Jail Diversion Programs for Animal Abuse Offenders

Animals & Society Institute
Overview

• Animal Abuse and Antisocial Behavior

• Holding Animal Abusers Accountable and Reducing Recidivism: Challenges and Opportunities

• Diversion Options

• Q & A
About ASI

• Founded in 1983 with a mission to “expand knowledge about human-animal relationships”

• Created AniCare, the first published treatment model for people who have abused animals, and presented the approach to over 1,100 practitioners in 24 states

• Leader in translating research on human-animal interaction into practice and promoting evidence-based approaches that get results.

• Publish two scholarly journals: Society and Animals and Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science (JAAWS)
Animal Abuse and Antisocial Behavior: The Violence Connection

• In a nationally representative sample of 43,093 adults in the U.S., cruelty to animals was significantly associated with all assessed antisocial behaviors (Vaughn et al., 2009).

• Animal abuse is associated with interpersonal violence, including bullying, juvenile delinquency, and adult violent crimes.

• Animal abuse can be a marker of family violence (Ascione et al., 2007; Volant et al., 2008)
Animal Abuse and Antisocial Behavior: The Violence Connection

Massachusetts SPCA study found animal abusers to be:

• 5 times more likely to commit violent crimes against people
• 4 times more likely to commit property crimes
• 3 times more likely to have a record for drug or disorderly conduct offenses

(Luke et al., 1997)
Animal Abuse and Antisocial Behavior: The Violence Connection

Of 236 people arrested for cruelty to animals:

- 55% also arrested for non-animal-related felonies
- 81% had 2 or more crimes in their history
- 69% also arrested for battery of all sorts
- 41% are confirmed gang members

(Chicago Court Advocacy Study, 2009-2012)
Growing Recognition of the Importance of Taking Animal Abuse Seriously

- Research on the relationship between animal abuse and other violence has resulted in law enforcement recognizing animal abuse as a “crime against society.”

- Starting in 2016, the FBI National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) will begin collecting information on reports of animal abuse as well as arrests and convictions.

- NIBRS: Detailed crime statistics that law enforcement agencies nationwide provide to the FBI. The information is critical to informing law enforcement policy and practice.
Holding People who Abuse/Neglect Animals Accountable and Reducing Recidivism

- Misdemeanor animal abuse: Few alternatives to hold perpetrators accountable and reduce the likelihood that they will repeat the behavior

- Most people who have abused/neglected animals receive nothing more than a small fine.

*The result is a GAP in meaningful sentencing alternatives for animal cruelty cases.*
Addressing the Gap

Diversion programs offer a viable option to address this gap and:

• Provide early intervention
• Reduce cruelty to animals and humans
• Reduce recidivism
Three Levels of Diversion Based on Severity of Offense

- **Level I: CARE (Companion Animal Responsibility and Care)**
  - Minimum standards of care and knowledge of companion animals’ basic needs

- **Level II: BARK (Behavior, Accountability, Responsibility, and Knowledge)**
  - Focused on accountability and factors that motivated the abuse or neglect, including attitudes, beliefs, and other risk factors

- **Level III: AniCare**
  - One-on-one psychological intervention focusing on animal abuse and co-occurring issues such as substance abuse, domestic violence, and child abuse
Diversion Program Goals

Short-term

• Increase accountability
• Increase knowledge of animal care and well-being
• Change attitudes and beliefs that support animal abuse
• Improve self-management and interpersonal skills

Medium-term

• Improve behavior: Proper care of animals
• Promote healthy positive relationships with animals

Long-term (and ultimate)

• Decrease recidivism
Diversion Program Logic Model

Intervention

- Accountability:
  - Confronting abuse (#1)
  - Laws and consequences
  - Intergenerational issues (#3)
  - Becoming the victim (#5)
  - No free rides (#7)

- Knowledge:
  - Companion animals’ basic needs
  - Spay/neuter
  - Dangers of chaining, “outdoor” animals
  - Hygiene, grooming and training
  - Health care and common issues
  - Perceptions of animal behavior

- Attitudes and beliefs:
  - Internal beliefs (#2)
  - Social conditions & animal abuse (#4)
  - Abused animal’s perspective (#6)
  - Teaching respect (#8)
  - Infallibility fallacy (#12)

