

**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES™**

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**THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES
ANIMAL SERVICES
CONSULTATION PROGRAM**

**MIAMI-DADE POLICE DEPARTMENT
ANIMAL SERVICES UNIT**

Miami, FL

**The Humane Society of the United States
2100 L Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) believes that the objective examination of shelter procedures and operations is best accomplished through independent consultations. The HSUS is the nation's largest animal protection organization, and is uniquely positioned to evaluate the effectiveness of local animal care and control services, offer recommendations, and provide assistance with implementation.

Recognizing the need within the animal sheltering community for professional, standardized analysis, The HSUS has developed the professional Animal Services Consultation (ASC) program, a service created to effectively assist local animal care and control agencies (both municipal and nonprofit) in managing their way to success.

In December 2003, The HSUS was asked by the Miami-Dade County Manager's Office and Office of the Inspector General to provide a proposal for a review of the Miami-Dade Police Department Animal Services Unit. The HSUS submitted a proposal for a comprehensive review and evaluation of its current operations, services, and programs with an eye to the future. A site visit was conducted June 15-18, 2004.

Each HSUS ASC is tailored to meet the client's needs by utilizing a team of experts to conduct an assessment of services and suggest feasible solutions, as may be necessary, to a wide breadth of problems. To assist Miami-Dade County, The HSUS utilized a team with specific expertise within the field of animal care and control. The team for this consultation included the following HSUS representatives:

Kim Staton, HSUS Consultant
Shelter Facilities and Operations

Karen Terpstra, HSUS Consultant
Shelter Facilities and Operations

John Snyder, HSUS Senior Director, Companion Animals and Equine Protection
Management and Administration

Jim Boller, HSUS Consultant
Field Services and Animal Control

Krista Hughes, HSUS Assistant Manager, Animal Services Consultation Program
Site Coordinator/ Report Development

Along with this final report, we have compiled a reference materials binder, which contains sample forms, relevant articles, studies, and other information to help further support our recommendations. Footnotes marked by an asterisk (*) are resources that have been provided separately along with additional books, CD ROMs and catalogs.

Notes:

The HSUS team would like to applaud Miami-Dade County for taking this initial step towards improving services for the people and animals in Miami-Dade County. We are optimistic that positive change will result from the collaboration of those overseeing, working for, and working with Miami-Dade Police Department Animal Services Unit.

Included in this report are many recommendations, some requiring substantial change, and we understand that it can be overwhelming. To start, we suggest reviewing the report several times and forming a task force in order to prioritize the recommendations (See section 2, Task Force). Some of the recommendations can be implemented immediately with just a change in process, while others may take months or even years. It will be an ongoing process.

By nature our reports focus on areas that need improvement, but the observations throughout this report are not meant to be critical; rather they should be viewed as a snapshot of where the agency is and used as a departure point to where management wants it to go. In addition, we do our best to highlight areas that are commendable. Unfortunately, some agencies that have received evaluations have been unfairly besieged due to individuals and groups taking observations and recommendations out of context and using them to target individual shelter staff. Some of the issues discussed in this report are not uncommon in sheltering agencies around the country, and The HSUS urges those reading the report to use it as a tool for positive change, not a weapon.

We would like to add that the observations and recommendations made in this report should in no way be used to lay blame at the feet of Miami-Dade Police Department Animal Services Unit staff members. Although every shelter has its mix of marginal, satisfactory and exceptional employees, they are most often working with little or no oversight, training and equipment, and yet are still getting the job done. It is the responsibility of the county, in conjunction with shelter management to make the suggested changes.

Please note that hereafter the Miami-Dade Police Department Animal Services Unit will be referred to as "MDPASU." The HSUS would like to thank the people involved with Miami-Dade County and MDPASU for their assistance and cooperation with The HSUS ASC team. We have been extremely pleased to assist in their efforts to improve programs and services for both the animals and humans within their community, and remain available as a continued resource in the coming months. With that in mind, The HSUS respectfully presents the following report.

