



# AMERICAN HUMANE

Pets and Women's Shelters (PAWS)<sup>™</sup> Program



Startup Guide

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## Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>The Link Between Violence to People and Violence to Animals</b>	<b>6</b>
The Link Facts and Figures	7
<b>Pets and Women's Shelters (PAWS) Pilot Program</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>The Need for a PAWS Program</b>	<b>8</b>
Emotional Need	8
Local Need	9
<b>Establishing a PAWS Program</b>	<b>10</b>
Make It a Multidisciplinary Team Effort	10
Identify a PAWS Program Director	11
Establish Written Policies and Procedures	11
Types of Pets	11
Location	11
Safety and Security	12
Materials and Supplies	13
Noise	14
Allergies	14
Objections From Other Residents or Staff	14
Cooperation With an Animal Shelter or Animal Rescue Organization	15
Excess Animals	15
Noisy Animals	15
Large/Exotic Animals	15
Aggressive or Stressed Animals	16
Providing Care for the Pets	16
Veterinary Care and Records	17
Abused, Aggressive or Stressed Pets	17

Duration and Cost of Housing Pets	18
Counseling Involving Pets	19
Leaving the Shelter	19
Fundraising	19
Publicity	20
Legal Issues	20
Confidentiality of Location and Identity	20
Court Orders and Pet Protection Orders	20
Custody and Ownership Issues	20
Insurance/Liability for Bites and Other Injuries	22
Kennel License and Special Permits	22
Evaluations	23
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Forms</b>	<b>24</b>
Memorandum of Understanding Between Animal Shelter and PAWS Program	25
Shelter Supply Checklist for PAWS Program	26
PAWS Program Intake Form	27
PAWS Program Agreement Between Resident and Shelter	29
Procedures for Residents With Pets	30
Consent and Release for Boarding at Animal Shelter	31
PAWS Program Extended Care Contract	32
PAWS Program Resident Evaluation	33
<b>References</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Resources</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Appendix - Animal Handling and Safety Tips</b>	<b>37</b>

## Introduction

In their lifetimes, approximately one in four women will be victims of domestic violence<sup>1</sup>. Given that more than 71 million U.S. households include companion animals as pets (APPMA, 2007), it is inevitable that many of those households will experience both domestic violence and animal abuse. In fact, in a study of intentional animal abuse cases, 13 percent involved incidents of domestic violence, 7 percent co-existed with child abuse and 1 percent involved elder abuse (HSUS, 2001).

When domestic violence victims with pets consider fleeing abusive homes and there is no safe place to house their pets, they have little choice but: (1) to remain in their homes and subject themselves, their children and their pets to continued violence, or (2) to flee and leave their pets behind. Because victims understand the extent of the harm that their abusers will likely inflict upon their pets, if left behind, many victims remain in violent relationships.

Currently, numerous programs provide procedures for housing family pets off-site at animal shelters or with animal rescue groups, and many shelters are following such a plan (Ascione, 2000). According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence's *2004 National Directory of Domestic Violence Programs*, more than 700 shelters across the country provide assistance or referrals for placement of pets<sup>2</sup>; however, American Humane is aware of only four shelters that actually provide on-site housing for pets.

Recognizing both the urgent need to protect domestic violence victims from further abuse and the comfort that pets provide people, especially in times of stress and trauma, American Humane is leading a national program to guide domestic and family violence emergency housing shelters toward permitting residents to bring their pets with them. American Humane's Pets and Women's Shelters (PAWS)<sup>TM</sup> Program acknowledges the richness of the bond between people and their pets, which often provide unconditional love and comfort to adult domestic violence victims and their children. For that reason — as well as for the safety of the pets — American Humane strongly advocates keeping domestic violence victims and their pets together whenever possible.

This Startup Guide provides simple, how-to methods for starting a PAWS Program at a domestic violence shelter. In 2008, American Humane hopes to see 15 PAWS Programs launched across the country, with additional programs added in subsequent years.

American Humane envisions a day when no family members, including pets, will be harmed. Until that day comes, implementing a PAWS Program in every domestic violence shelter throughout the United States will help keep people and their pets safe.

