



# City of Austin

## Recommendation for Action

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**File #: 25-2575, Agenda Item #: 1.**

12/11/2025

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### **Posting Language**

Authorize negotiation and execution of an interlocal agreement with Texas Department of Criminal Justice to provide an animal training program for military veterans incarcerated in the Travis State Jail for a seven-month pilot program with two one-year extensions. Funding: This item has no fiscal impact.

### **Lead Department**

Austin Animal Services.

### **Fiscal Note**

This item has no fiscal impact.

### **For More Information:**

Rolando Fernandez Jr, Interim Director of Animal Services; Sadie Spalding, Department Executive Assistant.

### **Additional Backup Information:**

If approved, this item authorizes Austin Animal Services to enter into an interlocal agreement with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) to provide an animal training program. Under this agreement, the Travis State Jail and TDCJ Rehabilitation and Reentry Division will provide for an in-house foster program for dogs currently in the Austin Animal Services shelter system. Military veterans currently incarcerated at the jail would receive dog handling training from Austin Animal Services employees to prepare them to train the dogs in their care.

The benefits of this pilot program are significant, as it would enhance the well-being of both the incarcerated veterans and the dogs in their care. Research shows that individuals in prison facilities have a higher likelihood of employment upon release when they acquire transferable skills during incarceration. By providing hands-on experience in animal care, behavior, and enrichment, the program aligns with the City's goal of increasing animal adoptability and the State's goal of promoting successful reentry. Educating incarcerated veterans to develop practical skills in dog handling and behavior supports both animal welfare and post-incarceration outcomes.

Further, dogs housed in City shelter facilities have an increased probability of successful adoption and safe behavior if they are well socialized and have received basic obedience training. Pets in specialized enrichment programs benefit behaviorally and emotionally from increased interactions and engagement.

This proposed program between the City and State contributes to the welfare, health, and safety of both City and State residents, and the parties have determined that this program serves valid public purposes of both the City and State.