoptions

- We appreciate the recognition of the pride that our team takes in the role they have in helping animals in our care find their forever home.
- We will continue to increase offsite adoption opportunities within the availability of volunteers.
- We currently cannot create a fee for any service that has not been approved in advance by the City Council. Council Resolution sets all fees for City services. We will put forth recommendations in the next fee schedule hearing to implement the ability to offer promotional adoption prices like the current offsite adoption fee.

- We will review further with our adoption team the recommendation to stop contacting landlords and in that review we will take into consideration data from past checks and, if it proves to be a non-issue in a majority of the cases, we will stop that practice. We will do the same review of our dog-to-dog meeting practice, and, if the data shows this practice demonstrates that, for a majority of these visits, there are no issues, we will also implement the recommendation to stop this practice.
- We agree that improved clarity is needed regarding the roles and processes with respect to adoptions and related to our partners at spcaLA. We will work with them to identify ways we can further enhance and clarify the adoption process. In the FY18 Budget process we also identified a need for increased marketing and social media to help us increase the positive outcomes for the animals in our care. Recently, we shifted some part-time hours from another position to accomplish some of this work. This new position has been funded, and we are in the recruitment process and once we have the full-time marketing person on board we will be able to promote our adoptions on a wider scale.

Rescue Groups

- We appreciate that our value of the role rescue groups play in our overall success has been recognized. We do agree, however, there is room for improvement in the communication and relationships with rescue groups, clearly defined roles, policies and procedures for transfers to rescues, as well as stated criteria and protocols for rescue groups who want to work with the Shelter in positive partnership to follow. We will review our current policies and procedures and revise them based on the recommendations in the review.

Volunteers & Fosters

- We appreciate that the consultant recognized we have many dedicated and professional volunteers at the shelter. Many of the recommendations in this area related to defining roles for volunteers, information session and tour, online software management system and training levels have already been implemented.
- We also recognize that having a formal volunteer program supported by a Volunteer Coordinator would allow us to enhance our services and adoptions. Increasing the volunteer program has the potential to increase enrichment programs, adoptions (offsite and at the shelter) and much more. Without the addition of a full-time staff person, this program will struggle to grow and meet its ultimate potential. There was unfortunately not capacity in the FY18 budget to add additional staffing to enhance our volunteer program. If funding becomes available in the future, we would certainly be supportive of the Long-Term recommendations outlined below. In the meantime, we will be looking for a Volunteer Coordinator and see if we can't provide some of the enhancements outlined.
- We also agree with the recommendation that a full-time staff person is needed to implement a foster program, along with some additional funds for medical needs related to this program. There was unfortunately not capacity in the FY18 budget for this enhancement. Until these resources are identified, we cannot commit to this very labor-intensive program without negatively impacting other areas of our operation.

Community Outreach and Engagement

- As discussed earlier in the report, we have received funding to hire a full-time Marketing Coordinator. That recruitment is currently underway. Although we will not have the resources to hire a full communications team as recommended, once this position has been filled, we will be able to implement some of the recommendations identified in the review.

Fundraising

- We agree that a focus should be put into fundraising and we will look to implement these recommendations, as we are able given our current resources. We will also investigate establishing a "Friends of the LBACS" in the future to assist us in this area.

Signage and Customer Service

- We agree that signage is an area where improvement is needed and will be addressing this along with the long-term space-planning goal.



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