

# Collaborating to Assess, Intervene, and Prosecute Animal Abuse: A Continuum of Protection for Children and Animals

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## Introduction

Most mental health professionals, child protection workers, and prosecuting attorneys do not ask children or adults about their animal-related experiences or gather corroborating information about animal abuse (Bell, 2001; Nelson, 2001). This chapter provides a rationale for professionals working in each of these fields to assess for exposure to and perpetra-

tion of animal abuse. In addition, we present specific assessment tools, describe the types of information that are most useful when collaborating across disciplines, and discuss how best to use this information in the respective practices of mental health, child protection, and prosecution. The Appendix contains the assessment tools referred to in the following vignette.

## Case Scenario

Bobby is a 9-year-old Caucasian boy living with his mother and father and two younger siblings, a sister age 6 and a brother age 4, in a middle-class suburb. Bobby was referred by his pediatrician to psychologist Dr. Barbara Boat for a mental health assessment and counseling after Bobby presented with complaints of headaches and stomach aches. The pediatrician found no physiological cause for the child's complaints.

Bobby presented with a small cut over his right eye. Initially Bobby was reluctant to talk until Dr. Boat administered *The Childhood Trust Survey on Animal-Related Experiences*. Bobby revealed that there had been several pets in his family, including two dogs that lived outdoors and a succession of cats. He added that "animal cops" had been to the house several times after complaints by neighbors about the treatment of the various animals. The first cat, a stray, arrived three years earlier. Bobby had formed a special attachment to this cat and named it Smokey, often seeking comfort from the cat when his father yelled and was abusive. Bobby mentioned that the family pets hid whenever his father entered the room. Approximately one year ago, Smokey defecated outside

the litter box. Bobby's father then threw Smokey across the room. Smokey hit the wall, fell to the ground, and was unable to move. The father, still enraged, would not let anybody help Smokey. Later, when Bobby's mother made an effort to help Smokey, the father punched her in the ribs and then pulled a shotgun out from the gun cabinet in the family room and pointed it at her. Bobby said that his father was angrier than he had ever seen him. Smokey died 2 days later and Bobby did not know what happened to Smokey's body.

Two months later, the father bought a kitten for Bobby. The kitten was also scared of Bobby's father and ran away later that year. Another cat arrived but was run over by a car. Neither cat was special to Bobby. Bobby told Dr. Boat that if he loved something, his father would hurt it. Recently, the father showed Bobby how to shoot BBs at a stray cat that was hanging around the house, saying he was sick of cats and their fleas.

When asked about the cut over his eye, Bobby reluctantly disclosed that his father had thrown a plate in anger and when the plate shattered against the wall, a shard cut Bobby. Based on the concerning information obtained, Dr. Boat notified Child Protective Services (CPS).

Ms. Lynn Loar, a social worker at CPS, was assigned the case. Using the *Family-Based Risk Assessment* as a guide, Ms. Loar interviewed Bobby, his parents, and his teachers. Bobby's current teacher reported that he was alternately charming and angry, frequently complaining of psychosomatic ailments, and was twice stopped from roughly handling the classroom hamster. The teacher checked with Bobby's former teachers about abusive behavior toward pets and learned that Bobby had deliberately stepped on a gerbil in the second grade classroom.

Ms. Loar visited the home to assess risk. She substantiated the allegations of injury to the child, weapons in the home, the stray cat shot with BBs, and the poor condition of the two outdoor dogs. Ms. Loar urged the mother to call the police and report the domestic violence, and to call the municipal department of animal care and control to report the abuse of Smokey and the stray cats. The mother complied.

The police and animal control officer responded together. The father was arrested for domestic violence and cruelty to animals. During an interview with the arresting officers, the father denied killing or being abusive to Smokey or any other animal in the house, denied teaching Bobby how to shoot BBs at animals, and denied all abuse of Bobby and his wife.

Reports from all incidents were forwarded to prosecuting attorney Allie Phillips. Smokey's body was never located so a necropsy could not be performed. Attorney Phillips issued criminal charges for one count of felony child abuse, one count of felony domestic assault using a weapon, and one count of felony animal abuse causing the death of an animal. Attorney Phillips successfully used the *Pattern of Abusive Conduct* assessment to obtain convictions on all charges, including the killing of Smokey. Bobby, his siblings, and his mother are now at a safe and undisclosed family violence shelter.

### The Mental Health Practitioner's Perspective

Mental health evaluators who work with children face two ongoing challenges. The first challenge is to gather as much relevant information as possible from the child in a timely, efficient, and effective way. The second challenge is to assess the child's risk for abuse or neglect and to design an effective intervention, which may necessitate using the services of a child protection agency and the courts. Most clinicians use a standard set of forms to gather data about the child client that covers a variety of symptoms and behaviors. Missing from this repertoire, however, is a systematic screening of the child for animal-related experiences. *The Childhood Trust Survey on Animal-Related Experiences* (Appendix A) provides a structured interview to complement existing assessment tools and elicit relevant information about exposure to and treatment of animals.

#### **Reasons Why It Is Important in the Continuum of Protection for Children and Animals to Screen Routinely for the Child's Experiences With Animals**

- Pets are part of the family. Nearly 75% of American families with school-age children have at least one companion animal (Humane Society of the United States, 2004). Thus, mental health professionals who work with children will frequently encounter children who have had experiences with pets that share the child's family environment. Furthermore, in the United States, there is considerable monetary and emotional investment in a pet's welfare, reinforcing for a child that pets are considered to be part of the child's family. For example, in a recent survey of pet owners, 84% said they acquired their pet mainly for companionship, 83% referred to themselves as their pet's "mom" or "dad," 59% celebrated their pet's birthday, 90% would not consider dating someone who was not fond of their pet, and 52% believed their pet listened to them best, 93% were willing to risk their own life for their pet, and 53% were spending more on their pets now than they did 3 years ago (American Animal Hospital Association, 2004). A mental health professional who does not ask about animal-related experiences is missing potentially relevant information about a child's risk status.
- A second reason to inquire about the child's experiences with animals is that the

behavior that harms the animal is the same behavior that harms the human.

From William Hogarth's *The First Stage of Cruelty*, illustrated in 1751 (Lindsay, 1979) to the FBI profiles of serial killers (Lockwood & Church, 1996), anecdotal and research evidence links acts of cruelty to animals with acts of cruelty to humans (Arkow, 1996; Felthous & Kellert, 1987; Kellert & Felthous, 1985). Research indicates that in homes where children are physically abused, pets are significantly more likely to be abused (DeViney, Dickert, & Lockwood, 1983). Furthermore, and importantly, inhabitants of these physically abusive homes were 10 times more likely to be bitten by the family dog. Mental health professionals should be aware of this important observation because currently, in the United States, dog bites to children ages 5 to 9 are determined to be a major public health problem (Centers for Disease Control, 2000; see *Animal Abuse, Cruelty, and Welfare* by Gullone and Clarke, this text). The statistics on dog bites are alarming. Fifty percent of dog bite victims are children under the age of 12, 70% of fatal dog bite attacks involve children, and dog bites are the third leading cause of emergency room admissions in children ("Task Force on Canine Aggression," 2001). The important point for mental health professionals is that, in some cases, dog bites to children that occur in the family home may be an indicator of a physically abusive or otherwise chaotic household. Furthermore, dog bites can be traumatizing to both the child and the caregiver (Bernardo, Gardner, & Amon, 1998; Bernardo, Gardner, O'Conner, & Amon, 2000; Rossman, Bingham, & Ende, 1997).

Because the behavior that harms the animal is the same behavior that harms the human, it is not surprising that research documents show that both children and animals are at risk in homes where there is domestic violence (Ascione, 1998; Ascione, Friedrich, Heath, & Hayashi, 2003). In one study involving 48 shelter programs, 85.4% of family violence shelter workers reported that women entering the shelter disclosed animal abuse in their home. In addition,

63% of the shelter staff reported that children spoke of animal abuse in their home (Ascione, Weber, & Wood, 1997). In two studies in different locales, the majority of pets in home where battering occurred were threatened with harm or actually killed by the batterer and the majority of children witnessed the abuse to the pet. In addition, in 21%–40% of these homes the children continued to be exposed to potential harm because their mothers remained in the home to protect the pet rather than seek safe shelter for themselves and their families (Ascione, 1998; Thomas & McIntosh, 2001). Just as the majority of children witness domestic violence, the majority of children also witness pet abuse (Ascione, 1998). Exposure to animal cruelty can have a significant impact on the developing child, including promoting desensitization and decreasing empathy; reinforcing the idea that the child, like the pet, is expendable; damaging the child's sense of safety and confidence in the ability of adults to protect him or her from harm; accepting physical harm as part of allegedly loving relationships; fostering the seeking of empowerment by inflicting pain and suffering; and leading to the imitation of abusive behaviors. Thus, mental health professionals urge pediatricians to assess for domestic violence and to ask mothers and their children about animal-related experiences (Boat, 2000).

Exposure to pet abuse in the context of domestic violence can also contribute to the recently documented neurobiological deficits occurring in children who witness domestic violence. One result is that the brains of children exposed repeatedly to traumas such as witnessing domestic violence are significantly smaller, resulting in serious problems in social, emotional, and intellectual functioning (De Bellis, 1999; De Bellis et al., 1999).

- A third reason for mental health professionals to ask about animal-related experiences is that children appear to be less likely to censor the information they give about their pets and thus inadvertently reveal incidents or settings that put them at risk for abuse or neglect. For example, when a 15-year-old boy was asked if there was a stressful time when his favorite dog was a source of comfort to him he

replied, "Yeah. After my stepdad beats me my dog jumps up and licks my tears." The mental health professional had no idea that the boy's stepdad was beating him.

