

AlignCare

Serving Families, Pets and Communities

Becoming an AlignCare Community



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PREAMBLE



AlignCare is a One Health healthcare system that aligns the current resources of social service agencies and veterinary service providers while utilizing community funding. The alignment of these resources improves access to veterinary care for families currently underserved, as well as enables social service and animal care professionals to meet their goals in serving families. AlignCare is supported by the University of Tennessee College of Social Work Program for Pet Health Equity and facilitates access to sick and injury veterinary care for bonded families participating in means tested public assistance programs. AlignCare National is an active partner in a community driven effort by providing infrastructure, expertise, training, and support. AlignCare National provides guidance to identify local resources and funding and is a subsidized health care system that controls and shares costs of veterinary care.

This document describes the process for how your community can become an AlignCare Community. AlignCare National will be a partner during the process of forming and implementing your local AlignCare Network and will work closely with you at every step to help ensure your success.

10 Required Core Features of an AlignCare Community

- 1) Utilize a One Health focus to provide support for human and up to four (4) nonhuman family members through veterinary care and access to needed social service resources.
- 2) Establish a Community Council to implement, fund and operate the program. The council should consist of representatives from social service agencies, animal welfare agencies, funders, VSPs, and other community stakeholders.
- 3) Fill a capacity to enroll and serve families who currently participate in a means tested income qualified assistance program and whose nonhuman family members have a sick/injury need. Families must be recertified annually.
- 4) Provide incremental veterinary care through multiple veterinary service providers (VSPs) located throughout the service area, including for-profit and not for profit.
- 5) Implement a cost sharing system including discounts from VSPs, co-payments from families, and local AlignCare funds and/or other sources. Partnering VSPs must sign a collaboration agreement.
- 6) Utilize trained Human Support Coordinators to support families throughout enrollment and address programmatic questions.

- 7) Partner with social workers to be trained in veterinary social work for family support.
- 8) Use AlignCare Engage software to qualify and enroll eligible families and to submit invoices and medical records.
- 9) Agree that the University of Tennessee is the fiscal agent for depositing and distributing funds to providers. A 10% charge is assessed to cover the costs of administration.
- 10) Use the AlignCare branding consistent with the AlignCare style guide.

AlignCare Roles & Definitions

- **Academic Institution.** A potential source to identify Veterinary Social Workers and Human Support Coordinators. Colleges of Veterinary Medicine may also serve as potential veterinary service providers.
- **AlignCare Community Council.** The AlignCare Community Council is made up of individuals representing organizations, funders, government agencies, and associations that have a strong interest in increasing access to veterinary care with the AlignCare system. Community Council members guide the implementation and sustainability of AlignCare in their local community. Community Council members may represent veterinary medical associations, public health agencies, community foundations, and others who have a vested interest in access to veterinary care. Community Council members may participate in multiple ways, including being a referral agency, a veterinary service provider, or veterinary social work and human support coordination. AlignCare National will advise and guide the Community Council as needed.
- **AlignCare Engage.** The AlignCare software system used to enroll families, process veterinary visits and invoices, and collect data on pets and their families to further the understanding of underserved bonded families.
- **AlignCare National.** AlignCare is a service program of the University of Tennessee College of Social Work Program for Pet Health Equity. AlignCare National is the centralized administrative structure that sets standard policies and procedures for the AlignCare system. AlignCare National will guide and support the Community Council as needed.
- **Animal Welfare Organization (AWO).** AWOs may participate as referral partners, provide veterinary services, Human Support Coordinators, and Veterinary Social Workers, and contribute financial and pet-related resources. Participation in AlignCare by AWOs provides opportunities to further assist families in the community and reduce the number of pets being surrendered for treatable medical conditions.

- **Community Champion.** This can be one or more individuals or organizations who lead the effort to bring the AlignCare system to their community. With the assistance of AlignCare National, the Community Champion(s) recruits the AlignCare Community Council members. The lead agency may be an animal welfare organization, social service agency, human health agency, or other interested organizations.



