

Incorporating The Link into Child Protection Policy and Practice:

*A species-spanning
strategy for breaking
the cycles of violence*



NATIONAL LINK COALITION

*Working together to stop violence
against people and animals*

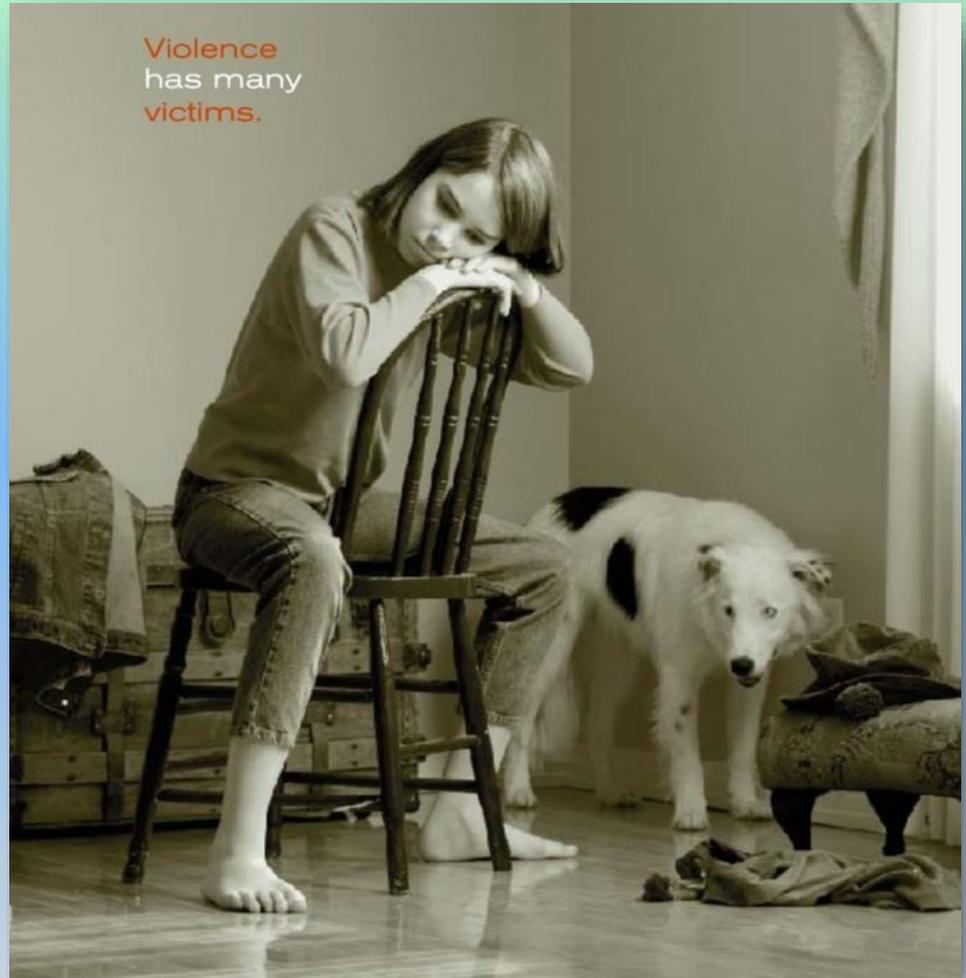
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www.NationalLinkCoalition.org

856-627-5118



Scottish SPCA
Edinburgh
9 September, 2019

Glad to Be Back – To Where A Lot of The Link All Began!

1996: Helen Munro publishes “The Battered Pet” (in Ireland...), launches recognition of NAI in animals and veterinary forensics.



2016: Scotland invests £1,000,000 to train 100,000 front-line professionals to recognize & respond to domestic violence.



2019: Client confidentiality can be breached if animal, child or domestic abuse suspected.



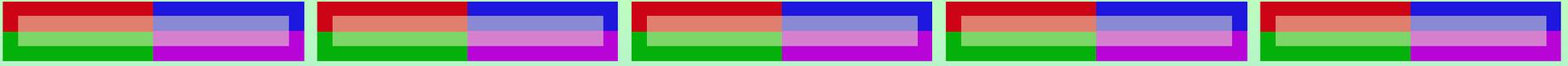
Beauticians



Dentists



Veterinarians



Glad to Be Back – To Where A Lot of The Link All Began!

**1997: Scottish SPCA launches First Strike
Scotland to address animal harm by integrating
animal abuse into enforcement and social justice.**

Established UK's first cross-reporting system.



Trained police recruits on The Links between animal abuse & violent crime.

2002: Encouraged Parliament measure to:

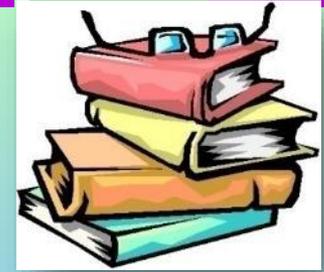
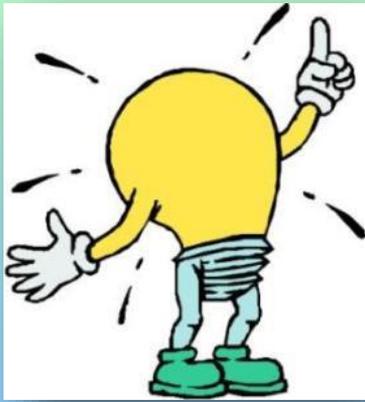
- **Research The Link between domestic violence, child abuse and animal abuse.**
- **Study therapeutic programmes to address children's abuse of animals.**
- **Create protocols for cross-reporting across all respective agencies.**

2003: Commissioned *The Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime: Preliminary findings on cruelty towards animals.*

2018: Pilot Animal Guardians programme: identifying the connections between ACES (victimization, bullying and abuse) and their pivotal role in leading to cruelty to animals.



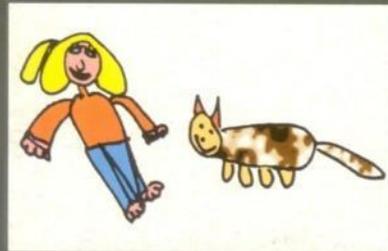
How I Got Here



The provocative research study....

"This is my cat.
My dad treats my cat
unfairly like he
treats my mom."

—Jennifer, age 8



The curious teacher training....

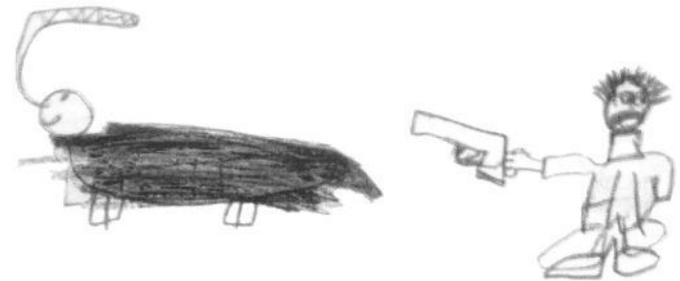


The fateful after-dinner speech....



