



DeKalb County – American Rescue Plan Funding

Scope of Work

Background

Ahimsa House is the only 501c3 nonprofit organization in Georgia that is dedicated to addressing the link between family violence and animal abuse by providing wraparound services to help pet-owning victims of domestic violence seek safety and achieve long-term stability. We are honored to be considered for \$50,000 of funding from Commissioner Spears.

Domestic violence (DV) occurs when one utilizes abusive behavior to maintain power and control over an intimate partner or family member. In addition to the detrimental effects on physical and mental health, abuse often results in victims missing work and becoming isolated from loved ones, and children are frequently used as a tool for manipulation. Pet-owning victims face additional challenges, with up to 89% reporting that their abuser threatened, harmed, or killed a pet, often doing so to prevent victims from fleeing or disclosing the abuse. Because of this danger and the limited availability of services, nearly 50% of victims report that they delayed seeking safety out of concern for a pet. Ahimsa House enables our clients to reach safety and stability by providing temporary care for pets while they escape and rebuild their lives. Our 24-hour crisis line and outreach program offer additional support and education for survivors – even those that do not enroll in our program.

DeKalb County served by two domestic violence shelters, both with limited capacities. Unlike the majority of DV shelters, both shelters are able to accommodate companion animals to some degree, which is a tremendous benefit to residents of DeKalb County. However, pet-friendly space is still limited, and access is often further restricted due to limitations on allowable species, breeds, and behaviors of clients' pets. Furthermore, many survivors -- including 50% of AH clients -- do not feel that a DV shelter is right for them, and opt to stay in other temporary accommodations, such as with friends or family.

Ahimsa House partners with both of DeKalb's DV shelters to provide additional support to shelter residents that have pets or other companion animals: we provide veterinary care, pet supplies, education and resources, pet deposits, and more for these shared clients. When clients are unable to utilize the pet facilities of these DV shelters or cannot locate another pet-friendly temporary accommodation, Ahimsa House provides up to 60 days of temporary housing for pets so their owners can seek safety in any location available to them. Pets are housed in and cared for by a confidential network of veterinarians, boarding facilities, and foster homes; this decentralized model means our Direct Services Program has no physical capacity and allows us to serve survivors regardless of location or access to transportation, and to customize services for each family's unique needs.

Proposed Use of Funds

Ahimsa House offers services aimed at 1. providing support to survivors in general to aid them in identifying and accessing resources and 2. relieving survivors of many of the barriers associated with seeking safety with pets specifically.



Oftentimes, Ahimsa House is the first contact a survivor makes with any social services agency because they want to ensure their pets can reach safety before they make any arrangements for themselves. Ahimsa House's 24-hour crisis line receives over 200 calls per month and not only provides information about our program and seeking safety with pets, but also offers numerous other services such as assistance applying for TANF/government benefits, legal advocacy, emergency financial assistance, and referrals to available services, support, and resources.

Approximately 88% of Ahimsa House clients utilize emergency shelter options that are not pet friendly, so we offer temporary housing for pets belonging to these survivors to enable them to access the available safe-housing options while they work to secure new employment and long-term housing. Ahimsa House advocates for clients in obtaining new pet-friendly housing and when new rental homes are secured, pays pet deposits; the upfront costs associated with securing new housing are already significant, but this is especially true for victims of domestic violence who likely experienced financial abuse and escaped with no assets. By offering these services, Ahimsa House helps increase the possibility that survivors can achieve longer-term security.

Ahimsa House also provides other services that are instrumental to enabling clients to access these housing-related services. Most temporary pet housing options utilized by Ahimsa House, as well as some long-term rentals for both people and pets, require that pets receive a basic level of veterinary care such as up-to-date vaccinations, sterilization surgeries, and regular use of preventative medications. Ahimsa House provides this care for all pets in our program, as well as treatment for illness or injury resulting from abuse or neglect as these costs would place an extreme financial burden on our clients and serve as a major setback in achieving stability. Because many clients do not have access to pet-friendly transportation, Ahimsa House offers taxi or rideshare rides to safety for clients and their pets. Short-term pet-friendly hotel stays are also provided for clients in immediate need of escape to allow them to search for a longer-term temporary housing option from a safer location.

Exact Services, Prices, and Methods of Service Delivery

The average cost to provide wraparound services for one DeKalb County client and their pet(s) is \$1,923, and the services provided for each case are customized based on the individual client's needs. Ahimsa House provides pet housing in a statewide network of foster homes, boarding facilities, and veterinary clinics. Foster homes bear lower costs and are utilized whenever possible, but Ahimsa House pays for boarding stays when foster availability, animal temperament, or health concerns necessitate this type of pet housing. The average length of stay in our program is about 42 days and approximately 79% of nights of safe shelter provided to pets in our program take place in boarding facilities, which cost an average of \$20.79 per night (per pet).

Veterinary care is also provided by one of the veterinarians in this partnership network; low-cost clinics are utilized if possible, but because drop-off at a veterinary facility is the first step for incoming clients, availability and proximity to the survivor must often be prioritized. The average cost of veterinary care for one client's pet(s) is approximately \$698.

All arrangements for pet housing, veterinary care, transportation, and hotel stays are made and paid for directly by Ahimsa House staff. The average costs of one rideshare ride and one night at a hotel are \$36 and \$157 respectively. Pet deposits are paid directly to landlords after the client provides a signed lease and pet addendum, and cost an average of \$483.



Ahimsa House typically receives an average of approximately 35 requests for services from DeKalb County clients each year. We expect this funding to provide wraparound services for about 26 clients at the average cost per DeKalb County case of \$1,923. On average, Ahimsa House staff spends approximately 15-16 hours on service delivery for each client.

| <i>Item</i> | <i>Cost</i> | <i>Number of Clients Served</i> | <i>Estimated Total</i> |
|--|-------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| Wraparound services to support a pet-owning survivor of domestic violence in achieving long-term housing security Services will be customized to the needs of each client and exact costs will vary accordingly. | \$1,923 | 26 (Approximate) | \$50,000 |
| Administrative Costs No administrative fees are requested. | \$0 | | \$0 |
| <i>Total</i> | | | \$50,000 |