- **Human Support Coordinator (HSC).** The Human Support Coordinators trained by the Veterinary Social Work staff, review applications, make enrollment determinations, and provide community resource materials to families. HSCs provide enrollment assistance when needed in the form of guidance or hands-on help. HSCs monitor the local @aligncarehealth.org email and refer families in need of additional services to the VSW team. This may include families experiencing psychological, emotional challenges or who require in-depth casework to keep their family together.
- **Program for Pet Health Equity (PPHE).** PPHE developed AlignCare, the first One Health healthcare system that addresses the needs of people, their pets, and their ecosystem, which is largely defined by low socioeconomic status. PPHE connects AlignCare families with participating veterinary service providers, while leveraging community resources and activities.
- **Referral Partner.** Referral partners are entities that refer potential AlignCare families and accept referrals from AlignCare for veterinary or human services. These may be Animal Welfare Organizations, Social Service Agencies, Veterinary Service Providers, or any organization or business where families may inquire about or seek assistance for their non-human family members.
- **Social Service Agency (SSA).** SSAs may have a wide variety of roles, from referring families to AlignCare to being a member of the AlignCare Community Council, recruiting Human Support Coordinators and Veterinary Social Workers, and providing direct social services to AlignCare families. Participation in AlignCare provides social service agencies the opportunity to address the needs of human and non-human family members.
- **Veterinary Service Provider (VSP).** VSPs (for-profit or not for profit) provide veterinary care to pets of AlignCare families using incremental veterinary care. They include general, emergency, and specialty practices, as well as spay/neuter services. VSPs may provide Human Support Coordinators and Veterinary Social Workers. Participation in AlignCare offers VSPs viable options to provide sick or injury care to pets of underserved families.
- **Veterinary Social Worker (VSW).** Veterinary Social Work is a growing area of social work practice that attends to the human needs that arise at the intersection of veterinary medicine and social work practice. AlignCare National Veterinary Social Workers train and

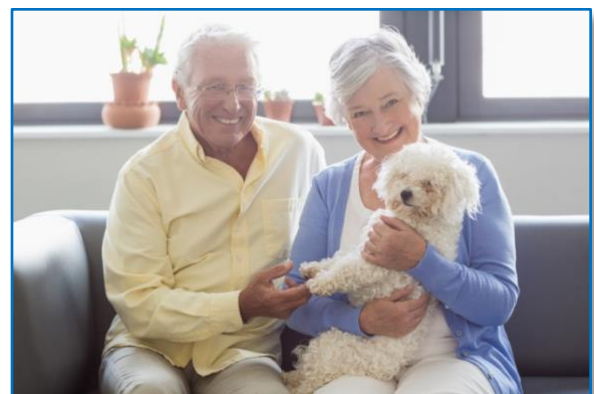
guide local community Human Support Coordinators and provide social work services to families and veterinary service providers as needed.

- **Veterinary Medical Association (VMA).** VMAs are potential AlignCare Community Council members. Gaining their participation early in the process may ease the task of recruiting veterinary service providers for the network. VMAs have the potential for finding creative funding opportunities as well.

