

Spring 2026 Bulletin



Navigating the Veterinary Spectrum of Care

How you can balance Compassion, Finances, and Regulatory Obligations

What is the Spectrum of Care (SoC)? The Spectrum of Care in veterinary practice means offering a range of treatment options for animals, from basic to advanced care. It helps veterinarians provide the best care possible while considering what pet owners can afford. The idea is to offer care that is not only based on the best medical practices but also takes into account the client's financial situation and needs.

Why Do We Need a Spectrum of Care?: It might seem logical to think that people should only get pets if they can afford full veterinary care. However, things are often not that simple. Unexpected expenses, financial struggles, or limited access to resources can affect someone's ability to provide the care their pet needs. As veterinarians, it's important to recognize these challenges and offer flexible treatment options that fit within a client's budget.

The Current State of the Spectrum of Care: A 2018 survey from the Access to Veterinary Care Coalition found that 28% of pet owners face barriers to veterinary care, with financial problems being the biggest issue. Unsurprisingly, most veterinarians (95%) agree that every pet deserves some level of veterinary care. In fact, 98% of private practice vets reported taking steps to help clients overcome financial barriers. A common way to do this is by discussing all treatment options with clients and finding solutions that fit their budget.

The Spectrum of Care and Veterinary Board Cases: In cases where veterinarians are being investigated, one key focus is whether they followed the Standard of Care. The Standard of Care is a set of guidelines that determines the minimum level of care expected from a veterinarian. It includes the skills, knowledge, and actions a vet should take, including how they communicate with pet owners and what treatments they provide. The Spectrum of Care refers to all the possible treatment options available to treat an animal, from basic to advanced, and represents options that are a part of the Standard of Care.

Professional reputation was noted as a greater concern for recommending treatment options (40%) than worry about what other veterinarians will think about offering SoC (8%) or licensing concerns (14%)

Dolan, E. D., & Slater, M. R. (2024). Veterinarians' Self-Reported Behaviors and Attitudes toward Spectrum of Care Practices. *Animals*, 14(10), 1416.

Clarifying the VGAL Role

Responsibilities, Limitations, and Meaningful Supervision



Veterinary Graduates Awaiting Licensure (VGALs) play a vital role in veterinary practices, but it is essential to understand and adhere to the specific responsibilities, limitations, and supervisory requirements.

Who is a VGAL? A VGAL is a veterinary graduate registered with the Board to practice under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian. A VGAL must be either a graduate of an AVMA-accredited veterinary school who has not yet (but is registered to take the NAVLE) or a graduate of a non-accredited veterinary school enrolled in the ECFVG program. A VGAL can only work under a supervisor's license and cannot practice independently.

VGALs must submit an application to the Board, proof of their veterinary degree, and confirmation that they will sit for the NAVLE or are enrolled in the ECFVG program. Registrations are valid for 1 year, but may be extended with another application and proof of registration for the NAVLE or CPE (for ECFVG candidates).

Working without a registration or with an expired registration is a violation for both the supervisor and the individual working with the registration. Both the VGAL and the supervisor may be subject to discipline

Key Responsibilities of a VGAL

- 1. Identify Yourself:** VGALs must always identify themselves to the owner as such before performing any services. Transparency ensures clarity and trust between clients and team members.
- 2. Direct Supervision:** All services performed by VGALs must be under the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian in good standing with the Board. This supervisor must be on the premises and available to verify and oversee their work. If a supervisor's schedule does not permit direct oversight, they may designate another licensed veterinarian to supervise the VGAL. However, the original supervisor retains ultimate responsibility for the VGAL's actions.
- 3. Document Responsibilities:** VGALs must clearly document in the medical record which diagnostics and procedures they perform versus those performed by their supervisor. Accurate record-keeping ensures transparency and compliance with regulatory standards.

Limitations on Practice: A VGAL cannot prescribe or dispense medications. Only a supervisor may prescribe. VGALs may recommend and discuss medications, but a supervisor must write the prescription or direct the medication to be dispensed from the hospital. VGALs cannot independently diagnose or perform procedures without supervision.

Supervisors: Your Role Matters

Being a supervisor carries significant responsibility. Supervisors must ensure compliance with regulations as well as mentor a VGAL at a critical time in their career. It is an opportunity to instill good habits, such as maintaining accurate medical records or communicating well with clients. Once established, good habits can follow veterinarians throughout their careers.

Fostering Success: For VGALs, it can be an opportunity to develop clinical and communication skills under experienced mentorship. Supervisors can contribute to the profession's future by guiding these graduates effectively. Understanding and respecting the rules ensures a seamless transition from VGAL to licensed veterinarian.

Registration and Expiration: VGAL registration is valid for one year. If a VGAL needs an extension, they must re-apply and receive the extension before they can continue practice. Practicing after the registration expires is a violation can result in disciplinary action for both the VGAL and their supervisor.

Avoiding Pitfalls: VGALs and supervisors alike must work together comply with regulations. Unsupervised or unlicensed practice, improper identification, or prescribing medications can lead to disciplinary actions for both the VGAL and their supervisor.

If a VGAL or supervisor have questions about responsibilities, practice limitations, or supervision requirements, they are encouraged to contact the Board office for clarification. Seeking guidance proactively can prevent potential issues and ensure compliance with state regulations.