- Another reason to assess for animal-related experiences is that the child's experiences of attachment, loss, and coercion related to companion animals are potentially informative about a child's risk status. When a child reveals that he or she has a favorite pet, mental health professionals must be aware that caring about a pet can make the child more vulnerable to loss and threats of harm to the pet in order to coerce the child to comply with a demand. Examples of coercive threats include: "If you tell anyone what I did, I will kill your kitty." "If you don't have sex with me, I will take your dog to the pound and have it killed." "You have been a bad boy and to punish you, one of your puppies must die. You choose the puppy that I will kill or I will kill all of them." Mental health professionals must be aware if their child clients are experiencing similar threats.
- Finally, more potentially effective interventions for both children and animals can be informed by knowing and understanding the impact of the child's animal-related experience. Effective interventions utilize knowledge of animal-related experiences with the aim of reducing risk, addressing loss, and creating safe ways for the child to attach to another living being. One example is to report to humane authorities the animal abuse or neglect that the child has disclosed. Another intervention may involve consideration of the child's attachment to a pet if the child needs to be removed from an unsafe home and placed elsewhere. During a 911 call to report domestic violence, a terrified 6-year-old girl said to the dispatcher, "I think my cat's scared!" Her mother was murdered during the call ("Battered hearts," 1995). Hopefully the professionals who intervened to provide care for the girl were aware of her concern about her cat and aware that providing care for the child's cat was potentially an important therapeutic intervention.

Mental health professionals may need to develop a "safety plan for pets" in homes where abused or neglected children reside. Physically and sexually

abused children have a higher incidence of abusive behavior to animals (Ascione, 2001), which can involve several different motivations including their lack of boundaries, witnessing and imitating violence toward animals, and a desire for revenge. Also, a sexualized abused child may seek sexual stimulation from a pet and experience a tragic end as illustrated by the following case: The mother of a 5-year-old girl had recently discovered that her child had been sexually molested for some time by a male neighbor. One day the mother was walking by the closed door of her child's bedroom and heard moaning sounds inside. Upon opening the door the mother discovered that her daughter had the family pet cat between her legs and the cat was licking the child's genitals. The mother was so distraught and enraged by this scene that she grabbed the cat and slammed the cat against the wall, killing the cat. Mental health professionals can anticipate and problem solve these situations with caregivers to make sure that neither child nor pet is harmed further.

A teenager who has been adjudicated for cruelty to animals may be remanded by the courts to perform community service at a humane society. However, mental health professionals should insist that no child or adolescent be in a humane society unless they are screened for animal-related experiences first. For example, an early adolescent boy was adjudicated for animal cruelty after setting fire to a kitten. He stated, "It was just a cat" and "I thought the cat was a stray." He also noted that his father "hated cats." However, the boy described having a favorite dog that was a source of comfort to him. This boy may be an appropriate candidate for supervised community service in an animal shelter. On the other hand, children who are fearful of animals or report no attachment to a pet or animal may be inappropriate for such a service slot. In addition, mental health professionals who may be involved in treatment recommendations must remember that humane societies are short-staffed and often unable to provide the supervision these referrals require.

### ***The Childhood Trust Survey on Animal-Related Experiences***

It is useful to have a set of questions available to guide the assessment of the child's experiences with animals. *The Childhood Trust Survey on Animal-Related Experiences* (CTSARE) is a 10-item screening questionnaire for children, adolescents, and adults that asks about experiences of attachment, loss, and fear in relationship

to pets and other animals (see Appendix A). A longer version of the CTSARE has been adapted for use in several studies (Baker, Boat, Grinvalsky, & Geraciotti, 1998; Flynn, 1999; Miller & Knutson, 1997). However, the validity and reliability of CTSARE have not been established. This instrument should be used as an interview guide and administered orally so the interviewer can use follow-up questions to obtain additional information as appropriate. The questions that are found in the CTSARE are described below and illustrated with Bobby's case.

- Questions 1 and 2 inquire about past and present ownership of pets. Data support that pets rarely survive more than 2 years in homes that are chaotic, have few resources, and have several risk factors for abuse or neglect (DeViney, Dickert, & Lockwood, 1983). Frequently, the inhabitants of these homes list many pets and a high mortality and turnover rate. When asked what happened to all the pets he had listed, one teenager shrugged and said, "I don't know. Either grandma got rid of them or they're dead." When several pets have "just disappeared," a caution flag should be raised that the family needs help. In Bobby's case, the therapist was alerted by the cats being short-lived and cats that just "ran away."
- Question 3 seeks information about whether the child has, or has had, a favorite pet as an indicator of attachment. Lack of any special relationship with a pet may signal a child who is divested from, or never formed, close relationships. Bobby decided that he could not invest caring feelings in a pet any longer because of the fear that his father would hurt the pet and, inevitably, pets would leave or die.
- Question 4 asks about a difficult or stressful time when a pet was a source of comfort or support. Children often readily disclose situations where they felt vulnerable, sad, or frightened when they are focused on their pet (Doyle, 2001). Bobby revealed both that he derived comfort from Smokey and that he was overwhelmed by witnessing Smokey being hurt and being prevented from assisting him. Bobby's psychosomatic symptoms appeared soon after this event.
- Questions 5, 6, and 7 address issues of the pet having been hurt, worries about something

bad happening to the pet, and losing a pet. Responses to these questions can offer a window into the child's home environment and assist in focusing the intervention. Bobby's responses to these questions revealed not only his sad history of loss of pets and realistic fears that any new pet would be harmed by his father, but also his father's physical abuse of him and his mother.

- Questions 8 and 9: Seeing someone hurt an animal makes a significant impact on witnesses. Bobby's cat Smokey died after being thrown across the room by Bobby's raging father. Denying a child or adult the opportunity to help a favorite sick or injured animal is a potentially devastating experience. However, some children and adults do not consider harming a stray animal comparable to harming a family pet. Bobby admitted, with no show of remorse, to shooting BBs at a stray cat under his father's tutelage. He did not admit, or perhaps recall, deliberately stepping on the gerbil at school in the second grade or handling the hamster roughly in his current classroom. Interviewers must query other observers to get adequate information about the child hurting animals or pets, as commonly used instruments such as the Teacher Report of the Child Behavior Checklist for Children (Achenbach, 1991) do not include items on animal cruelty. However, teachers with classroom pets may observe harsh treatment of the animal. Other teachers may overhear a child talking about seeing or committing cruel acts, or read about concerning behaviors around animals in the writings of their students. Such observations warrant further inquiry.
- Question 10 underscores the need to know if a child has ever been badly frightened or hurt by a pet or other animal. The trauma of being chased, pinned, or bitten by a dog can shape a lifelong, negative response to dogs. This question also can reveal a home or neighborhood where a child may be at greater risk to be harmed by an animal. Examples of such neighborhoods include the child having access to dogs that are chained outdoors, dogs that are running freely, and the presence of higher risk dogs such as pit bulls.

As a mandated reporter, Dr. Boat was required to refer Bobby to Child Protective Services. She shared her concerns about the safety of people and the animals in the family with both Lynn Loar and with Bobby's mother. Bobby's mother was initially very concerned about losing Bobby and his siblings. However, with support, she seemed relieved that there might be an intervention to stop the violence in the family.

## **The Child Protective Services Perspective**

### ***Tasks of the Child Protective Services Worker***

Child Protective Services (CPS) investigates allegations of abuse or neglect to minors when it receives reports either from mandated reporters or concerned citizens. Both law enforcement agencies and CPS respond to reports of harm. As governmental agencies, both are limited in scope and cannot take preventive action except in exigent circumstance. Reports must specifically explain what jeopardizes the child's safety or welfare. It is not enough for the reporter to describe a chaotic or alcoholic family or harm to another, human or animal, in the home. Rather, the reporter must make the risk to the child clear, and present the additional information to support the parent's ability or inability to recognize risk and protect the child from harm. Dr. Boat referred Bobby because she observed an inflicted injury, was told of additional physical abuse, and diagnosed emotional abuse from Bobby's account of witnessing his father's abuse of his mother and Smokey.

Reporters of suspected child abuse or neglect should keep in mind that CPS can only intervene when the child's welfare is at risk. Therefore, they should begin their report by describing the child, his age and specific vulnerabilities, and the incident that precipitated the report. Reporters should add relevant information about patterns of abusive or negligent behavior, especially any recent abusive or neglectful treatment of other siblings in the home. Reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect should also comment, when appropriate, on the parents' ability or inability to recognize the harm to the child in order to inform the development and implementation of a plan to protect the child from future harm.

Although it may seem logical that a child would be at risk in a home that is unsafe for animals, this in itself is not sufficient for CPS to respond. Reporters

must make the specific risk to the child clear. *The Family-Based Risk Assessment* (Loar & Colman, 2004) contained in Appendix B provides a tool to assess risk for all living beings in the home and to make explicit who is at immediate risk in which situations.

CPS cannot act preventively, nor can it get involved with families who do not wish to receive services unless the problems are severe and directly compromise the welfare of the minor children in the home. CPS is a governmental agency that is intruding into a family's privacy and thus its scope is statutorily limited. CPS's dual mission is to protect minors and preserve families. At times these two goals are mutually exclusive and greater weight must be given to the child's safety. Furthermore, CPS workers have limited time to gather information about their clients and can only force involvement in serious situations. These limitations often frustrate concerned relatives and professionals involved with troubled families. Anguished relatives are exasperated when CPS says the situation is not serious enough for them to get involved. Domestic violence professionals and substance abuse treatment providers are often frustrated when, on occasion, CPS removes the child of a battered woman or a relapsing addict. As a result, CPS workers must learn interview techniques that quickly elicit relevant information and also build collaborative relationships with other professionals who are involved with the family and will report their concerns.

