

A Framework for Rehoming Programs

The Opportunity

When people feel supported and not judged, and when they reach out about rehoming a pet, outcomes improve for everyone. More people come forward earlier, fewer pets enter the shelter system in crisis, and organizations build deeper trust with their communities.

What the Data Shows (Home To Home data)

- **Behavior Intervention informal study:** Early pet behavior intervention via SMS for pets being rehomed for behavior reasons: a 1-month pilot involving ~1,000 pet owners looking to rehome. When prompted by a 21-day post-listing check-in, 80% of responses from pet owners who received pet behavior support did not end up surrendering their pet to a shelter as part of an informal study by Home To Home and Petcademy.
 - **Housing Instability & Pet Rehoming: A Collaborative Analysis -**
<https://heyzine.com/flip-book/8e50607851.html>
 - **Petcademy and Home To Home® Launch AI-Powered Rehoming Support for Pet Owners -**
<https://www.einpresswire.com/article/902745204/petcademy-and-home-to-home-launch-ai-powered-rehoming-support-for-pet-owners>
 - **Recent survey (full analysis pending):** In a survey of 4,379 community respondents, 53% said they felt "very positive" when asked to describe how they feel about rehoming — animals going from one home to another, skipping the animal shelter — as an option for pets. 69% responded "very positive" or "positive" overall.
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Key Rehoming Principles

- Rehoming is a normal life decision, so we should treat it as one.
- Lead with empathy and options, not process and requirements.
- Make it easy for people to ask for help before a situation becomes a crisis.
- Have a dedicated rehoming program or pathway: a clear, findable process your community knows they can access before ever considering surrender.
- Share resources broadly: pet food assistance, behavior support, temporary fostering, and low-cost vet care can help people keep their pets when rehoming isn't the only option.
- Connect your community to a rehoming platform so owners can find new homes directly, without going through the shelter.

Rehoming Framework

This framework follows that experience from a pet owner's perspective, and highlights what organizations should have in place at each stage.

Stage 1: First Contact. What does someone hear when they reach out? This is where language matters most, the first conversation sets the tone for everything that follows. Consider how your team talks about rehoming in that first call, email, or website visit, whether rehoming is presented as an option early, and whether staff and volunteers are trained to respond with warmth regardless of the reason someone is reaching out.

Stage 2: Their Options. What's actually available to this person? A well rounded program offers more than one path and makes all of them visible. Consider what rehoming tools or platforms this person can use, whether retention resources like food assistance, behavior help, vet care, or temporary fostering might change the outcome, and who on your team helps this person navigate their options.

Stage 3: Support Along the Way. What happens while this person is figuring it out? The process doesn't end after the first conversation. Consider whether someone on your team follows up, what hands-on support your organization offers, and whether community resources or partners can support this person along the way.

Stage 4: The Outcome. Consider how your organization talks publicly about rehoming outcomes, whether storytelling continues to reflect a no-shaming, supportive tone, and whether outcomes are tracked so impact can be measured and shared.

Managing a Rehoming Program: What It Takes to Sustain It

A rehoming program works best when it's treated as an ongoing function, not just a one-time initiative. These are the areas worth building out and revisiting regularly.

Ownership and Roles

Identify who or which team manages day-to-day rehoming inquiries and how responsibilities are shared across intake, behavior, and communications teams. Clear ownership prevents the program from quietly fading once initial momentum wears off.

Consistency Across Touchpoints

A pet owner might encounter your rehoming program through a phone call, a website visit, a social media post, or a conversation with a volunteer. Consistency across all of these in tone, information, and next steps builds trust and avoids mixed messages.

Training and Refreshers

Staff and volunteer training shouldn't be a one-time onboarding step. Build in regular refreshers, especially as language and tools evolve, and create space for staff to ask questions or raise concerns about specific cases.

Partnerships and Referral Networks

A program is stronger when it's connected to a network: rehoming platforms, national partners, other AWOs, community organizations, housing and healthcare partners, and retention resources. Regularly revisit who's in that network and whether referral pathways are still accurate and active.

Tracking and Measuring Outcomes

Success can mean a lot of things. Number of pets rehomed directly, reduction in shelter intake, owner satisfaction and strengthening community relationships, or something else. Data makes it possible to improve the program and to make the case for continued investment.

Best Practices

Internal Communications and Staff Training

- Establish shared language guidelines that apply across all departments: intake, helpline, front desk, social media, outreach, and administration.
- Train staff and volunteers to respond to rehoming inquiries with the same warmth and neutrality they would bring to an adoption inquiry.

Intake and First Contact

- When someone calls or emails about rehoming be opened ended and supportive "Tell me a little about your situation"
- Normalize the conversation early: "A lot of families reach out to us when things change. We're glad you called."
- Give people information about all available options: not just shelter intake. Including community rehoming platforms, foster networks, and partner resources, pet retention and other community resources (pet food pantry's, behavior help, etc)

Website and Digital Presence

- Make rehoming information easy to find and not buried under adoption or other content, avoid requiring people to navigate through surrender forms to find rehoming resources.
- Use a dedicated landing page or section that explains options
- Link to community rehoming platforms directly from your website.

Community and Partnerships

- Identify local organizations that serve people in transition: housing agencies, healthcare providers, social services, senior care facilities, military family support programs and provide them with ready to use language.
- Work with your rehoming platform to see what resources they have to support pet owners.

Social Media

- Share success stories that include various perspectives: the previous owner, the new adopter, shelter staff, etc.
- Invite community members to share rehoming posts to extend reach and normalize
- Respond to comments on rehoming posts with the same neutral, supportive tone you use in direct conversations. Do not engage with or amplify shaming comments. It is okay to hide or remove comments from users who do not uphold this standard.

Material to share with your community

HOW TO REHOME YOUR PET: A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

Finding your pet a new home is easier than you might think. Here's how to get started.

Step 1: Create a profile for your pet.

Share a few photos and some basic information like your pet's personality, habits, what kind of home would be a good fit. This helps potential adopters get to know your pet before they even meet.

Step 2: List your pet on a rehoming platform.

Home To Home® is a platform that connects you directly with people looking to adopt. Your pet's profile goes live, and interested adopters can reach out to you.

Step 3: Hear from and meet interested adopters.

You'll receive messages from people interested in meeting your pet. Take your time and ask questions.

Step 4: Make the transition.

Once you've found the right match, you can share helpful information, routines, favorite toys, and vet records to help your pet settle in.

EXAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POST COPY

Normalizing rehoming

Life changes. Sometimes that means finding a new home for a pet, and that's okay. If you're navigating this, we're here to help.

Moving directly from one home to another means fewer changes all at once, making it easier for your pet to feel comfortable in their new home.

When pets go straight from one home to the next, they bring their routines and habits with them, helping them feel secure from the start.

Community invite

Looking to adopt? Pets on [[Home To Home link](#)]