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## The Experience of Pet Ownership in Transitional Housing

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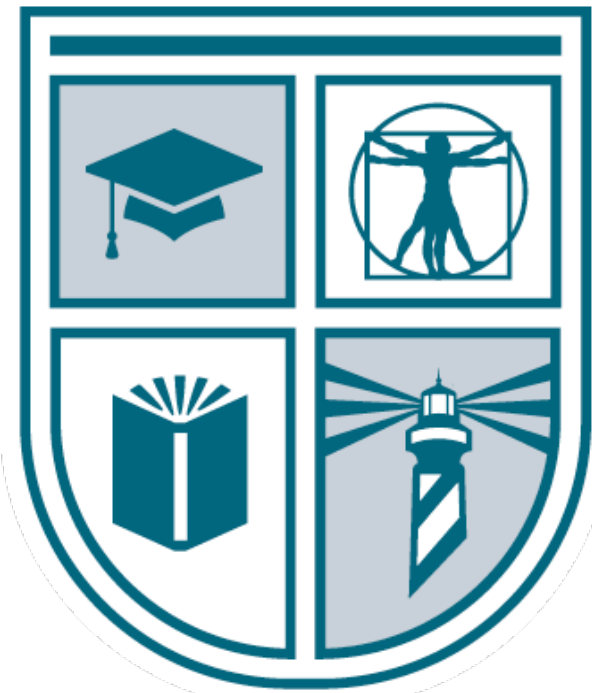
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# The Experience of Pet Ownership In Transitional Housing

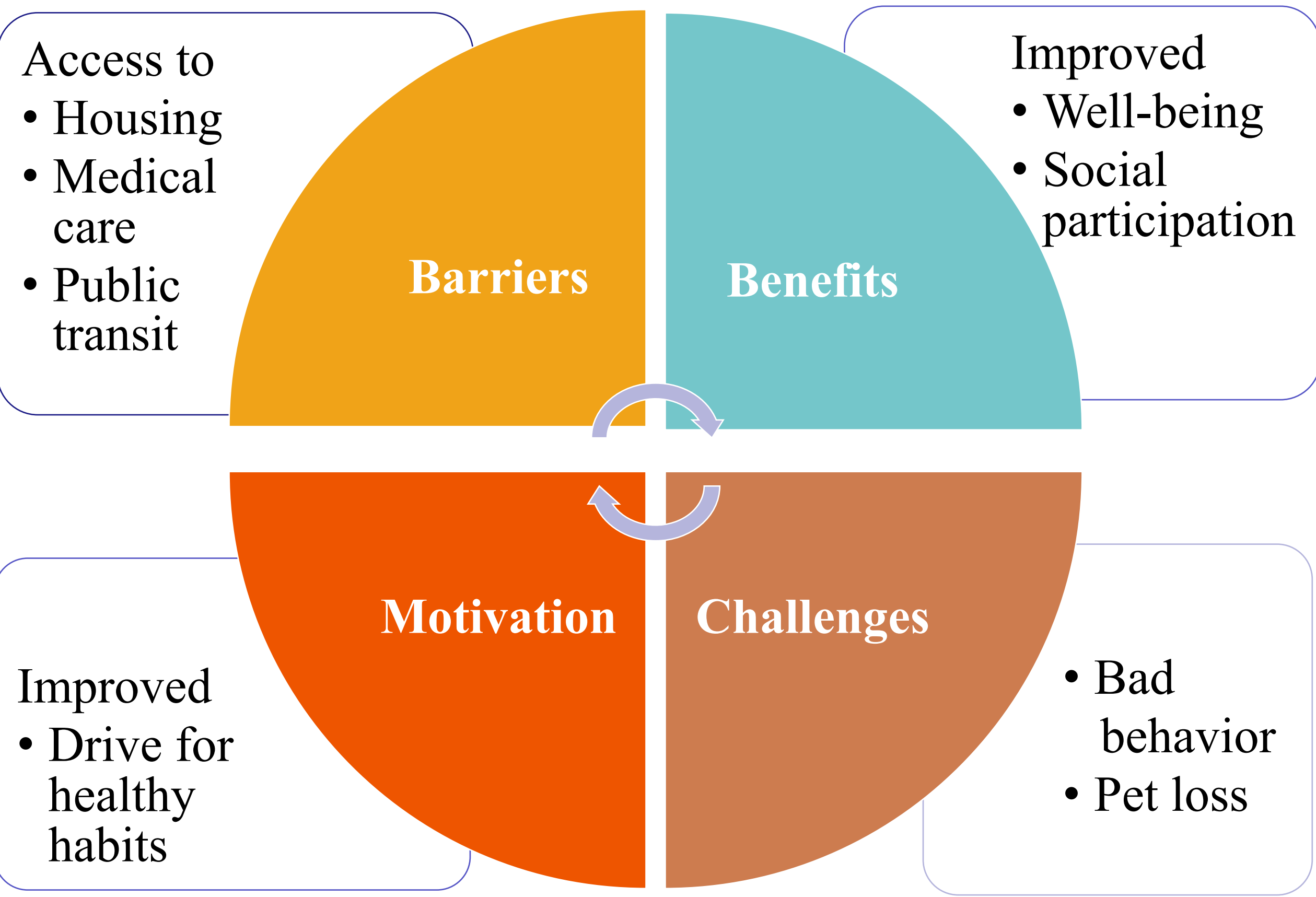
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## Background

