



*Decrease their numbers. Elevate their status. End their homelessness.*

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## United Spay Alliance

United Spay Alliance (USpA) is a national nonprofit 501(c)3 animal welfare organization dedicated exclusively to promoting affordable, accessible, and timely spay/neuter services as the solution to the crisis of cat and dog homelessness.

### **A Collaborative Referral Network of State Programs**

As the nation's only active, **collaborative referral network of state programs for affordable spay/neuter services and education for the public**, USpA provides resources and education to effectively develop, maintain and strengthen state spay/neuter programs and coordinate delivery of spay/neuter services in their communities.

Our current coalition of 29 state programs each has assembled, in their respective states, a network of veterinarians, clinics and agencies providing affordable sterilization for cats and dogs to aggressively address the pet overpopulation in America. We empower our independent, nonprofit affiliates by providing them resources, networking and education to develop, strengthen, coordinate and deliver affordable spay/neuter in their communities.

While a few national groups have created an online search for clinics, these databases are often not kept up-to-date. Pet parents who call a clinic only to find it closed may put off spaying and neutering their pets for another day. Through our state affiliates, pet parents not only receive current information on spay/neuter resources but can talk to state leaders about any worries or concerns they might have about sterilizing their pets. For these state leaders, it's personal. It's not the number of calls to the state spay/neuter hotline or hits on the website that indicate their success; it's the number of pets that actually get fixed in their respective states.

And that's the point of USpA: we know there is no one-size fits all approach to addressing pet overpopulation and every state is different in terms of what it needs to help animals. The resources needed for Tennessee or Louisiana aren't necessarily the resources needed in Maryland and Oregon. In our increasingly homogenized world, USpA is intentionally looking for ways to keep things statewide and local. We don't think anyone can do a better job of solving the pet overpopulation problem than the people who live in the state. These people know first-hand where and what spay/neuter resources are needed for their state's unique needs, and we stand ready to support their efforts.

As a network, we maintain direct relationships with our state leaders to strengthen the network and stay in touch with their needs. We issue periodic surveys, receive updates on active services, and work to provide them communications, program and educational resources to reach their respective communities. Together, we identify where spay/neuter services are needed most and look for the support needed to help these communities.

### **Education for Pet Parents**

When pet parents take advantage of low-cost spay-neuter in their communities, they are taking an

important step in keeping unwanted pets from being abandoned on our streets or relinquished at animal shelters, often at risk of euthanasia.

USpA is committed to helping pet parents find affordable access to spay/neuter and wellness services, and we reach these public constituencies through our state affiliates. These pet owners often have questions about their pet's surgery – *Does a veterinarian perform the surgery? Is anesthesia used? Will my pet feel pain?* While the public may find some answers on the Internet, we have found that people who are this apprehensive about the procedure often need to talk to someone directly about their concerns before they will sterilize their pet. State affiliates provide important conversations and educational resources that help pet parents better understand the procedure and find affordable spay/neuter and wellness services in their communities.

Additionally, there are under-served regions in numerous states where affordable access to spay/neuter services is not available. Our state affiliates try to help pet owners find the closest resource, which may include a local spay/neuter clinic willing to visit the area with a mobile clinic or a transport program that picks up animals in that community and takes them to a stationary clinic. The most important thing is that once a person emails or calls for help, the affiliate works to make sure their pet gets sterilized.

### **Outreach to Animal Welfare Professionals**

Animal welfare organizations with spay/neuter facilities, spay/neuter clinics and private practice veterinary practices are essential partners to our affiliate programs in providing affordable and quality spay/neuter services.

#### *Animal Welfare Organizations*

While you might think that all animal shelters these days sterilize their dogs and cats before adoption, it isn't true everywhere yet. There are still some animal shelters across the country that adopt pets out before sterilizing, hoping the adopters will return to get their pets fixed at a later date or referring them to local spay/neuter clinics with a voucher for their surgery. There are always people who don't return to get their pet fixed, leaving adoptable pets vulnerable to the same circumstances that probably lead to their being relinquished to the shelter in the first place.

We encourage all animal shelters to sterilize their dogs and cats before adoption and encourage established animal welfare organizations to open high volume spay/neuter clinics or subsidy programs at their facilities.

#### *Spay/Neuter Clinics*

Spay/Neuter clinics are our essential partners with the state affiliates. They provide the key resources pet parents need to get their pets sterilized and protected through wellness services, like vaccinations and preventatives. But few people know that many of these clinics offer transport programs and mobile spay/neuter clinics.

#### *Private Practice Veterinarians*

The prevailing wisdom used to be dogs and cats should have at least one litter before being fixed or that they shouldn't be sterilized until they were six-months-old. We have worked hard to dispel these old practices, since studies have shown fixing a pet, especially a cat, at least one month earlier can have a significant impact on reducing accidental litters.

USpA has vast collective expertise in spay/neuter, access to new procedures and research, including non-surgical trends that can help our affiliates get the word out to pet owners. We've already helped

reduce the suffering of cats by helping communities solve overpopulation through science that addresses the feline reproduction cycle. We expanded our educational outreach to the public-at-large as well as private practice veterinarians for a national early spay/neuter program called **Fix Felines by Five Months (FFF)**. Piloted in two of the poorest counties in Maine with the highest cat populations, FFF has already yielded a 41% drop in area shelter intakes there.

While this campaign is endorsed by the American Veterinary Medical Association, there are still private practice veterinarians that hold fast to the “wait until they are six-months-old” model. We educate veterinarians on the AVMA’s endorsement of the campaign and encourage them to begin promoting the Fix by Five campaign with their clients. Through surveys with veterinarians in five states, we learned that as many as 41% planned to adopt the Fix by Five model.

We need to continue this outreach until we reach the entire veterinary community, which involves education and interaction with veterinarians to update them on this model of care that saves lives.

### **Expanding Publicly-Funded State Spay-Neuter Programs**

USpA is working with and mentoring several state animal groups to create long-term, sustainable funding for affordable spay/neuter. We’re showing them the ins and outs of writing up legislation, determining where the monies will come from, and how to work with legislators to get legislation passed, especially for low-income pet parents. Just like with our state affiliates, we believe that one-on-one discussions with leaders in the states’ animal communities are the most likely to result in legislative successes for creating spay/neuter funds for the future.

### **Managing Future Access to Spay/Neuter Services**

USpA believes spay/neuter reflects our moral and compassionate responsibility toward sentient companion animals. To that end, our work is to inspire a shift in society’s views of spay-neuter education by reducing a pet parent’s concerns and helping them find low-cost resources in their communities. It’s not as sexy as a topic as adopting pets, but it’s a key factor in reducing euthanasia and ensuring every pet can find a home.

Funding is always needed to ensure access to low-cost spay/neuter services and wellness services are continually managed and expanded for success. We are updating our model to meet the increasingly complex 21st century landscape in animal welfare. Many key regions in the country are “spay/neuter deserts” where no affordable spay/neuter can be found. These regions need services, plus supportive communications, resources, marketing and mentoring services to reduce animal overpopulation and suffering.

Capacity building will enable USpA to better support state leaders with mentoring, marketing tools, program and educational resources and advocacy, to keep spay/neuter outcomes on a positive trajectory – particularly in poor communities. By supporting USpA, we can build a national awareness of the vital importance of spaying and neutering pets and the role it plays in saving lives.

For more information, visit [www.UnitedSpayAlliance.org](http://www.UnitedSpayAlliance.org) or contact our Program Director at [ProgramDirector@UnitedSpayAlliance.org](mailto:ProgramDirector@UnitedSpayAlliance.org).