"This is a snake. Snakes make me angry.
They will bite my dad and kill him. My
dad's in jail because he socked my mom."

— Brandy, age 4



"My dog used to be abused by my Mom's old boyfriend.
It has a family that takes care of it now. My dog used
to look shabby but now her fur looks soft. My dog has a
good home now."

— Chris, Grade 4

What's the National LINK Coalition?

- **National Resource Center.**
- **3,800+ members, 50 states, 55 countries.**
- **Informal collaboration addressing linkages, prevention and response to animal abuse, domestic violence, child maltreatment and elder abuse.**
- **Policy, programs, awareness, & research (1,400+ citations).**
- **LINK-Letter, local coalitions, trainings.**
- **By recognizing how human and animal violence are linked, violence prevention is enhanced and families and communities are safer.**



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Pet-keeping is a pivotal point of childhood identification – *what do you recall???*



Animal Abuse as a Predictor of Interpersonal Violence



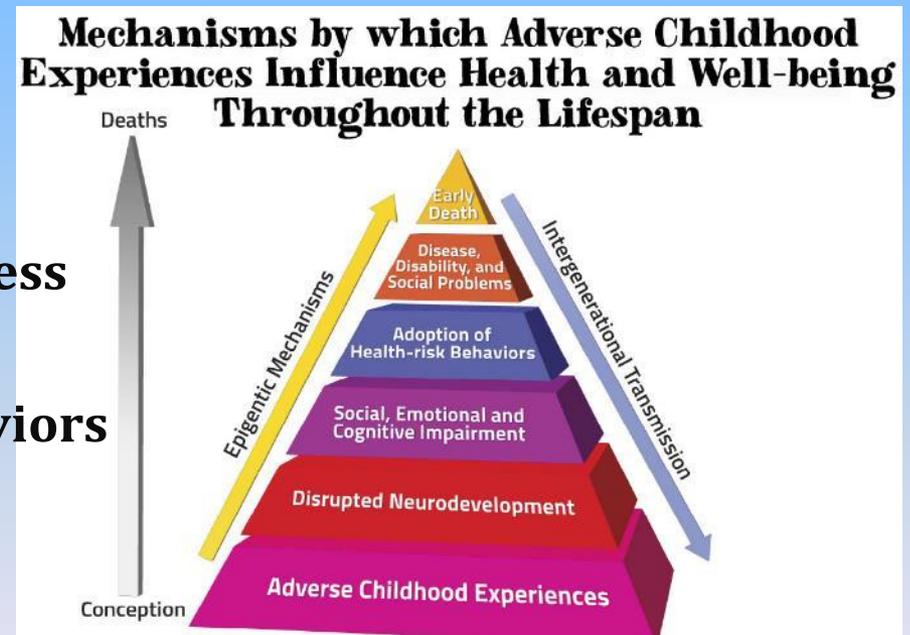
“One of the most dangerous things that can happen to a child is to kill or torture an animal and get away with it.”

*-- Margaret Mead,
anthropologist*



Gaps in the System: Animal Abuse and Dangerous Animals As “Adverse Childhood Experiences”

- CDC ACEs study 1995-1997 (17,000 participants, 19 years)
- ID'd risk factors
- Toxic stress in early childhood:
 - Harms developing brain architecture
 - Long-term hyper-responsiveness to perceived threats
 - Adoption of risky health behaviors
 - Lifelong negative physical & mental health/mortality



● **Ignored children's exposure/perpetration**



Community

Extended family

Parent(s)

Child(ren)



Gaps in the System: Traditional Family Systems Theory

Pet(s)





Community

Extended family

Parent(s)

Child(ren)

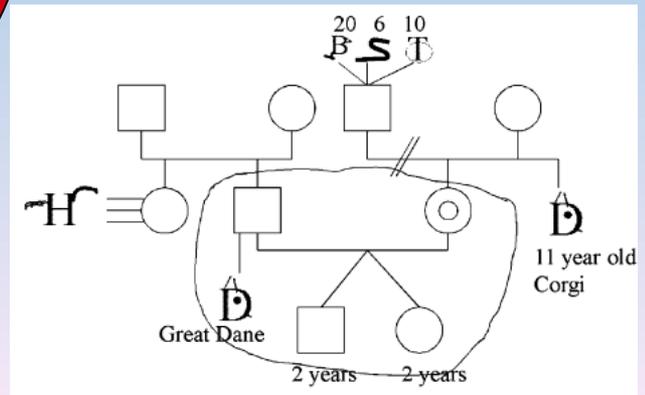


Pet(s)



More Appropriate Family Systems Theory

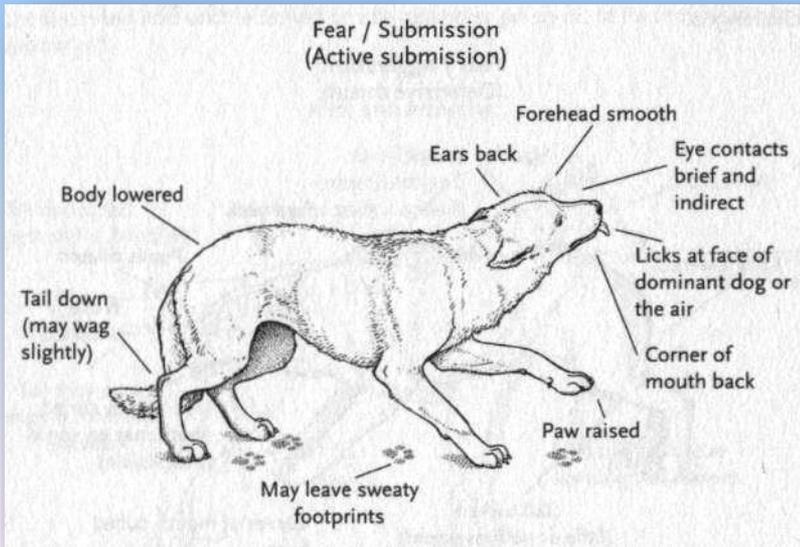
Include pets in the genogram!



Gaps in the System: Dangerous Animals as a Risk Factor for Child Maltreatment



Teach Canine Behavior 101 to child welfare personnel!



But We ARE Making Progress!

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)

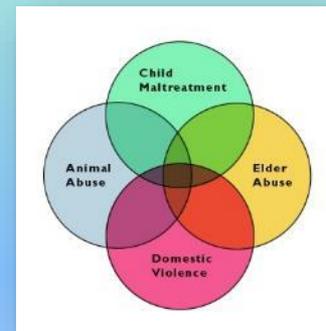
Federal
Bureau of
Investigation
(FBI)

“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.”