*Editor's note: Different organizations use different terms for women who are or who were subjected to domestic abuse — most commonly "victim" and "survivor." In this manual, for the purposes of consistency and clarity for the reader, we use the term "victim" to describe a woman who is in or has left an abusive situation and "resident" to describe a woman who has entered a shelter.*

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1 Although there are instances of women battering men, and cases of domestic violence in gay and lesbian relationships, intimate partner violence overwhelmingly involves men abusing women. For the sake of convenience in this manual, we have assumed that scenario.

2 "Shelter for pets" was defined as "program provides a safe place for the pets of battered women that use their residential services." The directory did not distinguish between on-site housing of pets and off-site housing of pets with an animal shelter or animal welfare organization.

## **The Link<sup>®</sup> Between Violence to People and Violence to Animals**

Research studies have clearly documented that when there is one form of violence in the home, everyone in the home is at risk. Domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse and animal cruelty may co-exist in violent homes, and all of these forms of violence are at national epidemic levels.

The Link between animal cruelty and human violence is an internationally recognized fact (Ascione, in press). Each year, defenseless pets are victims of family violence. Not only are these pets in harm's way, but they may become helpless pawns in the power and control mechanisms abusers use to hurt their victims. Abusers use the killing, torturing and beating of pets — or the threat of such actions — as a weapon to ensure submission and silence by their victims. This causes many victims — adults and children alike — to remain in violent households in order to ensure that their pets are not harmed (Jorgensen & Maloney, 1999; Lembke, 1999; Quinlisk, 1999).

Numerous studies in psychology, sociology and criminology have demonstrated that violent offenders frequently have childhood and adolescent histories of serious and repeated animal cruelty. The FBI has recognized the connection since the 1970s, when its analysis of the lives of serial killers suggested that most had killed or tortured animals as children. Other research has shown consistent patterns of animal cruelty among perpetrators of more common forms of violence, including child abuse, spouse abuse and elder abuse. In fact, the American

Psychiatric Association considers animal cruelty one of the earliest signs and an important diagnostic criterion of conduct disorder (APA, 2000). Children who grow up in an environment of animal cruelty live in constant fear that a beloved family member will be harmed. Children often intervene to protect their family members and pets from being battered. Some children may even allow themselves to be victimized to save their pets from being harmed or killed (Edelson, Mbilinyi, Beeman, & Hagemester, 2003). Over time, these children may become desensitized to the inhumane treatment of animals and people.

In recent years, increased awareness of The Link has resulted in many states enacting laws, and local agencies establishing policies, that coordinate domestic violence and animal protection efforts. These initiatives include cross-reporting laws and interdepartmental cross-training and establishment of protocols among first responders, and new laws that allow pets to be included in domestic violence protective orders. These efforts are providing more protection for victims of violence and their families. However, more can be done to help victims of violence leave abusive homes. Allowing them to leave with their pets is essential. Pets provide emotional support to victims and children leaving their homes, and allowing them to take their pets with them eliminates their need to return to abusive homes to protect their pets from abusers' calculated retaliation.