2.0 TASK FORCE

The development of a task force to review this document and create a working plan of action is a very important step to take. After reading this report, the task force should recommend priorities and action items with due dates. The document the task force develops then becomes MDPASU's working document to implement the recommendations in this report. The structure of people selected for this task force is critical.

This process will help MDPASU prioritize and plan for the future, with not only this report, but with other changes and plans for MDPASU down the road. This process has been used successfully with other agencies that have received evaluations.

The recommendations included in this report are based on what we believe are best practices in the field of sheltering. Miami-Dade County officials and MDPASU management, in concert with the task force, should prioritize and weigh each recommendation against available resources and decide whether or not that recommendation is to be implemented as-is or used as a departure point for what is more realistic for them.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Put together a committee of no more than seven members that are willing to commit up to four months and who work well in group settings. It is important to appoint unbiased individuals to the task force. The task force should include the following:
 - A shelter staff representative
 - A veterinarian with a strong shelter medicine background

- Other members may include:
 - An individual with legal strength
 - Public health officials
 - City budget officials
 - Community members with expertise in short-term and strategic planning
 - Those interested in animal welfare, but without personal agendas

- ✓ If the agenda is not moving forward due to disagreement, strongly consider hiring a professional facilitator.

- ✓ Convey the responsibilities of the task force, which include:
 - Reviewing the report
 - Using a form, divide up and prioritize each recommendation ¹

This process allows the agency, through the task force, to evaluate the recommendations

1 Task force matrix example

as they relate to each other.

- ✓ Develop a reporting mechanism so the recommendations of the task force can be presented and MDPASU can begin to implement the changes.
- ✓ Create written guidelines outlining expected behavior and conduct for task force members. These guidelines should include stipulations if meetings are missed.
- ✓ A memorandum of understanding (MOU) should be created that outlines the above sections and the role and outcome of the taskforce. All task force members should be required to sign the MOU so it is understood that the task force is to be a professional undertaking.

3.0 SHELTER MAINTENANCE

3.1 SHELTER EXTERIOR/ GROUNDS/ LANDSCAPING

Observations:

The original building was built in 1973 and the West Wing was added in 1985. The shelter exterior and grounds were not in bad condition but there was a lack of cleaning, litter removal, and landscaping.

There was an abundance of litter, especially cigarette butts, throughout the grounds including the front public parking lot and under the trailer located at the end of public parking area. Overflowing ashtrays and trash cans may have contributed to this problem.

The front entrance area was in need of cleaning. Although this area had to accommodate a lot of traffic every day, it was evident that keeping this area clean was not a priority. The sidewalk was dirty and discolored and The HSUS team noticed a dirty diaper that sat in the driveway in front of the entrance for the better part of a day before someone picked it up.

The front glass doors were in need of cleaning due to smudges and handprints. Understandably, it is very difficult to keep these doors clean in light of the traffic that passes through them; however, the condition of the doors indicated that they may not have been cleaned for some time. The dirty doors contributed to the overall unsanitary appearance of the main entrance area.

Landscaping outside the building was limited. There were some planted trees at the entrance of the building and some dispersed throughout the parking area.

The exterior of the shelter was in reasonably good repair for its age but needed some minor repairs and preventative maintenance. There were some areas where paint had chipped and needed to be repaired and repainted. And a significant number of the overhead lamps in the front entrance area were not working. These light fixtures were also dirty which restricted the amount of light provided.

The HSUS team was told that ground maintenance, including landscaping, was contracted through an outside source.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Assign a staff person to closely monitor the grounds and remove litter and cigarette butts on a daily basis. Although litter removal may be included by the landscaping company, it is not practical or cost effective to have an outside party come every day.
- ✓ Clean the light fixtures and replace burnt out bulbs or repair as necessary to ensure that all lights are fully operational.
- ✓ Trash cans and ashtrays should be emptied at least once daily to ensure the public has an appropriate place to discard trash items and cigarette butts. Consider purchasing

“smoker’s outpost” type cigarette butt receptacles to replace the current cans. They hide and hold hundreds of butts and won’t necessarily need emptying daily.

