



# ***Back Where They Belong***



***Removing Barriers to RTO/RTH to Get  
More Animals Back Where They Belong***

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CARE - Companions and Animals  
for Reform and Equity



Maddie's® Million Pet Challenge  
UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program





## Practices and Policies

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- Know where to find and identify practices and policies.
- Know how and when to modify practices and policies.
- Know how to develop new practices and policies.



Resource: USA.gov Local  
Governments Search Tool

<http://tinyurl.com/D2B2Resources>



## Case Example

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Deborah, a new manager at a shelter, is at a loss about why **policies don't seem to be working** at the shelter. Others state, ***"this is the way we've always done it."*** When reviewing local ordinances and old SOPs, however, she realizes that **despite a major change in local demographics, the same shelter policies have been in place for 30 years.**





## Recognizing and Reducing Bias in RTO

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- Identify resources to assist you in identifying bias (we all have it).
- Engage community to identify and minimize bias.



Resource: CARE REDI Certification

<http://tinyurl.com/D2B2Resources>

## Removing Barriers

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- Barriers ultimately harm animals and those who care for them.
- Few understand the full impact of barriers.
- Many resources exist to help shelters reduce barriers (a win-win for all).



Resource: California Ability to Pay Form

<http://tinyurl.com/D2B2Resources>



## Case Example

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Joan's cat, Bo, was impounded for running at large, and makes it to the shelter to reclaim him the same day. There, she's told that in order to reclaim Bo, **she must pay \$50 in fines and fees before she can have him back**— no exceptions. She doesn't get paid until Friday, which is one day after the stray hold. Despite her best efforts, she is unable to get the \$50 in time. **The actual cost to shelter for housing Bo during this time was \$150.**





## RTO Over the Phone

**Case example: Wanda was recently hospitalized.** Her grandson, who agreed to watch her dogs, Star and Stella. One day, he accidentally left the door open, letting Stella out. Before he realized the mistake, a passerby from another neighborhood had already seen and picked Stella up, taking her to the shelter. **Unable to prove ownership, the grandson was unable to get Stella back.** Wanda tried to call from the hospital to no avail. **By the time she was released, Stella had already been adopted out, and Wanda's health was further at risk.**

**Sample policy:** "An animal may be reclaimed by any person who has obtained the written or verbal permission of the owner to reclaim the animal, or by any person who is a legally appointed agent for the owner or keeper. Verbal permission must be provided by the owner to the shelter."



Study: Impact of Pet Care Needs on Medical Decision-Making among Hospitalized Patients

<http://tinyurl.com/D2B2Resources>





## Offer Free Transport

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- Remember, “back home” may take a variety of forms, but it is still home to the animal, and often much better than the alternative.
- Identify transportation options proactively, and seek the help of transport volunteers.

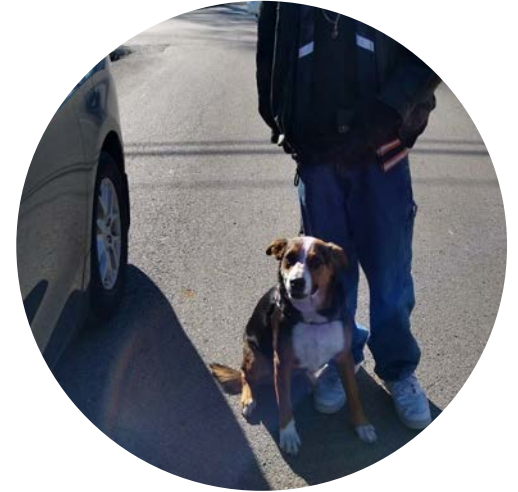




## Case Example

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Seeking human shelter during the cold after a recent eviction, an **unhoused couple made the difficult decision to surrender their beloved dog Penny, so they could access a human shelter that didn't allow pets. Penny did not adjust well and was slated for euthanasia.** The shelter called the couple to let them know. Fortunately, **the shelter allowed volunteers to transport Penny “back home” to the couple, on the sidewalk outside of a local library.** Learning of their story, a community member offered to foster Penny until the cold snap was over. More than one year later, the couple remains unhoused, but Penny is still alive and content with the people she's always known and loved.





