### Animal Abuse, Animal Hoarding and Elder Abuse: Challenges and Strategies for Adult Protective Services

National Adult Protective Services Association Denver, Colo. – Aug. 21, 2019





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### **HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE PETS?**

Why????

Why do so many of us share our homes with filthy, slobbering, shedding, scratching, hairball-barfing, humping, peeing and pooping butt-licking predators?





## Because There's Nothing Quite Like It in the Whole World!

A smooch from your pooch can make your whole day seem brighter!









#### The "Good Side" of the Human-Animal Bond

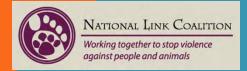
### "A PET IS AN ISLAND OF SANITY IN WHAT APPEARS TO BE AN INSANE WORLD."











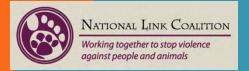
#### The "Good Side" of the Human-Animal Bond

### "IT'S NOT THAT THE NURSING HOMES ARE GOING TO THE DOGS..."

"...The dogs are going to the nursing homes, and every indication is that the residents love it. Happiness really is a warm puppy!"







#### The "Good Side" of the Human-Animal Bond

Why do AAA/AAT work?

"When the dogs go walking down the hall of the hospital, it's like that scene in The Wizard of Oz when everything changes from black and white... to color." Judy Levicoff,

Abington Memorial Hospital



### The good news....



"When people maintain patterns of caring, whether for a house, a garden, pets or people, they are protecting themselves against despair, against giving up. After retirement, people are urged to give up cares. It can be a lethal tradeoff. The

steps to the helplessness/hopelessness syndrome. And those who cope best with old age are those who continue the daily acts of caring, especially the most satisfying ones – care rendered to living things, such as pets and gardens."

person who stops caring for something may have taken the first

### The good news....

### Pets can enhance and facilitate social capital:

A "ripple effect extending beyond individual health benefits to their owners to non-pet owners and the broader community."

- -40.5% of pet owners know other people through pets
- 75.8% walk about more frequently...
   an obesity control trick!
- 83.8% of dog walkers talk to other people
- Pets create a community with a sense of safety



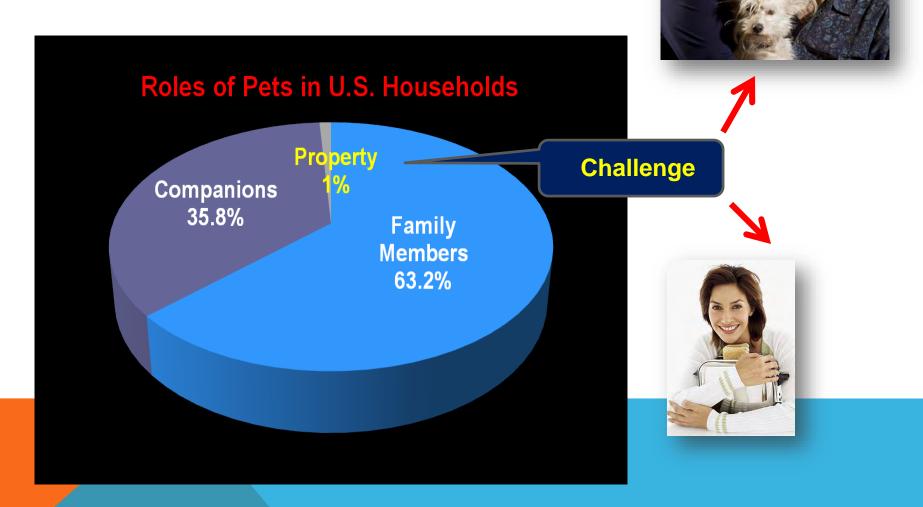
Lisa Wood, Billie Giles-Corti, Max Bulsara & Darcy Bosch (2007): More than a furry companion: The ripple effect of companion animals on neighborhood interactions and sense of community. *Society & Animals* 15(1), 43-56.

### Pets -ALL IN THE FAMILY!



- More homes have pets than children
- More money on pet food than baby food
- More dogs than people in European countries
- More cats than dogs
- Pet industry: 7<sup>th</sup> largest retail sector
- A child in the US today is more likely to grow up with pets than with a father

### **How Do Families See Their Pets?**



AVMA: U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook, 2012

## Pets and the Elderly: The Good...



## The Bad, and the Ugly



**Animal Abuse:** 

It's the tip

of the

ANIMAL ABUSE



iceberg...

