

Successful Animal Shelters:
It's Not Just About the
Money

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Myth Busting

- Rural shelters are not disadvantaged in budget, staff, volunteers
- Numbers of full time staff do not impact shelter activities
- Higher budgets do not increase shelter activities and services or improve outcomes
- Age of the facility does not affect activities, services, or outcomes
- Open intake status does not affect activities, services, or outcomes
- High resource shelters come in all types
- High resource shelters do not necessarily have better outcomes

Animal Shelter Challenges

- 70 million stray cats and dogs
- 324,500 to 748,913 relinquished annually
- 3 to 8 million animals in shelters
- 5,500 euthanized per day
- 388,381 euthanized in 2016
- 13% of gross intake euthanized
- \$8 per capita spent on shelters annually



Research Questions

- What is the extent of use of best practices?
- What traits, programs and activities are most strongly associated with positive outcomes?
- What should shelters do to foster better outcomes?

Methodology



Shelter Data

- Survey: all 165 licensed shelters in Michigan
- Response rate 56%
- Shelter Activity Reports 2012-2015
- Topics: traits of shelters
- Aspects of shelter operations
- Site visits: 8 shelters
 - 4 with highest save rates
 - 4 with most improved save rates

Best Practice Guidelines

- ASV
- NACA
- ASPCA
- HSUS
- SAWA
- Prior research

Shelter Traits

- Capacity
- Budget
- Personnel: staff and volunteer
- Open or limited intake
- Public or Non-profit
- Urban, suburban, rural

Practices Measured

- Maintenance
- Data Management
- Population Management
- Animal Care
- Health Protocol
- Volunteers
- Animal Enrichment
- Adoption Practices
- Staffing and Training
- Community Relations

Outcome Measures

- Save rates 2012-2015
- State inspections 2013-2016
- Complaints 2013-2016
- Survey of perceived success

Data Limitations

- Relies on State reporting forms
- Inconsistent reporting of owner euthanasia
- Inconsistent reporting by age
- Inconsistent classifying of returns
- Non-reporting
- Inspections not done in all years
- Limited number of complaints
- Limited scope of inspections
- Little variation in inspections and complaints

Shelter Profile Interval Data

	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	Std. Deviation
Age of organization	37	29	4	133	27.93
Age of facility	25	17	1	100	22.05
Dog capacity	38	26	0	250	43.42
Cat capacity	54	40	0	200	47.03
Other capacity	07	04	0	60	11.09
Full time employees	06	02	0	90	12.26
Part time employees	05	02	0	30	6.36
Administrative staff	02	01	0	12	2.70
Animal care staff	07	05	0	60	9.60
Medical staff	01	00	0	30	4.23
Volunteers	74	30	0	700	126.24
Volunteer Hours	1,436	500	0	174,000	2972.87
Annual budget self reported	\$407,142	200,000	\$4,500	\$6,000,000	\$849,383
Total expenses	\$584,976	\$214,471	\$16,727	\$5,424,438	\$963,373
Total assets	\$1,475,898	\$622,020	\$,5203	\$11,941,252	\$2,369,212
Total revenue	\$690,558	\$354,237	\$20,728	\$4,894,126	\$1,018,438
Contributions and grants	\$447,969	\$48,486	\$15,018	\$2,700,678	\$647,736

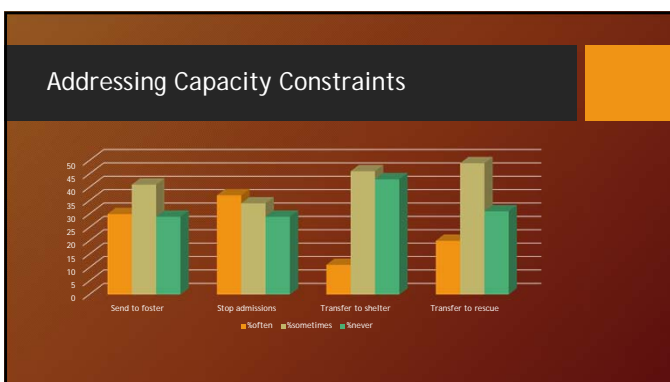
Shelter Profile Nominal Data

	% Yes
Open Access	33
Limited Access	34
County Shelter	34
City Shelter	10
Nonprofit with municipal contract	23
Nonprofit without municipal contract	41
Friends-of model	03
For profit	01
Have a mission statement	93
Have an external Board Directors	74

Best Practices









Volunteer Activities

Most Used		Not Used	
Activity	Percent	Activity	Percent
Dog Walking	58	Euthanasia Decisions	92
Cat Comforting	55	Behavior Plans	69
Community Events	51	Post-op Monitoring	69
Fund Raising	45	Adoption Decisions	67
Foster Care	37	Clinic Staff	66
Grooming/Cleaning	37	Behavior Testing	63

