



# Prince George's "Youth Canine-Assisted Intervention Program"

## A Discussion Paper to Explore Building a Local Canine-Assisted Intervention (CAI) Hub

### *Credits*

*This Project was supported by The Canadian Foundation for Animal-Assisted Support Services (CFAS) so as to acknowledge the value of Prince George's Canine-Assisted Intervention Youth Program. By cross-pollinating local programs we were able to foster a collaborative culture, while celebrating unity in diversity. The participants shared commitment toward their clients and zeal for building synergistic relationships glistened like a diamond in the rough. Meeting in person made it even more evident that this is much more than a program, it is a community of caring citizens going above and beyond to make Prince George a healthier and safer place to live, work and play.*

*On behalf of the Foundation I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for persevering and contributing to this rich dialogue and shared aspirations of forming a local cohort and hub. In the words of Henry Ford; "Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success."*

*With appreciation, Joanne Moss, National Director, CFAS*

## Canine-Assisted Community Transformation (CACT)

Prince George has a population of approximately 71,973 (Statistics Canada census 2011), it is the largest city in northern British Columbia, Canada contributing to the province's economy and culture as a service and supply hub. Like other major cities, it is plagued by high crime rates and recidivism.

Canine-Assisted Intervention (CAI) programs are growing in popularity throughout Canada due to their versatility and the positive impact they are making to address crime and recidivism.

As such, Pawsitive Horizons, Corrections, John Howard Society and The Canadian Foundation for Animal-Assisted Support Services (CFAS) began a dialogue in the Fall of 2015 to discuss increasing the success rate of community re-integration, reduction of recidivism, and parole infractions.

Roadblocks to reintegrating offenders and reducing recidivism may very well become a thing of the past if CAI programs make their way into Prince Georges justice, corrections, healthcare, and social services sectors.

Consequently; a pilot project was launched late last Fall (2015) to explore the feasibility of building and developing a local *CAI Hub* model with the potential of replicating the model in other communities.

### Paws with Purpose



This paper is one of many ways we envisioned sharing our experiential learning's with others. Further, hubs could eventually be expanded to include other local Animal-Assisted Activities. Because dogs don't impose subjective expectations on the program participants a bond of trust begins to take root along with being

grounded in the present.

### Assumptions

Assumptions about the participants and potential outcomes are managed so as not to impose expectations, or try to produce certain results. CAI is a natural process whereby those facilitating the program allow things to unfold naturally rather than trying to force solutions. The dogs foster positive outcomes simply by being themselves – an important lesson for all to grasp.

### What We Invest

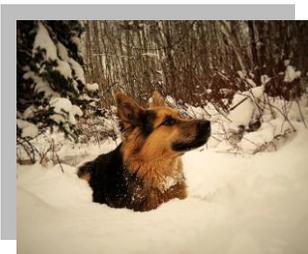
This program is resourced through the Youth Justice Fund. Veterinary services, dog food, and pet insurance are offered at a premium thanks to Trupanion and the Hart Family Vet Clinic. Pawsitive Horizons pays for the pet insurance and provides the dogs for the program. The support staff and case management team at Youth Custody invest their time along with the Youth Forensics psychiatric care team. In some circumstances, elders, family members and foster parents lend a hand.

Staff from Pawsitive Horizons invest their knowledge and expertise along with victim and court services and case management. Volunteers provide their time and talents to help care for the dogs.

### Activities

Activities include, but are not limited to dog grooming. The purpose of the grooming activities are to nurture problem solving, learn a job skills, working as part of a team, empathy, anxiety reduction and relationship building. The impact of these activities improve self-worth and social cognition. Furthermore, over time the team's interaction with the participants and the dogs fosters trust and real conversations.

*The City of Prince George's Bylaw Services Division enforces a variety of City Bylaws such as Animal Control. We would like to acknowledge and thank Bylaw Services Manager Fred Crittenden for his interest in and willingness to collaborate with the CAI Programs stakeholders to improve the quality of living in Prince George.*



**Living in the present is a gift!**

### Short-Term Outcomes (Three to Six Months)

The purpose of the program is to aid in the preparation for release and successful community re-integration. Successful outcomes are determined by reduced recidivism, employment, social, emotional and physical wellbeing.