## The Link — Facts and Figures

- Twelve independent surveys have reported that between 18 percent and 48 percent of battered women have delayed their decision to leave their batterer, or have returned to their batterer, out of fear for the welfare of their pets or livestock (Ascione, 2007).
- In 2004, there were approximately 627,400 incidents of domestic violence (U.S. Dept. of Justice, 2006).
- In 2005, approximately 900,000 children were abused or neglected (U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, 2007).
- More than 71 million homes currently include companion animals (APPMA, 2007).
- 71-85 percent of women entering domestic violence shelters reported that their partner had threatened, injured or killed the family pet (Ascione, Weber, & Wood, 1997).
- One of the first studies to address The Link between child abuse and animal abuse discovered that 88 percent of homes with physically abused children also included abuse or neglect of the family pet (DeViney, Dickert, & Lockwood 1983).
- In a nationwide study, more than 71 percent of battered women reported that their abusers had harmed, killed or threatened animals, and 32 percent reported that their children had harmed or killed animals (Ascione et al., 1997).
- In a study of battered women in several northeastern states, 48 percent of respondents reported that animal abuse had occurred “often” during the past 12 months, and another 30 percent reported that the abuse occurred “almost always.” Types of animal abuse reported included punching, hitting, choking, drowning, shooting, stabbing and throwing the animal against a wall or down stairs. Respondents reported that animal cruelty incidents coincided with violent outbursts against human family members 51 percent of the time (Carlisle-Frank, Frank, & Nielsen, 2006).
- Research has shown that 62-76 percent of animal cruelty in the home occurs in front of children (Faver & Strand, 2003). Children often intervene to protect their mothers and pets from being battered. Some children may even allow themselves to be victimized to save their pets from being harmed or killed (Edelson et al., 2003). Tragically, this behavior is often symptomatic of children's future abuse of people (Boat, 1999).
- Children who are exposed to domestic violence are nearly three times more likely to treat animals with cruelty than children who are not exposed to such violence (Currie, 2006).
- In one study of battered women with children who sought shelter in a safe house, 32 percent reported that their children had hurt or killed a family pet (Ascione, 1998).
- Animal cruelty committed by children is often symptomatic of future abuse toward other animals or people (Boat, 1999): 36.8 percent of boys and 29.4 percent of girls who were victims of physical and sexual abuse and domestic violence have been reported to abuse their family pet (Ascione, 2005).
- Significant research has documented a relationship between childhood histories of animal cruelty and patterns of chronic interpersonal aggression (Kellert & Felthous, 1985; Hensley & Tallichet, 2005; Merz-Perez, Heide, & Silverman, 2001; Becker & French, 2004).

## Pets and Women's Shelters (PAWS)<sup>™</sup> Pilot Program

In May 2007, American Humane partnered with the Doorways for Women and Families shelter in Arlington, Va., to begin a PAWS Program at the shelter's Safehouse. Doorways began renovating part of its site to accommodate on-site housing for companion animals, while American Humane followed the progress. This manual describes and addresses issues and concerns that arose during Doorways' implementation of the PAWS Program.

As part of the pilot program, Doorways re-established a working relationship with the Animal Welfare League of Arlington (AWLA) animal shelter to provide specific guidance on how to properly and humanely house companion animals on-site at the Safehouse. At first, Doorways decided to house smaller pets (e.g., cats, birds, rabbits and small dogs) within each resident's room. AWLA recommended building a secure sheltered kennel area in the backyard of the Safehouse to house larger pets (e.g., dogs, farm animals, etc.) and placing special needs animals (i.e., aggressive or ill pets, exotic pets, animals too large for the outdoor kennel, or a large number of pets that exceeded the space allocated at Doorways) at the AWLA animal shelter so they could receive expert care. During the program, Doorways opted to move any pet that might trigger allergic reactions among residents (primarily cats and small dogs) to the outdoor kennel to avoid allergy issues in the small, four-bedroom Safehouse.

In addition, the Shelter for Abused Women and Children in Naples, Fla. ([www.naplesshelter.org](http://www.naplesshelter.org)), another shelter that currently houses pets on-site, provided valuable information regarding the shelter's procedures and processes for allowing pets on-site.

## The Need for a PAWS Program

A PAWS Program enables more domestic violence victims to leave abusive households without leaving their pets behind and at risk. It also enables the comfort and reassurance that a family pet can provide to adult and child victims during stressful times.

### Emotional Need

The human-animal bond is critical during times of stress and trauma. Studies reported by the American Veterinary Medical Association and the American Animal Hospital Association show the importance of pets in American households, as indicated by the following statistics on pet owners:

- 84 percent acquired their pet mainly for companionship.
- 83 percent refer to themselves as their pet's "mom" or "dad."
- 59 percent celebrate their pet's birthday.
- 90 percent would not consider dating someone who was not fond of their pet.
- 52 percent believe their pet listens to them best.
- 69 percent let their pet break household rules (such as allowing their pet on the bed) when their spouse or significant other is not present.
- 93 percent are likely to risk their own life for their pet.
- 55 percent have an emergency preparedness plan for their pet in case of a disaster.
- 36 percent have named a guardian for their pet (American Animal Hospital Association, 2004; American Veterinary Medical Association, 2005).