The Key Principles for Today

1. Polyvictimization: when animals are abused, children are also at risk. When children are abused, animals are at risk.

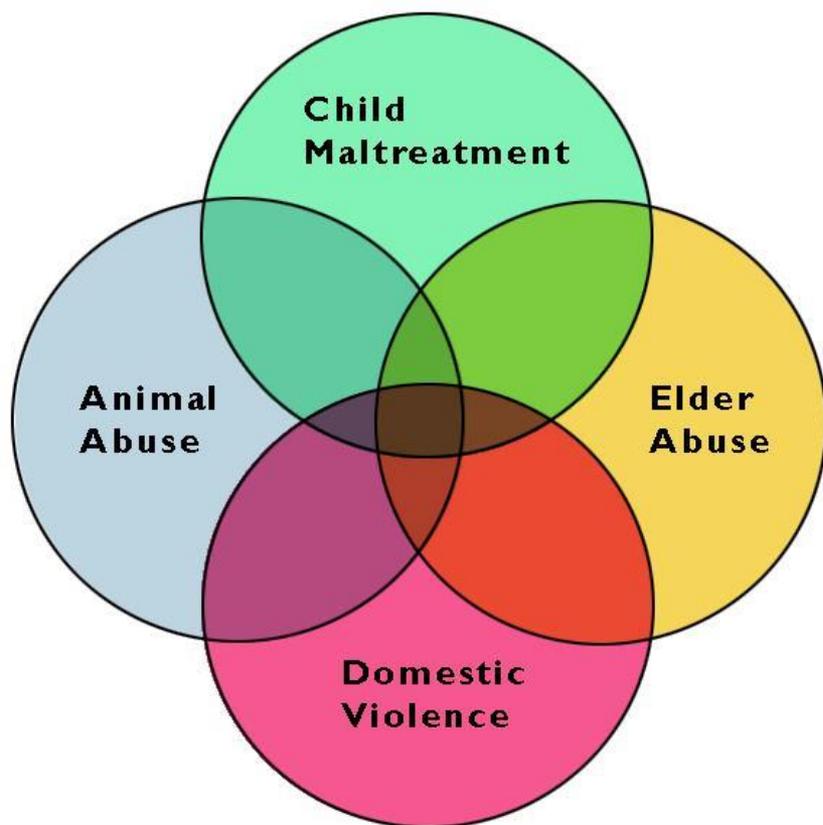


2. Children's abuse of animals may signal the child is also a victim of abuse.

3. Animal abuse committed or witnessed by a child may be a precursor to becoming an abusive adult.

4. The emotional significance of animals in children's lives can be significant but is often underestimated... or not acknowledged.

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.”

“Recognizing animal abuse as an indicator that something is wrong in a household may be the first step in stopping the cycle of violence.”

-- Kimberly Adams,

Kentucky Children’s Rights Journal, 2000



Caught in the Cross-Fire: Types of Animal/Human Violence Links

- 1. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:** Power & Control. “Emotional extortion.” Woman fears leaving.
 - 2. ANIMAL SEX ABUSE:** Coercive control in child sexual abuse. Link with child pornography.
 - 3. ACES:** Child commits or witnesses animal cruelty.
 - 4. ANIMAL HOARDING:** Intractable problem, multi-disciplinary response.
 - 5. ANIMAL FIGHTING:** Links to organized crime.
 - 6. BULLYING:** By youths who bully... and who have been bullied.
- 

Why Should We Routinely Ask About Children's Experiences with Animals?

Because...

- **A common denominator** in most children's lives.
 - *A child in U.S. is more likely to grow up with a pet than a father!*
 - *Pets in 67% of homes with children < age 6, 74% if > age 6.*
- They **talk about their pets** before they talk about themselves, so...
- Asking about pets can **build rapport and trust**.
- Animal abuse is:
 - A **gateway** to other violence.
 - A **mirror** of interpersonal relationships.
 - A **window** into a child's world.
 - One of earliest signs of **Conduct Disorder**.
 - An **Adverse Childhood Experience**.



Why Should We Routinely Ask About Children's Experiences with Animals?

- Asking about the pets in the lives of children can fill in a big piece of the puzzle – *and build rapport and trust*

1. “Are there animals at home?”
2. “How are they cared for?”
3. “Are you worried about their welfare?”





The Significance...

“Approximately 70-80% of our population has a significant trauma history. There is something very powerful (and chilling) about sitting with a child, who cannot directly articulate that they have been the victim of abuse.... but when you ask about family pets, they share with you that in a drunken rage their uncle threw the kitten out of the fourth floor apartment window... or the teenage boys whose father pulled the toe nails off his dog to get back at the son. The link is real. I have sat in the room with kids and families where the link tells you more about the family unit than any individual family member can or will. Just asking about animals in the home, has often yielded me much more than many other clinical assessment tools.”

-- Kirby L. Wycoff





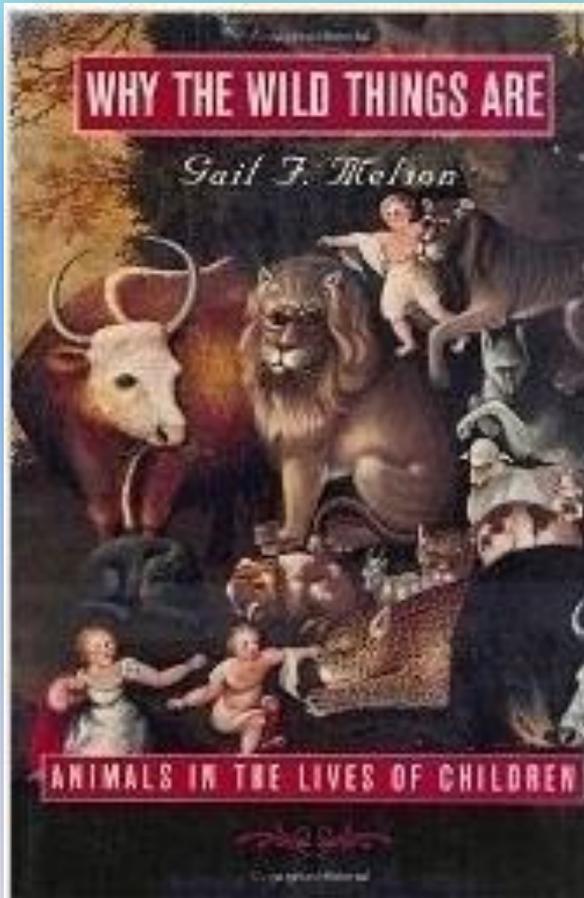
The Impact of Pets on Children



"I have a youth who has been abused at her home, but wants to return there due to believing that her cat is the only one who loves her. She rescued the cat from an abusive home and believes that the cat tries to keep her father away from her. She would move to a group home or anywhere else without running away if she had her cat...."

-- Social worker, Arizona

Why Should We Routinely Ask About Children's Experiences with Animals?



