

Ollie's Law Advisory Committee Meeting
Minutes July 30th | 9 AM – 10:30 AM
Approved 8.19.2025

Advisory Committee Attendance

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

Advisory Committee Absence

Mark Hogan-absent for meeting

MDAR Attendees

Katherine Foote
Sheri Gustafson

Public Attendees

12 additional ZOOM attendees

This open meeting was held virtually over the ZOOM webinar platform. 838 3960 2566
Meeting ID: Passcode: animal

I. AC Attendance Roll Call

Mathers started meeting at 9:00 AM by roll call.
Cahill-present, Pacheco-present, Doyle-present, Rustenbeck-present, Coughlin-present,
Holmquist- present, Wilson-present, Cameron-present, Sullivan-present, MacKenzie-present,
Baxter-present

II. Minutes Review for 6/25/2025- vote required

Pacheco motioned to accept the minutes from the AC meeting on 6/25/25. Cameron-second. All
accepted.
Minutes for June 25, 2025, Ollie's Law AC Meeting accepted.

III. Discussion: Staffing Models

A. Employee Training and Education Requirements

- 1. Foundational animal behavior knowledge and baselines**
 - 2. Baseline competencies in husbandry, medical awareness, and basic first aid**
- B. Staffing Number Guidelines**
- 1. Initial framework and benchmarks for appropriate staffing levels**
- C. Materials for Consideration**
- 1. Authored piece on kennel staffing with veterinary considerations**
 - 2. Public email submission(s) relevant to staffing**

All of the above agenda items were discussed in a flowing discussion, summarized below.

Mather kicked off the conversation on staffing and asked the AC to participate by providing input on the topic. She asked if Coughlin had created a document for staffing and supervision considerations. She asked Coughlin to present her document, then said they would move on to Doyle's document, and then one that she authored herself.

Coughlin stated that she had created a simple document to share with the AC and stressed that she believes a law is only good if it can be adequately enforced. Her goal when creating the document was to provide a basic foundation with safety and incident prevention in mind. Coughlin shared a document she authored titled "Ollie's Law Supervision and Staffing Notes". She read through the document, which contained suggested language for staffing levels, adequate animal supervision, and staff-to-animal ratios.

Holmquist stated that Colorado has staffing numbers in their regulations as well. Mather agreed.

Doyle shared her document titled "6.27.25 Ollie's Law Veterinary Staffing". She asked the AC to read through the document on the screen. At the end of the document was language taken directly from the MA Shelter/Rescue Regulations. Doyle pointed out that the document stated what she felt would be adequate staffing/ supervision from a veterinary perspective. She commented that her comment in section one of the document needed input from the AC. The comment was in relation to the part of the document that stated: "Any dog showing signs of having an infectious or contagious disease shall be placed in a separate space from other dogs until the dog is removed from the facility to receive veterinary care, ideally under the care of the owner." She was interested in hearing what timeframe or details would make sense for the owner's response.

Mather asked for clarification on whether Doyle was referring to the owner's response after an event. Mather then shared her document titled "Training Competencies and Staffing Recommendations". Mather explained that her document was intended to create guiding principles. The document contained opinions on group sizes, staff training importance, staff to dog ratios, and square footage needed per dog for playgroups. The document also mentioned a kennel disclosure for owners.

Coughlin asked for clarification on the disclosure.

Mather stated that she felt that a disclosure should be given to clients, and that it would state facility practices.

Sullivan said that he felt the disclosure would be an asset to protect the kennel, but had concerns that clients may not understand the details of the disclosure and whether they are positive or negative.

Mather stated that the disclosure is not intended to be a release of liability but rather a statement on whether minimum standards of care are being met.

Cameron said that she felt that it is important to get ratios in regulations and that a disclosure should not be used instead. She expressed concern that the public would not know enough about standards to determine what a safe level of supervision is. She expressed that she saw more value in ratios than negatives.

Mather stated that she believes that ratios are important, but also felt that they can provide a false sense of security, since the training and experience of staff can greatly differ. She felt training and education were the most important issues to address over ratios.

Doyle asked the AC to consider the dog's perspective and what might be important, such as staff understanding body language, housing/confinement needs, and felt that looking at the issues from that perspective may help develop enforceable measures.

Wilson asked about adding a statement to the disclosure form that explains standards to the public.

Sullivan said that he felt the education, training, etc. were all pieces of the complete puzzle and all are important. He also stated that he felt continuing education of kennel staff was necessary and explained the system used for ACO continuing education.