The bond between animal and human begins very early in life. Animal images are printed on the bedroom walls, clothing, toys and books of babies and infants. Childhood entertainment and education portray pets and animals as friends, such as Big Bird, Blue's Clues, Clifford The Big Red Dog, Curious George, Garfield,

and pet action heroes such as Lassie, Benji and Underdog. As part of healthy growth and development, bonding with animals and pets teaches children empathy and compassion for other living creatures early in life. Breaking this bond can cause serious emotional difficulties for children and adults, particularly during a time of crisis (Jalongo, 2004; Melson, 2001).

Studies have shown that there are significant similarities between the emotional closeness shared between people and their pets and that shared by people and their closest family members. In one study, one-third of pet owners responded that they felt closer to their dogs than to other family members (Barker & Barker, 1988). Another study found that children are more likely to have pets than they are to have siblings or fathers (Melson, 2001). And more than 75 percent of pet owners say their pet's health is as important to them as their own (Pfizer/Gallup, 1998).

These studies begin to explain why people who are bonded to their companion animals may choose to remain in crisis situations or violent homes in order to keep their pets safe, or why victims delay leaving violent homes until they can take their pets with them. A 1997 survey of five Utah crisis shelters revealed that abused women will hesitate to leave their pets behind in violent homes (Ascione et al., 1997). Although the study focused primarily on the connection between animal abuse, child abuse and domestic violence, it also showed that 25 percent of the women seeking shelter had chosen not to leave their abusive homes because they were concerned about leaving their pets behind. Other studies consistently report that as many as 48 percent of domestic violence victims delay leaving abusive relationships in part due to concern for their pets' welfare (Ascione, 2007).

Other research studies show that pets support the physical and mental health of individuals, particularly during stressful times. Pet ownership provides the owners with cardiovascular and other health benefits, such as: (1) lowering blood pressure, triglycerides and cholesterol; (2) achieving a higher survival rate after myocardial infarction, with pet

owners 8.6 times more likely to be alive one year after the heart attack; (3) lowering stress; (4) improving weight control; (5) experiencing fewer minor health problems; (6) making fewer visits to a doctor; and (7) requiring less medication.

The benefits to mental health have been addressed in relation to childhood development and elderly citizens. For children, studies have shown that pets: (1) benefit childhood development by providing a sense of security and self-esteem to children; (2) allow children to develop trust due to constancy, security, reliability, love and affection; (3) facilitate play, exploration and independence; (4) promote responsibility and nurturing; (5) provide social and emotional support; and (6) provide a positive impact on the lonely, emotionally or physically impaired, and delinquent. For elderly citizens, studies have shown that pets fill a void for lost relationships and can transcend sensory deficits, mental changes and mobility restrictions that can impede human-human relationships (Barker, 1999).

A study in 2002 (Allen, Blascovich, & Mendes) found that, during stressful situations, some people benefit more from a pet's companionship than from a human friend or a spouse. In the study, researchers documented that people see their pets as important sources of non-judgmental social support and significantly helpful in alleviating stress.

### Local Need

Each shelter should assess whether allowing pets on-site would be beneficial to its residents and would assist victims in leaving abusive homes. Shelter officials should ask residents if they would have left their abusive homes sooner if they could bring their pets with them. In addition, shelter officials should ask shelter and emergency hotline staff, local law enforcement and animal welfare officers, and prosecuting attorneys whether they encounter women who wish to leave abusive homes but choose not to due to lack of safe placement for pets. These inquiries will help determine the need in the community and how frequently animals will require housing at the shelter.

## Establishing a PAWS Program

The goal of encouraging PAWS Programs across the country is to enhance the safety of as many victims, children and pets as possible by helping them more easily leave abusive homes. Some shelters are reluctant to allow on-site housing of pets because they fear the process is complicated and costly. Acknowledging that shelter resources are often strained, this manual is intended to alleviate that fear and plainly demonstrate the simplicity of establishing a PAWS Program.

**If you are interested in starting a PAWS Program at your shelter, contact American Humane's Office of Public Policy at (703) 836-PETS (7387) or email [PAWSprogram@americanhumane.org](mailto:PAWSprogram@americanhumane.org) to receive free guidance and technical assistance.**

## Make It a Multidisciplinary Team Effort

When establishing a PAWS Program, your shelter should provide information regarding the existence of the PAWS Program in a timely manner to local law enforcement officers, child protection investigators, animal welfare investigators, health care providers (medical and psychological), counseling centers and hotlines, prosecuting attorneys and veterinarians. This will allow for greater dissemination of information about your program throughout the community and will allow victims to make informed decisions regarding leaving abusive homes if they know their pets will be safely accommodated at your shelter.



