

BACKGROUND

Companion animals can promote human mental health, but little is known about how pets may impact mental health differently across sociodemographic groups.



Provide social support



Increase quality of life



Reduce loneliness and decrease social isolation

Animal shelters offer a unique opportunity to reach underrepresented adopters.

STUDY AIM



To assess the feasibility of recruiting and retaining prospective dog and cat adopters through animal shelters for a longitudinal study of mental health.

KEY FINDINGS



Baseline response rate

41% of eligible participants completed the baseline survey.



Income groups

Most participants had household incomes below \$58,741.



Follow-up retention

Only 4 participants completed all 3 surveys.



Feasibility

Participant recruitment through shelters can advance research on adoption and mental health across socioeconomic groups.

METHODS



Recruitment

Adopters from two animal shelters in Philadelphia.



Data Collection

Validated mental health surveys at baseline, 1-month, and 3-months post-adoption.



Participants

16 prospective cat and dog adopters.

CHALLENGES



Numerous participants were lost to follow-up or non-responders.



Additional retention strategies are needed to improve participation.

CONCLUSION



Partnering with animal shelters helped reach an underrepresented population of mostly lower- and middle-income adopters.



More frequent engagement with participants throughout the study and increased incentives for study completion may help reduce loss to follow-up.