In line with preparing for release, CAI is used in conjunction with therapy goals ('therapeutic aid' or 'therapeutic alliance'; this can be related to disclosure, the 'big three' barriers to intervention [program adherence, motivation, and communication], or simply a targeted goal) and/or with targeted goals associated with successful reintegration (reductions in anxiety, pro-social behaviours, empathy, self-efficacy, etc.).

Although not explicitly a goal, CAI provides social and emotional support, both of which are identified as important for reintegration.

### Mid-Term Outcomes (Six Months - One Year)

The problem with the six months to one year delineation is that the program duration is only 8 to 10 sessions, about once per week. The medium term is essentially looking at whether the changes are maintained post program completion.

It also follows that if the individual is released within this time-frame, community reintegration is usually more successful with CAI than without.

### Long-Term Outcomes (One Year and Beyond)

As lives are turned around there is less of a burden on the justice system and other community services. Resources are needed to conduct a three-year study to monitor the ongoing progress of the participants. While the potential for successful role-modelling is promising without a longer term plan there is no constructive way to introduce this concept without creating animosity and uncertainty between peers and gangs.

### Impact

The current impact is both encouraging and promising, because, it builds a rapport with clients. Canines in workplaces also boost the morale of employees and volunteers.

### Program Evaluation



Concrete evaluation criteria needs to be established to measure the success of the program, while taking into consideration a host of past and present influences such as learned behavior, abuse, the affects of trauma, overall health, undiagnosed

disabilities, pending legal proceedings, peer pressure, unemployment, etc.

### Program Development

Development dollars are needed to monitor, evaluate and report the long-term outcomes and corresponding impact so as to create best practices and bench marks.

Research is also in order to track how CAI programs actually reduce the burden on the justice system, corrections, social services and healthcare.

Factoring in the cost benefit of programs would help to provide benchmarks for planning, delivering, evaluating and improving this emerging sector.

One thing's for certain; the short and mid-term outcomes are good indicators that CAI programs build healthier communities and mend fences opening up a world of possibilities for and with the participants.

### Collaborative Research



In order to build a credibility chain to augment recognition within other sectors it is critical that CAI organizations and practitioners collaborate with as many stakeholders as possible. Working together could pave the way to job

creation for both the participants and the general public. By working together we could co-create a seamless continuum of CAI Programs across the country.

### Filling Gaps and Connecting the Dots

In order to address these gaps *The Canadian Foundation for Animal-Assisted Support Services (CFAS)* is working with Prince George CAI stakeholders and the surrounding area to develop the local hub model with the hope that it could eventually be replicated in other communities. In time, the model could be expanded to include other animals, activities, and programs.

This endeavor is intended to complement a national initiative known as the Victors Program. To launch the program a nationwide CAI environmental scan, funded by Justice Canada, commenced in January of 2016. [Read more...](#)

### About Us

[Pawsitive Horizons](#) strives to promote responsible pet ownership and caring. The majority of our therapy dogs are rescued. While responsible ownership does not solely involve rescues, Pawsitive Horizons strongly supports giving canines a second chance and providing them with the opportunity to realize their full potential.



### [The Canadian Foundation for Animal-Assisted Support Services](#)

(CFAS) invests in the human-animal bond to build healthier and safer communities for both people and animals.



### PG CAI Hub

There are many advantages to building local hubs with partnering organizations and service providers. To name a few; local groups can create nuances that resonate within and meet the unique needs of their respective communities. Working as a hub member means sharing knowledge, lived experience, and dialogue around best practices that shape meaningful programs to suit and meet the needs of residents. Moreover, hubs provide the opportunity to share resources and opportunities to build mutual capacity. Rather than competing with one another they can function as a cohort, while focusing on service excellence.

A local hub also makes it easier for donors and volunteers to get involved to support a number of organizations and activities through one engagement channel.