## Identify a PAWS Program Director

Each PAWS Program should have one person in charge of overseeing its operation (with delegation of authority, as necessary) to ensure that pet care is maintained on weekends, at night, during holidays and when the pets' owners are not on-site. The PAWS Program Director should keep an inventory of incoming and outgoing pets, manage the kennel or location where pets are housed, ensure that veterinary care is provided when needed, and maintain appropriate supplies and medications for the pets.

The PAWS Program Director should prepare a short list of policies and expectations for each resident who enters the shelter with a pet. The list of rules can be taken from the information contained in this manual, including the Procedures for Residents With Pets, located in the Forms section.

## Establish Written Policies and Procedures

Based on the uniqueness of your shelter and the needs of the residents entering the shelter, preparing your own policies and procedures is recommended for a smoothly operating PAWS Program. This manual should help you prepare simple, effective procedures. Your shelter should establish a policy of formally welcoming pets to the facility when space is available, but retaining the right to deny pets, when necessary, due to overcrowded conditions or if the animal's condition, temperament, behavior or other factors would compromise the health, safety or well-being of the residents or other animals.

**The following procedures address key issues related to housing pets:**

### *Types of Pets*

First decide what types, sizes and number of pets can be accommodated safely on-site, since that decision will determine the types of accommodations required.

For animals that cannot be accommodated in the on-site PAWS Program, your shelter should

establish a relationship with a local animal shelter or rescue group to provide temporary housing. Such agencies need to be prepared for foster care scenarios that could last many months. An excellent resource describing these programs is American Humane's *Operational Guide for Animal Care and Control Agencies: Handling the Pets of Domestic Violence Victims* (1998). An informal memorandum of understanding (MOU) is located in the Forms section of this manual to assist in establishing an off-site foster housing agreement.

To date, the Naples shelter has accepted all animals that arrive, including large dogs, cats, rabbits, birds and reptiles. If a pet's care requirements exceed the shelter staff's abilities, or if the pet is aggressive or frightened, the local animal shelter is on standby to accept the animal and provide care. Similarly, the Doorways shelter has an MOU with the Animal Welfare League of Arlington to provide housing, if space is available, for any pets that cannot be accommodated at the shelter.

Since animal shelters may have no vacancies during certain times of the year, it is advisable to have an MOU with two or more shelters or animal rescue groups that can provide housing.

### *Location*

After deciding the types, sizes and number of pets your shelter will accommodate on-site, you must decide how to accommodate them. We recommend three methods for housing pets on-site:

**Option 1:** Locate a separate room within the shelter that can safely house the animals in separate cages or crates. This option significantly reduces potential issues with allergies and noise. Depending on the size of the shelter, the separate room may be placed far from resident rooms. For example, the Naples shelter's on-site

kennel is in a room on the opposite side of the large shelter and away from any of the individual residential rooms. The kennel room has its own air ventilation and filtration system to avoid allergy contamination outside of the room. It houses up to six animals and has a door to an outside area for a dog run.

**Option 2:** Allow residents to house smaller, non-allergenic pets within their rooms and have the residents be responsible for their own pets' care. Each resident must agree to not let their pets roam free or disturb other residents and/or pets. Each pet in this situation must be in a carrier or on a leash when it is escorted in and out of the residential room. This option may be particularly well-suited for birds, fish and small "pocket pets" (hamsters, rabbits, gerbils, guinea pigs, etc.) that do not need to leave the immediate area. This option can be used in association with Options 1 or 3, for on-site housing of larger pets, or it can be used separately if larger pets will be housed off-site in a local animal shelter.

**Option 3:** Provide secure and sheltered housing directly on the shelter property. Sheltered chain-link kennels or a small building or shed on the shelter property can accommodate larger animals.

Heating and cooling options must be considered when housing pets outside. The Doorways shelter has opted to modify a pre-built shed and place large animal crates within the shed. The shed is being wired with electricity for lighting, heating and cooling.

