INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR ANIMAL HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE (IAAHPC)

Advancing Research in Animal Hospice and Palliative Care

IAAHPC Grant Proposal Example: Caregiver Wellbeing Focus

Principal Investigator (PI): Dr. Jamie Patel

Credentials/Title: PhD, LCSW, Associate Professor, Human–Animal Interaction

Institution/Organization: Pacific Wellness University, School of Social Work

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Project Duration: 15 months Total Budget: $5,800 USD

Submission Date: March 31, 2026

Easing the Burden: Evaluating a Telehealth-Based Support Program for Pet Caregivers During End-of-Life Care

1) Project Title

Easing the Burden: Evaluating a Telehealth-Based Support Program for Pet Caregivers During End-of-Life Care

2) Structured Abstract

Background: Companion-animal caregivers providing end-of-life care frequently experience chronic stress, anticipatory grief, and isolation comparable to that of human hospice caregivers. Although veterinary teams increasingly acknowledge this burden, few structured, evidence-informed interventions exist to promote caregiver resilience within the animal hospice context. Objective: This pilot project will evaluate the feasibility, effectiveness, and acceptability of a six-week telehealth support program designed for pet caregivers managing palliative or hospice care at home. Methods: Thirty adult participants will engage in weekly online group sessions facilitated by a clinical social worker and veterinary consultant. Quantitative measures of stress, wellbeing, and empowerment will be collected pre- and post-intervention, complemented by qualitative reflection journals.

Impact: This project will lay the groundwork for scalable telehealth interventions addressing caregiver wellbeing, communication, and quality of care across the companion-animal hospice continuum.

3) Specific Aims

Aim 1: Measure change in caregiver stress (PSS-10), emotional wellbeing (WHO-5), and empowerment pre- and post-intervention.
Aim 2: Evaluate feasibility and acceptability of the telehealth format via attendance rates and participant satisfaction.
Aim 3: Explore qualitative themes related to emotional adaptation, coping, and meaning-making through participant journals.

4) Study Design & Methods

Design: Mixed-methods pre–post feasibility study.

Participants: Thirty adult caregivers providing hospice or palliative care to companion animals recruited via four veterinary partners and social media outreach. Inclusion criteria include adult age (≥18), primary caregiving responsibility, and internet access. Exclusion criteria: active participation in other structured caregiver support interventions.

Procedures: Participants will attend six weekly 60-minute sessions conducted via HIPAA-compliant Zoom Health, co-facilitated by a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW) and veterinary hospice specialist. Session topics include anticipatory grief, effective communication, compassion fatigue, boundary setting, and legacy creation. Surveys will be administered online at baseline and week six.

Measures: Quantitative – Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10), WHO-5 Wellbeing Index, and Caregiver Empowerment Scale. Qualitative – Written reflection journals analyzed for themes of coping, connectedness, and transformation.

Analysis: Paired t-tests and effect-size estimation for quantitative outcomes. Thematic analysis for qualitative reflections. Feasibility indicators include attendance, retention, and participant feedback metrics.

5) Ethical Oversight & Animal Welfare

Ethical Oversight: IRB approval will be obtained through Pacific Wellness University (#2026-038). All procedures involve minimal risk and voluntary participation. Confidentiality will be maintained via de-identified data storage and secure institutional

platforms. Participants will receive clear consent forms emphasizing confidentiality and the ability to withdraw at any point without consequence.

6) Feasibility & Research Team

PI: Dr. Jamie Patel, PhD, LCSW – expertise in grief counseling and human–animal interaction.
Co-Investigator: Dr. Lauren Kim, DVM – veterinary palliative care liaison.
Project Coordinator: Maya Chen, MSW – responsible for participant scheduling, communication, and data organization.
Consultant: Dr. Rebecca Tran, PhD – psychologist providing supervision on group facilitation fidelity.
Resources: Qualtrics survey suite, encrypted data storage, and transcription services provided through Pacific Wellness University.

7) Timeline (12–18 months typical)

Q1: IRB approval, finalize recruitment materials, develop facilitator guide.
Q2: Participant enrollment and baseline data collection.
Q3: Six-week intervention delivery and post-assessment.
Q4–Q5: Data analysis, qualitative coding, manuscript development, and conference submission.

8) Budget & Justification

Participant incentives ($1,200): Digital gift cards for completion of surveys.
Software subscriptions ($600): Zoom Health and Qualtrics platforms.
Research assistant ($3,000): Data management, qualitative coding, and administrative support.
Supplies and dissemination ($1,000): Educational handouts, graphic design for toolkit, and printing.
Total Requested: $5,800 USD

9) Dissemination & Impact

Findings will be submitted to the Journal of Human–Animal Interaction and presented at the IAAHPC Annual Conference. An open-access facilitator manual, including structured discussion guides and evaluation tools, will be distributed through IAAHPC's resource hub and Pacific Wellness University's continuing education portal. This project will contribute to sustainable, scalable models for emotional support in animal hospice, aligning with IAAHPC's mission to promote integrated, compassionate, and evidence-informed care for all.

Principal Investigator Signature

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