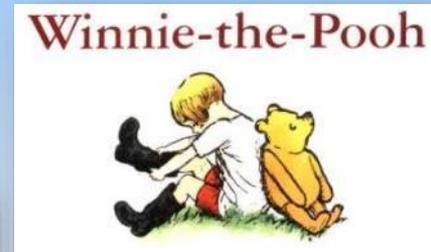
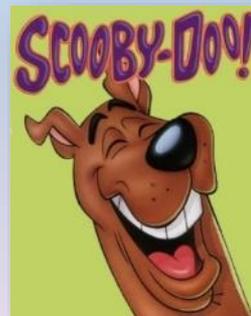
Gail Melson:
WHY the Wild Things Are

Children's literature & media.

First words we speak.

Fairy tales: more animals than fairies.

80-90% of children first experience loss through pets.



Pets and Children's Emotional Development



Children are especially drawn to animals and often confide their secrets, fears and angers to their pets; abused children are more likely to do this.

Pets may be children's only friends in chaotic homes and may help buffer against maladjustment.

*-- Melson, 2001; Robin, ten Bensel, Quigley & Anderson, 1984;
Risley-Curtiss et al., 2006; Strand, 2004*

Benefits of pets – Psychological/Social

Children with pets are:

- more socially integrated,
- have wider social networks,
- perform better academically, and
- are more popular with their classmates.



The “Dark Side” of the Human-Animal Bond

Animal Abuse:
It's the Tip
of the
Iceberg



ANIMAL ABUSE



**CHILD
MALTREATMENT**

**ELDER
ABUSE**

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



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Animal Abuse as a Predictor Of Interpersonal Violence



REALITY CHECKS

#1: Not all childhood abusers grow up to be psychopaths.

#2: Some children who are surrounded by violence seek comfort in animals or try to protect them.

#3: Because animals are not listed on risk assessment instruments, and cruelty is not listed in crime reports, risk is underestimated.

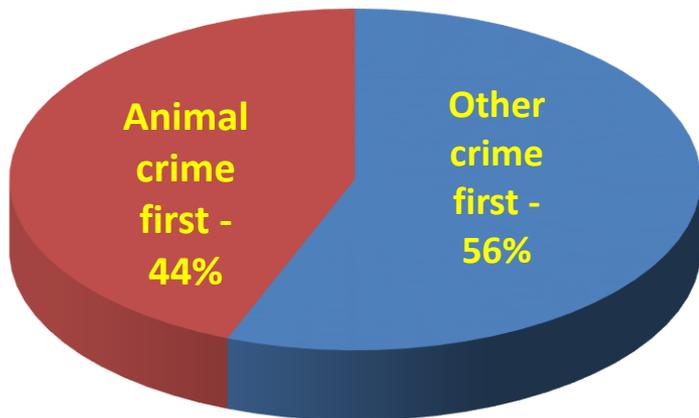
Reality Check: Does animal abuse always lead to interpersonal violence?

153 cruelty offenders:

- tracked for 10 years prior & 10 years after
- matched with control group



Animal & Human Crimes



Criminal offenses:
Animal abusers: 70%
Non-abusers: 22%

Conclusion: Animal abuse doesn't always lead to human violence, but we're not surprised when there is a link.

-- Arnold Arluke & Carter Luke,
Northeastern University & Massachusetts SPCA, 1997



Reality Check:

The prognostic value of childhood animal cruelty

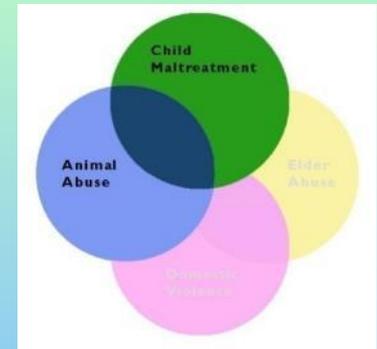
The home environment may be a better predictor of the development of adult violence. We should not infer that animal cruelty always leads to other antisocial behaviors.

The context within which cruelty occurs is significant and the complex nature of abusive home environments and experiences that contribute to behavioral problems and interpersonal violence should be important targets of our investigations. (McPhedran, 2009)



Research Review:

The prognostic value of childhood animal cruelty



60% of pet-owning families meeting NJ criteria for child abuse or neglect also had abused or neglected pets

Animal abuse occurred in **88%** of families with physical child abuse

2/3 of cases by fathers – 1/3 by children



Bite incidence was **11x** greater



Use of veterinary services similar to general population

(DeViney, Dickert & Lockwood, 1983)

Other Risk Factors to Look For: Animal Abuse and Child Sexual Abuse



Survivors of child sexual abuse reveal that threats and abuse of their pets are used to gain control, while also ensuring their silence, by forcing them to decide between their victimization or the pet's death.

-- Carol J. Adams (1994)

Sexually abused children 5X more likely to abuse animals.

(Ascione et al., 2003)

“Why do people abuse animals?”

As many reasons as for interpersonal violence, including:

- **Ignorance**
- **Inability to empathize**
- **Socialized to abuse**
- **Inadequate coping skills**

- **Coercive control, revenge, retaliation**
 - *Because they can*
 - *Because they're jealous*
 - *Because it works*
 - *Because they think the cops won't care*

- **To control the animal**

- **Psychopathology**
 - Sadism, sexual gratification



“Why are children cruel to animals?”

INCREASING CAUSE FOR CONCERN

- Curiosity or exploration
- Relieve boredom or depression
- Fear of the animal
- Imitating adult actions
- To protect the animal from worse abuse
- Re-enacting their own experience of being abused
- Regaining a sense of power after abuse
- Rehearsal for interpersonal violence