### Pet Ownership when Experiencing Homelessness



(Cleary et al., 2021; Irvine, 2013; Rhoades et al., 2015).

## Problem

Limited research exploring the needs of pet owners who are transitioning from homelessness to housed.

## Purpose

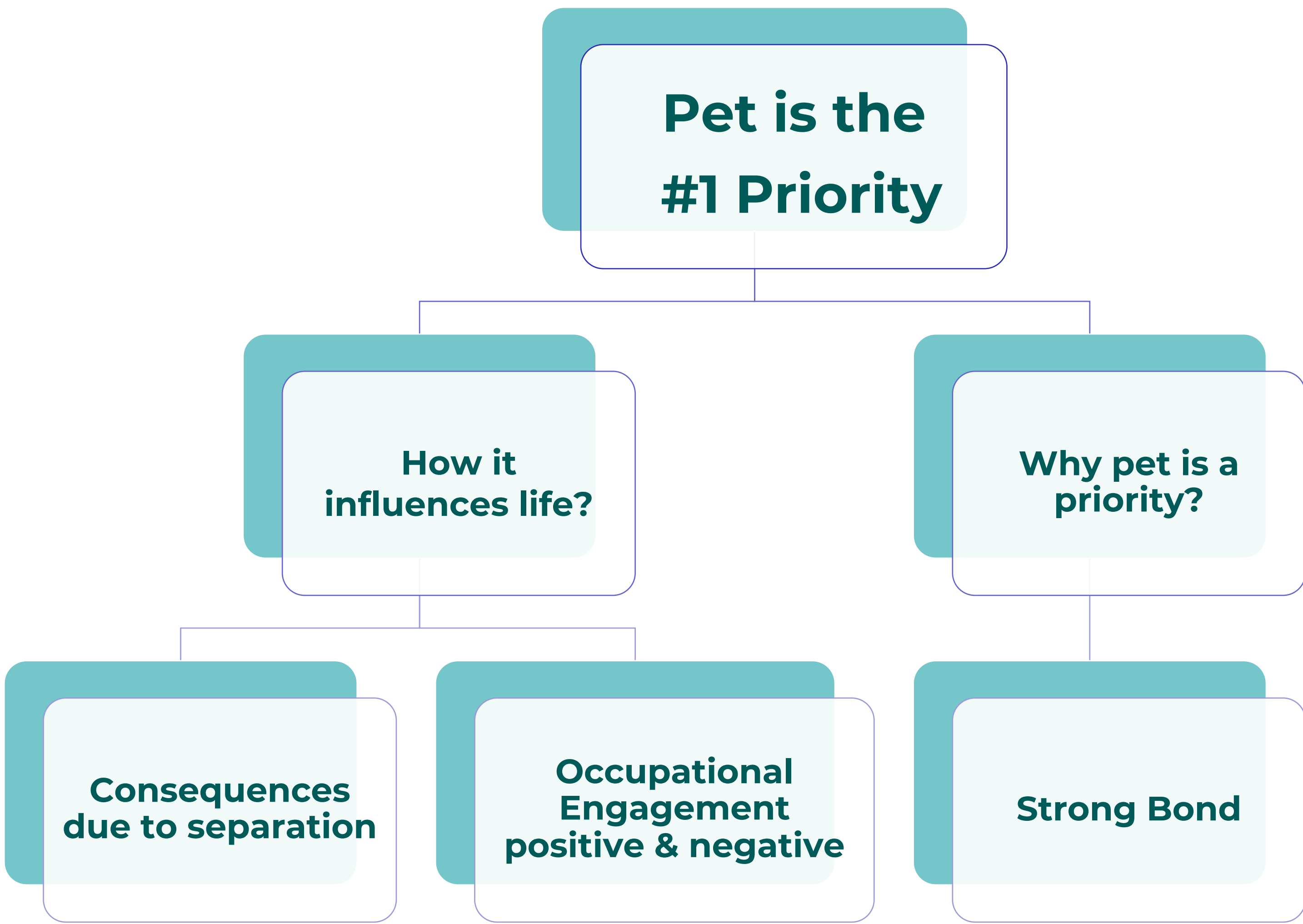
- To conduct a study that answers the question
- What is the experience of pet ownership during the transitional housing process?

