

# 2024 AAHA COMMUNITY CARE GUIDELINES FOR SMALL ANIMAL PRACTICE

Veterinary teams want to help every pet that comes through the door...



...but they're often constrained by factors out of their control.

The AAHA Community Care Guidelines help practices expand their offerings so they're not left with the painful decision to turn a patient away or have a client decline care.

What if practices could serve more patients and families with diverse needs by collaborating with nonprofit organizations and the community beyond their walls?

Community care is a creative way of thinking about health care that mobilizes all available resources in a community. It is a collaborative, noncompetitive care model that places the family (people + pets) at its center.

Community care uses all the tools and resources available to veterinary practices, including:

- Using a spectrum of care approach
- Recognizing and mitigating barriers to care
- Adopting a family-centered approach to health care, including a commitment to keep pets with their families whenever possible
- Collaborating with nonprofit practices like shelters, spay and neuter practices, animal welfare organizations, and community practices
- Redefining what "gold standard" practice means to bring care options to more pets and families



"Gold standard" veterinary care has traditionally meant the most expensive or technologically advanced options. The new definition of gold standard includes:

- A range of diagnostic and treatment options
- Accessibility
- Consideration of the client & pet's contextual needs
- High quality and safety of care
- High likelihood of positive outcomes for the patient
- Evidence-based medicine



Learn more about innovative strategies to bring veterinary care to all pets in the 2024 AAHA Community Care Guidelines, available at [aaha.org/community-care](https://aaha.org/community-care)