MALTREATMENT

ABUSE ABUSE

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



What is the "Link" between
Animal Abuse
and other forms of
Family Violence?



"When animals are abused, people are at risk; When people are abused, animals are at risk."

### An Extreme – But Real – Example: Animal Abuse Investigation Thwarts Suicide Bomber

- Gregory Lepsky, 20, Point Pleasant, NJ
- US-born, family emigrated from Chechnya, thought his father had lost the faith
- Family members called police Feb. 2017 after he stabbed "dirty" family dog



- Police found pressure-cooker bomb, ISIS materials, incriminating e-mails, and plot to wreak havoc in NYC
- Told authorities he regretted trying to kill the dog -because police would not have found him otherwise

#### What Happened as a Result?







July 2018: Three federal counter-terrorism agencies identify animal abuse as a possible warning behavior for terrorism

#### **Joint Counterterrorism Assessment Team**

Dept. of Homeland Security (DHS) National Counter-Terrorism Center (NCTC) Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

"Reporting, investigating, and prosecuting animal cruelty may help minimize violent acts toward humans, including terrorism," and encourage first responders, animal control, animal shelters, social services, and veterinarians, peers, neighbors, and family members to report suspected animal cruelty to authorities for further vetting. "Their participation becomes a force multiplier and may assist communities and law enforcement with identifying, assessing and managing threats of planned violence while promoting public safety."

### WHAT IS THE NATIONAL LINK COALITION?

National Resource Center.

Organized 2008, Portland, Maine.

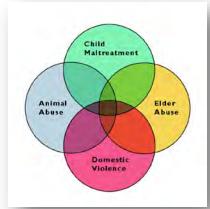
3,800+ members, 50 states, 57 countries.

Informal collaboration addressing linkages, prevention and response to animal abuse, domestic violence, child maltreatment and elder abuse.



LINK-Letter, local coalitions, trainings.

By recognizing how human and animal violence are intertwined, violence prevention is enhanced and families and communities are safer.



### Relevance for senior services:

- Elders might benefit the most, but are least likely cohort to have pets
- Animal neglect may also indicate challenges in self-care and need for assistance
  - memory loss
  - fixed/low income
  - physical frailness
  - transportation limitations
  - social isolation
- Animal control/protection often first on scene



### Why Are Some People Abusive to Animals?

- Ignorance
- Inability to empathize
- Inadequate coping skills

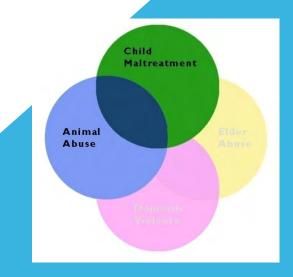
(more sensitive to stress and strain, pet's behavior releases frustration and anger)

- Socialized to abuse
- Believe abuse justified and beneficial (violence, power and control)
- Sense of entitlement

   (animals not worthy of moral consideration)
- Personality dysfunction, poor impulse control
- Regional subcultures



# Animal Abuse and Child Abuse





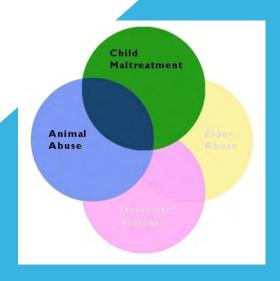
Henry Bergh, Founder American SPCA (1866)

The "Little Mary Ellen" Case (1874)





The battered-child syndrome, a clinical condition in young children who have received serious physical abuse, is a frequent cause of permanent injury or death. The syndrome should be considcred in any child exhibiting evidence of fracture of any bone, subdural hematoma, failure to thrive, soft tissue swellings or skin bruising, in any child who dies suddenly, or where the degree and type of injury is at variance with the history given regarding the occurrence of the trauma. Psychiatric factors are probably of prime importance in the pathogenesis of the disorder, but knowledge of these factors is limited. Physicians have a duty and responsibility to the child to require a full evaluation of the problem and to guarantee that no expected repetition of trauma will be permitted to occur.