Shelters may incorporate some or all of these options depending on space allocated for their PAWS Program. Regardless of the type of on-site program instituted, shelters should require residents to provide all care for their own pets, including feeding, exercise, cleaning, allocation of medications and TLC. An area where food and water bowls and crates may be washed, and where pets may be groomed, should be available. Each program should also provide an outdoor "run" area, particularly for dogs, that allows for animals to urinate and defecate in a specified area to avoid complications with animal waste. Additionally, this area can be covered with pebble-like material that can be sanitized using a bleach solution.

### *Safety and Security*

Your shelter should take into consideration the safety of its residents who may have to walk, exercise or



On-site pet room at the Shelter for Abused Women and Children in Naples, Fla.

otherwise leave the property with their pets. Safety plans and protocols should be implemented to make sure that all shelter staff, residents and pets are safe during those times. This is especially important for facilities located in urban areas, where an on-site yard may not be available.

Your shelter also should establish security protocols to limit access to the on-site animal room or animal-sheltering facility to only those residents who have pets there.

### *Materials and Supplies*

Regardless of which option you choose for the location of the pets, the following supplies should be kept in stock if you will allow cats and dogs:

- Dry and canned dog and puppy food
- Dry and canned cat and kitten food
- Kitten and puppy formula
- Formula bottles
- Cat litter
- Litter boxes and scoopers
- Metal food and water bowls that secure to the door of the crate or kennel
- Collars and leashes
- ID tags
- Chew toys
- Cat toys
- Cleaning solution for the cages, crates or kennels. (Check with your local veterinarian or animal shelter on what types of cleaning solutions are safe to use.)
- Towels, blankets and other soft items for pets to lie on
- Medical supplies (as recommended by a veterinarian) such as flea and parasite medicine and grooming products

Bulk food should be stored in sealed, dry containers or on elevated pallets to prevent infestation by vermin.

Many of the items listed above can be obtained at no cost through donations from community members. (See the Fundraising section of this manual.) Local animal shelters, breed rescue groups, veterinarians and boarding kennels also may be willing to donate these supplies and assist with planning and implementing a PAWS Program. In addition, some residents may arrive at the shelter with supplies for their pets.

Depending on which housing option you select, these additional materials should be obtained:

**Option 1:** When housing pets confined together in a separate room, each pet must be contained in its own cage or crate. Ideally, there should be a partition to keep dogs and cats out of sight of each other. Allow for sufficient space in the room to accommodate three to four visitors, a table on which a veterinarian can examine an animal outside of the cage/crate, and storage cabinets for storing medical supplies, food, bowls and litter. The Naples shelter placed six extra-large plastic dog crates in its room by placing three crates side by side on the ground and stacking a second row of three crates on top of them. The crates were large enough to hold any pet up to approximately 50 pounds. Your shelter should regulate and mandate times and frequency that pets are removed from their crates for exercise and waste elimination.

**Option 2:** For pets being housed in residential rooms, sufficient supplies appropriate for the types of pets allowed in the shelter should be stocked.

**Option 3:** For a secure and sheltered outdoor kennel, consult with your local animal shelter and state regulatory agency to ensure that each kennel is of sufficient height, width and length.

Floors must be of concrete or dirt and there must be a barrier between cages. A roof should also be included to prevent pets from escaping or being stolen, and to protect pets from the weather. Each kennel should have a secure lock to avoid theft or tampering with the animals. In climates that experience excessive heat or cold, each kennel should include a separate traditional doghouse, airline crate or other enclosed area which the pet can enter for added security and shelter. Heating and cooling dog mats, which can be purchased in many pet stores and on the Internet, also should be used. Another option is to purchase a pre-built building or shed that can house extra-large dog crates or fenced kennels to separate each animal. The building must have adequate heating, cooling and ventilation, as well as facilities for daily cleaning and sanitation of the kennels by the residents or, in their absence, assigned staff or volunteers.

