

Glossary of Key Terms



The following are definitions of key terms used throughout the SOC Implementation Strategies Guide.

Access to Veterinary Care

"Access to veterinary care is a complex problem that sits at the intersection of a number of societal factors including income inequality, access to transportation, language and cultural differences as well as the spatial distribution of veterinary care providers" (Neal & Greenberg, 2022, p. 9).

Neal, S. M., Greenberg, M. J. (2022). Putting access to veterinary care on the map: A veterinary care accessibility index. *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, 9. 857644. <http://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2022.857644>

Contextualized Care

Contextualized care "encompasses everything in play during any caregiving interaction, including the people, patient(s) and wider environment (e.g., personal, clinical, professional, organisational, economic, geographical, societal, political, ethical, ecological)" (Skipper et al., 2024, p. 117). These contextual factors should not be regarded as "non-financial 'costs'; rather, they explicitly or covertly shape all veterinary activities in both positive and negative ways....Contextualised veterinary care describes an approach that is intentionally shaped by the aims, knowledge, experiences and circumstances of individual animal caregivers and veterinary professionals, acknowledging the wider contexts of each clinical encounter, to deliver the most appropriate welfare-focused care for every animal" (Skipper et al., 2024, p.117). The term "spectrum of care" has emerged to address similar concerns within the profession.

Skipper, A., O'Neill, D., Serlin, R., Davidson, J., Elwood, C., & Gray C. (2024) Contextualised care: Faddish or foundational? *Veterinary Record*, 195(3), 117. <https://doi.org/10.1002/vetr.4567>

Cultural Humility

Cultural humility involves understanding the complexity of identities — that even in sameness there is difference — and that a clinician will never be fully competent about the evolving and dynamic nature of a patient's experiences.*

Khan, S. (2021). *Cultural humility vs. cultural competence - and why providers need both*. Healthcity: Health equity news from Boston Medical Center. <https://healthcity.bmc.org/cultural-humility-vs-cultural-competence-providers-need-both/>

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Gold Standard Care

Generally refers to the most intensive and technologically advanced treatment that is believed to produce the best outcome or the longest survival. The fallacy of the "gold standard" is that many criteria factor into which treatment would be the best for a specific patient and their family. Additionally, many conditions do not clearly have one treatment option that assures the best outcome, longest survival, minimal complications, or fewest unintended side-effects. Less intensive treatments might offer similar outcomes or even be preferred by the client. Clinicians are instead encouraged to practice with a "spectrum of care/ contextualized care" approach to developing treatment plans. "The most appropriate pathway for each patient and owner should be navigated through an iterative process of 'shared decision-making'; we cannot separate clinical decisions from their social contexts" (Skipper et al., 2021, p. 331).*

ASPCAPro (2021). *Enaging the future: Access to veterinary care roundtable AVC*. <https://www.aspcapro.org/resource/avc-roundtable-overview>

Skipper, A., Gray, C., Serlin, R., O'Neill, D., Elwood, C., & Davidson, J. (2021). "Gold standard care" is an unhelpful term. *Veterinary Record*, 189(8), 331. <https://doi.org/10.1002/vetr.1113>

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Implicit/Unconscious Bias

There are two types of bias: explicit (or conscious) and implicit (or unconscious). Conscious bias in its extreme is characterized by overt negative behavior that can be expressed through physical and verbal harassment or through more subtle means such as exclusion. Implicit bias operates outside of the person's awareness and can be in direct contradiction to a person's espoused beliefs and values. What is so dangerous about implicit bias is that it automatically seeps into a person's affect or behavior and is outside of the full awareness of that person. Implicit bias can interfere with clinical assessment, decision-making, and provider-patient relationships such that the health goals that the provider and patient are seeking are compromised.*

National Center for Cultural Competence at Georgetown University. (n.d.). *Two types of bias*. <https://nccc.georgetown.edu/bias/module-3/1.php>

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Incremental Care

A strategy that delivers staged diagnostic and therapeutic options sequentially, over-time. Noncritical procedures are delayed to help control costs. It relies on the clinical judgment of the veterinarian, active follow-up of case progression, and, when appropriate, in-home care that can be provided by the client. In addition, there is a focus on prevention and early diagnosis and intervention.*

Program for Pet Health Equity. (2024). *Incremental veterinary care case management approach*. <https://pphe.utk.edu/brite/resources/incremental-veterinary-care/>

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Moral Distress

Moral distress can be defined as the powerlessness, anger, and guilt that healthcare professionals experience when they must act professionally in a way that is misaligned with their own values or beliefs.

