

# Supporting youth transitioning out of care with pets

This document shares the results of a November 2023 gathering of TRRUST members.

Local data<sup>1</sup> shows that pets play an important role in the lives of youth transitioning out of care. They can contribute to improving physical and mental health, and can increase feelings of safety and connection. However, having a pet can cause financial challenges and be a barrier to accessing housing and services. Supporting youth transitioning out of care with a pet requires multiple partners and a collective approach.



## TRRUST members are already supporting youth transitioning out of care with pets. Examples include:

- 🐾 Pet food and pet-friendly services are available at Directions and Covenant House.
- 🐾 Low-cost spay and neuter programs are offered by BC SPCA and Paws for Hope.
- 🐾 Knowledge about youth from care with pets is shared through McCreary/TRRUST research findings.



## TRRUST members identified what else is needed:

- 🐾 More pet-friendly housing options.
- 🐾 More places where youth can safely leave their pet(s) overnight.
- 🐾 Pet-friendly regulations (e.g., limitations on the amount that can be charged for a pet damage deposit).
- 🐾 Low-cost vet care, medications, and grooming services.
- 🐾 Training for program staff on working with pets to reduce negative experiences/accidents.
- 🐾 Pet-friendly spaces that are also safe for those who are not comfortable around pets.
- 🐾 Clear, well thought out policies and guidelines in place before programs become pet friendly.
- 🐾 Pet care training for youth (including obedience training for dogs).



## TRRUST members identified barriers that will need to be addressed:

- 🐾 Service providers' concerns about potential risks of developing pet-friendly services (e.g., liability of someone getting bitten, accommodating those with allergies or fear of animals).
- 🐾 Lack of resources for agencies to accommodate pets (e.g., supplies, appropriate spaces).
- 🐾 Many staff are unaware of the important role that pets can play for youth, and of ways to ensure services can safely accommodate pets.
- 🐾 Lack of training and education for pet owners.

<sup>1</sup>[mcs.bc.ca/pdf/searching\\_for\\_a\\_place.pdf](https://mcs.bc.ca/pdf/searching_for_a_place.pdf); [mcs.bc.ca/pdf/ytoc\\_metro\\_vancouver.pdf](https://mcs.bc.ca/pdf/ytoc_metro_vancouver.pdf); [mcs.bc.ca/pdf/connections\\_ii.pdf](https://mcs.bc.ca/pdf/connections_ii.pdf).



## TRRUST's role in improving supports for youth transitioning out of care with pets:

- 🐾 Raise awareness of the importance of pet companionship for youth transitioning out of care.
- 🐾 Facilitate the development of policies and procedures which help to keep everyone safe around pets.
- 🐾 Share relevant resources and examples of policies and programs that are working well.
- 🐾 Educate youth and service providers about pet care, including safe ways to interact with pets.
- 🐾 Advocate for the needs of youth with pets, including pet-friendly housing and services/spaces.
- 🐾 Build connections between service providers who are offering/considering offering pet-friendly services.
- 🐾 Incorporate consideration of pets into the work of each TRRUST cluster.

### Specific clusters could:

#### Housing cluster

- 🐾 Raise awareness of the housing needs and challenges of youth with pets.
- 🐾 Create a pet-friendly landlord network (similar to the friendly landlord network), which educates and supports landlords to accommodate youth with pets.
- 🐾 Offer pet damage deposits so that youth can secure housing.
- 🐾 Ensure that youth have access to pet-friendly housing.
- 🐾 Advocate for group homes, shelters, and foster homes to take pets.



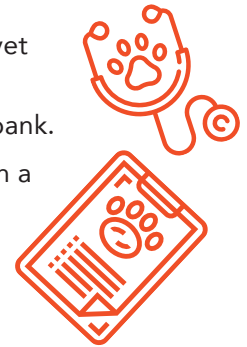
#### Education cluster

- 🐾 Raise awareness in schools of the positive impact of pets on youth.



#### Meaningful connections cluster

- 🐾 Offer a one-time emergency fund for vet bills, etc.
- 🐾 Develop a pet food bank.
- 🐾 Develop and maintain a list of animal related resources.



#### Shared measurement cluster

- 🐾 Collect and share data about youth transitioning out of care with pets.
- 🐾 Maintain current database of services and supports available for youth with pets.

