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**SHELTERS** 

# The 3 Ms for Problem Behavior

## (Motivation, Management, and Modification)

1

## Identify the motivation for the behavior.

**Goal:** Understand how the animal feels and why the behavior is occurring.

Interpret animal signaling in context – What is the animal feeling? What is the animal's underlying emotional state? Why is the behavior present? What is motivating it? What/how is the animal learning?

Assess physical & behavioral needs:

- Physical needs – nourishment, shelter, exercise, rest, physical health... – Consider a medical exam to rule out physical health problems or pain that could be underlying behavior problems.
- Behavioral (social and emotional) needs – sense of control (behavioral options), social companionship, mental stimulation, physical activity, ability to cope with/escape stress, behavioral health...
- Are these being met? How can they be better met?
- Provide additional enrichment and daily activities including out of kennel time, social contact, physical exercise, play
- Ensure a structured consistent predictable environment

2

## Manage the behavior.

**Goal:** Avoid allowing the animal to "practice the behavior" because practice makes perfect.

Can the behavior be managed? How can the environment be manipulated to facilitate management?

- ID triggers and avoid them
- Housing change (examples: quieter location, larger enclosure, compatible roommate, foster care)
- Use tools (examples: bedding, toys, hiding boxes, treat buckets, visual barriers)
- Use medication (examples: trazodone, gabapentin, fluoxetine)

3

## Modify the behavior.

**Goal:** Change the behavior. Can the behavior be modified – how?

Can positive emotional associations and positive responses be created and substituted for the negative/undesirable ones?

- Positive training
- Behavior modification