








**TABLE 2.1**  
**Barriers to Accessing Veterinary Care**

Barrier	Description
<b>Cost</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Client is unable to pay for the care that is offered using the financial tools available at the practice.</li> </ul>
<b>Housing and Rentals</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many pet caregivers face challenges finding or maintaining rental housing.</li> <li>Pet medical issues (e.g., new urination or defecation issues, barking or other vocalizations, and unusual waking hours) can compound the risk of eviction.</li> <li>In a 2019 survey of 1,299 pet-owning renters, 72% reported difficulty finding pet-friendly housing, with low-income owners struggling the most.</li> </ul>
<b>Veterinary Deserts</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The community exists within a “veterinary desert” (rural or urban region with low access to veterinary care), necessitating travel over long distances to acquire care.</li> </ul>
<b>Transportation</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There may be little or no public transportation to get to the clinic for care and follow-up. Pets may not be allowed on many types of public transportation. In a 2019 study by The Street Dog Coalition, only 3 of the 50 biggest US cities allowed all well-behaved pets to ride public transportation, 10 did not allow any pets to ride (except service animals), and the other 37 only allowed small pets in carriers that fit under the seat (Geller J. The Street Dog Coalition, unpublished data, 2019).</li> <li>Although major ride-share companies publish policies stating service animals are permitted, whether a driver agrees to transport a pet is up to them. Some ride-share drivers may refuse to transport pets or add surcharges like cleaning fees.</li> <li>Pet-specific transport solutions, like pet taxis and ambulances, can be cost-prohibitive for families.</li> </ul>
<b>Language</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families may speak a language different from the one primarily spoken by the veterinary team.</li> <li>Although clinics may remedy this in their own practice, language can be a barrier to the family accessing other services in the community care network.</li> </ul>
<b>Access to/ Familiarity with Technology</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clinics may require online appointments or communication, but not all households have access to technology.</li> </ul>
<b>Disability/ Accessible Spaces</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The mobility of family members/caregivers and accessibility of practice spaces (ramps, assistance with pet carriers, accommodations for medications [e.g., cannot administer pills]) may affect ability to receive veterinary care.</li> </ul>

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**The 2024 Community Care Guidelines for Small Animal Practice are available at [aaha.org/community-care](https://aaha.org/community-care).**

These guidelines were prepared by a Task Force of experts convened by the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) and were subjected to a formal peer-review process. This document is intended as a guideline only, not an AAHA standard of care. These guidelines and recommendations should not be construed as dictating an exclusive protocol, course of treatment, or procedure. Variations in practice may be warranted based on the needs of the individual patient, resources, and limitations unique to each individual practice setting. ©2024 AAHA.