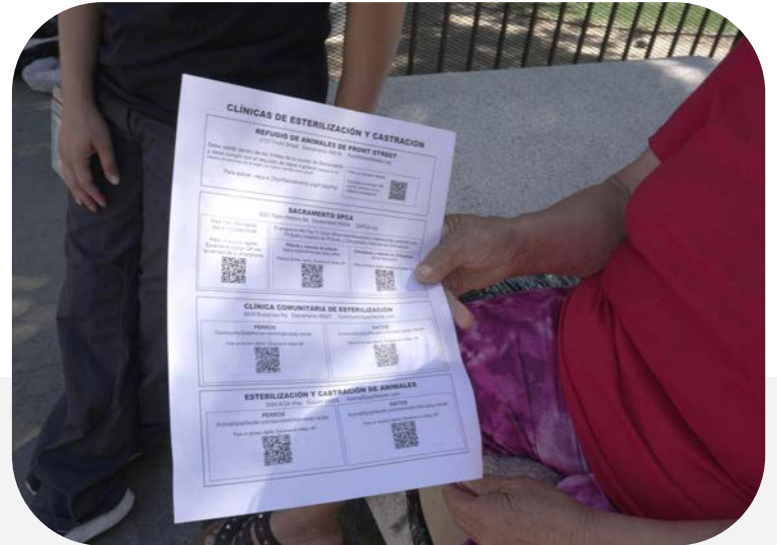
## Understanding Demographics

Understanding demographics= fewer intakes, euthanasias, potential for increased community support.



Resource: Language Line Services  
(translation, interpretation, etc.)

<http://tinyurl.com/D2B2Resources>

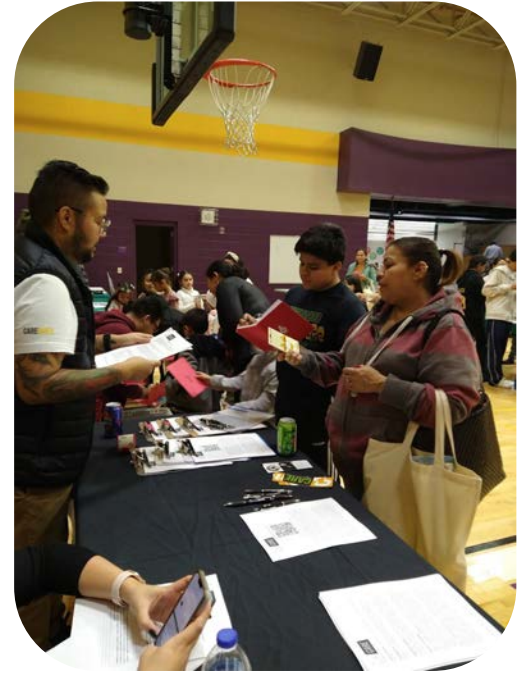




## Case Example

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Davi, an English language learner recently immigrated with his beloved companion pet, Paçoca, for a job that required proficiency in Portuguese, their native language. **Davi learned about low-cost services for veterinary services at the municipal shelter, but was unable to take advantage of them due to language barriers.** Because it typically operated in a silo, apart from human service agencies, the **shelter was unaware of translation services** and funding opportunities available to all municipal service providers (including the shelter).



## Communicate in Multiple Languages

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- Seek to include staff members and volunteers who speak languages that are representative of the community.
- See who provides local translation services to other agencies and organizations.





## Case Example

**Case example:** Travis was recently pulled over and **arrested on an outstanding warrant for a minor offense**. His **dog, Polo, was sitting on the back seat at the time of arrest and was eventually impounded at the local shelter**. Travis would like Polo back but was not given information about Polo's whereabouts or how to be reunited with him. **Travis was released from prison three weeks later. By that time Polo had been adopted to a new family.**

**Sample Provision:** The arresting officer should make a reasonable effort to ensure that animals or pets under a person's care will be provided with adequate care when that person is arrested. This is only required when there is no person to provide care and the arrestee is expected to be in custody for a time period longer than would reasonably allow him/her to properly care for the animals. Relatives or neighbors may be contacted, with the owner's consent, to care for the animals. If no persons can be found or the owner does not consent, the appropriate animal control authority should be notified. (Red Bluff PD Policy Manual).

*Work to understand your community's needs and reasons they can't reclaim their pets and work to remove those barriers*



## Punitive Mindset

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Some outcomes of a punitive mindset:

- More euthanasia
- Fewer adoptions
- Increased operating costs
- Damaged community trust
- More intakes





## Resources

- USA.gov Local Governments Search Tool
- CARE REDI Certification
- California Ability to Pay Form
- Impact of Pet Care Needs on Medical Decision-Making among Hospitalized Patients
- Language Line Services (translation, interpretation, etc.)



<http://tinyurl.com/D2B2Resources>





# Thank You!

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