### Ask What's Possible not What's Wrong

Among other things, CFAS has worked diligently over the last 18 years to create a single-entry point for the public to access and share information and resources. In doing so, this space has contributed toward greater recognition of the human-animal bond within Canada's social fabric as one of its most precious natural resources. Further, the founder's definition for the bond is that it produces love just for being. *Why is this important? Because love changes everything.* Rather than dwelling on problematic issues and gaps, the Foundation's approach from the onset was to ask the stakeholders to consider what's possible. Answering this question is empowering people by enabling them to address weaknesses,

fears, gaps, and threats through a pro-active capacity-based lens.

### Sharing Capacity – The One Health for People, Pets, and Partners Initiative

CFAS launched its One Health for People, Pets and Partners Initiative to unite and engage stakeholders so as to build and sustain healthier and safer communities for both people and animals.

Featured aspects of this undertaking are the proposed One Health Fund, One Health Magazine, and a national One Health Mascot. One Health Trail Events were launched in 2015. Trail events are also geared toward preparing for Canada's 150<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations. The One Health worldwide movement promotes the advancement of healthcare in the 21st century and a strategy for expanding interdisciplinary collaborations and communications in all aspects of healthcare for humans, animals and the environment.

Rather than simply endorsing the movement CFAS created this Call to Action. [Read more...](#)

What this means for the Prince George CAI Community Hub is that CFAS has resources and opportunities it's willing to contribute in order to build and sustain their local hub model.



## Research References

The following set of assumptions form the theoretical platform for Animal-Assisted Interventions with canines.

### Logic Assumptions

Literature suggests the human-canine relationship has a greater chance of successful establishment (Geist, 2011; Hines, 2003; Turner, 2011) and provides qualitatively different features (non-evaluative, reduces anxiety, reduces barriers to intervention; Banks & Banks, 2002; Cirulli et al., 2011; Dimitrijević, 2009; Geist, 2011; Sockalingham et al., 2008) compared to human-human relationships. Strong research.

These differences may be more facilitative to effective intervention, particularly with populations that are resistant to intervention, such as youth populations who have experienced trauma (Bardill & Hutchinson, 1997; Cirulli et al., 2011; Dimitrijević, 2009; Parish-Plass, 2008), and in emergent evidence, incarcerated youth populations (Lange et al., 2006). Developing research.

The human-canine relationship is anecdotally reported to be 'simpler,' less 'judgemental,' and 'unconditional' relative to human-human relationships (Allen, Blascovich, Tomaka, & Kelsey, 1991; Bardill & Hutchinson, 1997; Jorgenson, 2007; Turner, 2011) and therefore may be a more effective therapeutic relationship amongst populations who commonly experience difficulty establishing healthy relationships (Lange et al., 2006). Developing research.

Clients will experience positive cognitive, behavioural, and emotional changes (promotes prosocial behaviour, reduces stress and anxiety, facilitates communication, better emotional wellbeing, improves self-efficacy, increases motivation; Banks & Banks, 2002; Dimitrijević, 2009; Sockalingham et al., 2008; strong research) as a result of the therapeutic human-dog relationship in addition to achieving intervention goals (Banks & Banks, 2002; Bardill & Hutchinson, 1997; Cirulli et al., 2011; Fournier, Geller, & Fortney, 2007; developing research).

These changes will aid in effective community integration and reduce the chance of recidivism (Fournier, Geller, & Fortney, 2007; Lipsey, 2009; Schneider, 2006). Developing research, little research with specific focus on AAI and recidivism.

These changes will be sustainable over time (Lipsey, 2009). Developing research.

These changes will positively impact the community and other structures/services (e.x., justice system, addiction services) in the expected ways (Anderson, 1999; McCollister, French, &

Fang, 2010; Miller, Cohen, & Wiersema, 1996; Taylor, 1995). Strong research.