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Veterinarians may worry that offering treatment options that are not the "best" care could lead to problems with their professional conduct. However, offering different care options that fit a client's financial situation does not mean breaking the Standard of Care. It just means tailoring the treatment to meet both the pet's needs and the owner's financial abilities, while still following professional and ethical guidelines.

Regulatory Considerations

It's important for veterinarians to keep accurate records of the treatment options they discuss with clients. According to regulations (NAC 638), veterinarians must ensure that pet owners are fully informed about their pet's treatment options, the risks involved, the expected outcome, and how much it will cost. This process is called informed consent.

By documenting these options and getting informed consent from clients, veterinarians can make sure they are following the rules and regulations, while also providing care that is compassionate and meets the needs of both the animal and the pet owner.

Effective Strategies for SoC and Building Client Trust

- Practice reflective listening by verbally summarizing what owner shares.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Consider the order you present treatment options. Don't automatically start with the most advanced or expensive option as it could bias the owner's decision.
- Give time for the pet owner to process information and ask questions.
- Provide translations in various languages when needed.

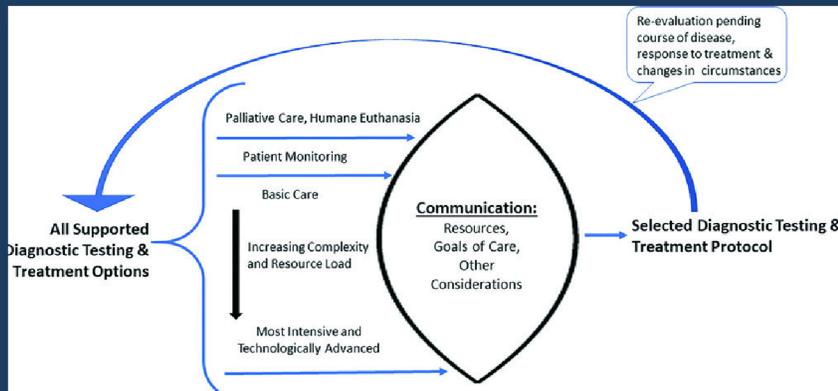


Illustration of the spectrum of care in veterinary medicine
[Click Here for the Full Article](#)

Explore the Spectrum of Information on Spectrum of Care



[Veterinarians' Self-Reported Behaviors and Attitudes toward Spectrum of Care Practice \(Animals\)](#)

[Spectrum of care: more than treatment options \(JAVMA\)](#)

[How Veterinarians Can Provide a Spectrum of Care: Podcast \(ASPCA\)](#)

[One Size Fits Some: How Practicing Across the Spectrum of Care Benefits Pets + Practitioners \(dvm360\)](#)

[What's the Emergency? The Case for a Spectrum of Care Approach \(dvm360\) 0.5 hour CE](#)

[Introduction to Spectrum of Care \(dvm360\) 0.5 hour CE](#)

[Spectrum of Care from the Regulator's Perspective \(AAVSB\) 1 hour CE](#)

Veterinary Communication Training Opportunities

[AVMA Well Being Educator Program](#) trains veterinary professionals to teach workplace communication skills for supporting wellbeing in a one-day interactive session. Gain the knowledge and confidence to help teams and individuals thrive. (5.25 credit hours)

[Empathy for Impact \(ASPCA\)](#): when empathy is practiced by the veterinary team, it has the power to improve client communication, gain client partnership, improve compliance, and maximize client satisfaction. (1 credit hour)

[Modern Mentorship \(dripVet\)](#): in-depth look at what is needed to provide high-quality mentorship in the veterinary field; course tutors all have extensive experience and/or training mentorship in the veterinary field. (10 credit hours)

[Empathy and Reflective Listening \(VIN\)](#): learn the difference between empathy and other communication tools such as sympathy, solving, consoling, or questioning. (3 credit hours)

News and Updates



Paw and Order Update

Are you or members of your staff interested in Paw and Order, but can't attend in person?

Try the new free Paw and Order Webinar to earn 1.5 hours of CE!

[Find Course Info Here](#)

Still Need to Find CE?

[Find approved CE courses here!](#)

You can find CE listed by topic, approved providers, and other other topics that interest you.

What's New

Check out the most recent regulatory changes [here](#).

The Board has taken recent regulation changes and put them into one document for easy reference.

Please let us know if you have questions.

Important Dates 2026

April 30
Quarterly Board Meeting (Reno)*

July 30
Quarterly Board Meeting (TBD)*

Wild West Veterinary Conference
October 14-17 (Reno)

October 30
Quarterly Board Meeting (TBD)*

*All Board Meetings are held in-person and virtually.

Don't Panic-Prepare!



Renewals will open next year on April 1, 2027

If you haven't already, make sure you have a plan to get your CE in time for next year's renewal.

Earn CE for renewal starting 7/1/2025 through 6/30/2027

CE Requirements to Renew
40 hrs DVMs, 20 hrs for LVTs, 30 hrs for AC, 10 hrs APT.

At least one-half of your hours must be in-person.

Live-Online courses can count for the 'in-person' requirement. The certificate must state the course was 'live' or 'interactive'

Check [here](#) for a list of approved sources for CE.

[Join the Board Mailing List](#)

We Want to Hear from You!

Let us know whether it is the good, the bad, or the ugly. Have ideas for future bulletins or questions? Let us know here.