Blackwell, M. J., & O'Reilly, A. (2023). Access to veterinary care—a national family crisis and case for One Health. *Advances in Small Animal Care*, 4(1), 145–157. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.yasa.2023.05.003>

Dodek, P. M., Wong, H., Norena, M., Ayas, N., Reynolds, S. C., Keenan, S. P., Hamric, A., Rodney, P., Stewart, M., & Alden, L. (2016). Moral distress in intensive care unit professionals is associated with profession, age, and years of experience. *Journal of Critical Care*, 31(1), 178–182. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrc.2015.10.011>

Jameton, A. (2017). What moral distress in nursing history could suggest about the future of health care. *AMA Journal of Ethics*, 19(6), 617–628. <https://doi.org/10.1001/journalofethics.2017.19.6.mhst1-1706>

One Health

A collaborative, multisectoral, and transdisciplinary approach—working at the local, regional, national, and global levels—with the goal of achieving optimal health outcomes recognizing the interconnection between people, animals, plants, and their shared environment.*

CDC. (2024, October 30). *One Health*. <https://www.cdc.gov/one-health/about/index.html>

*From Open Door Veterinary Collective: <https://opendoorschool.thinkific.com/collections/digital-downloads>

Professional Identity

"Professional identity is a multi-dimensional construct that incorporates personal, familial, and cultural values; learning from critical workplace experiences; social identity validation; and individual professional priorities" (Armitage-Chan, 2020, p. 126).

Armitage-Chan, E. (2020). Best practice in supporting professional identity formation: Use of a professional reasoning framework. *Journal of Veterinary Medical Education*, 47(2), 125–136. <https://doi.org/10.3138/jvme.0218-019r>

Shared Decision-Making

A collaborative approach that involves the client in all decisions regarding a pet's health care. It depends on mutual respect and communication and requires the veterinary team to accept the client's decisions without judgment. The process of clinician and patient jointly participating in making a treatment decision after discussing the options, benefits, and harms, and considering the patient's values, preferences, and circumstances. Shared-decision making builds trust and increases client satisfaction with veterinary visits.*

Marks, N. (2024). The progressive veterinary practice. *Veterinary Clinics of North America: Small Animal Practice*, 54(2), 265–276. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cvsm.2023.10.011>

Ito, Y., Ishikawa, H., Suzuki, A., & Kato, M. (2022). The relationship between evaluation of shared decision-making by pet owners and veterinarians and satisfaction with veterinary consultations. *BMC Veterinary Research*, 18, 296. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12917-022-03401-6>

Barry, M. J., & Edgman-Levitan, S. (2012). Shared decision making—Pinnacle of patient-centered care. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 366(9), 780–781. <https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMp1109283>

Janke, N., Shaw, J. R., & Coe, J. B. (2022). On-site communication skills education increases appointment-specific client satisfaction in four companion animal practices in Texas. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 260(13), 1711–1720. <https://doi.org/10.2460/javma.22.06.0242>

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Social Determinants of Health/Social Determinants of Animal Health

The health of humans and of animals is influenced directly by individual genetics as well as indirectly by the social, political, economic, and environmental conditions in which people and pets are born, live, and die. These non-medical factors greatly affect, or determine, the overall health of both people and animals. Inequities in such factors as housing and food security, education, cultural/ethnic acceptance, gender, income distribution, social inclusion, access and affordability of healthcare, employment and working conditions, language, internet access, and digital literacy can seriously impact the health of people and animals.*

Card, C., Epp, T., & Lem, M. (2018). Exploring the social determinants of animal health. *Journal of Veterinary Medical Education*, 45(4), 437–447. <https://doi.org/10.3138/jvme.0317-047r>

World Health Organization. (2008). *Closing the gap in a generation: Health equity through action on the social determinants of health. Final report of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health*. World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241563703>

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Spectrum of Care

Spectrum of care refers to the wide range of care options veterinarians can provide. Practicing across the spectrum of care involves tailoring care options based on contextual factors, such as client goals, abilities, and resources, as well as patient, veterinarian, and practice factors, while considering available evidence. The term “contextualized care” has emerged to address similar concerns within the profession.

Englar, R. E. (2023). Recasting the gold standard—part I of II: Delineating healthcare options across a continuum of care. *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*, 25(12), 1098612X231209855. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098612X231209855>

Fingland, R. B., Stone, L. R., Read, E. K., & Moore, R. M. (2021). Preparing veterinary students for excellence in general practice: Building confidence and competence by focusing on spectrum of care. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 259(5), 463–470. <https://doi.org/10.2460/javma.259.5.463>

Skipper, A., Gray, C., Serlin, R., O'Neill, D., Elwood, C., & Davidson, J. (2021). “Gold standard care” is an unhelpful term. *Veterinary Record*, 189(8), 331. <https://doi.org/10.1002/vetr.1113>

Stull, J. W., Shelby, J. A., Bonnett, B. N., Block, G., Budsberg, S. C., Dean, R. S., Dicks, M. R., Forsgren, B. W., Golab, G. C., Hamil, J. A., Kass, P. H., King, L. J., Lund, E. M., Maddux, M. L., McFarland, J. M., McKenzie, B. A., Moyer, M. R., Olson, P. N., & Wittum, T. E. (2018). Barriers and next steps to providing a spectrum of effective health care to companion animals. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 253(11), 1386–1389. <https://doi.org/10.2460/javma.253.11.1386>

Standard of Care

The concept lies at the intersection of clinical practice, veterinary ethics, and the law. The legal system uses a locality rule to define it as the standard of care required of and practiced by the average, reasonably prudent, competent veterinarian in the community. Veterinary specialists are held to a higher standard of care than are general practitioners in any location. The standard of care changes over time as new data is available.*

Block, G. (2018). A new look at standard of care. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 252(11), 1343–1344. <https://doi.org/10.2460/javma.252.11.1343>

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