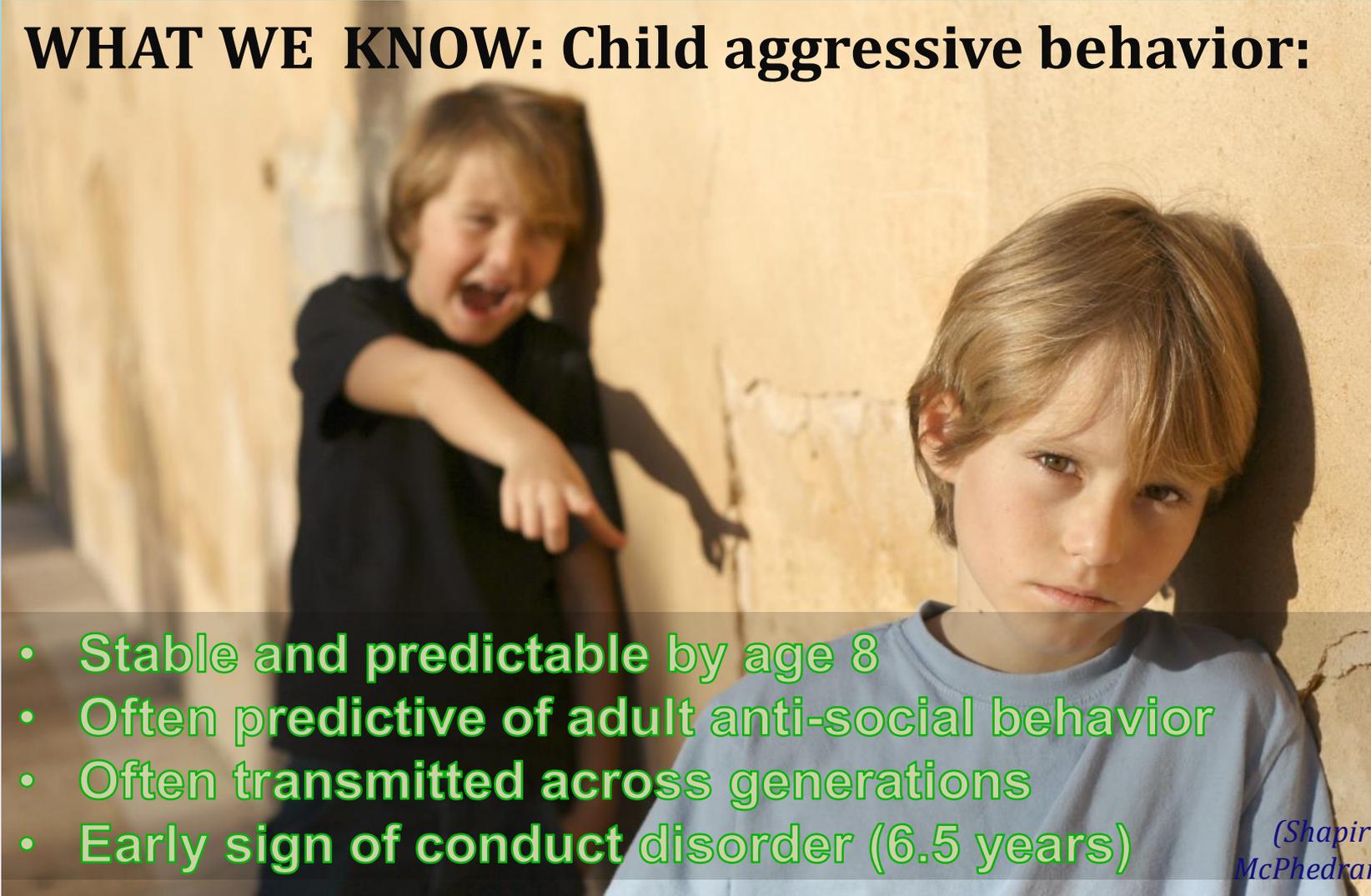
Nikolas Cruz,
Parkland, Fla. H.S.

“Does Animal Abuse Always Lead to Human Violence?”

WHAT WE KNOW: Child aggressive behavior:

- Stable and predictable by age 8
- Often predictive of adult anti-social behavior
- Often transmitted across generations
- Early sign of conduct disorder (6.5 years)

*(Shapiro, 2011;
McPhedran, 2009)*



“Does Animal Abuse Always Lead to Human Violence?”

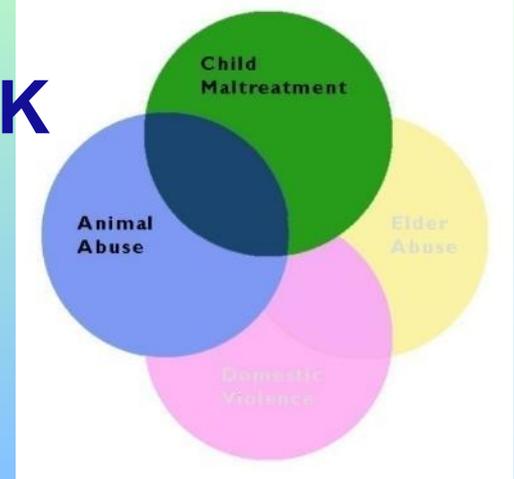
WHAT WE DON'T KNOW:

- Causal or co-relational?
- Graduation hypothesis?
- General pattern of deviance?
- Context of home environment and abusive experiences?
- Something else?
- All of the above?

*(Shapiro, 2011;
McPhedran, 2009)*

The Animal Abuse/Child Abuse LINK

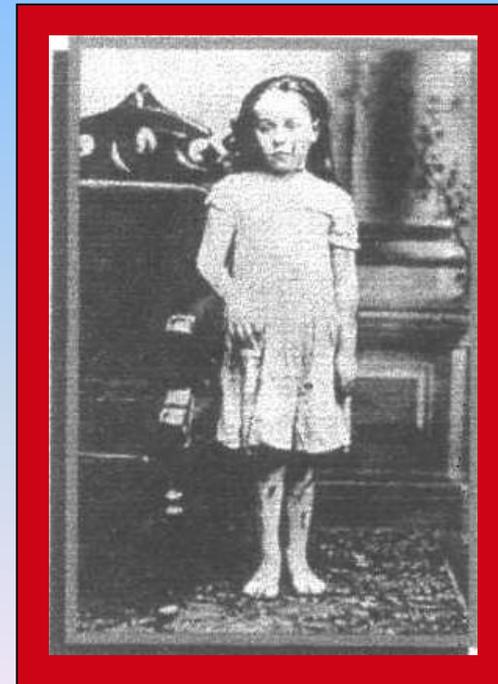
“Coming Full Circle”:
Child and animal protection movements
are re-uniting



Henry Bergh, Founder
American SPCA
(1866)



The
“Little
Mary
Ellen”
Case
(1874)



The Animal Abuse/Domestic Violence LINK

History of pet abuse one of 4 greatest risk factors for becoming a DV batterer. *(Walton-Moss, 2005)*

Children exposed to DV 3X more likely to be cruel to animals. *(Currie, 2006)*

12 studies: 18% – 48% of battered women, and their children, delay leaving. Women who seek safety 11X more likely to report partner hurt or killed animals than non-DV women. *(Ascione, 2007)*

68% of battered women revealed animal abuse: > 75% in presence of children to intimidate and control. *(Quinlisk, 1998)*

32% of battered women reported their children harmed animals. *(Ascione, 1998)*



The Animal Abuse/Domestic Violence LINK: What's the Risk?

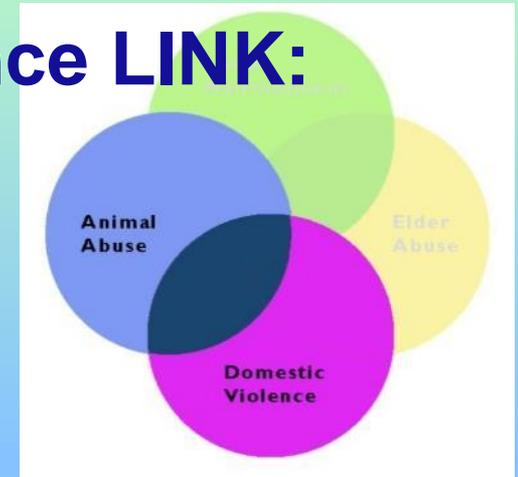
IPV suspects with histories of pet abuse:

- Much greater history of previous violence.
- Much greater risk to first responders.

