

DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL SHELTERING

CALENDAR YEAR 2024 EQUITY IMPACT PLAN



Leadership Sponsor: Reasa Currier, Director

Equity Lead(s):

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Departmental Equity Guiding Statement: The Department of Animal Services is committed to applying an equity lens to our policies and procedures to ensure that Fairfax County residents are able to keep their families intact through the prevention of pet relinquishment. The human-animal bond is a mutually beneficial and dynamic relationship between people and animals that is influenced by behaviors essential to the health and well-being of both. DAS recognizes the impact of systemic poverty and structural inequity on pet ownership and is committed to providing equitable pet assistance to preserve the human-animal bond formed among Fairfax County residents and their companion animals.

Context: The top reasons that Fairfax County residents either relinquish their pets to the shelter or seek out temporary housing includes access to a wide array of basic care needs and/or because they are experiencing homelessness or other hardships.

- Lack of access to affordable preventative and urgent veterinary care.
- Lack of low-cost spay/neuter options for Fairfax County residents outside of very limited services through DAS.
- Lack of pet-inclusive housing is one of the top reasons that pets become unnecessarily relinquished to the shelter.
 - Over two thirds of Fairfax County households have pets.
 - Lack of access to pet-inclusive housing without size or breed restrictions.
 - Lack of pet-inclusive housing for individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Lack of access to affordable pet retention supplies such as food, medication, preventatives, grooming, and training.
- Lack of access to accurate and quality information about the above items.

While Fairfax County Animal Shelter prioritizes provisions of high-quality care to animals in our shelter, we recognize that we have an obligation to our community to identify, acknowledge, and address service and resource gaps to prevent animals from entering the shelter system altogether, keeping Fairfax County families together. The health of families and their pets are inextricably linked. Disparities that place individuals on the low end of the health gradient are reflected in the pet population through increased relinquishment to the shelter. Research has shown that companion animal owners are willing to risk or forego shelter, treatment, healthcare, housing, and certain employment opportunities to prevent being separated from their pet. Through the establishment of community partnerships and collaboration with other county agencies, DAS seeks to provide consolidated social services to Fairfax County families so that families have the capacity to focus on making optimal choices for themselves that enhance the mental and physical well-being of the family as a whole.

In late 2023, FCAS opened the Lorton Campus at 8875 Lorton Road, Lorton, VA. The south county area of Fairfax has been identified as a community in need of more pet resources according to shelter data. There is a disproportionate number of stray animals and/or animals being relinquished to shelter coming from neighborhoods located along the Route 1 corridor. Expanding services to this community will greatly enhance pet resource support.

System-Level Infrastructure:

- Policies, practices, and efforts of Animal Protection Police/FCPD as they relate to DAS's policies, practices, and efforts in the community and ongoing communication between agencies regarding these items.
- Policies and practices of the Health Department, Family Services, and Neighborhood and Community Services as they relate to DAS's efforts in the community and ongoing communication between agencies regarding these items.
- Policies, practices, and outreach efforts of other social service agencies specifically related to pets owned by residents utilizing services and ongoing communication between agencies regarding these items.

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DEPARTMENT GOALS

Goal 1: Continue and expand community outreach programs to improve quality of life for pets and people in underserved communities.

One Fairfax Area(s) of Focus: 18. Other

Countywide Strategic Plan Community Outcome Area(s): Empowerment and Support for Residents Facing Vulnerability (ESRFV)

Relationship to Countywide Strategic Plan Strategies/Metric(s):

Strategy ESRFV 1. Develop targeted marketing and outreach strategies, in coordination with community-based partners, to proactively engage residents facing vulnerability.

Actions	Stakeholders	Resources/ Supports	Responsible Parties	Timeline	Performance Measures
<p>1a. Increase capacity of the Pet Resource Center to serve the target number of individuals/families and meet program goals. This includes the creation and expansion of wrap-around pet resources to support food insecurity, housing insecurity, and access to veterinary care.</p>	<p>PRC Manager DAS Leadership</p>	<p>Staff, money, time, volunteers</p>	<p>PRC Manager PRC Coordinator</p>	<p>Jan. '24 – Dec. '25</p>	<p>Number and types of services provided, number of events hosted, number of families served, number of new and repeat clients, number of partner organizations both private and non-profit/mission based organizations</p>
<p>1b. Identify and remove barriers preventing individuals from accessing services such as language, transportation, and technology.</p>	<p>PRC Manager DAS Leadership</p>	<p>Staff, time</p>	<p>PRC Manager PRC Coordinator</p>	<p>Jan. '24 – Dec. '25</p>	<p>Number and types of services provided, number of events hosted, number of families served, number of new and repeat clients, number of partner organizations both private and non-profit/mission based organizations</p>

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Goal 2: Increase accessibility of Department of Animal Services information and content.

One Fairfax Area(s) of Focus: 15. Digital access and literacy for all residents.

Countywide Strategic Plan Community Outcome Area(s): Efficient and Effective Government (EEG)

Relationship to Countywide Strategic Plan Strategies/Metric(s):

Strategy EEG 3. Enhance communication and outreach to the community by using all available communication methods and tailoring messaging to individual needs.