### *Noise*

When housing pets on-site at a shelter, whether inside or outside, there are bound to be instances of barking, meowing, chirping or other natural noises. If the pets are kept in a separate room within the shelter, choosing a room that is the farthest away from the sleeping quarters will help reduce noise. If pets stay in their families' rooms, advising the families to do their best to calm their pets and reduce noise is recommended. And for pets housed outdoors, placing the outdoor kennels or shed in a location farthest away from the residences on the property will help in reducing noise from stressed pets. However, if an animal becomes too vocal and disruptive, and the family is unable to calm the pet, it is recommended that your shelter contact its partner animal shelter/rescue organization to provide housing for the pet.

It may be necessary to discuss your planned PAWS Program with neighbors who may be adversely affected by animal noises (and odors and waste), and with municipal zoning officials to determine whether special kennel permits are required.

### *Allergies*

Pet-related allergies are common, and you should anticipate that residents will have allergies to a variety of pets. The shelter intake form should ask every resident to identify any pet allergies they have. This may help with placement of pet-allergy residents in rooms farthest away from rooms with pets. Options 1 and 3 are the best ways to avoid allergy issues. If housing pets in a separate room inside the shelter (Option 1), be sure to have a separate heating/cooling/ventilation system so that pet hair and dander do not enter the main residential ventilation system.

### *Objections From Other Residents or Staff*

If a shelter resident objects to having other residents' pets located on-site, inquiring into the reasons for the objection may allow for a discussion to address and ease the resident's concerns. Advising the resident of the importance of keeping pets safe from an abusive partner may provide for education on The Link and gain acceptance by the resident. The discussion may also reveal that the resident had a beloved pet threatened, killed or harmed in the past. Obtaining this information may allow for a referral to appropriate counseling for the resident.

It is important that the PAWS Program Director obtain agreement or understanding from all staff about the importance of the program before implementing it. Staff at the Naples shelter overwhelmingly embraced housing pets on-site and often can be found providing comfort and care to the pets located in the indoor kennel.



### **Cooperation With an Animal Shelter or Animal Rescue Organization**

The purpose of the PAWS Program is to house family pets on-site at your shelter in order to maintain the human-animal bond during a time of crisis. In addition to asking animal shelters and breed-specific rescue organizations to provide guidance to you on animal housing issues, collaborating with your local animal shelter or an animal rescue organization can be especially helpful to the program when the following situations arise:

#### *Excess Animals*

There may be times when a resident has more pets than can be safely housed on-site, or your shelter is at maximum pet capacity and cannot accommodate new arrivals. In these situations, it is best to work with the resident to determine which pets would do best in off-site housing at a

local animal shelter or in foster care with a rescue organization, and which pets need to stay on-site with the resident due to fright or attachment issues.

#### *Noisy Animals*

If an animal becomes too vocal and disruptive through excessive barking, meowing, chirping, etc., and the family is unable to calm the pet, you should contact an animal shelter or rescue organization to provide temporary housing for the pet.

#### *Large/Exotic Animals*

As mentioned previously, under Types of Pets, you should determine the maximum size animal that can be accommodated on-site, as well as which species you will allow. Your PAWS Program may be unable to properly house and care for exotic



Naples shelter staff member with a resident cat.

pets, such as reptiles and snakes, or large animals, such as goats, pigs and horses. For animals that are not suitable for housing on-site, make sure you have alternative housing predetermined.

### *Aggressive or Stressed Animals*

If an animal that is aggressive or stressed (due to the change in environment or possible abuse) arrives at your shelter, you should ask your partner animal shelter or animal rescue group to assist with housing and care while the animal transitions out of the abusive environment. Shelter and rescue group personnel are trained to effectively handle and work with these pets to ensure their comfort. Similarly, long-term confinement in small quarters can induce stress in pets, and these personnel may recommend behavior counselors who can assist in addressing the problem.

An MOU is recommended when establishing a relationship with an animal shelter or rescue organization

to house large pets, exotic animals or excess pets that cannot be housed on-site. For a sample MOU, please see the Forms section.