Allen, K. M., Blascovich, J., Tomaka, J., & Kelsey, R. M. (1991). Presence of human friends and pet dogs as moderators of autonomic responses to stress in women. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 61(4), 582-589. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.61.4.582

Anderson, D. A. (1999). The aggregate burden of crime. *The Journal of Law & Economics*, 42(2), 611-642. doi: 10.1086/467436

Banks, M. R., & Banks, W. A. (2002). The effects of Animal-Assisted therapy on loneliness in an elderly population in long-term care facilities. *The Journals of Gerontology: Series A: Biological Sciences and Medical Sciences*, 57A (7), 428-432

Bardill, N., & Hutchinson, S. (1997). Animal-assisted therapy with hospitalized adolescents. *Journal Of Child And Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing: Official Publication Of The Association Of Child And Adolescent Psychiatric Nurses, Inc*, 10(1), 17-24. doi: 10.1111/j.1744-6171.1997.tb00208.x

Cirulli, F., Borgi, M., Berry, A., Francia, N., & Alleva, E. (2011). Animal-Assisted interventions as innovative tools for mental health. *Annali Dell'istituto Superiore Di Sanità*, 47(4), 341-348. doi:DOI: 10.4415/ANN\_11\_04\_04

Dimitrijević, I. (2009). Animal-assisted therapy—A new trend in the treatment of children and adults. *Psychiatria Danubina*, 21(2), 236-241. Retrieved from: <http://hrcak.srce.hr/>

Fournier, A. K., Geller, E. S., Fortney, E. E. (2007). Human-animal interaction in a prison setting: Impact on criminal behaviour, treatment progress, and social skills. *Behaviour and Social Issues*, 16(1), 89 - 105.

Geist, T. S. (2011). Conceptual framework for animal assisted therapy. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 28(3), 243-256. Doi: 10.1007/s10560-011-0231-3

Hines, L. M. (2003). Historical Perspectives on the Human-Animal Bond. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 47(1), 7-15. doi: 10.1177/0002764203255206

Jorgenson, J. (1997). Therapeutic use of companion animals in health care. *Image--The Journal Of Nursing Scholarship*, 29(3), 249-254. DOI: 10.1111/j.1547-5069.1997.tb00993.x

Lange, A. M., Cox, J. A., Bernert, D. J., & Jenkins, C. D. (2006). Is counseling going to the dogs? An exploratory study related to the inclusion of an animal in group counseling with adolescents. *Journal Of Creativity In Mental Health*, 2(2), 17-31. doi:10.1300/J456v02n0203

Lipsey, M. W. (2009). The primary factors that characterize effective interventions with juvenile offenders: A meta-analytic overview. *Victims and Offenders: An International Journal of Evidence-Based Research, Policy, and Practice*, 4(2), 124-147. doi: 10.1080/15564880802612573

McCollister, K. E., French, M. T., Fang, H. (2010). The cost of crime to society: New crime specific estimates for policy and program evaluation. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 108(1), 98 - 109. doi: 10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2009.12.002

Miller, T. R., Cohen, M. A., Weirsema, B. (1996). Victim costs and consequences: A new look. NIJ Research Report.

Parish-Plass, N. (2008). Animal-assisted therapy with children suffering from insecure

Attachment due to abuse and neglect: a method to lower the risk of intergenerational transmission of abuse? *Clinical Child Psychology & Psychiatry*, 13(1), 7-30. doi: 10.1177/1359104507086338

Schneider, A. L. (2006). Restitution and recidivism rates of juvenile offenders: Results from four experimental studies. *Criminology*, 24(3), 533-552). doi: 10.1111/j.1745-9125.1986.tb00389.x

Sockalingam, S., Li, M., Krishnadev, U., Hanson, K., Balaban, K., Pacione, L., & Bhalerao, S. (2008). Use of Animal-Assisted therapy in the rehabilitation of an assault victim with a concurrent mood disorder. *Issues In Mental Health Nursing*, 29(1), 73-84. doi: 10.1080/01612840701748847

Taylor, R. B. (1995). The impact of crime on communities. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 539(1), 28-45. doi: 10.1177/0002716295539001003

Turner, J. (2011). Animal assisted therapy and autism intervention: A synthesis of the literature. *Research Papers*, 119, 1 – 78. Retrieved from: <http://www.library.unbc.ca/>.

## Dialogue Disclaimer

This program overview is the culmination of an ongoing dialogue that emerged as the contributors worked on a program logic model to explore the feasibility of program development and partnership within a local community hub. As such, the content is not a comprehensive review of all aspects of the program. Rather, this paper is the first of many steps toward cultivating clarity, initiating proactive collaboration and quality assurance endeavours to better serve this population.