*The Childhood Trust Survey on Animal-Related Experiences* (Appendix A) facilitates the gathering of relevant information for CPS workers by beginning with questions that are neutral and easy to answer and then focusing on areas of concern. The CPS worker who asks the children and the non-offending parent about the welfare of animals in the home is also apt to be seen as empathic and caring—as well as smart—for bringing up such a painful and distressing topic. If the worker knows local resources for companion animals—for example, safe haven programs that provide emergency shelter for pets so families can enter battered women's shelters—and has a good relationship with the local animal control officers, otherwise-reluctant families may well cooperate with the CPS worker.

Collaborations with animal control officers and prosecutors of animal cruelty cases can facilitate CPS involvement if they focus on the dangerous behavior of the adult and how that dangerous behavior jeopardizes the safety of all living beings

who, in the normal course of activity, trigger these behaviors. Further, a CPS worker presenting to the Juvenile Court a ruling from a criminal court that a person was found too dangerous to be allowed to have a dog would be in a stronger position to advocate for increased protections for the minor children in that person's care.

However, CPS workers (and others) must be mindful of their role and its limitations. They are not mandated to report cruelty to animals or domestic violence in most jurisdictions, and confidentiality requirements, along with their agency's policy, may preclude contacting the police and animal control. In the vignette, the worker encourages Bobby's mother to contact these authorities herself, and that is generally what CPS workers must do unless the offender poses immediate danger to him/herself or other humans.

### **Using the Family-Based Risk Assessment to Document Risk to All Living Beings in the Home**

The *Family-Based Risk Assessment* (Loar & Colman, 2004) is designed to help professionals determine the dangerousness of a potential offender in a particular family situation involving children, dependent adults, frail elders, animals, and other members of the household. *The Family-Based Risk Assessment* considers which factors are most likely to act as triggers for a particular individual and the probability that other family members will activate these triggers. Realistically evaluating triggers and assessing how likely they are to be activated by others in the home points out risks and steps to take to protect potential victims from getting hurt.

For example, some people are easily provoked by noise while others might be indifferent to noise but be very aggravated by messiness or demands for assistance. A number of people find normal behaviors such as crying, barking, or whining highly stressful. High frequency, intensity, and duration of stressful behaviors can increase the probability of violence. Thus, the chronically noisy child or pet could be at greater risk in one home than in another. Each family has its own unique combination of stressful circumstances that contributes to the degree of risk for violence.

Larger social, economic, and environmental factors affect risk as well. Psychosocial and economic impoverishment creates a context in which a potential abuser is less able to inhibit aggression. Sleep-deprived parents caring for a colicky and constantly

crying infant who live in a nice home in a quiet neighborhood and who can afford a babysitter pose less risk to their infant than do sleep-deprived parents who live in a run-down apartment in a dangerous neighborhood and who cannot afford in-home help.

The professional assesses the family's risk based on six common individual and family (including companion animals) behaviors that can act as triggers for abusive behaviors. These "triggers" are explained in detail in Appendix B. The trigger behaviors assessed are:

- noisiness
- messiness
- disobedience
- eating difficulties
- toileting difficulties
- level of activity and need for supervision

The professional assesses to what degree each behavior is a trigger for the offender, and scores the offender from 1 (minimally reactive) to 5 (extremely reactive) for each trigger. Then the professional assesses and scores from 1 to 5 each family member and companion animal for the likelihood that they will demonstrate any of these trigger behaviors, and who is most likely to be at risk for which behavior. The chart at the end of the risk assessment allows the professional to assess the offender and each animal, child, person with a disability, elder, and adult partner in the home on a grid. That grid makes patterns clear and demonstrates how known abusive behavior toward a companion animal indicates risk for certain human cohabitants and why.

In Bobby's case, the referral indicated that the father was extremely reactive to messiness, especially toileting accidents, and disobedience. The CPS worker would want Bobby's mother and teachers to describe how noisy, messy, and disobedient Bobby tended to be, along with his behavior at meal times, bathroom habits, and level of activity and need for adult supervision. By noting the correspondence between Bobby's father's greatest areas of reactivity and Bobby's most trying behaviors, and the father's known violent behavior in response to those triggers, the worker can reasonably assess risk to Bobby.

The animal control officer can assess risk to the companion animals, factoring in their quirks, noisiness, messiness, and the like. The mental health professional working with Bobby and his mother can use the information on the grid to help the mother

focus on areas of greatest risk in order to be more effective in protecting Bobby. Together, the mental health professional and the mother can design a treatment plan that will address areas of greatest vulnerability. The mental health professional working with Bobby's father can use the chart to teach coping skills to the father and depersonalize his sense of being wronged and deliberately provoked by what are, actually, just the annoying behaviors that all living beings tend to do.

### **The Prosecuting Attorney's Perspective**

When a prosecuting attorney pursues a child abuse or family violence case that contains contemporaneous allegations of criminal charges or animal abuse, the prosecutor is in a unique position to gain valuable information regarding the dynamics of abuse within the family. Possessing such information will aid in properly prosecuting the offender, tailoring appropriate plea agreements and sentencing terms, and making provisions to enhance the safety of the family and its companion animals.

In addition, the animal abuse charges will assist the prosecutor in protecting and helping child victims or witnesses. Children who have been abused or who have witnessed family members or pets being abused need appropriate assessment and treatment. Failure to provide such interventions may result in the child becoming a part of the criminal justice system as a juvenile or adult offender (Ascione, 2001).

#### ***Understanding the Serious Connection Between Animal Abuse, Child Abuse, and Domestic Violence***

Most law school curricula do not prepare attorneys to recognize the pattern of abusive conduct involved in co-occurring animal abuse, child abuse, and domestic violence. Many prosecutors feel helpless and ineffective in cases involving family violence due to a lack of cooperation from victims and/or recurring incidents despite court intervention. When family violence includes animal abuse, especially if the assailant has killed or mutilated a pet, or threatened to injure or kill a pet, the lethality risk for all in the family may increase (Boat, 1999).

Prosecutors must take seriously all cases that involve charges or allegations of animal abuse because abusing an animal may be contemporary with, or a precursor to, more serious future abusive conduct (Arkow, 2003). A study conducted by

the Humane Society of the United States in 2001 involving 1,677 official and unofficial reports of intentional cruelty against animals discovered that 89% of those cases also involved males perpetrating domestic violence, 67% of those cases involved coexisting child abuse, and 50% of the cases involved coexisting elder abuse (Arkow, 2003; see *Counting Cruelty* by Lockwood, this text).

One of the first studies to address the link between child abuse and animal abuse discovered that 88% of homes with physically abused children also had abused or neglected pets (DeViney, Dickert, & Lockwood, 1983). Due to the alarming connection between family violence and animal abuse, prosecutors must be aware of animal abuse occurring within homes for several reasons: (1) Animal abuse displays serious antisocial behavior by the offender (whether child or adult); (2) animal abuse is a relatively common occurrence in the lives of many children; (3) animal abuse witnessed by children has potential negative developmental consequences for the child; (4) animal abuse is related to interpersonal and family violence; (5) the well-being of companion animals is at risk in violent homes; and (6) if violence to animals is reduced, this could help achieve a less violent society for children and adults (Flynn, 2000).

Prosecutors not only have the mandate to represent and protect the people of their community in criminal cases, but the duty to reduce the likelihood of future criminal conduct through tough stances on crime and sentencing issues.

Prosecutors are accustomed to the fast pace of the court system and often do not have sufficient time to effectively analyze and process a criminal case. In particular, misdemeanor criminal charges (which encompass many forms of animal abuse and domestic violence charges) are quickly processed through the court docket due to case overload and minimized by time constraints on prosecutors. Prosecutors, nevertheless, need to take time to assess family violence cases that involve animal abuse, as well as cases that solely charge animal abuse, to prevent future occurrences of violence. A dismissive attitude regarding animal abuse allegations or charges does a disservice to the abused animals, as well as to children and domestic partners who witness the abuse or are abused themselves. In the United States, all states now have statutes that protect animals from abuse, cruelty, and killing. Therefore, if prosecutors take an appropriate stand on animal abuse cases, the prosecutors may help protect the physical and mental

well-being of the children and domestic partner and interrupt the cycle of violence within the family. This stance is consistent with the prosecutor's mandate to protect the community and reduce the risk of future violence (see *The Impact of Improved American Anti-Cruelty Laws* by Frasch, this text).

In Bobby's case, a prosecuting attorney should take seriously the multiple allegations of animal abuse as depicted in Bobby's interview with Dr. Boat as well as the corroborative evidence obtained by CPS, law enforcement, and animal control officers. Bobby informed Dr. Boat that "animal cops" had frequented their home for several years because neighbors complained about his father's treatment of the family pets. A prosecutor should attempt to locate any reports or citations involving Bobby's father. Having this information available in a criminal prosecution is essential to documenting the past history of violence by Bobby's father. Some evidence of prior violence may be admissible as "prior bad acts" or "other acts evidence" to help gain a conviction against Bobby's father (Federal Rules of Evidence 404(b)).

The prosecutor should charge *all* offenses to address *all* dimensions of the father's violent behaviors. Ignoring the multiple allegations of animal abuse in Bobby's case would enable the offender to continue to terrorize his family members through abuse of any pets or other animals. Furthermore, the father could continue to model abusive behaviors for Bobby who already is harming animals.