Mather asked for Cahill's opinion.

Cahill stated that kennel education would not be in his department's area of expertise, and that is one of the reasons it's not required for shelter/rescue staff. He said that while he felt training was important, he was not convinced that it should be in the regulations. He further explained that while lots of continuing education trainings are approved for ACO credit, the training's specific content is not endorsed.

Mather commented that recommended training from the AC may be able to check that box. Baxter said that what would have saved her dog would have been adequate supervision. She felt that supervision and coverage were essential topics to regulate.

Coughlin went back to her shared document, where she stated that a minimum requirement would be to make sure a dog is checked every 8 hours and 10 hours overnight in a boarding setup. She explained that with those numbers, she was trying to establish the minimum.

Baxter commented that she felt that if someone is getting paid to watch an animal, they should not be leaving the animal unsupervised at all.

Coughlin replied, saying that it would not be realistic to require constant supervision, especially if the boarding consists of having a safe area for the dog, such as a crate. She then references the letter from the public that was emailed to the AC.

Pacheco and Baxter both commented that they felt someone should be present. Mather asked about when dogs are being rotated, what would be recommended then?

Coughlin stated that her recommendations were not for when dogs are in playgroups or free roaming, but rather when dogs are crated or in pens. Adequate supervision for the different scenarios will vary.

Doyle said that she would want to make sure that the supervision level would ensure that concerns are addressed promptly and that parameters and frequency should be established.

Sullivan stated that it is common for dogs to essentially be alone in their ACO facility for 9 hours or overnight, but they are safely separated to prevent issues.

Mather said that they should focus on what supervision level is required at any given time.

Cameron stated that daycare versus boarding could be broken down into separate enclosures versus comingled. Maybe they should require care plans that the owners approve?

Mather said that they could use the declaration. Instead of a disclosure, make it more of a statement?

Holmquist added in the chat that CA uses the term " Notice to Owner of Customary Practices". Baxter stated that she hears about a lot of issues at home day care, and asks if it is common for them to crate the dogs? Mather responded that it varies; some are crated, and some are comingled.

Cameron said that she felt that anytime dogs are comingled, there needs to be supervision. Mather mentioned that owners may feel that being uncaged is always best and may not realize the safety concerns.

Cahill stated that he felt that MDAR could get behind the statement that if you need to leave the building, all dogs must be able to be safely separated. He also said that the current kennel standards are that dogs must be kept in a sanitary manner. Even under current standards, a dog might need to be checked on more frequently than every 8 hours.

Doyle asked if there would be a separation exception for dogs from the same household.

Mather felt there shouldn't be an exception.

Doyle explained that in a shelter setting, keeping dogs together from the same household is a common practice to help reduce stress. However, the dogs are monitored at first to make sure no issues are seen.

Cameron said that there would be many variables that would need to be considered if they were to allow it.

Rustenbeck said that IBPSA does not recommend cohousing dogs, and that separation is safer when the dogs are unmonitored.

Doyle suggested that they refer to ASV Guidelines.

Mather asked if the conversation could continue and if another meeting could be scheduled next week.

Cahill stated that he was not in favor of scheduling an additional meeting and suggested that the current meeting schedule be followed.

C. Materials for Consideration

- 1. Authored piece on kennel staffing with veterinary considerations**
- 2. Public email submission(s) relevant to staffing**

Mathers said that since they were running short on time for this meeting, the discussion would be continued at the next meeting, and that the meeting's agenda would reflect that.

Cameron stated that she wanted to say thank you for receiving the email letter from the public about kennel considerations. She also wanted to address the concern about food storage in home care settings and said that she felt separate refrigeration is probably not necessary.

Cahill wanted to address the carpet concern from the email and said that if an individual is in the business of providing kennel services, then they should make efforts to ensure the areas can be properly cleaned and disinfected.

Sullivan mentioned that it is also important that the kennel follow municipal ordinances.

IV. New Business

- A. Open forum for additional committee input**
- B. Topics for future agenda development**

Cameron asked about the MDAR report to the legislature and the deadline for kennel reporting. Is that information posted anywhere, and is it searchable for the public?

Cahill responded that the required information would not give the public enough information to adequately check licensing. In addition, the quality of the information received depended on what the municipality reported and if it was in a way that we could export information. The information received is not posted on the website.

Mather asked if there was a motion to adjourn. Sullivan gave a motion; Cameron gave a second.

10:35 AM meeting adjourned.