

## Fact Sheet: **Street Outreach Services (SOS)/ Veterinary Street Outreach Services (VET SOS)**

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SFCCC's Street Outreach Services (SOS) program provides mobile health services directly to homeless people on the street and connects them to needed primary care services. SOS's Veterinary Street Outreach Services (VET SOS) project uses volunteers to provide free veterinary care for the companion animals of homeless San Franciscans as a way to reach out to their homeless guardians.

**Fact #1:** SOS & its VET SOS project travel in medical vans throughout San Francisco. Teams of doctors and nurses (SOS) and veterinarians (VET SOS), outreach workers, and volunteers create "clinics without walls" at soup kitchens, on city streets, and in parks. At the conclusion of a recent federal site visit, SOS was cited as a national model for its efforts to connect patients to primary care services and measure the success of its linkages.

**Fact #2:** Respect and understanding are keys to the success of SOS & VET SOS. By going directly to homeless people, the SOS & VET SOS teams build relationships of trust and break down barriers that keep homeless people from accessing care. Forty per cent (40%) of patients who receive a primary care referral from SOS connect to a regular doctor or clinic within 6 months. Over sixty per cent (60%) of referred SOS patients are connected to substance abuse treatment services.

**Fact #3:** At the suggestion of a former homeless patient, SFCCC began offering care to the companion animals of homeless San Franciscans as a way to reach out to their human guardians. In its first decade of service, the VET SOS project provided veterinary care to more than 4,500 animals, and human health information and referrals to more than 1,650 of their homeless guardians. In 2014 SOS received an award from UCSF's Community Partnerships Council to implement "Reaching People through Their Pets", in which SOS hosts UCSF residents to provide medical services at co-located SOS/VET SOS clinics in Bayview.

**Fact #4:** SOS & VET SOS serve as training sites for local universities, introducing over 40 future health care providers each year to homeless health issues and the importance of the human-animal bond in supporting wellness. In a recent survey, 85% of students/residents serving with SOS reported that the experience strengthened their ability to recognize and treat medical and psych-social issues of the homeless population and strengthened their interest to work in an underserved community.

*More Information? Feel free to contact us! [jgressman@sfccc.org](mailto:jgressman@sfccc.org) or 415-355-2220*