### ***The Prosecutor's Role on a Multi-Disciplinary Team***

In states that require multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs) to investigate child abuse or domestic violence allegations, the prosecuting attorney is often designated to lead the team based upon the premise that investigations conducted by the team may be serious enough to result in criminal prosecution. As such, cases must be legally sound and consist of legally obtained evidence in order to survive the high-level burden of proof in criminal trials. Although prosecutors do not have investigatory powers, prosecutors still need to have a broad-based understanding of the complexities of investigating child abuse and domestic violence cases that also involve animal abuse. The diverse composition of an MDT provides the broad knowledge base required to handle these cases most effectively. However, most teams do not include an expert on animal welfare. Prosecutors should take the initiative to include

animal welfare professionals (such as animal control officers, forensic veterinarians, and/or humane society professionals). Animal welfare professionals can provide essential information to effectively prosecute a criminal case.

One example of an MDT that includes animal welfare professionals is the Domestic Violence Enhanced Response Team (DVERT) in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Developed in 1992, DVERT works collaboratively with state and federal law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, animal welfare professionals, human services, probation agents, child advocacy centers, schools, and hospitals to intervene and advocate for safety of the entire family. The mission of the Domestic Violence Enhanced Response Team is to address domestic violence:

- by enhancing the safety of high-risk-for-lethality victims, to include children and animals;
- by ensuring appropriate containment of high-risk offenders;
- by facilitating local community oriented policing initiatives;
- by providing specialized training locally and nationally; and
- by supporting communities seeking to develop and sustain similar collaborative efforts.

DVERT is a comprehensive program that receives referrals, works confidentially with families through victim advocates, conducts home visits with child and animal welfare professionals, assesses safety of the victim and family, provides educational materials and information, assists with support during criminal prosecution and victim relocation, and provides continues criminal and advocacy case management for the victimized family. DVERT works closely with appropriate agencies to refer allegations of child or animal abuse and also receives assistance to remove family members, including companion animals, from abusive environments. DVERT also coordinates a program to provide low-cost or no-cost apartments to displaced victims and their families.

Other collaborative MDTs such as those in Wayne County, Michigan, and Lucas County, Ohio, cross-train animal control officers, humane society investigators, police officers, child protective services workers, and

domestic violence professionals on how each can recognize and document all signs of abuse or neglect occurring within a home. Animal abuse or neglect is often more visible because it occurs outdoors and can be viewed by concerned neighbors, whereas child abuse and domestic violence more often occur within the private confines of the home. My experience as a prosecuting attorney has been that people tend to more readily report concerns of animal cruelty than suspected child abuse, neglect, or domestic violence because of the visibility of animal abuse. However, it also appears that some concerned citizens are aware of the link between animal abuse, child abuse, and domestic violence. Several citizens have called me to seek advice about reporting suspicions of child abuse or domestic violence after they witnessed the abuse or neglect of pets in a particular family. Prosecutors are in a unique position to educate professionals and citizens and to encourage cross-reporting.

Animal welfare professionals are often the first emergency responders to have contact with a family that may be suffering from other forms of violence in the home. Training animal welfare professionals to recognize child abuse or neglect or domestic violence facilitates earlier reporting and better documentation of what may be occurring in the home. Similarly, if law enforcement is called to a domestic violence scene or child protective services receives a complaint, these responders should be trained to look for evidence of abused or neglected animals and to report this information to designated animal humane agents.

MDT members must be aware that reports of child abuse and neglect are mandatory and they are provided immunity and confidentiality for reporting. However, in most states, reports of domestic violence and suspected abuse or neglect of animals are not mandated and therefore not necessarily protected. Memoranda of understanding between agencies can indemnify reporters of abuse and neglect and should be developed by MDTs. Some states mandate partial cross-reporting in these areas. For example, in California, humane society and animal control officers are mandated reporters of suspected abuse and neglect of children, elders, and dependent adults. In Colorado, veterinarians are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse or neglect, and in Maine and Ohio, county humane agents are mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect. In 2006, West Virginia passed legislation that requires domestic violence, adult protective services, and animal welfare investigators to report suspected

child maltreatment. States that require all persons (including animal welfare professionals) to report suspected child abuse are Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, and Wyoming.

Veterinarians are mandated reporters of suspected animal abuse in Arizona, California, Illinois, Kansas, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Oregon, West Virginia (including humane officers), and Wisconsin. Veterinary technicians are also mandated reporters of suspected animal abuse in Oregon. States that have discretionary reporting of suspected animal abuse and provide civil protection for reporters include California (any employee of child/adult protective services), Colorado (veterinarians), Georgia (veterinarians), Maine (veterinarians, medical professionals and social workers), Maryland (veterinarians), Massachusetts (veterinarians), Rhode Island (veterinarians), and Vermont (veterinarians).

Prosecutors should contact their state prosecuting attorneys association and take steps to propose legislation in states that do not presently mandate reporting of animal abuse by law enforcement and child and adult protective services workers. Animal control officers should also be mandated to report suspected abuse or neglect of children, frail elderly, and dependent adults.

### **Family Safety Issues**

The prosecutor should be aware of shelter options for battered women, their children, and their pets. If private housing with family or friends is not available, options to place companion animals in a safe shelter situation should be explored. If companion animals can be removed safely from the home, abused domestic partners and children are more likely to leave the abusive home. Removing the family pets as pawns from the abuser will allow the entire family (including pets) to remain safe before, during, and after criminal prosecution of the offender (Ascione, 2000). The Humane Society of the United States initiated a *Safe Havens for Animals* program and maintains a list of animal shelters, animal care and control agencies, veterinary clinics, and private boarding kennels that will assist in housing companion animals when a family flees an abusive home.

### **Gathering Corroborating Evidence**

Prosecutors should ensure that MDT members are cross-trained on types of evidence to look for in

cases that involve allegations of animal abuse along with child abuse and/or domestic violence. Such evidence can include:

- Animals left outside without sufficient food, water or shelter
- Animals that appear emaciated
- Animal hoarding (possession a large number of companion animals; inability to provide even minimal standards of nutrition, sanitation, shelter, and veterinary care, with this neglect often resulting in starvation, illness, and death; denial of the inability to provide this minimum care and the impact of that failure on the animals, the household, and human occupants of the dwelling (Illinois statute 510 ILCS 70/2.10; see *Animal Hoarding* by Patronek, this text)
- Filthy house that contains animal feces in the living areas
- Injuries on the animals (which might be evidence of organized animal fighting or other forms of abuse)
- Frightened or cowering animals (which may be a result of abuse)
- Aggressive animals
- Areas in the home (particularly in basements) that appear to be set up for animal fighting
- Abusive attitude or language used by adults or children in the home toward the family pet in the presence of MDT members
- Comments by adults or children that indicate a lack of compassion for the pet

Prosecutors should require that an animal welfare professional be contacted immediately if there are any concerns about an animal's health or safety. The subsequent veterinarian's examination may produce corroborating evidence of animal abuse or neglect. Crime scene investigations should include videotapes or photographs of the home as well as evidence listed above. These tapes and photographs will allow the prosecutor to view the home and search for additional corroborating evidence that was not seized (see Appendix C for further information on gathering corroborative evidence).

### ***Forensic Interviews With Allegedly Abused Children***

If a child discloses information regarding his/her own abuse or witnessing of abuse of a family member and there is a companion animal in the home, a person

trained in conducting forensic interviews should explore whether the child has witnessed animal abuse or suspects the animal has also suffered abuse. When children have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, or have witnessed abuse of a parent or sibling, they may have difficulty discussing these traumatic issues with a stranger who is conducting a forensic interview. In the rapport-building stage of the interview, children may more readily talk about their pet than about themselves. Therefore, asking children a few simple, open-ended questions about their pets will likely get the interview off to a good start and provide valuable forensic information. Examples of such questions are provided in *The Childhood Trust Survey on Animal-Related Experiences* (Appendix A).

If the forensic interviewer learns that a child has a special attachment to a companion animal, the interviewer can explore that relationship to make the child comfortable during the interview. For example, Bobby was reluctant to speak with Dr. Boat about his father's abuse until she asked about family pets, whose maltreatment was of great concern to Bobby. During this process the interviewer may learn that the animal has been threatened, abused, or neglected. This information may offer law enforcement an opportunity to gather corroborating evidence. Bobby's disclosures prompted a search for the remains of Smokey, the cat.

### ***Criminal Charging Decisions, Plea Negotiations, Sentencing and Probation, and Court-Ordered Counseling***

Prosecutors are ethically bound to issue criminal charges only when there is sufficient evidence of criminal wrongdoing. Prosecutors seek testimony from domestic partners, children, neighbors, veterinarians, the accused, and others involved with the family regarding dangerous behavior. Prosecutors also rely on photographic and/or videotaped evidence showing the condition of the home and all victims. Prosecutors should charge any and all crimes that have sufficient evidence to support the criminal charge. When multiple forms of abuse occur in the home, all abuse should be considered when criminally charging the offender. Prosecutors often fail to criminally charge animal abuse crimes or summarily dismiss animal abuse charges in order to obtain a guilty plea to a more "serious" human abuse charge. Deeming animal abuse as a "lesser" criminal offense does a disservice to the entire family, including pets and the offender, in stopping the cycle of violence.

Of particular importance to prosecutors is whether an offender has a pattern of abusive conduct. When criminal offenders enter the court system on charges of family violence, prosecutors often hear that this was the first time the abuse occurred along with promises that the abuse will never happen again. The background of the offender should be investigated thoroughly to uncover prior incidents or reports of violence to humans or animals. Information about prior incidents of abuse will greatly assist the prosecutor in issuing criminal charges and negotiating resolution of the charges. In Bobby's case, his father had a concurrent history of animal cruelty and physical and emotional abuse of his son and wife. This pattern of abusive conduct should strengthen the prosecutor's position in criminally charging the offender, obtaining a conviction, or negotiating a plea and sentence.

