



The Linkage Project

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Asking about Pets

Asking questions about pets is one of the most important steps that human or medical service organizations can take to more fully address the connection between animal cruelty and human violence.

During initial intake sessions with clients many, if not all, social service organizations, ask about who else lives in the home. After all, it's important to know if children are present in the home or if there is a spouse or elderly parent or any other individual living in the home. This helps us get a sense of the client's family and opens the door for discussion of family dynamics.

It's common knowledge that people love to talk about their pets. In a study conducted by the American Veterinary Medicine Association, a full 98% of respondents considered their pet a companion or a member of the family! With that kind of response, we understand just how integrated pets are



in family life. They are, indeed, part of the family. So asking about them at intake is a great way to break the ice and can lead to a fuller discussion about the individual's situation.

Cathy Cyr, Child Protective Supervisor, recounts the story of going out on a complaint with a new case worker to a home where the male adult had been verbally hostile. "Upon entering the home the man was clearly unimpressed

with our presence. A female dog entered the room shortly after our arrival. The male spoke fondly to the dog as he caressed her. I commented on how attractive his dog was and how closely bonded they were. This statement changed the atmosphere and tone for rest of the meeting. We spent time talking about his dog and our mutual interest in animals. The man's open hostility disappeared, and he was pleasantly engaging. By the end of our visit he thanked us for taking the time to meet with him and invited us back. I believe taking the time to make the connection with this person to his pet influenced the positive interaction during the meeting."

What's more, observing interactions with animals as part of a visit provides good information about the dynamics in a home. Later, as part of the assessment process, ask if there are any worries about how a pet is treated within the family. This question will open the door for a discussion about any concerns regarding abuse not only to animals, but also to the humans living in the family. Then, treatment plans addressing safety can be developed to include everyone, even the pet, if needed.



Addressing the Hoarding Response

When a person collects too many animals and then neglects their basic needs, it is called hoarding. In these situations, the owners have lost control and Maine's Animal Welfare Program must intervene and seize the animals. Just what is the best response to animal hoarding? Since there are several types of hoarders, the response varies somewhat based on the owner's physical and mental circumstances.

In this issue, we're addressing the type of animal hoarders who come by too many animals through the goodness of their hearts but find themselves in a place where they cannot take care of themselves, let alone any pets. Sometimes this person has been the "go to" person for taking care of strays in the community, and unwanted animals may be routinely dropped off at his/her door. In such cases, Maine's Animal Welfare Program will try to work with the owner to reduce the number of animals involved. If that fails, then they will organize the seizure of the animals and

invite Adult Protective Services staff to participate so that the needs of the owner can be addressed at the same time the animals are removed. Whenever large numbers are removed from a home, many parties are involved, from local animal shelter or humane society staff, to code enforcement officers, the fire department, health officers, and the police or sheriff's department.

It's important to reiterate that the Animal Welfare Program often involves Adult Protective and other human services providers to address the needs of the owner and other people living in the house. These so-called "multidisciplinary response teams" represent the best practice in addressing hoarding situations and are more likely to lead to better long-term results for both animals and people.

For a more in-depth report on interdisciplinary response to hoarding, please log on to:

<http://www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/>

The Latest News!

The Linkage Project congratulates Maine's Office of Child and Family Services, DHHS, for including pet questions. At the January Statewide Advisory Committee meeting, Virginia Marriner, OCFS, Acting Director of Child Welfare Policy and Practices announced a policy addendum to the Child Protective Assessment Protocol. This protocol now includes the three pet questions designed to understand how pets are treated in the home. OCFS states "The impact of animal abuse and cruelty can be as detrimental to a child's safety and well being as is domestic violence and substance abuse".

Congratulations!

Quotable

"When the Animal Welfare Program responds to an animal cruelty or neglect complaint we often find that, besides the animals, there are many victims including children, the elderly and others. Without the assistance of a multidisciplinary team we would find ourselves in a position where we can help the animals but would fail to address the needs of all the victims and we find this troubling."

**-Norma J. Worley
Director of Maine's
Animal Welfare Program**

Workshops on Assessing and Treating Animal Abuse

On October 25 and 26, the Linkage Project sponsored two separate workshops featuring Kenneth Joel Shapiro, co-executive director of the Animals and Society Institute. The first workshop was a Policy Day, where we looked at the latest research on the link, received an overview of the AniCare assessment and treatment model, looked at collaborative networks and heard from a Maine panel on what the successes and challenges are here in Maine. Forty people attended the workshop.