Victims report:

- 80%: prior IPV incident
- 76%: had been strangled
- 26%: had been forced to have sex with suspect
- 80%: fear for their lives

(Campbell, Thompson et al., 2018)



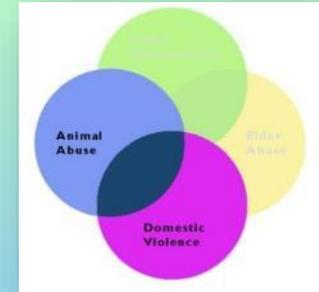
The Animal Abuse/Domestic Violence Inter-generational Cycle of Violence



The LINK and Domestic Violence

Animal Abuse and the Duluth Model

-- Safe Passage, Northampton, Mass.



Isolation: Refusing to allow you to take your pet to your vet. Prohibiting you from socializing your dog with other dogs.

Coercion and Threats: Threatening to harm or kill your pet if you leave or assert any independence.

Legal Abuse: Trying to take possession of a pet for which you have been the primary caretaker. Filing charges of theft if you leave with the pet. Custody battles.

Minimizing, Denying & Blaming: Blaming you or your pet for the cruelty.

Emotional abuse: “Bitch”. “Disappearing” or killing pet to take away your source of comfort and unconditional love. Forced participation in animal sexual abuse.

Economic Abuse: Refusing to allow you to spend money on pet food and/or vet care (then blaming you).

Intimidation: Harming or killing pet: “Next time it’ ll be you...”

Using Children: Harming or killing the children’s pet to intimidate them. Blaming you to create a wedge between you and the children.



The Animal Abuse/Elder Abuse LINK

Animal Welfare Issues for APS

Pet neglect (food, vet care).

Self-neglect (food, avoid hospital, LTC)

Animal hoarding.

Attachment & pet loss.

Safety to client & visitors (falls, vermin, bites).

Coercion & control

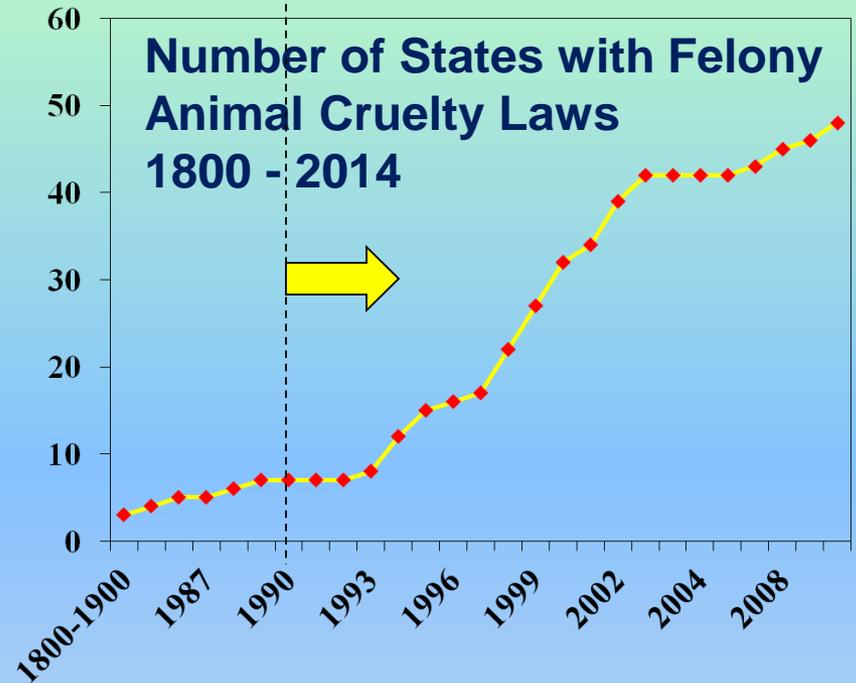
Jealousy/abuse of service animal.



Policy and Practice Responses to The LINK

Animal protection laws based on human safety benefits –

A more pragmatic strategy for animal welfare legislation.



Policy and Practice Responses to The Link

“Doggie Witness Protection Programs”

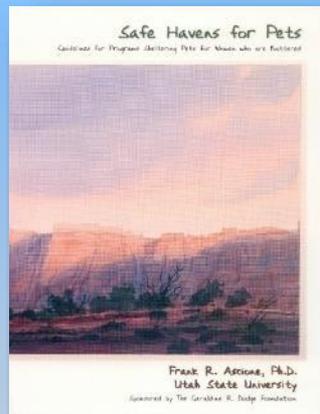
“Safe Havens”

600+ women’s
shelters:

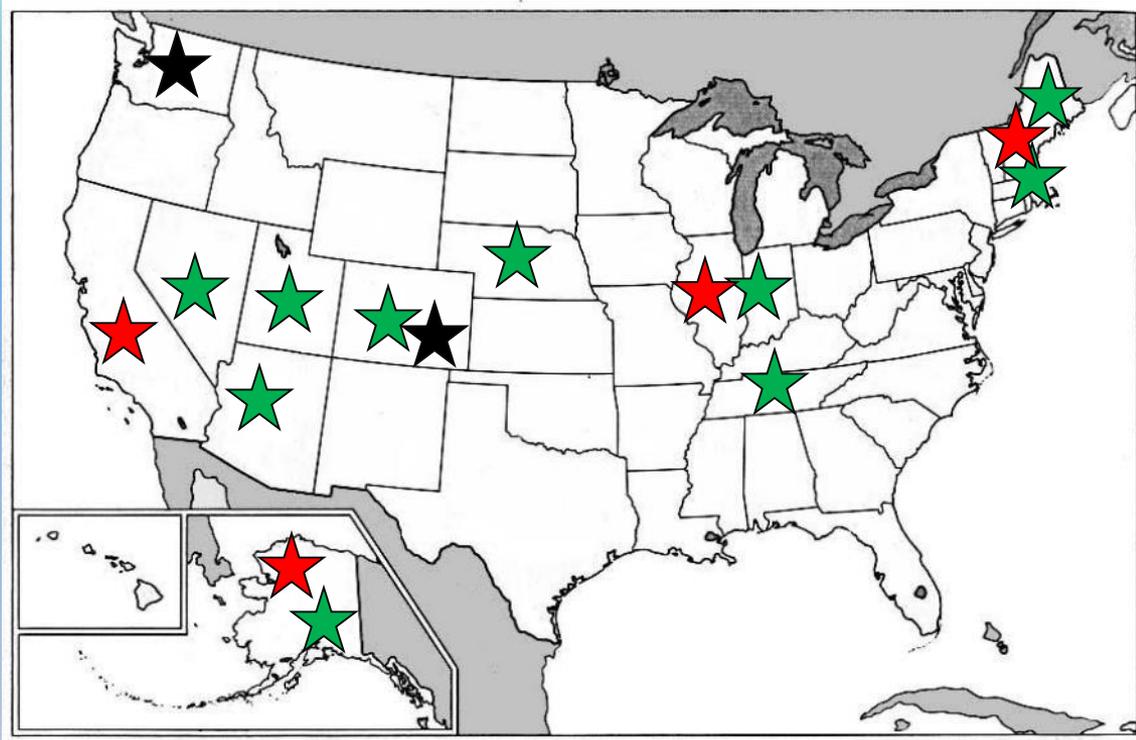
Foster referrals

www.SafePlaceForPets.org

SAF-T – www.alliephillips.com



Policy and Practice Responses Legislative Innovations



★ Courts can award custody in animals' best interests

★ Coercive-control animal abuse = Domestic Violence

★ or Elder Abuse

Policy and Practice Responses to The LINK – Data



January 2016: FBI added 4 categories of animal cruelty, abuse and neglect to NIBRS UCR system for 18,000 law enforcement agencies

- **Simple or gross neglect (animal hoarding)**
- **Physical abuse**
- **Organized abuse (animal fighting)**
- **Animal sexual abuse**



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Policy and Practice Responses to The LINK – “CASA for Pets”

Who looks out for
the long-term care
or legal
representation
of the animal?