In some situations, prosecutors may uncover a unique pattern of abusive conduct by an offender that may be admissible as similar acts evidence. Federal Rules of Evidence 404(b) provides:

Evidence of other crimes, wrongs, or acts is not admissible to prove the character of a person in order to show action in conformity therewith. It may, however, be admissible for other purposes, such as proof of motive, opportunity, intent, preparation, plan, knowledge, identity, or absence of mistake or accident, provided that upon request by the accused, the prosecution in a criminal case shall provide reasonable notice in advance of trial, or during trial if the court excuses pre-trial notice on good cause shown, of the general nature of any such evidence it intends to introduce at trial.

For example, if an offender has been criminally charged with child abuse or domestic violence and the offender has targeted the family pet in order to gain silence or compliance from the child or adult victim, this information may be admissible at trial to demonstrate the offender's motive and pattern of conduct. If the primary allegation in a criminal complaint involves child abuse or domestic violence and includes allegations of animal abuse, the prosecutor should request further information from family members or the family veterinarian to determine if there is evidence to support an animal abuse charge. Even if the information cannot support a criminal charge, prosecutors should consider such information when negotiating a plea agreement. Criminal

cases that have an underlying suspicion of animal abuse should have plea agreements or sentencing terms that contain sufficient safeguards for the entire family, including companion animals. The terms should include appropriate counseling and probationary terms for the offender that address issues of animal abuse, child abuse, and/or domestic violence.

When requesting specific probationary terms for the offender, prosecutors must be vigilant to ensure that the offender is not assigned to do community service at an animal shelter or with animals. As demonstrated in the following case example, mandating a convicted animal abuser to perform community service involving animals may not only result in community outrage, but create another tragedy. Community service is not a replacement for counseling and treatment. Anger management, empathy, and compassion counseling must be delivered in a professional setting. It is important to recognize that the anger management counseling typically ordered for offenders convicted of child abuse or domestic violence rarely addresses the abuse of the family pet or how the offender leverages power and control by threatening, injuring, killing, or getting rid of the pet. However, when prosecutors pursue convictions or guilty pleas to animal abuse charges, the Court can then order comprehensive, abuse-specific treatment for the offender that addresses all manifestations of the offender's abusive behaviors.

In sum, prosecutors should not be quick to dismiss the animal abuse charges as the "less serious" charges in cases of family violence. Rather, prosecutors should attempt to obtain guilty pleas on the charges of animal abuse along with appropriate guilty pleas to child abuse and/or domestic violence so the Court can order the offender to have no contact with animals, participate in abuse-specific counseling, and tailor other appropriate probationary terms.

In our scenario, Bobby's father was appropriately charged and prosecuted on all abuse in the home. The court ordered intensive counseling and tough probationary terms. Concerns about the father's pattern of animal abuse led to protective orders for the remaining family pets as well as for Bobby and his mother. In the interests of their immediate safety, Bobby and his mother moved into a domestic violence shelter and the humane society took custody of the outdoor dogs and placed them in adoptive homes. The father will not be able to manipulate his wife or son by threatening to harm the dogs if the dogs remain out of the home.

### **Case Example**

An example of a cooperative effort to gather evidence for purposes of criminal prosecution occurred in a case when I was an assistant prosecutor. Four individuals, three males and one female, all between the ages of 17 and 18, were convicted of felony animal abuse involving the killing, mutilation, and torture of animals. The investigation began as a simple retail fraud involving the theft of developed photographs from a local store. When responding police officers seized the photographs as evidence in the retail fraud investigation, they observed that the photographs depicted some of the teens engaging in sexual acts with cats and dogs. The teens admitted that the dogs and cats belonged to the female teen in the group. A search warrant was obtained for the female teen's residence where she resided with her mother and stepfather. The family pets depicted in the photos were taken into protective custody by animal control and given veterinary examinations to determine whether abuse has been perpetrated.

What initially appeared to be a routine retail fraud investigation turned in to a multi-suspect, multi-victim, and multi-jurisdictional investigation into animal torture rituals by the teens. The teens admitted to police officers that they had recently purchased a rat at a local pet store for the sole purpose of eating it. The teens unsuccessfully hung the rat, but then strangled, killed, and disemboweled the rat, then fried and ate the rat. The teens then nailed pieces of the rat to a cross with "repent" written on it. The teens further admitted to finding a large bird, later identified as a Muscovy duck, and torturing the duck with a machete. The duck was killed after 10–12 attempts to cut off the duck's head. The teens drew a pentagram on a wall with the duck's blood. The investigation also showed that the teens had gone to a neighbor's property and killed their African goose with a pitchfork and also killed a brown Leghorn Rooster. The teens had been scared away from killing some goats at the neighbor's property when the neighbor caught the teens hanging around and dressed in black Gothic attire.

Due to the cooperative effort in gathering significant photographic and testimonial evidence of multiple crimes of animal abuse, all four teens pled guilty to the original charges of felony animal abuse and were sentenced in ranges from 3 to 6 months in jail plus an additional 2 to 5 years of probation. As a result of the thorough investigation and gathering of evidence, I was able to convince the court of the seriousness of the felony animal abuse charges and

not succumb to pressure that my victims were "only animals." At sentencing, I advocated on behalf of the tortured animals and educated the judge on the connection between animal abuse and other human violence. I requested the maximum sentence under the sentencing guidelines in order to send a strong message to the teens and members of the community that torture of animals would not be tolerated. I also hoped to prevent these teens from engaging in future, and possibly escalating, violence against living beings.

Of particular interest in this case is that two of the four teens admitting during pre-sentencing interviews that they were physically and emotionally abused by their parents as younger children, and one teen admitted to being physically and sexually abused by both of his parents as a young child and that both parents were still incarcerated as a result of that abuse. Moreover, between the time of arrest and conviction all four teens were released on bond by the court. During this interim, one teen admitted he tortured and killed a cat and a chicken. I emphasized the abuse histories of the teens and the ongoing perpetration of animal cruelty during sentencing to encourage the judge to impose appropriate counseling and interventions to end the cycle of violence for these teens.

One lesson learned by the investigators in this case came prior to the issuance of criminal charges. The officers who had taken the dogs and cats into protective custody decided to return them to the female teen without consulting with the prosecutor's office. Working together as an MDT and maintaining an open dialogue would have prevented these companion animals from returning to an abusive environment. Nonetheless, at sentencing I successfully obtained a court order to prohibit the female teen to possess, or be in the vicinity of, animals during her 5-year term of probation. Consequently, the family pets (which fortunately had not been harmed further) were removed again and placed for adoption. It is important to understand that leaving the pets in the home imperiled both the animals and the teenager as she could have been charged with additional counts of abuse if she had continued to harm her pets.

### **Other Case Examples Showing the Link Between Animal Abuse and Human Violence**

In Brooklyn, New York, James Whalen pled guilty to beating and killing his ex-fiancée's cat after his fiancée terminated their relationship. The 9-pound cat

named Darwin was beaten to death by Whalen with his bare hands in April 2004. According to news reports, Whalen's ex-fiancée stated that Whalen had injured Darwin previously, but that no action was taken at that time. On March 11, 2005, Whalen was sentenced pursuant to a plea agreement to five years' probation, no jail, and continued alcohol abuse and anger management treatment.

On March 8, 2003, in Wilkeson, Washington, Steven L. Paulson, age 20, and Troy L. Loney, age 18, shot a dog (believed to be a homeless Siberian Husky) repeatedly with a bow and one arrow. According to charging papers filed in Pierce County Superior Court, the defendants roped the dog to a tree and took turns shooting him. He was struck by the arrow at least 10 times before he died. Afterwards, the men allegedly threw the body into a nearby creek. Volunteers had to search for the body. Initially, police did not arrest the pair, but during their arraignment on April 2, 2003, which drew 90 activists from as far away as the Canadian border, the Prosecutor asked the Judge to jail both immediately because he said they were a danger to the community. The men were jailed by the Judge in lieu of \$5,000 bail. Paulson and Loney were subsequently found guilty of felony animal cruelty for torturing and cruelly killing a defenseless dog and were sentenced on October 1, 2003. Both men had prior convictions: Loney was convicted of child molestation at age 13 and Paulson has been convicted of assault, robbery, mischief, and forgery. The Judge sentenced both defendants to 8 months in the Pierce County jail, 8 to 10 weeks of mental health treatment, and fines of \$1,500 and 240 hours of community service at the Humane Society of Tacoma and Pierce County. The community service factor of the probationary order came under severe scrutiny because it placed convicted animal abusers in the presence of animals. The defendants were released one month and two months early, respectively, due to "overcrowding." Loney served 81 days in jail; Paulson served 50 days.

In *State v. Pugsley*, 911 P.2d 761 (1995), the defendant was convicted of raping both his minor daughters and sentenced to life terms and a 20-year indeterminate term, with a 10-year minimum period of confinement. In affirming the conviction and sentence, the Idaho Court of Appeals noted, "On one occasion, he forced himself on his daughter while her younger sister was in the room. Pugsley threatened to kill his daughters if they told of the abuse. Pugsley was also convicted of raping his half sister. Evidence adduced during the two trials indicates that

Pugsley raped another of his half sisters and that he reinforced his threats against his youngest daughter and a half sister by killing animals in front of them."

In *State v. Twist*, 528 A.2d 1250 (Me. 1987), the appeals court affirmed child sexual abuse convictions of the defendant who molested five children, including two of his own children. The court commented on the severity of the abuse, including psychological trauma to the children, in addressing whether the children would testify in open court by mentioning that the children saw the defendant kill their cat by burning it in an oven followed by his threat to shoot them if they told about the abuse.

