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## **USC Researchers Release Impact Report from California’s Pet Assistance and Support Program**

*Study found significant increase in access to shelter for pet owners experiencing homelessness*

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A new USC study finds that funding for pet-inclusive emergency housing is a critical and effective intervention within homeless services.

USC’s [Homelessness Policy Research Institute](#) analyzed PAS provider spending and outcome reports from 2020-2024, finding increased access to shelter among pet owners, and substantial provision of pet healthcare.

“Our findings show that when people don’t have to choose between getting help and keeping their pets, they’re far more likely to engage in shelter and housing services,” said Nicolas Weinmeister, a researcher with the Homelessness Policy Research Institute who led the project. “The Pet Assistance and Support program removes a critical barrier and helps reach people who have long been excluded from the homelessness response system.”

California disbursed \$15.75 million in Pet Assistance and Support funds, since the program’s inception, to 243 sites across the state, enabling them to open their doors to 489 unhoused pet owners, on average, annually. A study to evaluate the initiative was conducted in collaboration between the USC [Homelessness Policy Research Institute](#), [My Dog Is My Home](#) and the [ASPCA®](#) (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals).

The Homelessness Policy Research Institute found increased access to shelter among pet owners, substantial provision of pet healthcare, and 886 exits to permanent housing, or approximately 20% of program participants. This is higher than the statewide permanent housing placement rate, which the CA Auditor estimated at 13% in 2024.

“The Pet Assistance and Support program shows that when providers are given flexible, targeted resources to serve people and their pets together, they are able to reach individuals who were previously locked out of emergency shelter and other critical services altogether,” said Christine Kim, founder and executive director of My Dog Is My Home. “Investing in pet-inclusive solutions strengthens the homelessness response system.”

Main takeaways from the study show that Pet Assistance and Support enabled homeless services providers to serve more unhoused clients, many of whom were previously unreachable due to pet-prohibitive policies or budget constraints; helped provide essential animal care and veterinary services, behavioral support sessions and pet-friendly amenities; and allowed providers to hire additional staff solely focused on pet-owning clients, leading to more individualized support.

“Pets play a pivotal role in the lives of their human caregivers, regardless of their income level or housing situation, and unhoused people with pets will often refuse assistance if it means giving up their pet, an outcome that no one wants to see,” said Susan Riggs, senior director of housing policy for the ASPCA. “We hope these findings encourage other states to follow suit in

providing support to the people and pets who need it most to ensure no one has to choose between keeping their pets and securing affordable, stable housing for themselves.”

Pet Assistance and Support was established in 2019 by the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to address this gap in California’s homelessness response system. Over 4 years, Pet Assistance and Support has served 4,407 participants across a provider network of 37 organizations.

[Download](#) the full report.

### **About the USC Homelessness Policy Research Institute**

Established with support from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and the Home For Good Funders Collaborative, the USC Homelessness Policy Research Institute (HPRI) is a collaborative of over one hundred researchers, policymakers, service providers, and experts with lived experience of homelessness that accelerate equitable and culturally informed solutions to homelessness in Los Angeles County by advancing knowledge and fostering transformational partnerships between research, policy and practice. For more information, visit [hpri.usc.edu](http://hpri.usc.edu).

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