(Connecticut & Rhode Island)



Policy and Practice Responses to The Link

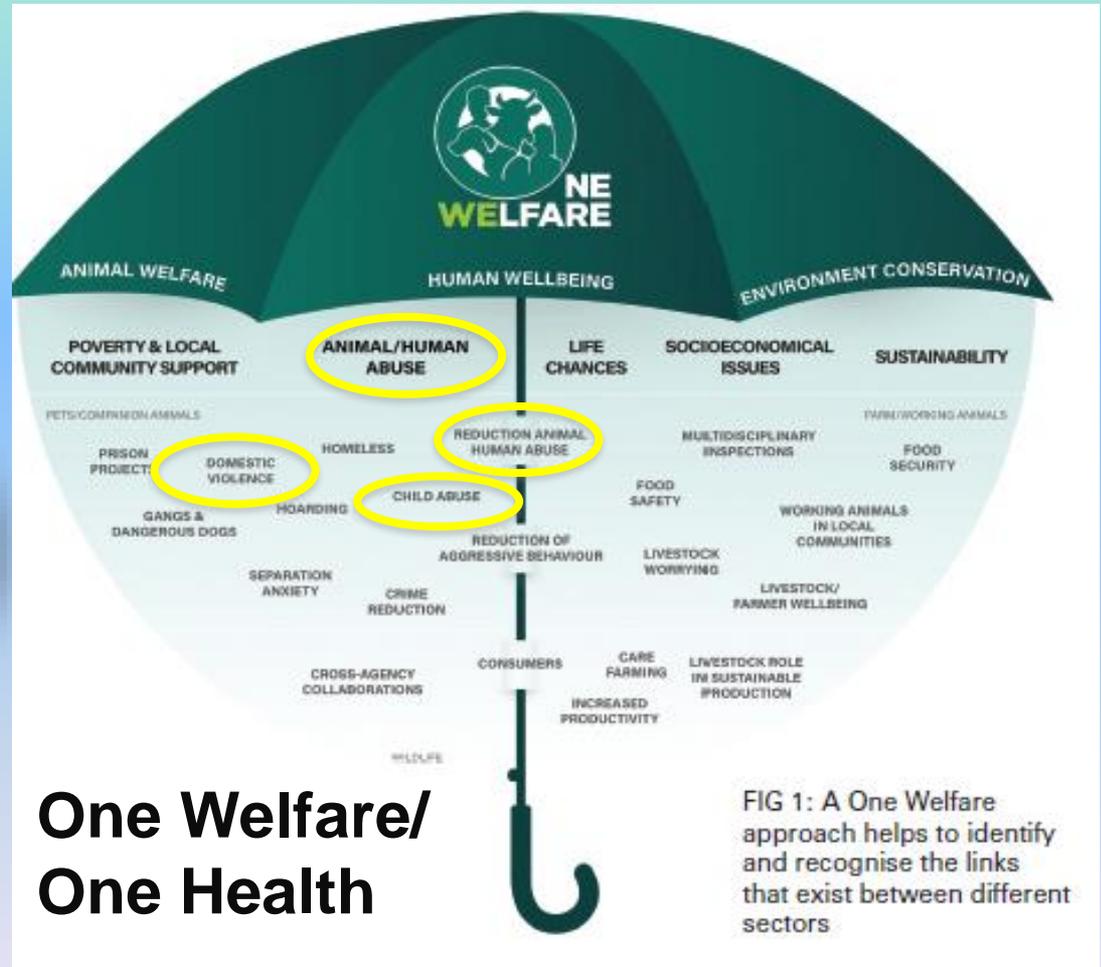
Engaging veterinary medicine in reporting systems

Veterinary Social Work

“The human side of veterinary medicine...”

“The animal side of social work.”

THE LINK BETWEEN HUMAN & ANIMAL VIOLENCE



**One Welfare/
One Health**

FIG 1: A One Welfare approach helps to identify and recognise the links that exist between different sectors

Policy and Practice Responses to The Link

Engaging veterinary medicine in reporting systems

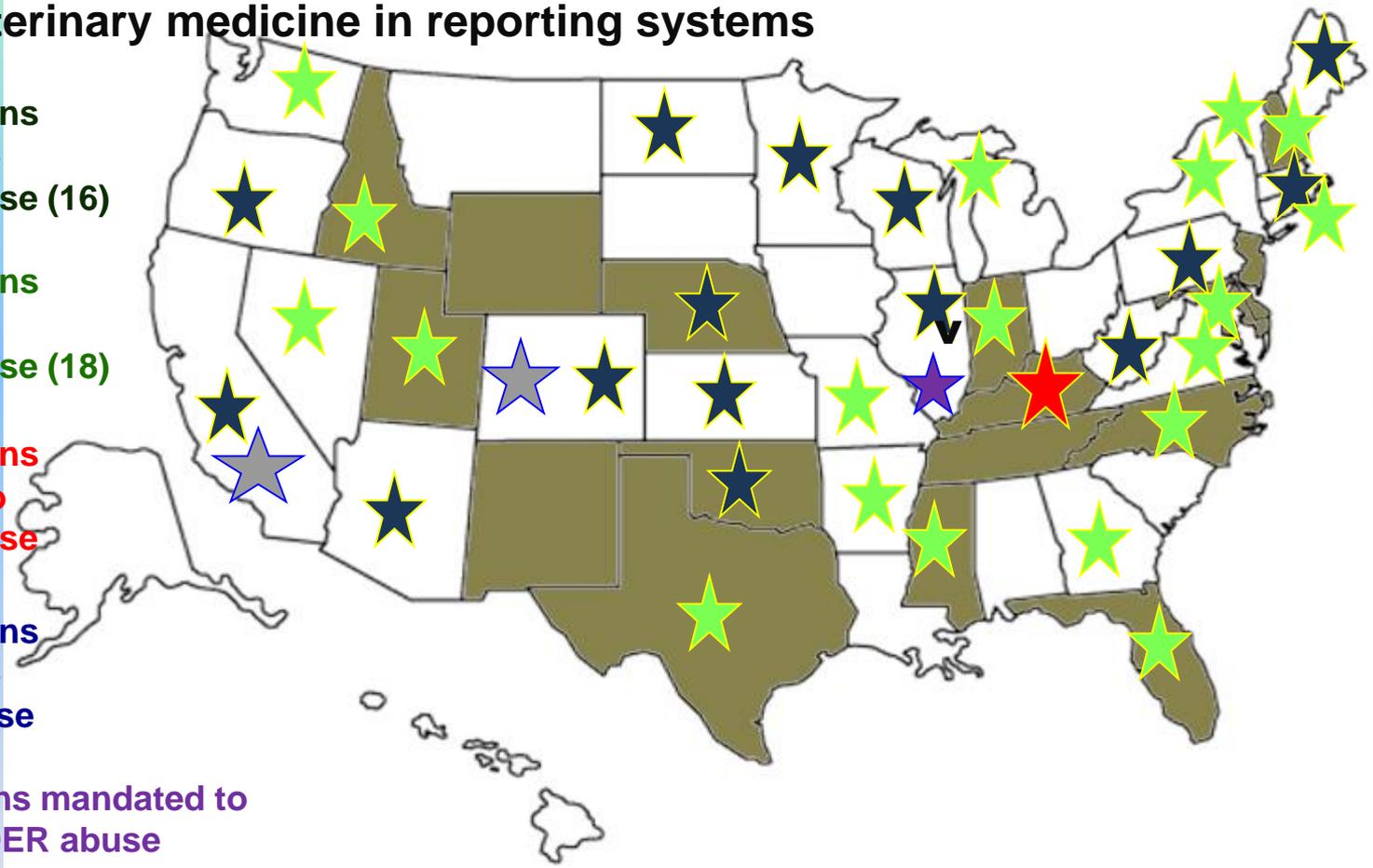
★ Veterinarians mandated to report animal abuse (16)

