

As the country continues to suffer the effects of COVID-19, the animal welfare field is evolving the way we respond to crisis and offer community support. Housing insecurity, although not new, has been exacerbated by the pandemic. The economic hardship faced by so many people will severely impact families and evictions are the next obstacle in the national crisis.

Endorsed by AWA, the HSUS, IHAC, HSVMA, UW-Madison Shelter Medicine, and now HASS!

## Introduction

An estimated 30–40 million renters are at risk of being evicted by the end of 2020 and with 72% of renters owning pets, the number of animals displaced with their people could be catastrophic. Additionally, pre-COVID estimations asserted nearly 10 million low-and extremely-low-income renter households were severely housing-cost burdened, meaning 50% or more of their income is spent on housing costs. Due to the economic consequences of COVID-19, another 1.5 million rental households are expected to become severely housing-cost burdened.

These predictions underscore the need for shelters and other animal services providers to ready a response, offer services that will keep people and pets together, and/or provide temporary solutions to ensure families stay intact.

In coming months, many families will face the heart-wrenching decision of choosing between a place to live and the pets they love. Human Animal Support Services has created this toolkit to provide you with tangible ways to respond in your local area, region, and state in collaboration with The Association for Animal Welfare Advancement and The Humane Society of the United States. Together, united as the animal welfare sector, we can do our part to minimize the trauma and devastation caused by the impending eviction crisis.

## Engaging Employees

An important first step to prepare for this inescapable challenge is communicating with your employees so they are aware of the eviction crisis and its implications for your organization. Share the potential challenges and ask for their recommendations on how to create an organized response. Engaging staff in the problem solving and preparation for this response is vital to gaining support for new or expanded programming. Check out this Navigating the Housing Crisis Webinar presented by **HSUS** and **HASS** on the eviction crisis that includes background and historical information that can provide your employees with a better understanding of the current housing crisis in the US: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UeM2d77RGf0>

## Engaging Volunteers

Next, meet with your volunteers and donors so they are also engaged in the journey. As with any crisis, clear, consistent communication with all stakeholders is essential to navigating the challenges effectively. Once a supportive structure is created, you can start focusing on developing solutions to support the community.

## Engaging the Community

Talking to community members about your programming is critical. As people reach out or enter the shelter for assistance or with the intent to surrender their pet, asking the right questions, and responding with kindness and understanding, will help determine the best course of action for each individual situation. Training key staff and volunteers on how to provide this new level of support is paramount to success. Proactively letting the community know your organization is a resource will ensure fewer surrendered pets and greater community trust. See this example of program promotion from the **Monadnock Humane Society**:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mATP4-m7Eu6udxji--H3Twlivdfe1gKN/view?usp=sharing>

**Success story: Guilford County Animal Services** saw the need for more resources to keep families together in Greensboro's Glenwood Community. Guilford staff members frequently responded to concerns about loose dogs and a need for food assistance. To better close the gap, Guilford is leasing a space within Glenwood. Community members will know where to go for help and can walk up and knock on the door. Branching out and being a presence for change in these communities is essential to supporting people and animals. [Link to post](#)

## Phase 1 Summary

In this first phase of the toolkit, you will find resources on how to shift old protocols and implement new ones to better support human-animal families facing eviction and possible separation in your community. With funding and staffing being the most probable challenge in implementing new programming, this first phase of the toolkit is focused on what shelters can work on first using their existing networks and resources. In addition, you will find sample resources shared by HASS pilot shelters across the US that have already started shifting their work in response to the eviction crisis and keeping more pets with their people together, in general.

**Resource guide structure:** in each section you will find recommendations broken down into actionable steps. With each action step, we have listed the necessary tasks that staff and high level volunteers can take to contribute to completing the action step, as well as tasks that can be assigned to any volunteer in your organization. We understand volunteers may not be legally allowed to do these tasks depending on the region, so we recommend you assign these tasks to the appropriate people, as you see fit.