#### The Battered-Child Syndrome

C. Henry Kempe, M.D., Denver, Frederic N. Silverman, M.D., Cincinnati, Brandt F. Steele, M.D.,
William Droegemueller, M.D., and Henry K. Silver, M.D., Denver

Reprinted From The Journal of The American Medical Association July 7, 1862, Vol. 181, pp. 17-24
Copyright 1962, by American Medical Association

## Animal Abuse and Child Abuse

- 60% of pet-owning families meeting New Jersey's criteria for child abuse or neglect also had abused or neglected pets



- Animal abuse in 88% of families with physical child abuse

- Bite rate was 11x greater
- Veterinary usage similar to general population



## **Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence**



### Manipulation – Intimidation – Retaliation



71% of shelter women: husband or boyfriend killed, harmed or threatened an animal;

32%: children hurt or killed animals (Ascione, Utah)

87% in presence of women 75% in presence of the children

(Quinlisk, Wisconsin)

## **Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence**

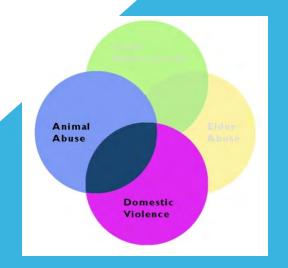
#### Batterers who also abuse pets:

- use more forms of violence and
- are more dangerous
- ... than batterers who do not abuse pets.

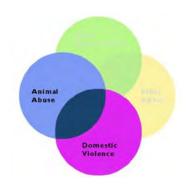
History of pet abuse one of the 4 most significant risk factors of becoming a batterer.

18% - 48% of battered women do not leave abusers in fear for their animals

41% of IPV offenders had committed animal abuse (rate in general population: 1.5%)



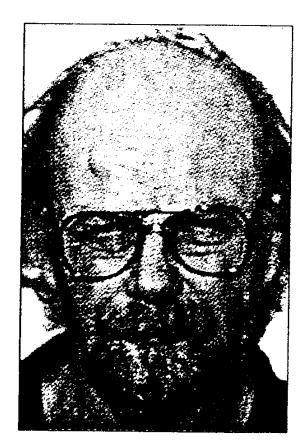
### Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse: What's the Risk?



IPV suspects with histories of pet abuse are significantly more likely to have had previous violent incidents. Victims reported:

- 80% had had at least one prior unreported IPV incident
- 76% had been strangled
- 26% had been forced to have sex with the suspect
- 80% fear they will be killed by the suspect

#### Animal Abuse Linked with Other Abuse



Davis: Charged with domestic violence, he's being held on bond in the Lucas County jail.

## Man who allegedly beat wife, killed kitten is held

**BY ROBIN ERB** 

**BLADE STAFF WRITER** 

An East Toledo man accused of killing his wife's kitten by putting it in an oven set at 500 degrees and then telling her "Your dinner's ready" appeared in court yesterday on animal cruelty and domestic violence charges.

Dennis Davis, 56, of Main Street, was ordered held in the Lucas County jail in lieu of \$8,500 bond by Judge Mary Trimboli of Toledo Municipal Court. "Just when you think they've found every way possible to manipulate someone,

somebody comes up with something new," said Sam Nugent, chief prosecutor. "This is quite brutal, quite unnerving."

"I've never had anything like this," Kevin Warner, a Toledo Humane Society investigator, said.

The case began about 3:30 p.m. Jan. 9, according to a police report filed by Roberta Davis, 41, who told officers that she is seeking a divorce from her husband.

Ms. Davis, who did not call police at the time but went to the downtown police station

See KITTEN, Page 18 ▶

### **Domestic Violence Responses**

### "Doggie Witness Protection Programs"

"Safe Havens"

600+ women's shelters: Foster referrals

### www.safeplaceforpets.org



### "SAF-T" – Sheltering Animals & Families Together



148+ pet-friendly women's shelters in US

(12+ in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Spain)

www.alliephillips.com

## **Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence**

A serious, understudied rural issue...

"It wasn't just the cats and dogs, it was the sheep and the chickens. I was terrified for their welfare. I knew if I were to leave, he wouldn't hesitate to kill them. He had done it before."





