



How to approach and offer assistance to our homeless friends

The Basics

1. No judgement
2. Accept a “no” and walk away - you can’t force assistance on someone
3. Make it about their pets, if they want to share details about themselves that’s up to them
4. Take it slow, you won’t resolve all of their problems or concerns in a single visit
5. If you say you’ll be back, go back
6. Listen

What you can offer them

- Dog food
- Leash, Collar, Harness
- Dog coat or t-shirt
- Tarp
- Dog Bed, towel, blankets
- Flyers with information about free vet services (spay, neuter, chip, vaccines)
- If they can get an ESA letter from a case worker we can provide them with a service vest

Advantages to them

- Dogs that are microchipped can be returned if they are stolen or lost
- It is illegal to have loose dogs, and unfixed pets - getting supplies and spay/neuter can help prevent them being hassled by Police or Animal Control

Trust is the most important factor in any relationship and when you approach someone experiencing homelessness you are offering a relationship, even if it’s short or temporary.

The more people see your face the more they will trust you.



Fears

- You will take their dog from them
- You want something in return

How to approach someone while remaining safe, and being non threatening.

If you're driving or passing by leave your car (bike, etc) close by and call out

"Can I help you and your dog with anything?" or "Do you need any food for your dog?"

Do a quick visual assessment and get any supplies out of your car that you can see they might need - collar, leash, food.

Supply items should be stored in your car in an easily accessible way that doesn't prevent you from hopping in and leaving quickly if the encounter doesn't go too smoothly, and should also not require you to displace your vehicle just to access a leash or flyer.

Approach slowly but be friendly. Remember that many homeless people have been harassed simply for existing and may be suspicious of you.

It is common that the first exchange doesn't go really well.

Make the dog the focus of your attention - it's often our homeless friends' only source of companionship and it can be easier for us to communicate and when we take the focus off of the individual and place it on the dog (or in some cases cat!)

Introduce yourself by name.

If your new friend seems open to talking a little make sure to give them a flyer with your Google Voice number on it, and explain about the free medical services for their pets: spay/neuter, rabies shots, and microchipping so that if they are stolen, we can safely help get the pet back to them.

Resist the urge to lecture, assume the person doesn't have all the information, not that they are wilfully ignoring the laws, and health risks about unfixed pets.

If appropriate, explain that if they can get a letter from mental health services or a counselor stating that they are under treatment & that their dog is an Emotional Support Animal, we will purchase them a service vest which will help them take their pets into stores, on public



transport, and also help them get onto a list for housing (which we can direct them to local services in their area at a later date).

Drop your flyer and supplies behind. The first visit may be short and awkward but follow up within the same week with additional supplies or just to check in.

It is not quick process, and it does require follow-ups and a gentle touch.

Everyone can relate to wanting to feel like we matter and that there is hope for things to get better.