★ Veterinarians permitted to report animal abuse (18)

★ Veterinarians prohibited to report animal abuse

★ Veterinarians mandated to report CHILD abuse

★ Veterinarians mandated to report ELDER abuse



18 states where EVERYONE is mandated to report child abuse: how many vets & ACOs know this???

Shouldn't the veterinarian be as proactive in responding to animal abuse as pediatricians are in responding to child abuse?

Policy and Practice Responses to The LINK

Expand the audience through public awareness:

Milwaukee spotabuse.org campaign



DOGS CAN HELP US FIND

- bombs
- drugs
- domestic abuse



Paid for by Serve, SpotAbuse.org

family members.
You might just save a life. Or two.

SHE'S NEXT

REPORT ANIMAL ABUSE. STOP DOMESTIC ABUSE. CALL 911.

Policy and Practice Responses to The LINK

Expand the audience through public awareness



LOVE SHOULD NOT MEAN FEAR

Domestic violence and spousal abuse are often preceded by threats and irrational behavior. Because domestic violence is a leading cause of homicide, both violence and the threat of abuse are prosecuted to protect the family.



The Baltimore Police Department now provides personnel dedicated exclusively to investigate domestic violence, assist with prosecutions, and send abusers to jail.

Call 911 — FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE
Call 311 — FOR INFORMATION

This project was supported by the Violence Against Women Demonstration and Technical Assistance Program, Grant No. 98-0481-0101, awarded to the Bureau of Equal Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Crime is a deadly menace across the face of the U.S. We're fighting back.



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Research Responses to The LINK:

In 2019 alone, from U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand...

Animal cruelty and bullying are early behavioral markers of current, future & persistent delinquency risk through moral disengagement. *(Walters)*

Zoophiles are remarkably self-aware of their sexuality, know their behavior is illegal, and relate their struggles with finding social acceptance to homosexuality. *(Sendler)*.

Physicians, as well as veterinarians, can support pets and people. *(Hodgson et al.)*

Animal sex offending may be linked to other criminal behavior. (Edwards, 2019)

Childhood exposure to animal cruelty makes children more susceptible to externalizing and internalizing negative behaviors and animal cruelty. *(Ladny & Meyer, 2019)*

DV cruelty motivated by: control women into compliance; assert supremacy as most important object of women's affections; and suppressing disclosures. *(Jury et al.)*

Prosecutors' interest in cruelty cases fueled by Link. *(Lockwood et al.)*

Any 1 of Triad behaviors can predict future offending; finding all 3 rare. *(Parfitt & Alleyne)*

1/5 of LGBT violence victims reported history of animal abuse. *(Riggs et al.)*

AAT can improve CPS interventions. *(Flynn et al.)*

DV survivors see animal harm as emotional abuse. (Fitzgerald et al.)



Conclusion

Key Premises of The LINK

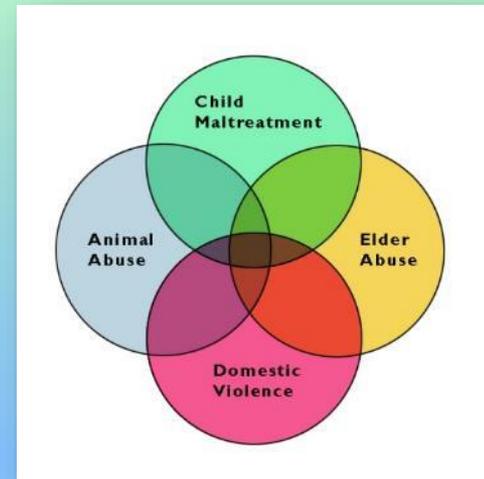
1. Animal abuse is also a human welfare issue.

2. Animal abuse is a form of family violence.

3. Consider animal abuse as Adverse Childhood Experience that impacts the health and well-being of children.

4. Multi-disciplinary responses that address animal maltreatment are a better way to help families.

5. LINK-based programs can create safer homes for children, families, and their pets.



National Resources



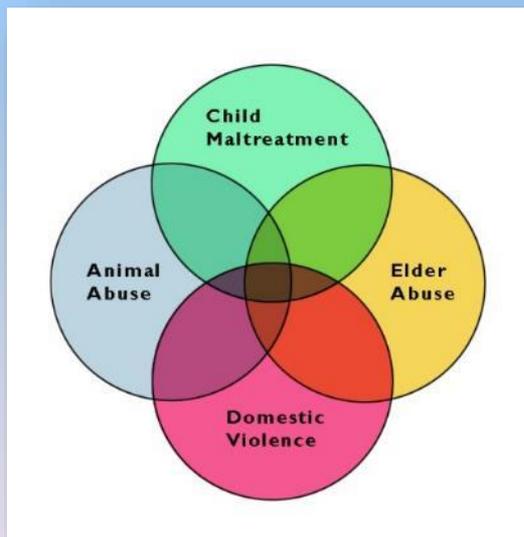
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www.NationalLinkCoalition.org

Sign up for our LINK-LETTER!
arkowpets@snip.net

***(please include the name and
location of your organization)***



Some Closing Thoughts....



“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

-- Margaret Mead, anthropologist

Any Questions



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