## Methods

- Design and implement a qualitative study at a transitional housing program in San Diego County
- Interview six current and recent pet owners
- Conduct thematic analysis
- Share findings with local organizations that work with people experiencing homelessness
- Gain a better understanding of the issue of homelessness

This study involves human subjects; it has been reviewed by the IRB and deemed exempt from IRB approval.

## Results



### Themes

Dogs were a priority due to strong human-animal bond

Dogs influenced occupational engagement positively and negatively

Owners faced consequences due to separation from their dog.

### Quotes

“To have my babies that is all that matters. Without them . I’m nothing...There’s no purpose... You know everything I do is for them” (P1).

“Before I got her. I was in bed most of the time. Because I just didn’t have any breath or energy whatsoever. She really put life in me” (P6).

If I hadn’t had my dog, probably would have went to the emergency a long time ago...I hadn’t gone for help because of my dog” (P5).

“If we knew we were going to lose them, I would not have stayed” (P3).

### Experiences of Participants

- 6/6 Dog owners
- 6/6 Separated from dog for a period
- 6/6 Experienced consequences due to separation
- 3/6 Lost ownership of their dogs
- 2/6 Reported delay in medical care due to dog
- 6/6 Refused shelter that was not pet-friendly
- 2/6 Owned an Emotional Support Animal

## Discussion

### Similar Themes Found in Previous Studies

- Strong Bond with Pet (Cleary et al., 2021; Irvine, 2013; Rhoades et al., 2015).
- Barrier to accessing medical care influencing owners’ abilities to manage their health (Rhoades et al., 2015; Howe & Easterbrook, 2018)

### Strengths

- Study revealed impact of living with and without the dog
- One of very few studies conducted at a transitional housing facility

### Limitations

- Only dog owners were interviewed
- Only two participants were currently living with their dogs

## Conclusion

Dog owners who were temporary separated from their pets experienced a decline in mood and motivation and disruption of routines.

Dog owners whose pets were adopted without their consent experienced unresolved emotions that prevented them from moving on with their lives

What is needed?

- Pet friendly shelters and housing
- Pet sitting services for low-income residents who need to get medical care

## References



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