



# Access to Veterinary Care for Low-Income Populations

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Animal companions are essential for the emotional, physical, and social benefits of a wide range of different people. Pets provide humans with a non-judgmental companion and in return, humans provide for and nurture their animals. However, care for a companion animal can be nearly unattainable without a comfortable income. In low-income populations accessible veterinary care that is affordable can be lacking. There needs to be support systems in place that address the welfare of low-income humans and their animals. Through qualitative analysis of interviews with veterinarians, I examine existing systems that provide support for impoverished pet owners to determine the best practices to better serve low-income populations.



# Literary Analysis

- 57% of households and 25% of the homeless population have some sort of companion animal.<sup>1,2</sup>
- Pets have been proven to provide social, emotional, physical, and mental benefits to humans.<sup>1</sup>
- Access to veterinary care can be costly, and low-income owners are much less likely to utilize a vet clinic.<sup>3,4</sup>
- Specific programs have helped make vet care more accessible, but there are still boundaries due to financial struggles, cultural barriers, and ultra specified programs.<sup>4-8</sup>



# Current Scenario

- There are organizations that offer veterinary help for low-income families.<sup>9,10</sup>
- Complex applications, widely online only access, and strict case-by-case provisions leave many without this access.<sup>11</sup>
- Cultural barriers, exclusion of unlicensed animals and animals lacking full histories of vaccinations, and limited clinic opportunities only make this distinction more severe.<sup>1</sup>



# Veterinary Perspective

- There is limited access, usually provided at the clinic level alone.<sup>11</sup>
- Animals provide people with happiness, an improved quality of life, and a strong relational bond.<sup>11</sup>
- Financial disadvantages, cultural, racial, transportation, and languages barriers all play a role.<sup>11</sup>
- Changes need to be made at the clinic, organization, and national levels.<sup>11</sup>
- The business model of veterinary care leaves many out, and that is not the answer for the wellbeing of humanity.<sup>11</sup>



# Response

- While some veterinarians agree that animal companions are an important resource for low-income populations to have access to, others think an owner should only be permitted to have a pet once they are financially able to provide for every situation.
- If actions were taken to make vet care more affordable, low-income populations would be better able to take care of companion animals and be more financially enabled to provide this.



# Conclusion

- The care and safety of the animal is essential when introducing any pet into a family.
- Low-income families should be able to access the wide array of proven benefits having an animal companion can provide.
- Making changes at each level of veterinary care, through each clinic, organization, and even at the national level is the greatest way to implement positive change that will be effective for low-income communities.



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