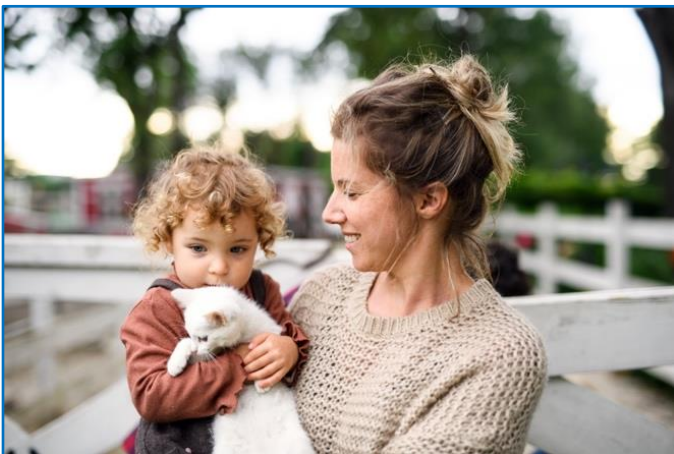
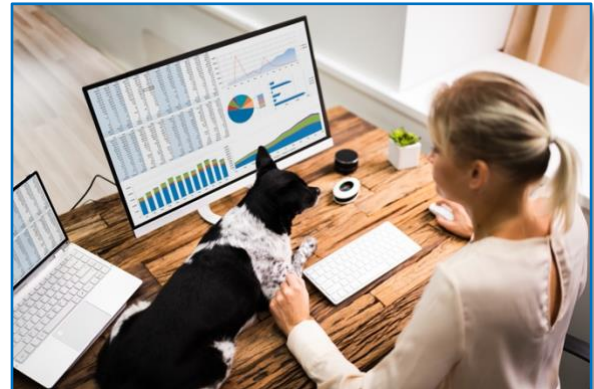


Value-Added Features from AlignCare National

- **National Recognition and Support Network.** The One Health concept of AlignCare is quickly growing in recognition to aid the entire family, both human and non-human.
- **National Fundraising Efforts.** AlignCare National is committed to creating national partnerships, sponsorships, and development efforts to obtain the funding needed for the AlignCare system in all communities.
- **Mentoring.** AlignCare National mentors your community through every step.
- **Partner Recruiting.** AlignCare National provides promotional materials to recruit partners.
- **AlignCare Engage.** The AlignCare software system used to enroll families, process veterinary visits and invoices, and collect data on pets and their families to further the understanding of underserved bonded families.



- **Family Education.** AlignCare Engage provides additional information concerning the pets' general needs and medical conditions through a partnership with InfoRX by Preventive Vet.
- **Research.** Information and data from the AlignCare system are analyzed by the University of Tennessee College of Social Work Program for Pet Health Equity to inform best practices for increasing access to veterinary care.
- **Veterinary Social Work.** The AlignCare National VSW team supports local VSWs who provide assessment, intervention and, when appropriate, referrals to local social service providers for intervention, case management and clinical treatment.
- **HSC Training & Support.** The AlignCare VSW team provides case consultation, HSC network building, ongoing training, and mentoring.
- **Community Coalition Training & Support.** AlignCare is dedicated to the success of each of AlignCare community and will invest the time and resources to ensure families get the help they need.
- **Fund Management.** The University of Tennessee can accept donations on behalf of AlignCare Communities and ensures those funds are used as directed, i.e., for the specific purpose of paying VSPs and, in some instances, VSWs in that community.



Phase 1 – Orientation and Recruitment

Begin Discussions with AlignCare National to Learn More About AlignCare

AlignCare is a community-led system and must grow from local efforts to be successful and sustainable. The first step in building AlignCare in a community is for an interested individual in the community to reach out to AlignCare National to learn more about the system and necessary steps to become an AlignCare community. Early in the process, an individual or group with a fervent desire to activate the AlignCare Network locally, i.e., community champion, should be identified. A sustainable AlignCare community system begins by aligning existing community resources and activities into a network of support for families.

The initial and subsequent conversations may include presentations about the AlignCare system, followed by directed discussions to identify potential members for the local AlignCare Community Council. An AlignCare Community Council is a group of stakeholders who implements the AlignCare system locally. AlignCare National works collaboratively with the AlignCare Community Council to identify potential partners, from Animal Welfare Organizations, Social Service Agencies, Veterinary Service Providers, and local foundations and philanthropists, whose mission aligns with animal welfare. Other potential members may include Veterinary Medical Associations, Local Government Representatives, Public Health Agencies, elected or appointed government officials, and community activists.