- Addressing other risk factors:
  - Animal abuse and substance abuse (#9)
  - Effects of animal abuse on children (#10)
  - Family hierarchy (#11)
  - Anger control (#13)
  - Animal abuse and self-talk (#14)
  - Stress management (#15)
  - Communication skills (#16)

Outputs

- Number of sessions completed
- Level of engagement in sessions
- Satisfaction with sessions

Short-term outcomes

- Increase accountability

Medium-term outcomes

- Increase knowledge of animal care and well-being

Long-term outcomes

- Improve behavior
  - Proper care of animals
  - Healthy, positive relationships with animals

Decrease recidivism

- Change attitudes and beliefs that support animal maltreatment
- Improve self-management and interpersonal skills
How Does Diversion Work?

• Assignment to diversion program at judges’ discretion based on severity, background, and other relevant factors

• Participants who complete program may have misdemeanor charges dismissed and/or fines reduced

• Participants may be required to complete the program in lieu of jail time (or reduction of jail time)
Program Details: CARE (Level I)

For both juveniles and adults, a single 3-hour session focusing on:

• Knowledge of companion animals’ basic needs
• Minimum standards of care
• Interactive exercises to explore perspectives and to build empathy
Program Details: BARK (Level II, Youth)

- 8 sessions, 2 hours each, attendance twice per week
- Outline:
  - Session 1: Challenging Internal Belief System
  - Session 2: Social Conditions Encouraging Animal Abuse
  - Session 3: Becoming the Victim
  - Session 4: The Abused Animal’s Perspective
  - Session 5: Animal Abuse, Personal Responsibility & Accountability
  - Session 6: Teaching Respect
  - Session 7: Infallibility Fallacy
  - Session 8: Anger Control
Program Details: BARK (Level II, Adults)

- 16 1-2 hour sessions
- Outline:
  - Session 1: Confronting Animal Abusers
  - Session 2: Challenging Internal Belief System
  - Session 3: Establishing Intergenerational Accountability
  - Session 4: Social Conditions Encouraging Animal Abuse
  - Session 5: Becoming the Victim
  - Session 6: The Abused Animal Perspective
  - Session 7: Animal Abuse, Personal Responsibility & Accountability – "No Free Rides"
  - Session 8: Teaching Respect
Program Details: BARK (Level II, Adults)

Outline (cont.):

• Session 9: Animal Abuse and Substance Abuse
• Session 10: Effects of Animal Abuse on Children
• Session 11: Family Hierarchy
• Session 12: Infallibility Fallacy
• Session 13: Anger Control
• Session 14: Animal Abuse and Self Talk
• Session 15: Stress Management
• Session 16: Communication Skills
Program Details: AniCare (Level III, Youth)

• One-on-one therapeutic intervention with mental health professional

• Helps youth develop empathy, self-management skills, and a sense of accountability

• Encourages parental involvement

• Topics addressed may include:
  ✓ Problem solving
  ✓ Frustration management
  ✓ Restructuring attitudes and beliefs about animals, violence
  ✓ Empathy
  ✓ Emotion management
  ✓ Attachment
  ✓ Accountability, especially older children
Program Details: AniCare (Level III, Adults)

- One-on-one therapeutic intervention with mental health professional
- Begins with assessment, including comorbid and co-occurring disorders
- Intervention focused on accountability, empathy, perspective-taking, compassion, interpersonal skills, and animal welfare
- Includes interactive exercises and homework assignments to reinforce sessions
Report to Court

Following an individual’s completion of any of the diversion programs, the Court will receive a report, including:

• Attendance

• Participation

• Transfer of Learning Assessment (includes open-ended questions and pre-post quantitative measures to assess knowledge of and attitudes toward animals)
Q and A

• Our Questions to Help Tailor the Program to Meet Your Needs:
• What kinds of defendants are you encountering?
• Initial assessment – how to determine eligibility?
• Are there defendants who would automatically be disqualified?
• Evaluation/post-implementation results
• Resources required for implementation

• Your Questions for Us!
For more information, please contact Dr. Lisa Lunghofer at lisa.lunghofer@animalsandsociety.org.