Best Friends

Training Playbook:
Managed Intake
or Admissions

Introduction

The following guide is designed to provide an overview of managed intake and help you implement a managed intake program at your agency. A common concern and misconception about managed intake is that scheduling non-urgent intakes will reduce services to the community and pets will be abandoned elsewhere. Agencies all over the country, in varying regional and demographic locations, have successfully implemented managed intake and disproven these misconceptions. Utilizing their experiences, standard operating procedures, and best practices, the following information will help you create your own lifesaving protocol for this instrumental program.

Program Overview

Managed admission or managed intake can be thought of as the "how" and "when" of intake, but not necessarily the "who," and refers to any form of regulating or scheduling non-urgent intake. Managed intake may involve simply limiting drop-off hours, closing night drop boxes, scheduling intake appointments or developing a formal process of surrender interviews with extensive efforts to provide support and alternatives. It also encompasses building programming around services outside of your shelter to support alternatives to intake and pet retention to reduce intake overall, so when entry to the shelter is actually needed, it is done in a controlled way.

All agencies, even those with an obligation to take in all animals presented to them (either by law, contract or policy), and the communities they serve can benefit from managed admission because rather than saying "no" to an animal, they are simply saying "not right now" and ascertaining what other options besides intake may be available. With managed intake, agencies can smooth out fluctuations in the intake of pets, plan for appropriate staffing, and match capacity to provide humane care. Managed admission is often associated with serving more pets and people, rather than fewer, over time.

Many agencies are concerned about public criticism around the appearance of reduced service hours. Keep in mind, however, that most citizens are not aware of the process for surrendering an animal until it comes time for them to believe they need the service.

When implementing a managed intake or admission program, make sure your website, social media, phone scripts and other public platforms accurately reflect the policies and procedures. Strengthening the availability of resources and intake alternatives via these platforms will offer the public access to support that may prevent the intake altogether. The public will turn to you, the experts, for help and to tell them what the policy is, and most citizens will follow the policy without complaint if they receive the same information consistently from all communication sources.

Here's a comparable example from the lives of most of us: Think of the last time you needed to go to the Department of Motor Vehicles. Prior to going, you probably looked at the website to find out what location offered the service you needed, what times the office was open, and what materials you needed to bring with you in order to receive services. Obtaining non-urgent service from an animal shelter should be no different.

There are two common options for implementing a successful managed admission program. Click on this link to determine which is best for your agency: *Humane Animal Control* manual, Managed Intake. The two options are:

- "Scheduled intake" means that the agency creates a schedule of how many pets they can take in and on which days of the week. Owner-surrender pets needing to come in are given an appointment based on availability in the schedule.

- "Owner-surrender hours" involves intake of owner surrenders only at certain times on certain days in the week.

With either option, intake staff need to counsel those wishing to surrender their pets to understand the reason and offer resources to try to help them keep the pet and/or find alternative placement for the pet, such as a rescue organization or another home, to avoid having the pet enter the shelter.

Program Composition

The following describes workforce needs, internal and/or external resources, and any other additional steps that should be taken into consideration for successful program implementation:

- Research your community to gain insight into what resources are available to assist individuals with keeping their pets and to strategize about building out programs where none currently exist. Examples of these resources include:

  o Pet food banks

  o Behavioral assistance (Reach out to APDT and IAABC to connect with those studying animal training and behavior. Students need volunteer hours to get certified.)

  o Nonprofits that help with veterinary care costs, housing deposits and other financial needs

  o Veterinarians in the community who offer discounted services and other low-cost veterinary care (preventative, diagnostic, trauma, illness)

- - o Pet-friendly housing options

  - o Lost-and-found resources online, such as local Facebook pages and other social websites, such as Nextdoor.com.

  You can also gather excess supplies (leashes, collars, crates, etc.) to have on hand to assist with owner retention.

- Compile a list of shelters and rescue groups in your community that may be able to take animals. Be sure to include any specific intake requirements that they have (species, specific breeds, seniors, etc.).

- Print out flyers from Adopt-A-Pet.com and have them available at intake and in the field with officers. Also, be sure to post a link to this site on your website.

- Create a list of resources to give to owners to help them showcase their pets for adoption in the local community and on social media.

- To help shift public thinking, consider what message you are sending by using the word "intake" for the admissions department, which implies that the animal will automatically be taken in. Consider updating to something that implies help, such as pet support, pet resources or animal help. When updating the name of that department, make sure all signs and references to it reflect the new community service–focused name.

- Update the forms you use for admitting animals to gain more insight into their individual personalities, needs, likes and dislikes, and do so in a way that encourages accurate information. The more information you collect from the owner, the easier it will be to find a new home if the animal is admitted. Be sure to have this new form available online.

Sample Procedure and Program Information Documents

Now that you have a general understanding of managed intake, the following documents may act as templates as you implement this program at your own shelter or facility. Keep in mind that there is no exact or perfect form of implementation. Using the considerations and program composition notes above, you should use the following only as guidelines or building blocks when creating your own standard operating procedures or documents (both internal and public).

If you need further assistance or clarification, please reach out to your regional specialist, regional director, or the Best Friends shelter outreach team at team2025@bestfriends.org.

- Fort Wayne Animal Care & Control's Managed Intake/Re-homing Community Awareness Campaign
- Richmond SPCA: Public Form – Admissions Information & Rehoming Resource Packet
- Austin Animal Center: Animal Interaction Form (During Surrender)
- Austin Animal Center: Human Interaction Form (During Surrender)
- Charlotte Mecklenburg Animal Care and Control: Public Information Doc – Animal Surrender
- Charlotte Mecklenburg Animal Care and Control: Staff Training & SOP – Safety Net Program
- Charlotte Mecklenburg Animal Care and Control: Owner Surrender Form/Information Sheet
- Charlotte Mecklenburg Animal Care and Control: Sample Data Year Over Year (great resource for naysayers)
- Lynchburg Humane Society: Admission Standard Operating Procedure & Intake Forms (Pet Help Program)
- Oregon Humane Society: Managed Intake SOP (full)
- Joint Animal Services (JAC)'s Coordinated Entry System