Phase 2 – Building and Funding the AlignCare System

Recruiting and Orientation of Potential Community Council Members

The local AlignCare Champion will identify and reach out to potential AlignCare Community Council members to explain the AlignCare system. Those that express an interest in serving as an AlignCare Community Council member are invited to an orientation presentation given by AlignCare National, offered individually or in small groups. This allows each group to become familiar with the AlignCare system before the organizational meeting and can save time during that meeting to focus on moving forward with setting up the AlignCare community.



AlignCare Community Council member organizations, in addition to serving on the community council, may participate by being a referral organization, providing Human Support Coordinators, Social Workers, and/or providing funding, or serving on the funding sub-committee. The initial focus is on recruiting AlignCare Community Council Members, and there are plenty of opportunities for organizations to participate short of serving on the Community Council. It is recommended to

start accumulating contact information for those that will be referral partners and service providers in the future.

Potential AlignCare Community Council members include representatives from:

- Social Service Agencies (SSAs)
- Animal Welfare Organizations (AWOs)
- Veterinary Medical Associations (VMAs)
- Academic Institutions
- Funders of community development and family and animal welfare
- Local government, public agencies, and community organizations

Organizational Meetings & Identification of Community Council Sub-Committee Members

AlignCare National team members facilitate organizational meetings to ensure potential AlignCare Community Council members have full understanding of all roles in the AlignCare system.

This first meeting identifies the need for AlignCare in the community and potential individuals to fill certain roles on the council.

Council member roles:

- AlignCare Family Referral Partners
- HSCs
- Community Champions
- Development & Fundraising
- SSAs
- VSPs
- VSWs



Some additional areas of discussion during these initial meetings may include:

- What area organizations are not represented that should be and who has contacts in those organizations?
- Who is the target population to serve? Are the families located in specific low-income zip codes, etc., or will specific groups such as veterans or other marginalized individuals be the focus?

Identification of Community Council Sub-Committee Members

The AlignCare Community Council may want to organize sub-committees to allow members to focus on areas that match their interests and expertise. Below are three example sub-committees, however, each AlignCare Community Council will customize their efforts and decide on the sub-committees needed and define the roles of each committee.

- **Operations Sub-Committee.** Oversees the day-to-day operations of the local AlignCare system, ensuring the smooth operation of all local activities and communicating with the AlignCare National team. This includes ensuring all various roles within the council and operations of the system are filled.
- **SSA Sub-Committee.** Identifies and recruits social service agencies to provide services to AlignCare families and to act as points of entry for families in need of veterinary care. This sub-committee also identifies community HSCs and VSWs.
- **VSP Sub-Committee.** Recruits VSPs to provide medical care to enrolled families. VSPs may be for-profit or nonprofit, offering sick and injury care, to include emergency and specialty care.
- **Funding & Communications Sub-Committee.** Identifies funds from multiple sources including local donors, philanthropists, and foundations interested in investing in their community. AlignCare National may provide assistance in finding funding, however, it is expected that most of the funding will come from the local community where the families who are benefiting reside. In some cases, AlignCare National may provide matching dollars. AlignCare National will provide reports with to facilitate planning.

Fundraising

Funding to implement AlignCare in a community is essential and must occur early in the planning process. Sufficient funding ensures stable services and avoids unnecessary service disruptions that can be harmful to pets, their families, and AlignCare partners. Costs vary by communities. AlignCare National will assist communities in estimating funding needed to start AlignCare in their community.

How are the funds used:

- Primarily to pay for veterinary care
- To acquire the services of VSWs.
- AlignCare National service fee (currently 10%) to provide AlignCare Engage software, training, and case consultation.



Phase 3 – Recruiting, Training, and Onboarding Community Partners

Veterinary Service Providers (VSPs)

Each community identifies multiple VSPs (for-profit or not for profit), to provide general veterinary care, emergency/specialty care, and spay/neuter clinics. Identifying VSPs in various geographic locations will improve opportunities for access to all families. VSPs who are not part of the AlignCare system can serve as points of referral.