The second day was devoted to an in-depth look at the AniCare Child assessment and treatment method, which is based on validated clinical interventions including cognitive behavioral therapy. The AniCare Child model is currently under evaluation in two sites nationally.

Dr. Shapiro and Wendy McSparren, an AniCare trainer and clinician, led us through the process of assessment and treatment, providing lots of information interspersed with video segments and role-playing exercises. In attendance were 30 participants from various organizations, including clinicians in private practice, juvenile corrections, family foster care, case managers and mental health service providers.

From the workshops, we learned that one of the most important things you can do is to ask about pets in the home, how they're treated and if there is any cause to be concerned about the welfare of a pet. If you ask, you'll learn far more about the client and family members, the animals, the interactions and the environment.

Both days received high marks from participants. And Maine now has more clinicians, case managers and individuals who know how to include animals and animal abuse in the assessment and treatment planning process.

For more information on the AniCare models, please go to:

<http://www.societyandanimalsforum.org>



Developing Foster Homes for Pets of Domestic Violence Households

When the new law passed allowing pets to be included in protection-from-abuse orders, finding safe places to house pets became a priority. If a victim of domestic violence won't leave when her pet(s) remains in the house, we need to have supports in place to find safety for the pet. Sometimes it can be a simple matter of asking a family member or friend to care for the pet while the woman goes to the domestic violence shelter and begins a new life. But what if family and friends aren't able to help?

The Linkage Project has been supporting collaboration between local humane societies and domestic violence shelters. Modeled after the PAWS program run by the Animal Welfare Society in Kennebunk and other similar programs, there are currently three such collaborative programs in development across Maine. In fact, due to the generosity of Verizon,

the Linkage Project will be providing consultation and training to humane societies and domestic violence agencies that are interested in developing this kind of program. Training will be offered sometime during the end of February through the middle of March. If you are interested in learning more, please contact Linda Jariz at the Linkage Project at 874-1175 ext 6042.

Pet Foster Homes are Urgently Needed

Are you interested in being a short-term foster home for pets in the Cumberland County or Penobscot County? Two organizations need foster homes for pets whose owners are leaving domestic violence situations. In Cumberland County, please call Kathleen Fobear at the Animal Refuge League, 854-9771 ext 110. In the Bangor area, please call Jeff Mitchell at 942-8902 ext 105.

Two New County Linkage Committees

With many thanks to support from the CF Adams Charitable Trust, Maine Community Foundation, A Kinder World and the Bingham Program, the Linkage Project has expanded to include Washington and Lincoln Counties. These two county committees are each in the development phase with members working to identify the areas of focus and expand membership. The addition of these two counties brings the number of Linkage County committees to five. Each county committee develops its own work plan that often includes training for the community along with networking. The Linkage Project is also providing consultation to the Sagadahoc County Domestic Violence Task Force. This group is adding the link between animal cruelty and human violence to its agenda. If you have a group that might be interested in addressing the link as part of its agenda, please contact the Linkage Project for more information.

Legislation

Be on the lookout for legislation this session that furthers the collaboration between animal welfare staff and social services staff. One bill will add Animal Control Offices to the list of mandated reporters of suspected child and elder abuse. Another bill will allow social service agency staff to report suspected animal cruelty. These bills will need your support! While not out as LDs yet, the reference documents are:



Blaine House Tea, Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence Recognition event in October 2006. Anne Jordan, Linda Jariz, Susan Walsh, Governor Baldacci and Norma Worley.

LR 0883 An Act to Identify Animal Control Officers (ACO) as Mandated Reporters of Abuse.

LR 1246 An Act to Permit Medical and Social Service Professionals To Report Animal Cruelty

Resources

For more information on the Linkage Project and for other resources please log on to:

<http://www.linkageproject.org>

For more information on the link between animal cruelty and human violence, log on to the Humane Society of the United States at www.hsus.org and search the site for First Strike. Publications that cover many aspects of this link are available to download or order.

HSUS has an on-line university course on integrating humane education in the classroom. For more information go to www.hsusonline.org

Do you have a group whose members would like to become trainers on the link? Contact the Linkage Project to arrange training and consultation.

For information about teaching empathy in schools or at home, log on to the Doris Day Animal Foundation at www.ddaf.org and search for the publication titled "The Empathy Connection".

For more information contact:

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Thank You

The Linkage Project operates through the generosity of A Kinder World Foundation, C.F. Adams Charitable Trust, The Bingham Program, One Day at a Time Fund at Maine Community Foundation, Verizon Foundation and Tom's of Maine.

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