Cases that involved threats to kill pets in order to silence child sexual abuse victims include *Murphy v. Mersbacher*, 697 A.2d 861 (Md. 1996) (one abuse victim was told that her dog would be killed if she disclosed the abuse); *State v. Swanson*, 2 NCA 777; 1993 Neb. App. LEXIS 117 (Neb. App. 1993) (the victim was reluctant to disclose the abuse, because her father "said he would kill my dog Lucky and chop me and my mommy and the furniture up with his ax."); and *State v. Foster*, 915 P.2d 567 (Wash. Ct. App. 1996) (the victim delayed disclosing abuse because the defendant threatened to harm the victim, as well as her dog, and the victim witnessed the defendant slam a sliding glass door on the dog).

### Conclusion: None of Us Does This Job Alone

"Enhancing our awareness and knowledge about the relationship between violence to animals and violence to children provides a unique opportunity to enhance our services to both" (Boat, 1999). It is important to educate all child abuse, animal abuse, legal, and family violence professionals about the links among abuse of animals, children, and domestic partners, the importance of gathering relevant information using tools such as those discussed in this chapter, and the value of collaboration among professionals. Providing a continuum of protection for children and animals will enhance the safety of family members, the prosecution of the abuser, and provision of appropriate interventions.

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## Appendix A

### The Childhood Trust Survey on Animal-Related Experiences

#### The Childhood Trust 10 Screening Questions for Children, Adolescents and Adults on Animal-Related Experiences

1. Have you or your family ever had any pets? ..... Y N

	How many?		How many?
a. Dog(s)	_____		
b. Cat(s)	_____	f. Turtles, snakes, lizards, insects, etc.	_____
c. Bird(s)	_____	g. Rabbits, hamsters, mice, guinea pigs, gerbils	_____
d. Fish	_____	h. Wild animals (describe) _____	_____
e. Horse(s)	_____	i. Other (describe) _____	_____

2. Do you have a pet or pets now? ..... Y N

	How many?		How many?
a. Dog(s)	_____		
b. Cat(s)	_____	f. Turtles, snakes, lizards, insects, etc.	_____
c. Bird(s)	_____	g. Rabbits, hamsters, mice, guinea pigs, gerbils	_____
d. Fish	_____	h. Wild animals (describe) _____	_____
e. Horse(s)	_____	i. Other (describe) _____	_____

3. Did you ever have a favorite or special pet? ..... Y N

What kind? \_\_\_\_\_

Why was the pet special? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Has a pet ever been a source of comfort or support to you—even if you did not own the pet? (e.g., When you were sad or scared?) ..... Y N

How old were you?

a. Under age 6    b. 6–12 years    c. Teenager    d. Adult

Describe the pet and what happened \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



5. Has your pet ever been hurt? ..... Y N

What happened? (describe) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

a. Accidental? (hit by car, attacked by another animal, fell, ate something, etc.)

b. Deliberate? (kicked, punched, thrown, not fed, etc.)

6. Have you ever felt afraid for your pet or worried about bad things happening to your pet? (describe) ..... Y N

\_\_\_\_\_

Are you worried now? ..... Y N

7. Have you ever lost a pet you really cared about? (e.g., Was given away, ran away, died or was somehow killed?) ..... Y N

What kind of pet? \_\_\_\_\_

If your pet died, was the death:

- a. Natural (old age, illness, euthanized)
- b. Accidental (hit by car)
- c. Deliberate (strangled, drowned)
- d. Cruel or violent (e.g. pet was tortured)

What happened?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Was the death or loss used to punish you or make you do something? ..... Y N

How difficult was the loss for you?

- a. Not difficult
- b. Somewhat difficult
- c. Very difficult

How much does it bother you now?

- a. Not at all
- b. Somewhat
- c. A lot

How did people react/what did they tell you after you lost your pet?

- a. Supportive
- b. Said it was your fault
- c. Punished you
- d. Other \_\_\_\_\_

How old were you?

- a. Under age 6
- b. 6–12 years
- c. Teenager
- d. Adult

8. Have you ever seen someone hurt an animal or pet? ..... Y N

	How many?		How many?
a. Dog(s)	_____	f. Turtles, snakes, lizards, insects etc.	_____
b. Cat(s)	_____	g. Rabbits, hamsters, mice, guinea pigs, gerbils	_____
c. Bird(s)	_____	h. Wild animals (describe) _____	_____
d. Fish	_____	i. Other (describe) _____	_____
e. Horse(s)	_____		

What did they do ?

- a. Drowned
- b. Hit, beat, kicked
- c. Stoned
- d. Shot (BB gun, bow & arrow)
- e. Strangled
- f. Stabbed
- g. Burned
- h. Starved or neglected
- i. Trapped
- j. Had sex with it
- k. Other (describe) \_\_\_\_\_

Was it

- a. accidental?
- b. deliberate?
- c. coerced?

How old were you? (circle all that apply)

- a. Under age 6
- b. 6–12 years
- c. Teenager
- d. Adult

Were they hunting the animal for food or sport? ..... Y N

Did anyone know they did this? ..... Y N

What happened afterwards? \_\_\_\_\_

**9. Have you ever hurt an animal or pet? ..... Y N**

- |             | How many? |  | How many |
|-------------|-----------|--|----------|
| a. Dog(s)   | _____     | f. Turtles, snakes, lizards, insects etc.        | _____    |
| b. Cat(s)   | _____     | g. Rabbits, hamsters, mice, guinea pigs, gerbils | _____    |
| c. Bird(s)  | _____     | h. Wild animals (describe) _____                 | _____    |
| d. Fish     | _____     | i. Other (describe) _____                        | _____    |
| e. Horse(s) | _____     |  |          |

What did you do ?

- a. Drowned
- b. Hit, beat, kicked
- c. Stoned
- d. Shot (BB gun, bow & arrow)
- e. Strangled
- f. Stabbed
- g. Burned
- h. Starved or neglected
- i. Trapped
- j. Had sex with it
- k. Other (describe) \_\_\_\_\_

Was it

- a. accidental?
- b. deliberate?
- c. coerced?

How old were you? (circle all that apply)

- a. Under age 6
- b. 6–12 years
- c. Teenager
- d. Adult

Were you hunting the animal for food or sport? ..... Y N

Were you alone when you did this? ..... Y N

Did anyone know you did this? ..... Y N

What happened afterwards? \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Have you ever been frightened—really scared or hurt by an animal or pet? ..... Y N**

What happened? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you still afraid of this kind of animal or other animals? ..... Y N

(Describe) \_\_\_\_\_

(Optional)

### Demographics

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Current grade or highest grade completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_  
(years)      (months)

Maternal level of education (highest grade completed) \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

### The Family-Based Risk Assessment

*The Family-Based Risk Assessment* considers which factors are most likely to act as triggers for a particular individual and the probability that other family members and companion animals will activate these triggers. Realistically evaluating triggers and assessing how likely they are to be activated by others in the home points out ways to prevent potentially dangerous situations from worsening and steps to take to protect potential victims from harm.

Assess the family's risk based on six common individual and family behaviors:

- noisiness
- messiness
- disobedience
- eating difficulties
- toileting difficulties
- level of activity and need for supervision.

Assess to what degree each behavior is a trigger for the potential offender, to what degree the behavior is evident in the household, and which household member is most likely to be at risk for each behavior.

*Step one:* Assess the potential offender's likely response to these six triggers.

Fill out the potential offender reactivity assessment, the left column of the chart on page 414, scoring the potential offender on a scale from 1 to 5 on his or her reactivity to each of six common behaviors.

"1" indicates this individual finds the behavior minimally annoying.

"5" indicates that it could be dangerously annoying.

With a reactivity rating of 1 to 5 in each category, a potential offender would have a Personal Reactivity Rating between 6 and 30.

*Step two:* Assess the degree to which these triggers might be present in the household by looking at the likely behavior of children, dependent adults, frail elders, animals, and other members of the household.

To do this:

- Make a list of all human and animal members of the household on the chart on page 414. Include all children and pets.

- Include other potential victims who reside in the home either permanently or temporarily, like an aging parent who lives in the guest room over the garage or another relative needing assistance while recuperating from an illness. Domestic violence of any sort can put even able-bodied adults in harm's way.
- Consider the frequency, intensity, and duration of the behaviors of the potential victims, scoring them using a scale of 1 to 5.

"1" indicates minimally provocative behavior.  
"5" indicates maximally provocative behavior.

- Score each member of the household on each behavior, then add the scores of the members of the household together. Next, multiply the cumulative score for each category by the potential offender's reactivity rating.
- Look at the resulting totals for high and low risk for individuals, for behaviors, for times of the day (such as meal times), and for a total indicating overall risk of violence.