Dog Enrichment Activities

Offered Regularly		Not Offered	
Activity	Percent	Activity	Percent
Outside play yard	82	Prison training	71
Chew toys	70	Read to calm	68
Enrichment toys	65	Running program	62
Behavioral training	37	Agility training	62
Individual behavior plan	31	Pack walks	56
Foster care	29	Inside play area	52

Adoption Fees

	%high	%moderate	%minimal	%not at all
Flat fee	88	06	01	04
Ability to pay	03	09	26	62
Sales/special promotions	16	27	30	27
Breed	22	21	25	32
Nature of adopter	15	22	24	39
Length of stay	13	22	24	41
Cost of medical invested	04	16	21	59
Reduction for senior animals	39	25	19	17
Reduction for health issues	20	29	32	19
Reduction for pit bull mixes	06	11	28	55
Reductions for black	00	08	31	60
Premiums for puppies	25	05	02	69
Premiums for kittens	22	10	02	66
Premiums for pure bred	10	03	04	83

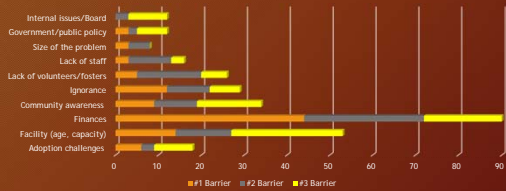
Comparing Practices to Guidelines

- Most best practices are widespread across different types of shelters
- Limited fostering to stay under capacity
- TNR not common
- Pain management not widespread
- Limited in-service training for vets
- Sterilized animals not marked
- Limited staff training on animal handling and compassion fatigue
- Few efforts at volunteer input
- Cat enrichment more uniform than dog enrichment
- Limited opportunities for shelter breaks
- Overreliance on flat fee schedule

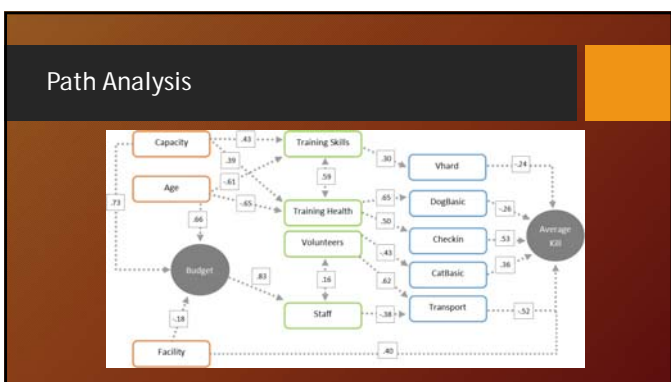
Explaining Positive Outcomes



Reported Barriers to Success



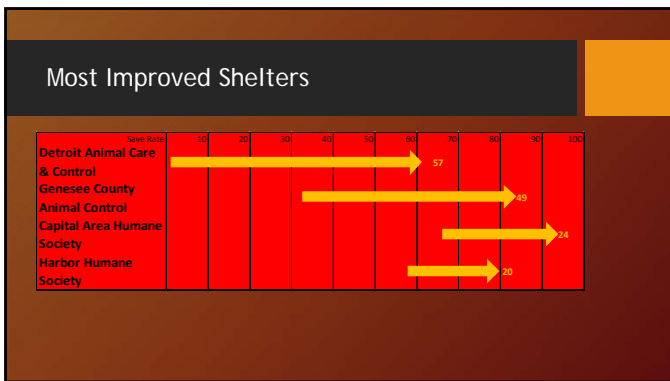




Change in Save Rates

	B	Std. Error	Beta	Sig
Transfer	.06	.03	.17	.09
Facilitators	-.07	.04	-.18	.07
Breed	-.48	.19	-.26	.01
Constant	.23	.19		.10

R² = .13







Harbor Humane Society Path to Success



CAHS Path to Success



What Shelters Can Do



Most Important Activities

- Enhanced adoption services
- Active transfer program
- No dog breed labeling
- Volunteers used for hands-on activities
- Isolation of incoming transfers
- Staff training
- More human-animal interaction

What Is Not Important

- Indicators of success not correlated
- Perceived success not related to save rates
- Nature of shelter not related to outcomes
- Capacity and resources not related to outcomes
- Personnel resources compensate for limited other resources

Low Hanging Fruit

- Isolate incoming animals
- Network
- Use volunteers
- Remove breed labels
- Foster
- Be present in community
- Basic enrichment
- Train staff and volunteers on handling
- Reduce adoption red tape
- Microchip
- Follow-up