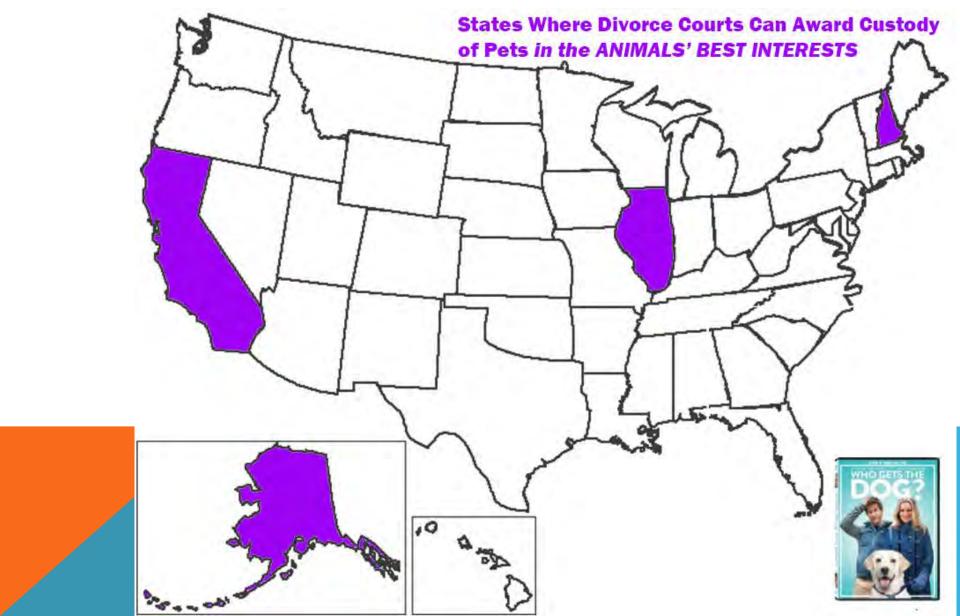
Susan Walsh, 50...

The Link Helps Resolve Ongoing Challenges: Better support for IPV survivors: Pet Protection Orders





### Policy and Practice Responses: Pets and Divorce Settlements



## Legislative Responses Coercive Animal Abuse = Domestic Violence or Elder Abuse



### The Animal Abuse/ Elder Abuse Link

**Animal Welfare Issues for Adult Protective Services** 



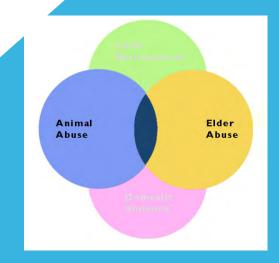


- Memory loss
- Fixed/low income
- Physical frailness
- Social isolation
- Hoarding



### **Animal Abuse and APS Caseworkers**

• 35%: clients talk about pets threatened, injured, killed, or denied care



- 45%: intentional animal abuse or neglect
- 92%: co-existing animal and self-neglect: animal neglect an important warning sign
- 75%: clients' concern for pets' welfare affected decisions about accepting interventions or other services Rational Center on Elder Abuse

### **Animal Abuse and APS Caseworkers**

"Her decision to go to the hospital depended on what happened to her cat. Her recovery depended on the cat's well being. So I had to find someone to care for her cat. I never thought that animal welfare would be of my job!"



-- APS caseworker, reported in Boat & Knight (2000)

### From the National Link Coalition's Case Files: Animal abuse linked with elder abuse...

NY man accused of beating his father, then stealing, raping and killing neighbor's dog...

RI man holds elderly mother's cat hostage for \$20,000 ransom...

FL man charged with killing mother's three dogs in jealous rage – believed she loved them more than him...

CA woman with starving horses charged with elder abuse when mother found covered in feces & urine...

Investigation into dog slashed with sword uncovers FL woman's brutal beatings of nursing home resident...

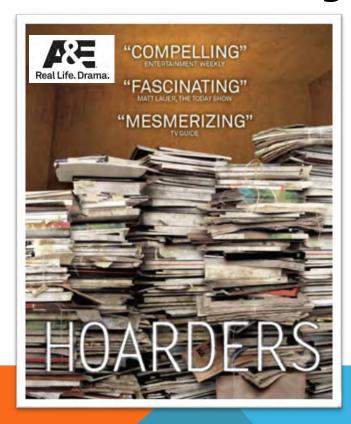
CA Family with autistic son catch caregiver viciously beating boy – and uncover histories of felony animal neglect and murder ...