#### ***Family-based risk assessment definitions:***

##### ***I. Noise.***

- animals  
Unaltered cats howl when in heat, a sound many people find dismaying or even chilling. To some, it sounds like a child's cry. Some dogs bark only occasionally—when somebody comes to the door, for example, while others bark more often, at any movement outside the house; still others seem to bark almost constantly. While this may not matter to people who are comparatively indifferent to noise, the noise-sensitive person finds this very trying behavior. Noise complaints are among the most common and frequent that animal control agencies receive. *Score each animal for how noisy it is.*
- children  
Children tend to be very noisy people: crying, whining, complaining, playing

## FAMILY RISK CHART

POTENTIAL OFFENDER	POTENTIAL VICTIMS					SCORE		
Triggers	Reactivity Rating	Animal A	Animal B	Child A	Child B	Child C	Adult Partner	Other Adult
Noise	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Messiness	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Disobedience	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Eating Problems	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Toileting Problems	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Requirements for supervision	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Total Risk Score</b>	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

*Add the score of all the potential victims together, then multiply that number by the potential offender's Reactivity Rating for each trigger to obtain scores.*

Degree of isolation: \_\_\_\_\_

Economic consideration: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

noisily, banging things, dropping things, and colliding with things. Some learn that they only get attention from their parents when they make a considerable amount of noise; the annoyed adults unwittingly reinforcing the behavior they abhor. *Score each child for noisiness.*

- people with disabilities, frail elders  
Hearing loss afflicts a considerable percent of the aging population as well as a smaller segment of the general population. Aging friends or relatives may play the television very loudly, often to the point of causing pain to others around them. Those sensitive to noise may become uncomfortable at home because the aging parent, now living in the spare bedroom, blasts the television all day. They may notice their own tempers flaring more quickly and small irritants appearing larger. In addition, helpers may need to shout and repeat everything several times to be understood. This can add considerably to stress levels. *Score each disabled adult or frail elder for hearing loss and resultant noisiness.*

- adult partners  
Adults make noise, especially when using a vacuum cleaner, washing machine, or other household appliance. Talking on the phone, nagging, or yelling at others may also activate triggers. Partners may have unrealistic—or at least unfulfilled—expectations of peace and quiet on demand. They may interpret noise as provocation worthy of retaliation, even if the noise is moderate and in response to normal boisterousness from young and energetic children or animals or hearing loss of older relatives. *Score the noise level of the adult partner and factor in the general level of noise in the home and environment.*

## 2. Messiness, disregard for or destruction of property.

- animals  
Animals do not share human regard for possessions. Cats see drapes and couches as fine things to scratch their claws against—and scratching claws is necessary to keep nails trim. Smart cat owners understand that cats scratch of necessity and the best way to protect the drapes and

the couch is to provide something the cat will prefer to scratch. Pet supply stores sell carpeted cat trees; they go up higher than the average couch and have a better nap than most drapes. Providing a more attractive alternative to the cat solves the problem; families without these alternatives are likely to find scratched furniture, curtains, and other household property.

Dogs, especially teething puppies, like to chew things. People who give their dogs rawhide to chew are nonetheless surprised that their dogs demolish leather shoes they leave lying around. From the dogs' perspective, leather is leather and their human cohabitant generously provides a variety of types and textures. The easy solution is to shut the closet door so the dog cannot get at the shoes and to give the dog non-leathery things to chew like nylon bones and densely stuffed Kongs™ (a chew toy).

With a few simple changes, families can avoid much destructive behavior by pets. However, many pet owners blame their animal for bad behavior. Having decided that the behavior was bad, they then feel justified in punishing it.

*Score the animals' messy or destructive behavior, factoring in mitigations like cat trees and nylon bones and noting their absence as contributing to risk.*

- children  
Children are messy and clumsy. They drop and spill things. They also enjoy finger-painting, splashing in puddles, and other messy activities. They are too young to appreciate the value of an expensive vase on a small table and to steer clear of it while enthusiastically if imprecisely careening down the hallway on a tricycle. With good intentions but poor understanding of developmental stages, some parents decide to teach young children not to touch fragile and valuable objects instead of simply putting them safely out of reach. The young child's take on the situation is of being tantalized and constantly tempted. Intermittent if not frequent failure of impulse control is normative for children. A wiser parent would baby- and toddler-proof the home and generally keep treasured or valuable objects in safe and inaccessible places.

*Score the messy or neat tendencies of the child and factor in the number of toys and the number of parts they contain. A spilled set of Legos or a 1000-piece puzzle looks messier than a Gameboy left on the table.*

- people with disabilities, frail elders  
People with poor coordination or ambulation may also find navigation difficult. Weak or tremulous hands mean that things will inevitably if unintentionally get dropped and broken. Difficulty walking and the use of assistive devices mean more room is required than most floor plans provide for doorways, hallways, and bathrooms. Without wide openings, someone using a walker is likely to scratch the molding in doorways and other narrow passages.

*Score the disabled adult or frail elder based on strength and coordination, and the presence or absence of canes, walkers, wheelchairs and other devices that tend to require more space than is available in the average home.*

- adult partner  
Partners often differ in their needs for tidiness and orderliness. Even if they agree on standards of neatness and cleanliness, they are apt to disagree on the division of labor and the specific value of the other's personal and cherished property. Thus, one partner may keep personal items neat but neglect household chores, while another might clean the car but ignore spills in the kitchen. An adult partner is at greater risk of triggering the potential offender's rage when power is not shared in the relationship, when individual rights and preferences are generally not honored, and when the more powerful partner's expectations include maid and other services. Mess may then be misinterpreted as a deliberate provocation, and a violent reaction felt as justifiable retaliation. The potential offender often chooses to destroy the things lying around or to shatter a treasured object such as a family heirloom to show his or her power to hurt.

In the clinical literature on domestic violence, injuring or killing the family pet is discussed under the rubric of destruction of property. While true, the pet as a sentient

being represents more than that. Violent adults may kick or throw a pet against the wall and refuse to let anybody help it. Thus, the family watches in horror as the pet suffers and dies a few days later. Family members identify and foresee their own fates in the pet's agony and death. Their pain goes beyond the sense of loss triggered when a treasured heirloom is thrown against a wall and breaks into pieces.

Another important point to consider is how the pet entered the family. Instead of chocolates or flowers, the remorseful gift accompanying the batterer's tearful apology may be a kitten and the words, "Honey, I don't know what came over me. I'll never do that again. To show you how much I love you and want us to be a family, I've brought you this kitten. We'll care for it together." The pet thus represents all the optimism and hope for the future that the human victim clings to.

*Score this category on general demands for tidiness, the presence of valuable and treasured objects, the presence of and past history of pets living and dying in the home, the number of people in the home (four children inevitably create more disarray than two do), and the egalitarian or unequal division of labor in maintaining the home and its contents.*

### **3. Disobedience, disrespect, noncompliance with rules, directions.**

- animals  
People say "sit" or "come" and expect the animal to comply. They tug vigorously on the leash expecting the animal to learn to walk without pulling. To humans the point of the talking or pulling is obvious. But to the animal, the message is indecipherable. For the animal to understand what is being asked and to learn to comply with the request, these behaviors must be taught in a variety of settings with clear and predictable directions and reinforcement. It is far easier to get a dog to come when called indoors, for example, than outdoors where competing smells, distractions, and food sources abound. Some pet owners mistake inadequate training for disobedience.

*Score this based on the animal's compliance and the owner's flexibility.*

- children

Children test limits to learn about themselves, other people, and the world around them. Limit testing is a normal—if trying—behavior, more intense at some stages (the “terrible twos” and the teens) than others. Adults sometimes have developmentally inappropriate expectations, expecting a young child to remember things or draw on life experience as though they were older. For example, a 3-year-old has an attention span of roughly three minutes. So, if a parent tells that child 20 times in an hour not to go near a hot coffee pot, that child is actually fully compliant for his or her developmental stage. Few parents who tell their 3-year-old something every three minutes also marvel at their child's flawless compliance. Rather, based on their own memory and attention span, they interpret the brevity of their child's retention as disobedience and respond angrily or punitively.

*Score this based on the child's tenacity in testing limits and the adult's realistic or unrealistic appreciation of developmentally appropriate expectations.*

- people with disabilities, frail elders

People with disabilities or infirmity due to age may need assistance, even attendant care. Does this mean they should not get to make decisions for themselves? In some cases, when the impairment is cognitive, it does for safety's sake. But, what of the aging parent who moves in with an adult child after breaking a hip and does not do as told? Should the desire of an adult to make his or her own decisions be interpreted as disobedience? Does the adult child repeat the words remembered from his or her teenage years, “When you're under my roof, you'll do as I say”?

Such constraints naturally may elicit noncompliance. Loss of autonomy and the need for assistance are problematic enough without having to risk abuse when asserting oneself.

*Score the empathy and flexibility of the caregiver as well as the vigorousness of the recipient's desire for autonomy. Take into account collusion between genera-*

*tions, as when a grandparent will seek to undermine a parent's authority with a child in the home.*

- adult partners

Some adults agree with their partner's right to make all the rules; others are overtly or covertly defiant. A partner may be at risk by breaking the rules, whether intentionally or not.

*Score the rigidity of the rules, the frequency or infrequency of tolerated exceptions, and the partner's ability to fulfill the potential offender's expectations for respect, obedience, and compliance with rules.*

#### 4. Eating difficulties or quirks.

- animals

Cats are notoriously picky eaters for reasons largely having to do with their dietary and digestive needs. However, the cat owner who sees yet another can of food go uneaten after sitting untouched for hours can easily misinterpret the cat's refusal to eat as defiance. This behavior is a common source of frustration for owners who, believing the cat is deliberately ignoring the food, fail to understand the cat's delicate dietary and digestive needs.

Dogs get into trouble for the opposite reason: they eat everything. Scavengers and omnivores by nature, they delight in food old and new, moldy and fresh, the not-yet-eaten and the already excreted. The dog owner who opens the oven, takes out a chicken, and then momentarily abandons it to answer the door is likely to find a happy dog and an empty platter back in the kitchen. Unless the owner has invested substantial time teaching the dog impulse control around food using increasingly large and tempting challenges, the empty platter represents predictable behavior, not a bad dog. The empty platter indicates that more training is needed, that food should be put in inaccessible places, and that the problem of the consumed chicken was caused by the person's failure to exercise hypervigilance around coveted food.

*Score the availability of generous enough amounts of fresh and appropriate food so the animal is not unduly hungry, the animal's drive and determination to hunt for*

*extras, and the vigilance of the pet owner in putting things away.*

- children

Children control so little in life that they readily seek to control what they eat. They may develop quirks to feel in charge, eating the same food for lunch every day for three months, only to say they hate it the first day of the fourth month. They may eat carrots or apples if they are sliced a certain way, but not another, or they may refuse to eat foods that “touch” (e.g., peas roll that into mashed potatoes on a plate). Some parents understand their child’s need for control and the advantages of choosing battles wisely; others take this behavior as an affront or a challenge and turn mealtimes into battlegrounds and power struggles.

