

SCOPE

BEFORE YOU SOAP

S

STORY

Ask open-ended questions about why the individual is seeking information or care. Listen to their story and the situation as they see it.



C

CARETAKER

Does the animal have an owner, a community member, a group of neighbors or others providing care? Who is able and willing to provide care?



O

OBSTACLES

Identify topics, barriers or concerns that may need to be addressed (e.g., transportation, finances, language barriers, and/or caretaker preferences and beliefs, etc.



P

PURPOSE

Clarify the purpose of the interaction. Is there intention to surrender? Is the goal to learn about options or to receive confirmation of a decision already made?



E

ENVIRONMENT

Ask about the animal's environment and where they spend their time. Where and how will they receive care? What features of that environment need to be considered in the care plan?



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A Tool for Contextualized Veterinary Care

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Veterinary and animal welfare professionals providing access-to-care need a practical tool that reflects the human-animal bond central to every clinical encounter. While SOAP (Subjective, Objective, Assessment, Plan) remains a vital framework for physical examination, it focuses directly on the patient and often overlooks the human context that shapes the care plan and what is ultimately the best outcome for the situation.

SCOPE—a simple mnemonic device introduced here—offers a practical, pre-SOAP guide for gathering social information to assist with practicing contextualized care. It prompts clinicians and animal welfare staff to explore the caretaker's story, identify barriers, understand their purpose and goals for the animal, and considers the environment in which care will occur. Using SCOPE before SOAP helps shift or refine the clinical approach— aims to improve treatment compliance, strengthen client and community relationships and improve satisfaction, and and facilitate better behavioral and medical outcomes.

SCOPE Breakdown:

Story: Ask open-ended questions—Why this visit happening today? What does caretaker feel is important about the animal and the situation?

Caretaker: Who is providing care: an individual, family, or community?

Obstacles: Explore barriers to care —transportation, finances, language, beliefs, availability or choices within care plans?

Purpose: What's the caretaker's goal—treatment, options, information, surrender, behavior support, end-of-life services?

Environment: Understand the animal's living space—dwelling type, exposure to weather, accessibility? What other factors need to be considered?

By using the SCOPE tool, medical and animal welfare service providers can partner with caretakers and stakeholders to identify the best services and treatment plans for the specific context presented to increase access to care.