- ✓ Clean the front entrance glass doors at least once daily, inside and out.
- ✓ Pressure wash the sidewalk and driveway as needed to minimize the accumulation of dirt and staining. This may be as often as monthly.
- ✓ Make it a priority to keep the grounds neat and aesthetically pleasing by keeping the grounds mowed in the areas that need it, especially the parking lot area and around the mobile trailer. Adding some more shrubbery and flowers will enhance the grounds.
- ✓ Thoroughly inspect the outside of the building and repaint or repair areas in need (Also see section 3.8, Facility Maintenance).
- ✓ If MDPASU continues to contract for landscaping services, it is recommended that some of the above recommendations be outlined in the contract so these duties can be carried out appropriately.

Discussion:

First impressions are lasting and as visitors approach the shelter, the impression they receive should be warm, friendly and inviting. A community’s animal shelter is the heart of an animal care and protection program and facilities and grounds should be maintained so that they are attractive and welcoming to the public. The external maintenance levels of the physical building itself can be – or can appear to be – reflective of how strong and caring the internal programs are. Currently, the building’s exterior requires only minor improvements.

3.2 EXTERNAL AND DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE

Observations:

External directional signage to MDPASU was inadequate. The HSUS team was unable to locate directional signage on any of the main roads near the shelter. However, a professionally constructed sign located by the roadway on shelter grounds could be seen from a distance. There was also a large sign above the main entrance, which was also professional and attractive.

There were several hand made signs posted on the glass front entrance doors which listed adoption hours, vaccination hours, and information about citations and civil violations. Professionally made signage at the front entrance included the shelter’s hours of operation.

Approximately 30 feet down the sidewalk to the left of the front entrance were two “receiving pets” signs directing the public to the animal receiving area. Animals were not able to be relinquished in the main lobby. The “receiving pets” signs were not easily seen from the front entrance and The HSUS team observed several members of the public standing in line at the main lobby counter to relinquish pets only to then be directed back outside after waiting in line for several minutes or more.

A Miami-Dade Police logo (a badge) was on several of the signs including at the entrance, on a large banner inside the lobby area, and on the animal control vehicles, etc. Although it appeared that the logos were similar, some said Miami-Dade Police and others said Animal Services Miami-Dade Police.

The public entrance to the parking lot was gated and during hours of operation the gates were left open. Outside of the gate were two signs both which had the agency's name, address, and hours of operation. No phone numbers were provided for after-hour emergencies, and hours for adoption and reclaim were not listed. The HSUS team saw several people come into the lobby in the morning only to be told that they would have to come back at 11 a.m. Having this information on the perimeter signs would prevent them from having to make an unnecessary trip into the building.

There was a large adopt-a-pet banner affixed to the fence as you enter the parking lot. This was a nice touch. The fence surrounding the building had several faded "bad dog" signs attached to it.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Provide directional signs (similar in quality and style to other professional municipal signage) at all major intersections off the main road.
- ✓ A logo designed specifically for the agency should be included on all signs. This will aid in brand recognition among MDPASU visitors, supporters and the general public.
- ✓ Remove the hand made signs from the front doors. Affix a small permanent sign on or near the front door including MDPASU's logo, name of the organization, various hours of operation (including adoption and reclaim), phone number and any number to call for after-hours emergencies.
- ✓ The signs outside the perimeter gate should have information directing people to alternate resources (i.e. wildlife rehabilitation, emergency veterinarians, etc.) when the shelter is closed. This sign should also have an animal control phone number for after-hour emergencies and the hours for adoption and reclaim.
- ✓ Provide signage at the front entrance area to direct those relinquishing animals to receiving. These signs should be professionally constructed and located in conspicuous areas so as not to be overlooked.
- ✓ Remove the "bad dog" signs around the perimeter fence. They give a negative connotation instead of fostering the idea that MDPASU is a place to adopt a loving family pet.

Discussion:

An animal control facility is often the first place people seek when they need advice about any animal related situation. Not only is it important that people be able to easily locate the facility, but there should be instructions on what to do when the facility is closed, so that people do not abandon their animals out of frustration. Exterior signage should be designed and installed with