*Score the child’s need for self-determination; the level of risk increases with the parent’s need to control what the child eats and to attribute motives like disrespect to quirks.*

- people with disabilities, frail elders

Some adults find eating difficult. They may have trouble chewing or swallowing; they may have ill-fitting or uncomfortable dentures, or their hands may tremble making it hard to cut food or manage utensils. What used to be a pleasurable half hour for the family to eat and socialize may become, through age or disability, a labor-intensive hour, generating frustration, spills, and despair.

Other adults need to be fed. When people feed children, they know their children will soon eat independently, outgrowing the need for mealtime assistance. When people feed adults, however, they foresee—realistically—that demands will continue indefinitely and may even increase. People who offered to help a relative for a short while may feel trapped when that relative’s health deteriorates rather than improves and the need to provide assistance increases.

*Score the level of assistance needed. Assess whether help is needed to cut or feed food, prepare special meals, or clean up messiness from feeding difficulties. Base this score on the level of repugnance or disgust*

*the caregiver experiences and reaction to increased dependency.*

- adult partners

The adult partner may be at risk in this category not because of eating quirks but because of his or her role in food preparation. A controlling partner may make exacting demands on the timing, quality, and service of meals.

*Score the potential offender’s level of expectations and willingness to adjust expectations downward when other demands press.*

### **5. Toileting or housebreaking accidents, incontinence; hygiene and grooming.**

- animals

Cats tend to be fastidious, only avoiding litter boxes when the cat is ill or bothered by something or when the box dirty. People may misconstrue the cat’s illness or their own failure to clean the litter box as the cat’s misbehavior.

Dogs surpass humans in some physical capabilities such as hearing and sense of smell. But they are similar to humans in needing to relieve themselves a few times during the day. Yet owners will take a dog out in the morning to relieve itself, go to work for the day, and return 10 hours later angry about a wet spot on the carpet—even though they themselves have gone to the bathroom two or three times during the day at work. This problem is simply a question of owners overestimating the dog’s physical capacity.

Other toileting accidents may be due to improper or inconsistent training, failure to notice the dog’s behaviors indicating a need to go out, insufficient time outdoors, or illness, particularly urinary tract infections. Some submissive and frightened dogs also urinate as one of their submissive behaviors. Scaring this dog will only increase the urinating indoors.

*Score the owner’s realistic or unrealistic expectations and willingness to provide clean litter boxes, sufficient training, and frequent enough opportunities to go out.*

- children

Most parents look forward eagerly to the day their child will outgrow the need for

diapers. This day usually arrives when the child is between 2½ and 3, although some children, particularly boys, wet the bed until they are older. Added pressure to toilet train children at an early age is put on parents by child care programs that only accept toilet trained children. Some children, due to illness, disability, emotional distress, or physical or sexual abuse are incontinent longer, particularly at night.

Parents are not always charitable with a child who wets the bed and may take it as an affront to their capacity as parents. This is especially likely if the parent was also a bed wetter and was humiliated or punished for the same behavior. Instead of engendering compassion, the memory increases the risk that the humiliated parent will repeat the abusive behavior with the bed-wetting child. Doubts about one's ability to control oneself can be projected on others, particularly when memories of self-regulatory failure are vivid and hurtful.

*Score the parent's history of enuresis and emotional trauma sustained in childhood and the age of the child and current frequency of toileting accidents.*

- people with disabilities, frail elders  
Some people with disabilities need toileting assistance throughout their lives, perhaps because of incontinence or needing help transferring from a wheelchair to a toilet seat. Some people become incontinent as they age. Incontinence is the single biggest trigger for elder abuse and the most common reason cited by family members for institutionalizing an older relative. This dependency takes a great toll on the caregiver and increases risk for the person with the disability. Even if an attendant provides the help, attendant care is poorly paid and poorly supervised, increasing the risk of both physical and sexual abuse by caregivers.  
*Score the level of assistance needed with toileting, frequency of needing to relieve oneself, screening and supervision of staff (if applicable), and other control issues around bodily functions, appearance, and access.*
- adult partners and teenage children in the home

Adult partners and teenagers are probably not incontinent, but they may, through hygiene or grooming, trigger control issues. They may dress or wear makeup in ways that seem sexy or provocative.

*Score the level of control attempted by one adult over another's appearance, grooming and hygiene.*

#### **6. Need for supervision due to level of activity or maturity.**

- animals

People tend to fall in love impulsively with a cute and bouncy puppy without realizing the puppy's level of energy and need for supervision and exercise. Puppies chew and explore constantly, requiring as much baby-proofing as a toddler. Older dogs are more mellow, happy to go for a run and to take a nap. Shelter staff may recommend that busy people select an older dog, but this advice usually goes unheeded.

*Score the animal's and human's levels of energy and the time the human allocates to exercise and recreate with the animal.*

- children

Because young children have enormous amounts of energy and little sense of safety, they must be supervised at all times. Always on the go, children require a high degree of attention. Parents, meaning well, think getting a puppy for their young child would be nice—the child and puppy can grow up together and their comparable energy will allow them to play enjoyably together. These parents ignore shelter warnings that young children and animals may double, not halve, the need for attention.

*Score the caregiver's willingness and level of energy to keep up with the child all his or her waking hours.*

- people with disabilities, frail elders  
People who have limited mobility or energy place demands on caregivers to get things for them and help in a variety of ways. They may also have bells to ring to summon help—and may ring them often. Particularly stressed are the people simultaneously supervising young and energetic children, a new puppy, and a bedridden in-law in the spare bedroom, bell ever at the

ready to summon a glass of juice or the newspaper.

- adult partners

Demands of infants and people who are ill, frail, or disabled take precedence over the demands of teenagers and able-bodied adults. An insecure partner may be provoked when others come first, seem “more important” and more worthy of care and attention.

*Score the number of competing demands and the potential offender’s relative ability or inability to yield center stage to the needs of others.*

Consider two additional factors as you score family-based risk in each category:

1. Isolation

Isolation is the biggest generic risk factor for abuse and neglect. Abuse and neglect take place at home in private when nobody outside the family is watching. Reducing isolation is the single most useful intervention.

*Assess risk by calculating time the family is alone, and the availability and*

*involvement of friends, relatives, and neighbors from work, school, church, or other organizations.*

2. Impoverishment

While poverty does not cause abuse, economic hardship reduces ways to minimize risk. An overwhelmed parent with disposable income can place the dog in a kennel for a few days, hire a housekeeper and a babysitter, or bring in a nurse’s aide for a disabled or elderly relative. Though stressed, and now the employer of a small staff, this person can carve out a few moments to regroup and delegate a number of tasks, especially those he or she finds most onerous or off-putting. Without money to hire help, people get pushed beyond their limits when forced to handle multiple and seemingly endless demands.

*Assess existing level of demands, use of support services, ability to pay for additional help, and the availability of reduced fee and volunteer services in the community.*

## Appendix C

### A Prosecutor's Checklist of Abusive Conduct Toward Animals

#### ***Individuals Who Can Provide Information:***

- Teachers (observed behaviors of children around classroom animals)
- Neighbors (neighbors often observe animal abuse and neglect that occurs outdoors)
- Friends
- Animal control and humane society officers (citations for an unlicensed or dangerous dog, neglect, abuse)
- Family members
- Protective Services (adult and child)
- Mental health professionals
- Law enforcement officers
- Veterinarians

#### ***Documented Behaviors of Children:***

- Rough handling of companion animals (throwing, kicking, pulling appendages, pulling out or cutting whiskers)
- Yelling at animals
- Shooting weapons or throwing rocks, etc., at animals
- Trying to run over animals with bicycles or other vehicles
- Stealing pets from neighbors
- Bragging about injuring or killing animals (whether true or not)
- Feeding toxic substances to animals
- Injuring, killing, or attempting to kill animals
- Ritually torturing and/or killing animals
- Using animals to kill other animals
- Leaving companion animals without appropriate food, water, or shelter
- Using companion dogs to fight other dogs or animals
- Killing an animal to rehearse the child's own suicide or homicide
- Killing an animal before an abusive adult can do so
- Abuse-reactive behavior (e.g., repeating their own abuse with an animal)

#### ***Documented Behaviors of Adults:***

- Rough handling of companion animals (throwing, kicking, pulling appendages, pulling out or cutting whiskers)
- Yelling at animals
- Threatening to injure or kill animals in front of children or family members
- Shooting weapons or throwing rocks, etc., at animals
- Trying to run over animals with vehicles
- Stealing pets from neighbors in retaliation for other incidents
- Feeding toxic substances to animals
- Injuring, killing, or attempting to kill animals
- Ritually torturing and/or killing animals (i.e., gang initiation)
- Using animals to kill other animals
- Leaving companion animals without appropriate food, water, or shelter
- Using companion dogs to fight other dogs or animals
- Using companion animals as coercion and control in domestic violence and child abuse scenarios
- Owning a vicious dog

**Gathering Corroborating Evidence:**

- Behavior of companion animals in the home (aggressive, vicious, or cowering)
- Veterinary records (establish a history of abuse or neglect through injuries, malnutrition, emaciation)
- Necropsy reports (if an animal was killed) to determine cause of death and document prior injuries
- Availability of food, water, and shelter for each pet
- Observations by police, animal control officers, or others regarding treatment of pets and attitude of the owner toward the pet
- Prior visits to the house by animal control to check on the welfare of pets
- Complaints by neighbors concerning the welfare of pets
- Prior citations or criminal complaints against the owners for animal-related violations of law