#### **Elders & Animals -- Issues for APS**

- Pet neglect (forget to feed; overfeed; don't let out; vet care)
- 2. Self-neglect (forgo food, hospital, LTHC; eat pet food)
- 3. Attachment and pet loss (sole companion, exercise, social connection, link to loved one)
- Safety of caseworker/home health aide/homemaker
   services (litter boxes, sink, vermin; aggression)
- 5. Manipulation, Intimidation, Retaliation. Extortion
- 6. Jealousy over service animal
- 7. Hoarding/collecting...

### **Elders & Animals -- Issues for APS**

### Animal hoarding – not taken seriously



"Hoarders" (2007 --)



"Crazy Cat Lady Action Figure" (2004)

"Crazy Cat Lady Board Game" (2007)



## WHY DO PEOPLE HOARD ANIMALS?

#### Animals provide us with:

- Reward
- Acceptance
- Conflict-free relationships
- Sense of self-worth Hoarders carry to extreme



Gary Patronek, VMD Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium

"Some people who have difficulty establishing supportive interpersonal relationships or who otherwise have difficulty coping with life stressors find refuge in animals."

#### **Elders & Animals -- Issues for APS**

## **Animal hoarding** •



- Not a harmless eccentricity, but a potentially serious problem for people, animals and the community.
- Multi-disciplinary response always required: APS, animal shelter, law enforcement, public health, fire dept., code enforcement, mental health, veterinarians.
- Animals may be dead or alive.
- Recidivism rate: 100%.

Animal
Hoarding
- an
APS
concern:

Abuser Age/Gender Mapping Abuse Type: Hoarding (all cases) 1889 Abusers Total 380 364 Est. 3,500 new cases reported/year 360 Est. 250,000 animals **-** Male 340 325 Female 320 40% of object hoarders also <del>2</del>300 299 hoard animals **88**260 • 10-15% of all hoarding cases involve dependent adults or children **Datapase** 0220 .5200 181 2180 160 162 **9** 80140 Ī<sub>120</sub> **5**100 Number 80 60 40 20 Under 10 10-14 15 - 1726-30 31-40 51-60 61+ 18-29 41-50 (0.044s)

Source:
Pet-Abuse.com
(2000-2013)

## **Elders and Animal Hoarding**

#### **DEFINITION:**

Intense emotional attachments 

 accumulates large # of animals.



- Fail to provide minimal standards of nutrition, sanitation & vet care.
- Fail to act on deteriorating condition of animals or environment.
- Fail to recognize negative impact of the collection on their own health and well-being.

## **Elders and Animal Hoarding**

#### **STATISTICS:**

- 76% female
- 46% aged 60+
- Most unmarried
- More than 1/2 live alone
- Animals:
  - cats 65%
  - dogs 60%
  - farm animals 11%
  - birds 11%
- Median: 39 animals per case
- **Dead or poor condition: 80%**
- Animal feces & urine: 69% of cases
- Hoarder's bed soiled with feces/urine: 25%
- Denial: 58% do not acknowledge the problems



# FOUR TYPES OF ANIMAL HOARDERS

1. Mental Illness

- 2. Overwhelmed hoarder
- 3. Rescue Hoarder

4. Exploiter Hoarders...



#### 1. Mental Illness

**Current thinking: not OCD but** disordered attachment style emanating from early childhood trauma & life stressors.

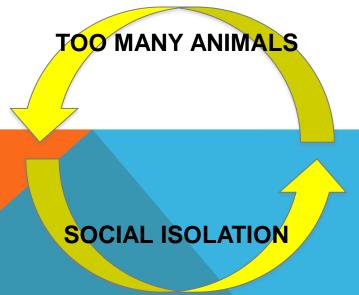


## Psychological Disorders Identified

- **Addiction Model** 
  - **Dementia**
- **Schizophrenia**

- **Borderline Personality**
- **Antisocial Personality**
- **Depression**
- Psychopathic Personality Münchausen by Proxy

- 1. Mental Illness
- Few psychotic
- Agoraphobics who don't want to be alone
- Isolation a cause of accumulation of animals
- Isolation a <u>result</u> of accumulation of animals





