### Finding Shelter for the Homeless and Their Companion Animals: Implications for administrative change

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#### Introduction
- About 1.56 million people, or about 0.5% of the U.S. population, use emergency shelters each year.
- One out of 50 children or 1.5 million children will be homeless each year.
- There are 57,849 homeless veterans, or 12 percent of all homeless adults. Just under 8% are female.
- Texas, California and Florida have the highest numbers of unaccompanied homeless youth under the age of 18, comprising 58% of the total homeless under 18 youth population.
- Homelessness affects men more than women. At least 70% to 85% of all homeless are men (AHAR, 2015).
- Studies of companion animals of the homeless have demonstrated improved human cardiovascular health, reduction in stress, decreased loneliness and depression, and facilitation of social interactions among people. Adversely, giving up companion animals has been found to have detrimental effects on overall health (Lee & Willson, 2017).

#### Methodology

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<th>Discussion</th>
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<td>- Qualitative description design using a mixed method approach for data collection.</td>
<td>- purposive sampling with a snowballing technique. No incentives were offered for participation.</td>
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<td>- The Facilitator Structured Interview Guide framed by a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis.</td>
<td>- High levels of pet-attachment may cause difficulty finding housing as shelters may refuse to house homeless with companion animals or the homeless may refuse placement if companion animals are not allowed.</td>
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#### Site Details
- Sites 5 Urban and 5 Rural (N=10)
- Administrators for 6 months to 14 years

#### Companion Animals (Dogs)
- ADA defines a service animal as dogs who are trained to work or perform tasks for people with physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or mental disabilities (ADA, 2017).
- These are considered working animals, not a pets.
- Companion Animals (Dogs, miniature horses, cats, birds)
- Companion animals provide stability through psychological, physiological, and social benefits.

#### Purpose
- The purpose of this study was to explore facilitating space for animal companions with homeless shelter administrators.

#### Aims
- To understand present policies and practices for sheltering companion animals.
- To understand the impact sheltering companion animals may have on shelter management.

#### Results

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#### Summary
- **Central Concept**
  - Homeless persons have a strong, unyielding bond with their companion animals that over-rides personal needs.

- **Over-arching Theme**
  - Homeless with companion animals have difficulty finding housing or employment and will refuse opportunities for placement if companion animals are not permitted, thus impacting the decision-making process of exiting homelessness if terminating the human/animal relationship is required.

#### Conclusions
- Companion animals play a significant role in effecting change or providing stability to the homeless.
- High levels of pet-attachment may cause difficulty finding housing as shelters may refuse to house homeless with companion animals or the homeless may refuse placement if companion animals are not allowed.
- Some shelters will accept the homeless and their companion animals.
- Findings have implications for point of care agencies to tailor services to the needs of homeless persons with companion animals to support improved health outcomes.
- Healthcare providers could use their political voices to affect social and financial actions to support homeless facilities abilities to shelter companion animals.

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