Actions	Stakeholders	Resources/ Supports	Responsible Parties	Timeline	Performance Measures
2a. Establish a multilingual social media presence.	Communications Manager	Staff, time	Communications Manager, PRC Coordinator	Jan. '24 – Dec. '24	Number of existing content items that have been improved for accessibility or translated, number of languages content items are available in, number of multilingual materials and content created, number of website pages reviewed
2b. Create multilingual informational materials and other materials to increase accessibility for all DAS services.	DAS Leadership	Staff, time	DAS Leadership PRC Coordinator	Jan. '24 – Dec. '25	

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Goal 3: Increase diversity of staff, volunteers, fosters, and applicants to match county’s diverse population.

One Fairfax Area(s) of Focus: 16. Intentional, focused recruitment efforts that bolster a diverse applicant pool; hiring and evaluation practices, and processes for employee feedback, to achieve and preserve a culture of equity and fairness for all employees.

Countywide Strategic Plan Community Outcome Area(s): Economic Opportunity (EO), Cultural and Recreational Opportunities (CRO), Effective and Efficient Government (EEG)

Relationship to Countywide Strategic Plan Strategies/Metric(s):
 Strategy CRO 7. Build awareness of volunteer opportunities and recruit a diverse volunteer base to support cultural and recreational opportunities.
 Strategy EEG 8. Improve the county’s competitiveness as an employer to recruit, hire and retain a diverse, highly qualified workforce utilizing data to determine barriers and target strategies for marginalized groups.

Actions	Stakeholders	Resources/ Supports	Responsible Parties	Timeline	Performance Measures
3a. Advertise job postings in locations and methods that are accessible to diverse audiences.	Human Resources, DAS Leadership	Time, staff	Business and HR Manager, PRC Coordinator, Volunteers	Jan. '24 – Dec. '24	Number of overall applications to posted positions, percent of applicants who speak a second language,
3b. Identify job seeking locations, job boards, and other physical locations to post jobs/volunteer opportunities.	Human Resources, DAS Leadership	Time, staff	Communications Manger, HR Manager, PRC Coordinator	Jan. '24 – Dec. '24	number of organization disseminating job postings

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Goal 4: Increase access to veterinary care for Fairfax County residents.

One Fairfax Area(s) of Focus: 18. Other

Countywide Strategic Plan Community Outcome Area(s): Empowerment and Support for Residents Facing Vulnerability (ESRFV)

Relationship to Countywide Strategic Plan Strategies/Metric(s):

Strategy ESRFV 4. Use all available sources of data to identify and understand emerging and existing vulnerabilities, in order to proactively engage impacted residents, identify service gaps and efficiently allocate resources.

Actions	Stakeholders	Resources/ Supports	Responsible Parties	Timeline	Performance Measures
<p>4a. Create a low-cost urgent care clinic for vulnerable populations have accessible veterinary care when their pet becomes sick. Create application and appointment frameworks, fee schedule.</p>	<p>Pender Veterinary Centre, DAS Leadership, PRC Manager</p>	<p>Buy-in from veterinary practices, time, staffing, funding</p>	<p>PRC Manager, PRC Coordinator, Pender Veterinary Centre</p>	<p>Jan. '24 – Dec. '25</p>	<p>Number of pets receiving care, number of animals relinquished to the shelter due to access to veterinary care, track neighborhood demographics for pets utilizing program and being relinquished to the shelter.</p>

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Goal 5: Expand access to affordable, pet-inclusive housing for Fairfax County Residents. Lack of pet-inclusive housing is one of the top reasons pets become unnecessarily homeless.

One Fairfax Area(s) of Focus: 2. Housing policies that encourage all who want to live in Fairfax to be able to do so, and the provision of a full spectrum of housing opportunities across the county, most notably those in mixed-use areas that are accessible to multiple modes of transport.

Countywide Strategic Plan Community Outcome Area(s): Housing and Neighborhood Livability (HNL)

Relationship to Countywide Strategic Plan Strategies/Metric(s):

Strategy HNL 2. Identify and create opportunities for additional affordable rental and homeownership units, including modifying housing policies, guidance and communication strategies for people facing barriers (low to moderate incomes, credit problems, past criminal history or prior evictions) in order to make a variety of housing program options accessible to all residents.

Actions	Stakeholders	Resources/ Supports	Responsible Parties	Timeline	Performance Measures
5a. Work with HCD and other stakeholders to develop a pet-inclusive housing policy for Fairfax County supported affordable housing units.	HCD, DAS Leadership	Collaboration and engagement from HCD and stakeholders	PRC Manager, DAS Director, HCD Leadership	Jan. '24 – Dec. '26	Number of animals relinquished to the shelter due to housing inequities. Creation of a pet-inclusive policy for affordable housing
5b. Develop resources and support for families with pets in crisis due to housing.	HCD, DAS Leadership	Collaboration and engagement from HCD and stakeholders	PRC Manager, DAS Director, HCD Leadership	Jan. '24 – Dec. '26	Percent of animals returned to families from the animal shelter through crisis program.

Department Director's Signature: *Rear Ceena*