- 2. Overwhelmed: Good intentions gone bad
  - Sincere desire but overwhelmed (word gets out as THE place to take unwanted animals)
  - Animals become family



#### 3. Rescuers

- Deep mistrust of others: see self as only one who can help
- State of denial
- Anti-euthanasia
- Identity tied to animals
- May rescue specific breeds (or colors)
- May rescue hospice cases, dying animals



- 4. Exploiters: Greed or criminal intent
- Solicit \$ from public
- Get animals to serve themselves
- Actively pick up animals, evade law



#### Social Work Issues in Animal Hoarding

- Undiagnosed mental health issues (only 9% have histories of MH treatment)
- Physical health issues (rarely leave house; don't see MDs; zoonoses)
- 14%: histories of elder abuse
- Malnutrition
- Poverty
- Isolation



- Jenny Coffey, Mayor's Alliance for Animals/ Urban Hoarding Project, New York City

#### **Social Work Issues in Animal Hoarding**

- Environmental issues: Fire hazards;
   Odor; Infestation with pests
- Non-working utilities
- Declining quality of life



- Potential for eviction or hospitalization (>50%)
- 47% have dead or dying animals
- Only 14% connected to traditional social services (e.g., Meals on Wheels, DSS)
- 11% require crisis responses

#### What To Do?

#### Advantages of prosecution

- Opportunity for evaluation and risk assessment
  - Opportunity to evaluate animals
  - Can do long-term monitoring (recommended!)
  - Court-ordered restitution of costs
  - Limits on animal ownership
  - Limits on animal-related employment
  - Law-enforcement public record
  - Makes them accountable
  - Educates public about seriousness of the issue

#### What To Do?

#### Disadvantages of prosecution

- Criminalizes behavior that may really be mental illness
- Alienates public or judiciary unfamiliar with the extent of the problem
- May not draw upon the community resources in the best position to provide long-term monitoring and solutions (e.g. mental health, adult protective services, animal care and control)
- Costly and time-consuming

## **INTERVENTION STRATEGIES**

Type of Hoarder	Persuasion	Threat of Legal Action	Prosecution
Exploiter	Unlikely to be effective	Unlikely to be intimidated	Usually essential
Rescue Hoarder	Unlikely to be effective, at least initially	Must offer potential for scaled-down operation	May be Required when threats fail
Overwhelmed Caregiver	Likely to be receptive	May be enough to reduce recidivism	Often unnecessary or counter - productive

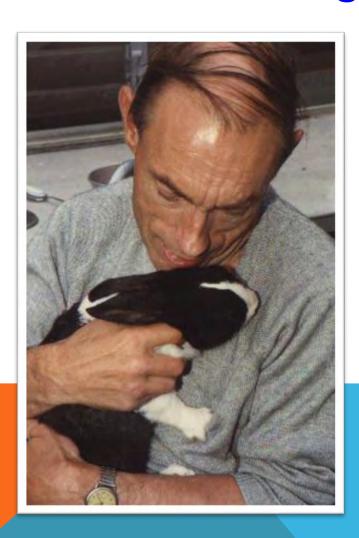
## **Elders and Animal Hoarding**

#### REMEDIES AND RESPONSES

- Foster housing, vet care, euthanasia of large #s of animals, mobile clinic for spay/neuter
- May require court order
- Psych counseling, social services
- Prepare for media interest
- Allow to keep limited #
- Frequent check-backs



## Other Issues: Humane Housing for Older People & Pets



Dilemma: elder may be forced to surrender pets and move to subsidized housing

### **Humane Housing for Older People & Pets**

#### KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

Housing & Urban-Rural Recovery Act, Sec. 227 (12 U.S.C. #1701r-1)

- disabled or 62+ can keep "common" household pets in federally-assisted housing for elderly or disabled

 pet deposits vary on rent subsidy, capped at \$300,
 can be paid in installments



### **Humane Housing for Older People & Pets**

#### KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

State laws protect rights of elderly and disabled to keep pets in state-subsidized housing

AZ\*, CA, CT, DC\*, MA, MN\*, NH, NJ\*



(\* = pet rights also guaranteed in private housing)

## **Humane Housing for Older People & Pets**

#### **KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!**

Other pertinent laws:

ADA: housing & transportation for service animals (dogs, miniature horses) (42 U.S.C. #12131-12134)

Public Housing Reform Act: residents of public housing allowed to own common pets subject to conditions (42 U.S.C. #1437z-3)

Fair Housing Amendments Act: private landlords cannot discriminate against people with disabilities with assistance animals (some exemptions) (42 U.S.C. #3601-3619)

#### 1. Ask questions in assessments, intakes, interviews:

- Clients more likely to talk about animals than themselves
- Your concern for pet --> trust
- If pet suddenly missing, or having problems, ask why
- Does client have vet?