Steps for onboarding VSPs:

- 1) Meet with potential VSPs to explain the AlignCare system and what their will be. VSPs are expected to agree to the following:
 - a. Practice Incremental Veterinary Care
 - b. Provide a 20% discount for services to AlignCare Families. The discounted services may be negotiated, e.g., if the VSP is a low-cost provider or under special circumstances.
 - c. Submit medical records and invoices to AlignCare National using AlignCare Engage within seven business days of services rendered.
- 2) A Collaboration Agreement is signed by the VSP and returned to AlignCare National.
- 3) The University of Tennessee emails the VSP a link to the Payment Works online payment processing system upon receipt of a signed AlignCare VSP Collaboration Agreement. This establishes the VSP as a vendor with the University of Tennessee for payment processing.
- 4) The University of Tennessee returns a signed copy of the AlignCare Collaboration Agreement to the VSP.
- 5) The VSP completes AlignCare Engage training.
- 6) VSP's begin serving AlignCare families following clinic policies.

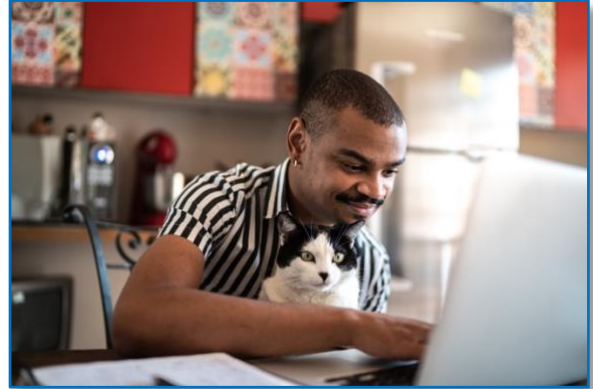
Social Service Agencies (SSAs)

Identify multiple geographically diverse SSAs serving a variety of client populations to increase awareness of AlignCare and refer eligible families.

Steps for onboarding SSAs:

- 1) Meet with potential SSAs to explain the AlignCare system and identify appropriate roles of SSAs.

- 2) A Collaboration Agreement is signed by the SSA and submitted to AlignCare National for processing.
- 3) AlignCare National returns a signed copy of the AlignCare Collaboration Agreement to the SSA.
- 4) AlignCare National provides informational materials to be shared with families that may be eligible for AlignCare services.



Animal Welfare Organizations (AWOs)

Identify AWOs that offer a variety of services and resources to increase awareness of AlignCare and serve as a point of referral.

Steps for onboarding AWOs:

- 1) Meet with potential AWOs to explain the AlignCare system and identify appropriate roles of AWOs.
- 2) A Collaboration Agreement is signed by the AWO and submitted to AlignCare National for processing.
- 3) AlignCare National returns a signed copy of the Collaboration Agreement to the AWO.
- 4) AlignCare National provides informational materials to share with families that may be eligible for AlignCare services.



Training

AlignCare National provides ongoing training for VSPs, HSCs and SSAs. Trainings include using the AlignCare Engage system to accept applications, verify family participation, and submit visits and invoices. Additional training is available on mediation, communication, compassion fatigue, and conflict management.

Phase 4 – Enrolling Families

AlignCare Eligibility

The following eligibility criteria are suggested for optimal family and community benefits:

- **Bonded Family** – The family views the pet as a family member and the family is not engaged in hoarding, breeding, fostering or are feral/community cat caretakers.
- **Need for assistance** – The family is income eligible as evidenced by current participation in a public assistance program. **Proof of public assistance must be from the state in which the family resides.**
- **Technology-competent** – The family should have access to a computer or smartphone and have an active email account. If unable to use the AlignCare system software, then arrangements for assistance should be made.
- **Willingness to partner** – The family must be willing to communicate with the local AlignCare partners.
- **Comply with Veterinary Service Provider recommendations** – Families must be willing to follow the recommendations of their Veterinary Service Provider to help keep pet(s) safe and healthy.
- **Vaccinations** – It is expected that enrolled families will comply with state laws and local statutes regarding their pet's vaccinations.

