

Ollie's Law Advisory Committee Meeting
Minutes September 17th, 2025 | 9 AM – 10:30 AM
Approved 10/21/25

Advisory Committee Attendance

Mike Cahill
Louis Pacheco
Jeni Mather
Dr. Erin Doyle
Noelle Wilson
Francine Coughlin
Debra Cameron
Kara Holmquist
Kevin Sullivan
Amy Baxter
Kathy MacKenzie
Mark Hogan

Advisory Committee Absence

Carmen Rustenbeck-absent for meeting

MDAR Attendees

Katherine Foote
Sheri Gustafson

Public Attendees

26 additional ZOOM attendees

This open meeting was held virtually over the ZOOM webinar platform. 891 7465 2703
Meeting ID: Passcode: animal

I. AC Attendance Roll Call

Mathers started meeting at 9:01 AM by roll call.

Cahill-present, Pacheco-present, Doyle-present, Wilson-present, Coughlin-present, Cameron-present, Holmquist-present, MacKenzie-present, Hogan-present.

Sullivan and Baxter joined the meeting immediately after the roll call.

II. Minutes Review for August 18th, 2025- vote required

Mather requested that Rustenbeck be asked if clarification is needed on her staffing recommendation for overnight care. MacKenzie motioned to accept the minutes from the August 19, 2025, AC meeting. Pacheco-second. All accepted.

Minutes for August 18th, 2025, Ollie's Law AC Meeting accepted.

III. Staffing Number Guidelines/ Proposed Ratios

A, Co-Mingled Dogs Operations

B. Non-Comingled Dogs Operations

C. Materials for Consideration-AC Developed Staffing Guidance Documents

Review submitted materials.

Mather began the conversation by revisiting the ratio of one staff member to fifteen dogs. She stated that she wanted to clarify that her suggestion was for needing two people when there were five or more dogs at the kennel, not owned by the kennel owner.

Mather shared her document "Staffing for all Kennels" and explained her thought process to the group.

Mackenzie asked how an ACO would be able to regulate a kennel if they needed proof of ownership to determine minimum staff requirements.

Mather said the difference would be that dogs at the kennel for which the owner is collecting money for watching would be considered non-owned dogs.

Cahill requested clarification on the staffing recommendations. If someone is watching dogs in their own home, then they can have up to four dogs on site. If they add a fifth dog, then they would need two staff members on site. Would the two staff members then be sufficient for up to 15 dogs?

Mather stated that her suggestion was that 2 staff would be sufficient until you reach 30 dogs. Stating that it follows current industry standards.

Cahill stated that he felt 2 staff were not enough for 30 dogs, and expressed concern about whether the dogs were comingled and unable to be separated if needed.

Mather replied that her recommendations follow the suggestions made in the letter to the AC from Boston Dog Lawyers, and that she is trying not to overreach.

Sullivan said that while he agrees with making sure there are 2 people when there are over 4 dogs, he feels that the ratios are too low for large kennels. He felt 4 staff for 60 dogs would not be enough.

Mather responded that 1 staff to 15 dogs is the industry standard, and as long as there is a second person onsite, ratios should be somewhat flexible depending on staff training.

Coughlin said that she had read the letter from Boston Dog Lawyers, but would like to know where the data mentioned in the letter came from. Was the data from BDL clients or directly from kennels? She also expressed concern over the ratios stated.

Mather said that the jump from 2 to 3 staff members needed, was because of how important a second staff member is in emergency situations.

Coughlin stated that the ratios must make sense and that facts and numbers should support their reasoning.

Both Coughlin and Mather mentioned the pressure they were receiving from kennel owners and the need to consider all scenarios.

Cameron commented that dividing dogs in a kennel by unowned and owned could create grey areas for enforcement. She also commented that she felt that the BDL letter was looking for stricter ratios. Cameron also emphasized that she felt a significant difference between what would be needed for dogs in kennels versus those in mixed groups.

Mather explained that she felt that the ratios are just one piece of the regulations and that additional layers would be needed to ensure safety.

Sullivan said that he would like to define the difference between staff on-site and supervision. He also stated that he would not be against saying 4 staff for 60 dogs is adequate if they were separated in kennels, but felt that comingled dogs would require more staff.

Mather stated that kennels do not need more staff at that number and said they shouldn't be considering unattainable staffing numbers.

Sullivan said that he is looking at the issue from an enforcement perspective, and what is adequate staff versus adequate supervision.

Mather broke down her recommended ratios: 1-4 dogs need 1 staff, 5-15 dogs need 2 staff, 15-30 dogs need 2 staff, 31-45 dogs need 3 staff, 46-60 dogs need 4 staff, and for additional dogs above 60, one more staff for each 15 more dogs.