"Are there animals at home?"

"How are they cared for?"

"Are you worried about their welfare?"

- 1. Include animal questions in assessments, interviews, intakes
- "Are there any animals at home?" (basement, garage, shed, yard)
- "Has anyone ever hurt or threatened your pet?"
- "Have any animals turned up missing?"
- "Are you worried about your pet's safety or health?"
- "Can you afford to care for your pet?"
- "Are you, or your home aides, able to do the physical tasks?" (change litter box, clean fish tank or bird cage, walk dog, clean yard, go to vet)
- "Is someone else available to care for pet?"
- "Are you depressed over the loss of your pet?"

#### 2. Home Visit Assessment Tips

- Risk reduction: Safety vs. fall
- Ask about any recent health problems or injuries
- Inadequate food/water/shelter
- How is pet being exercised?
- Pet clean-up
- Pet food but no human food
- Excess numbers of animals
- Future planning: short- or long-term hospital/skilled nursing facility
  - Who will take care of animal?
  - Can pet come to visit?



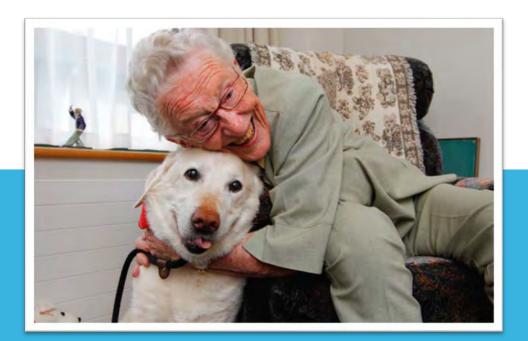
#### 3. Planning for Transitioning with Pets

- Animals sense changes
- Talk through issues with clients: what do they really want?
- How will pet transition?
- Does new residence allow pets?
- May be more expensive
- Is pet a risk for client with increasing frailty?
- Build in support system ahead of time
- Utilize community animal care & control, pet therapy, vet, AIDS services resources
- May need to find new vet
- Build in plan for animal for future care



#### 3. Strategies to Ease Transition

- Packing and moving considerations
- Acclimate pet to new setting in advance
- Scope out the new area for opportunities & resources
- Change address on tags
- Order new supplies



#### 4. End-of-Life Care Planning

- End of life wishes and burial/cremation considerations for both pet and older adults
- Hospice plans (for both pet and older adult)
- Alert vets to suicide watch potential



#### 5. Know who to call for referrals

- Pet care services for seniors/chronic illness (humane society, SPCA, animal services) (surrender, adoption, Safe Havens, low-cost vet/spay-neuter, foster care while in hospital, behavior counseling, pet food banks, meals-on-wheels)
- Who 'Ya Gonna Call? <u>Abuse Busters!</u>
- Seniors' transport services
- Vets/vet associations/Vet schools
  - 24/7 grief/loss hotline
  - Monthly grief support group
- Mobile groomers
- House-call veterinarians



- 6. Develop inter-agency relationships, especially for hoarding cases: MOU
  - Cross-training: make all aware of Link
  - Cross-reporting protocols: SPCA/Animal Control should call you on hoarding cases
  - Join community coalitions
  - Invite SPCA/Animal Control to join APS MDTs



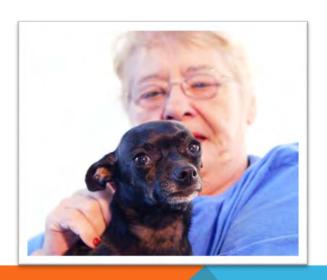
- 7. Identify pet-friendly housing (apartments, public housing)
  - -- SPCA volunteers can compile list

Identify nursing homes/assisted living centers with animal-assisted activities





8. If client is capable (physically, emotionally, mentally, financially) suggest a pet for companionship, responsibility, routine, exercise, social outreach



"Animal companions can relieve the anonymity often found in modern society, and can help build friendships. Dogs facilitate interaction among strangers and help establish trust among the newly acquainted."

