

Crisis and Resilience Planning: How to Weather Disruptions in Pet Care Services

For most pet care professionals, providing comfort, reliability, and safety is at the heart of what they do. But what happens when pet care businesses are faced with unexpected disruptions, such as natural disasters, animal health outbreaks, staffing shortages, or supply chain issues? The ability to respond thoughtfully and resiliently to crises like these is essential for safeguarding pets, reassuring clients, and preserving business continuity.

Whether you provide boarding, grooming, training, or other pet care services, having a crisis and resilience plan can protect your business and the pets in your care. Read on to learn how pet care professionals can build stronger, more adaptable operations that can withstand disruptions of all kinds.

Know Your Risks: Assess What Could Go Wrong

The first step in resilience planning is identifying the specific risks your business might face. Common disruptions include:

- **Natural disasters** — floods, wildfires, hurricanes, earthquakes and more
- **Public health crises** — outbreaks of zoonotic diseases or employee illness
- **Infrastructure issues** — power outages, internet disruptions, etc.
- **Staffing challenges** — high turnover or labor shortages
- **Supply chain delays** — these may impact food, medication, or cleaning supplies

Conduct a simple risk assessment by asking: “What events could disrupt our ability to care for pets? What would be the short- and long-term impacts?” This understanding will inform which areas of your business need the most redundancy and preparation.

Document Emergency Protocols—Clear Steps Save Precious Time

When a crisis hits, clarity matters. Adopt written procedures that cover:

- Evacuation routes and shelter-in-place plans
- Communication trees (who contacts whom, and how)
- Client outreach templates for rapid updates
- Pet record backups (digital and physical)
- Medication and medical needs procedures

Train your team regularly on these protocols, including walk-throughs and drills. Familiarity breeds confidence and reduces panic during real emergencies.

Build Communication Plans That Reassure

In a crisis, silence breeds anxiety—especially for pet owners. A good communication plan should include:

- **Multi-channel messaging:** email, text alerts, phone calls, and social media posts
- **Pre-written messages:** ready to go with minimal editing
- **Designated spokespersons:** trained to provide accurate updates

Transparent communication builds trust. Even if you don't have all the answers yet, regular updates will help clients feel informed and valued.

Cross-Train Staff

One of the most significant vulnerabilities in any small business is over-reliance on a few key people. Cross-training your team is important for ensuring continuity when someone is unavailable. Consider steps such as training staff in basic care duties and emergency procedures, documenting operational tasks (including checklists, SOPs, and videos), and mentoring future leaders within your crew.

Establish Resource Backups—Prepare for the Unexpected

Redundancy isn't waste—it's insurance. Consider investing in the following:

- Alternate suppliers for food, medication, and sanitation products
- Backup power sources (such as generators and battery backups)
- Emergency pet care kits for different scenarios
- Temporary facility partners for overflow or relocation

When primary systems fail, backups can keep your operations running.

Support Clients by Helping Them Prepare for Potential Crises

Clients themselves can face their own emergencies. To help support them and keep their pets safe even when they are not at your facility, consider including the following in your crisis plan:

- Pet emergency preparedness checklists for owners
- Guidelines for pets with special needs
- Recommendations for disaster-ready pet kits

By educating your community about pet-related crisis and resilience planning, you'll elevate the entire ecosystem of care—and position your business as a trusted partner.

Test, Review, Improve

No plan is perfect on the first try. Therefore, it's crucial to regularly review and refine your crisis management strategy by:

- Holding quarterly or annual reviews
- Running simulations with your team
- Soliciting client feedback
- Adapting to emerging threats such as new diseases or technological vulnerabilities

Building resilience is a dynamic process—it grows stronger with attention.

Take the Next Step Toward a More Resilient Pet Care Business

Crisis and resilience planning doesn't have to be something you tackle alone. At IBPSA, we are pleased to offer a variety of tools, education, and other resources designed specifically for pet care professionals navigating risk, safety, and operational challenges. For instance, IBPSA Members have exclusive access to our Risk Management & Safety Facility Certification Program, which helps businesses adhere to best practices for risk management and safety, reduce losses, provide a certifiably safe environment for staff and pets, and inspire confidence in clients. To learn more about this program and how it can help you protect your pet care business, visit <https://www.ibpsa.com/risk-management/>!