



# BARCS and the Maryland SPCA: Partnering to Provide Free Spay/Neuter Services for Low Income Residents in Baltimore City

Project # 15-018

County: Baltimore City

<b>Number of Cats Spayed:</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>Number of Dogs Spayed:</b>	<b>131</b>
<b>Number of Cats Neutered:</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>Number of Dogs Neutered:</b>	<b>119</b>

<b>Amount Received: \$94,000</b>	<b>Amount Remaining (to be returned to MDA): \$0</b>
----------------------------------	--

### Project Synopsis:

BARCS and the Maryland SPCA partnered to address the proliferation of unwanted animals that often become homeless or abused by providing free spay/neuter services for owned cats and dogs in low-income areas. The free spay/neuter service was offered through a voucher program, plus humane education for low income residents was also provided through community outreach. Jointly, BARCS altered 250 owned dogs and the Maryland SPCA altered 750 owned cats.



### Project Description:

Both the Maryland SPCA and BARCS have been working with the low income population of Baltimore City for many years but neither organization has provided ongoing free spay/neuter services for household cats and dogs. Currently, BARCS provides free spay/neuter for outdoor community cats through its grant-funded Trap, Neuter and Return program and in the past BARCS managed a voucher program for pit bulls through a grant from the Best Friends Animal Society. The Maryland SPCA provides some free spay/neuter services in select zip codes thanks to grant opportunities and offers low-cost services, as well. However, Baltimore City is in dire need of more free spay/neuter surgeries for its low-income citizens. The main outcome of this grant funding was to spay/neuter an additional 250 dogs and 750 cats which will help decrease the homeless animal population and number of animals coming into shelters. An additional benefit was provided by community outreach education whereby the Spay/Neuter Outreach Coordinator met with residents of low income areas and community leaders to explain the advantages of spaying/neutering their owned cats and dogs.

Through this grant, BARCS provided free spay/neuter surgery and Rabies vaccines to 250 owned dogs and the Maryland SPCA provided free spay/neuter surgery and Rabies vaccines for 750 owned cats in some of the most poverty-stricken zip codes in Baltimore City. BARCS absorbed the additional cost for Distemper vaccinations and microchipping the 250 dogs, as did the Maryland SPCA by providing the 750 cats with Distemper vaccinations.



**MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
**SPAY AND NEUTER GRANTS PROGRAM**



By including free Rabies and Distemper vaccines, along with the spay/neuter, helped to protect the health of Baltimore City's residents and its animals. And, by including free microchipping for the dogs, it prevented them from coming into our shelters and/or from staying for very long.

### **Summary of Approach:**

The primary goal of this grant funding was to spay/neuter an additional 250 owned dogs and 750 owned cats which will decrease the homeless animal population and number of animals coming into shelters. The need for free spay/neuter surgery is so tremendously critical in Baltimore City, that this goal was reached ahead of schedule in less than the 12-month grant period.

The first step in the program was to hire an Outreach Coordinator who is responsible for program oversight and the coordination of efforts for both organizations. The Outreach Coordinator spends approximately 20 hours per week going door-to-door promoting our services with spay/neuter vouchers and spends the remainder of his time on attending events and low cost clinics held by both BARCS and the Maryland SPCA, in addition to animal transport and administration (i.e., returning phone calls and emails and scheduling appointments).

BARCS has the highest intake of any shelter in the area. We analyzed our intake data to target low income areas with zip codes that have our highest intake of animals. We used this data for two different Trap, Neuter and Return (TNR) grants and for the Department of Agriculture grant for dogs. The Outreach Coordinator engaged these neighborhoods and community leaders to identify animals in need, plus attended the BARCS monthly low cost vaccine clinics to recruit the 250 dogs for this grant program.

The Maryland SPCA has identified "hot spots" using surrender data submitted from BARCS and from their own shelter. They have established various free and low fee spay/neuter community outreach events and initiatives throughout the years and targeted these "hot spots" for the free cat spay/neuter voucher program. By engaging the citizens of low-income Baltimore City neighborhoods and populations that lack access to medical care for their pets, the Maryland SPCA reached their goal of altering 750 cats for this grant in September.

Aside from BARCS and the Maryland SPCA, there are no other resources in Baltimore City to assist low income residents who wish to spay/neuter and vaccinate their owned cats and dogs. Now with a year of experience and awareness-building, the popularity of this voucher program is steadily growing.

### **Accomplishments:**

Our proudest accomplishment was that we were able to alter 1,000 additional animals in Baltimore City and that both agencies reached their spay/neuter goal for this grant ahead of schedule (despite the significant unrest from the Freddie Gray case and countless days of inclement weather).

The position of Outreach Coordinator, that was created and funded by this grant, proved invaluable in coordinating the program and promoting the importance of pet spay/neuter to the underserved population of Baltimore City. Community outreach has generated significant interest in the spay/neuter voucher program and the increased awareness about the program will assist both organizations in reaching their new goals in 2016.

After visiting with a variety of government agencies, the Outreach Coordinator was introduced to a staff member in Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake's office, who agreed to include information about the voucher program in the Mayor's monthly newsletter.

### **Lessons Learned:**

While altering dogs is part of our mission, we still are working on ways to attract more pit bull-type dogs owners into this program. We spent a good portion of time promoting the program at "pet-friendly" apartment complexes in low-income areas, but many of those apartment complexes also place a weight limit on dogs, thus large dogs were less likely to live in there. In 2016, we will be investing more time in the door-to-door approach, in hopes that it will be more effective in identifying larger dogs for the program.



Though our Outreach Coordinator is housed at the Maryland SPCA, it is important to share his daily schedule with BARCS, so both organizations are kept in the loop. In 2016, he will spend about an hour each day either at the Maryland SPCA or at BARCS before he goes into the community. This has already helped improve communication between both organizations so that information is properly shared.

During winter months when there are no outdoor community events, our Outreach Coordinator spent a good portion of time successfully recruiting for the program at indoor shopping malls in low income areas.

A 20% no-show rate for spay/neuter has been our average. We are still exploring different tactics that may work for both the pet owner and surgical staff without placing any additional burden on either of them.

Since there are no options for the underserved pet owners for free spay/neuter services for their pets other than what is provided through grant funding, the need continues to be dire. With a year of experience behind us and the same Outreach Coordinator continuing into our second year, other than having a significant number of no shows, we have worked through any minor issues and look forward to another year of success in meeting our goals. We greatly thank the Maryland Department of Agriculture for providing this grant funding to BARCS and the Maryland SPCA so that we can expand our lifesaving mission.

**Attachments:**

**For More Information Contact:**

**Name:**

Jennifer Brause, Executive Director

**Organization Name and Address:**

Baltimore Animal Rescue and Care Shelter (BARCS), 301 Stockholm St., Baltimore, MD 21230

**Email:** [jbrause@barcsanimalshelter.org](mailto:jbrause@barcsanimalshelter.org)



**MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
**SPAY AND NEUTER GRANTS PROGRAM**