-- Robins, D.M., Sanders, C.R. & Cahill, S.E. (1991).

Dogs and their People.

Journal of Contemporary Ethnography 20, 3-25.

9. Find volunteer opportunities for clients at animal shelters





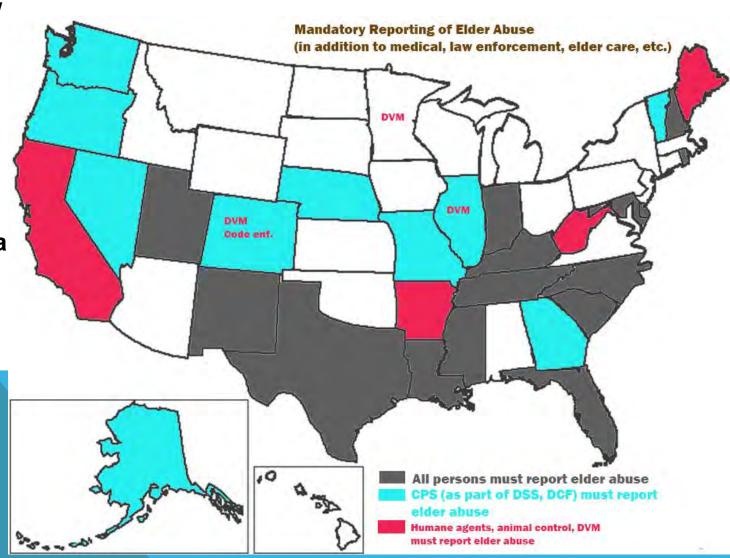




10. Legislative answers: Cross-reporting

APS mandated/ permitted to report animal abuse

- California
- Louisiana
- Nebraska
- Tennessee
- West Virginia



#### **Cross-Reporting -- Confidentiality concerns?**

#### **Statutory remedies**

- State law allowing cross-reporting
- State law mandating cross reporting
- (Limited or absolute immunity from civil/criminal liability)

#### **Codes of Ethics remedies**

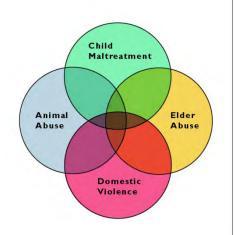
- Confidentiality can be breached if harm to self or others is risk (NASW)
- Explicit permission (AVMA, AAHA, CVMA, RNZVMA)

#### **Administrative remedies**

- OK to report to law enforcement when others are at risk
- Include humane society/animal control in MDTs
- OK to release info if family signs release form
- Report as private citizen

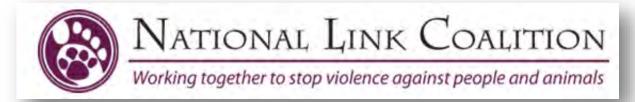
## **Summary**

1. Animal abuse also affects people's welfare.



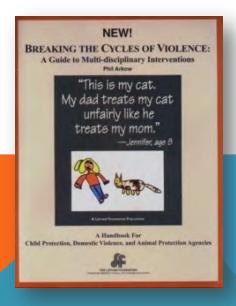
- 2. Animal abuse is a form of family violence.
- 3. APS personnel can work with animal care & control to recognize and respond to suspected animal maltreatment and better help families
- 4. Link-based agency policy changes can help families with pets who are experiencing violence.

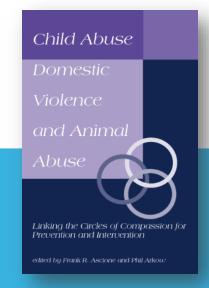
### Resources



## www.NationalLinkCoalition.org

Subscribe to our FREE LINK-Letter arkowpets@snip.net







The Latham Foundation www.latham.org



Any Questions?

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## Animal Abuse, Animal Hoarding and Elder Abuse: Challenges and Strategies for Adult Protective Services





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