Holmquist asked if the numbers presented were for staffing or supervision.

Mather responded that they were for staffing and that supervision was a secondary matter, beyond headcount, and that she had created regulatory rules to add further clarification in her shared document.

Cahill said that prior to the Ollie's Law efforts, no data was available to examine. Now that Ollie's Law is in effect, we will start to get data from injury reports. He also requested clarification on the 15 dogs to 1 staff ratio and whether it also applied to playgroups.

Coughlin said that the industry standard is what people strive for, and staffing and supervision numbers should line up.

Cameron stated that in one of the documents submitted at the last meeting, the staffing was broken down into specific duties and the time required to perform each task.

Cahill asked if someone could supervise the dogs and clean at the same time?

Mather responded that playgroup sanitation is different than the sanitation needed when cleaning kennels, and that supervision and cleaning can happen at the same time.

Doyle asked if two staff members could adequately manage 30 dogs in the event of an incident.

Mather responded that it really depends on whether the facility has good emergency/safety plans. She also said that once the data starts to come in from the new injury reporting, recommended staff levels may need to be adjusted.

Sullivan stated that he felt that not enough weight was being put on adequate supervision. He mentioned an incident where 30 dogs at a kennel started a fight, and the staff was too afraid to break it up.

Mather stated that she didn't feel that they could regulate based on facilities that don't train. She also asked if she could get an informal headcount of AC to determine if 2 staff members were needed for 5+ dogs.

Cameron asked for clarification on whether they were talking about unowned dogs in the kennel versus owned dogs.

Mather said that she felt unowned and owned should be counted separately.

Doyle asked for Coughlin's and Pacheco's opinions.

Pacheco commented that he felt ownership does need to be factored in, but would like to hear from the ACOs on whether that would create confusion in enforcement.

Coughlin stated that she felt comingled would need to be a consideration since requiring the second staff member for 5+ dogs would be cost-prohibitive for kennels with models where the dogs are kept separate. She also stressed the importance of emergency plans and staff education.

Sullivan said that after listening to the AC, he could agree with 1 person for 15 dogs for staffing, but felt there may need to be a lower ratio for adequate supervision when comingled.

MacKenzie stated that it would be challenging for ACOs to enforce ratios if dogs were categorized as either owned or unowned. If all dogs were simply counted as dogs and ownership wasn't factored in, then she stated she was okay with the proposed ratios.

Mather stated that she feels 2 staff are needed for 5 dogs, unless they define a landline.

Cameron stated that she feels the distinction between comingled and kenneled has to be a factor, and that she felt that if 6 dogs were kenneled, the 2 staff members would not be necessary.

Pacheco agreed with that.

Sullivan asked if they needed to focus on comingled numbers?

Mather said that a proposal of 1 staff for every 15 dogs in a comingled facility would be a change in the way most kennels currently operate.

Baxter said that she felt strongly that if you own a business, you need a second staff member there.

Holmquist stated that she wanted to go back and look at information around an incident that they had recently looked at, but that she was having a hard time following if they are trying to agree on ratios for comingled or for kenneled dogs, The asked if the ratios currently in discussion were: if comingled 1 staff for 1-4 dogs, 2 staff for 5-10 dogs and if kenneled 1 staff for 15 dogs.

Mather said that Pacheco's kennel system is not the mainstream setup for boarding facilities now and that most places do not have dogs separated but rather comingled.

Holmquist asked if the 1 staff to 15 dogs ratio is too low, then?

Mather stated that she felt that it was appropriate for the dogs that are separated.

Doyle stated that they won't be able to eliminate all risk, but that she is in support of a 1 staff member to 15 dog ratio, provided that dogs are not comingled at the facility. She also stated that she is unsure whether she has sufficient knowledge of how the facilities are run to make more precise decisions on ratios.

Cameron said that they may want to break the ratios down by handling procedures.

Mather said that the industry standard is a 1 staff per 15 dogs ratio, but that she feels a 1 staff to 10 dogs could be considered.

Pacheco asked if the ratios would apply to municipal kennels as well.

Cahill responded that it did not.

Mather asked if they could get a temp check on 1 staff to 15 dogs.

Doyle had to leave the meeting at 10:35AM.

Pacheco made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Cahill gave a second.

Meeting adjourned

The remaining agenda items were not discussed.

IV Remaining Meeting Schedule

V. Discussion: Staffing / Operator Education and Training

A. Employee and Owner/ Operator Training and Education Requirements

- 1. Foundational animal behavior knowledge and baselines**
- 2. Baseline competencies in husbandry, medical awareness, and basic first aid**
- 3. Review of Potential Learning Platforms for Kennel Staff**
- 4. Review Potential Testing Platform**

VI. New Business

A. Open forum for additional committee input

B. Topics for future agenda development