

Intervention Programs for Animal Abuse Offenders



Overview

- Animal Abuse and Antisocial Behavior
- Holding Animal Abusers Accountable and Reducing Recidivism: Challenges and Opportunities
- Intervention 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) began 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

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

- Provide early intervention
- Reduce cruelty to animals and humans
- Reduce recidivism



Three Levels of Intervention

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): An Intervention Program for Animal Maltreatment Offenders™
 - 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



Intervention 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

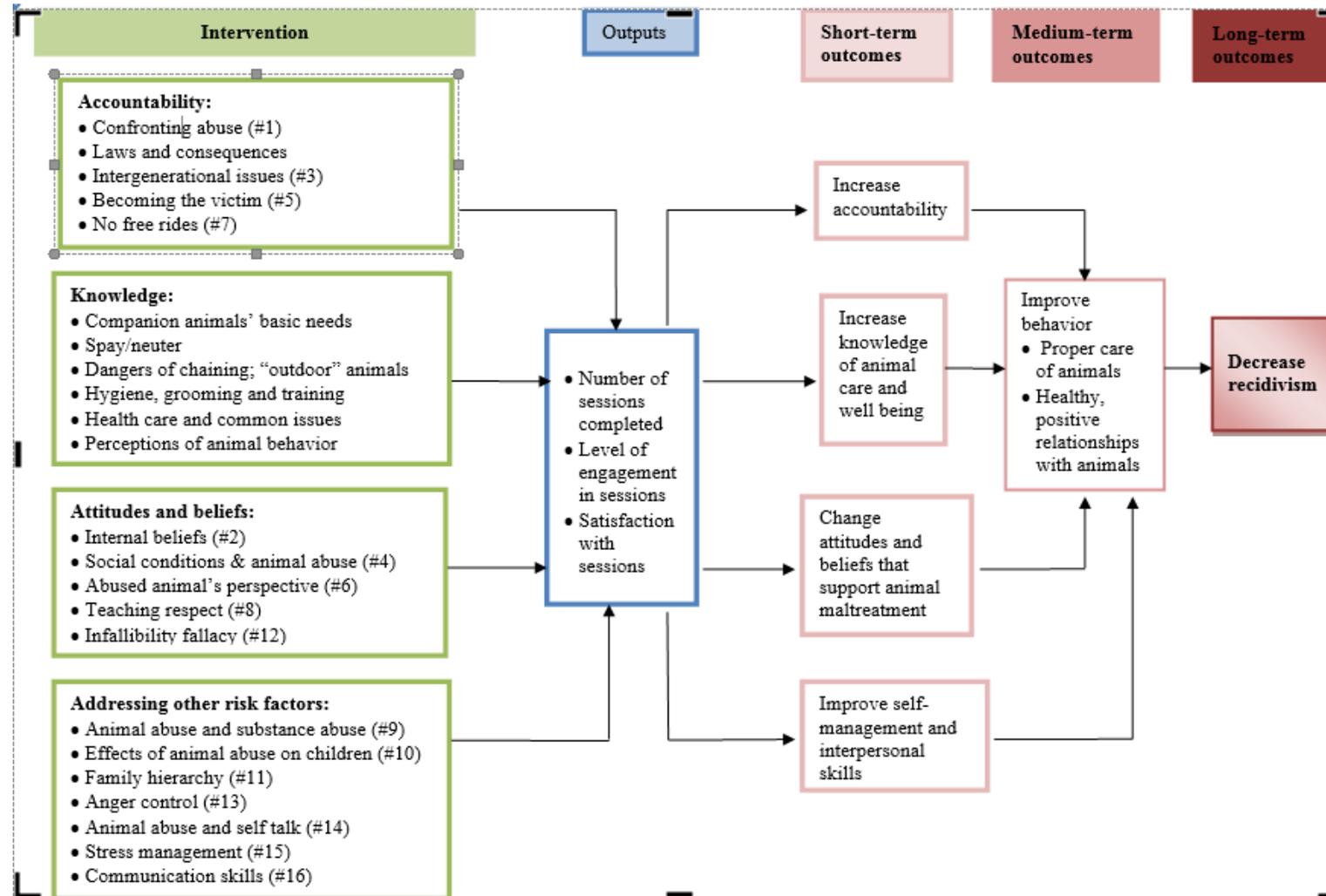
- Improve behavior: Proper care of animals
- Promote healthy positive relationships with animals

Long-term (and ultimate)

- Decrease recidivism



Intervention Program Logic Model



How Does Intervention Work?

- Assignment to an intervention 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 co-morbid 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 intervention 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.