### **Providing Care for the Pets**

We recommend that residents provide the day-to-day care for their own pets. They know their pets and can provide greater comfort and stability to confused or stressed pets during the transition to a new home. Whether the pets are housed inside or outside, each resident should be given guidelines on what is expected of them in order for their pets to remain on-site. These guidelines and responsibilities should include: providing food and water, cleaning the cage or kennel regularly, providing any medication, cleaning the litter box daily, walking the dog in a safe area designated by shelter staff and cleaning up after it, and notifying shelter staff if a pet needs veterinary care. These procedures should be provided and agreed to by each resident upon intake. A sample Procedure for Residents With Pets is provided in the Forms section. In addition, the Appendix contains Animal Handling and Safety Tips for shelter staff and residents.

## Veterinary Care and Records

Your shelter's PAWS Program should establish a relationship with a licensed veterinarian to help establish and maintain the program, to serve as a resource for consulting, and to provide routine and emergency medical care to any pets housed on-site. The veterinarian may provide some of the services pro bono or at low cost.

When examinations or treatments are needed, the veterinarian may visit your shelter, or arrangements should be made to transport pets to the veterinarian's office. The veterinarian must be apprised not only of the pets' medical conditions and histories, but also of the need to keep your shelter's location and the names of its residents confidential.

The reasons for having a veterinarian available include: (1) to provide an initial examination of each pet to determine whether the animal has been abused or neglected (even if the injuries are in the healing process); (2) to provide general medical care to the pets, including updating vaccinations, providing flea/parasite treatments and spaying/neutering; (3) to provide emergency care to pets suffering from illness or injury that may require surgery or other immediate attention; and (4) to provide expert testimony in court should the need arise to verify animal cruelty.

To find a veterinarian who will provide assistance to your PAWS Program, contact local veterinarians or the state or county veterinary medical association, advise the veterinarian of the PAWS Program, and ask for pro bono or low-cost assistance. Providing the veterinarian a copy of this manual will help educate him or her regarding the importance of the PAWS Program in saving lives.

The Naples shelter located a volunteer veterinarian through a fundraising event. The veterinarian is on call to visit the shelter if a pet needs immediate care. Otherwise, the veterinarian visits the shelter at least once a week to examine each pet and to provide basic vaccinations. The services provided on-site at the Naples shelter are free of charge, including supplies used (vaccines, medicine, etc.). Those

services can include a medical examination, vaccinations, flea/parasite treatment, cleaning and grooming. If a pet needs spaying or neutering, which is highly recommended, it is transported to the veterinarian's office, and the shelter pays a small fee for the procedure. If a pet requires immediate attention for injuries or ill health, it is transported to the veterinarian's office, and the resident is charged a reduced rate for the services. The Naples shelter pays for these additional expenses, on behalf of the shelter resident, through money donated or raised specifically to support its program of housing animals.

Your shelter's PAWS Program should request that each resident provide a current set of veterinary records for each pet prior to or shortly after moving in, to verify the health and vaccinations of all pets. Your shelter's veterinarian also may need to contact a pet's regular veterinarian and obtain its medical records. Your shelter's veterinarian should provide each family a record of each pet's services.

Your shelter should determine whether it will enact a rule that any veterinary records (past and present) may be provided by the shelter staff to law enforcement investigators or the prosecutor's office. This may assist in proving the evidence in cases where animal cruelty charges are being considered against the abusive person. However, your shelter should decide if this protocol is in the best interest of the families and in compliance with state laws and confidentiality agreements with the residents.

## Abused, Aggressive or Stressed Pets

Any pet arriving at a PAWS Program shelter may be under stress from living in an abusive home. Moving the pet out of its abusive environment is certainly beneficial, but can cause the animal some initial stress. In addition, some pets may be conditioned to behave more aggressively based on an abusive partner's cruel treatment or the home environment. When taking in pets, your shelter should ask the residents to provide detailed information regarding all of their pets, including behavior, temperament



and how the pets may react to being at the shelter. This information will be helpful in determining whether a pet will be better cared for at a partner animal shelter or rescue organization, where the staff is trained to handle stressed and/or aggressive pets and can work to calm the pet.

If a pet is checked into the PAWS Program and subsequently is determined to be too stressed or upset for safe handling, then a transfer to a partner animal shelter may be in the best interests of the pet. At no time should a staff member attempt to calm a stressed pet unless the staff member is trained in animal handling and/or attempts this through a kennel or cage door that provides protection from bites and scratches. When in doubt, contact the resident owner of the pet and your partner animal shelter for assistance.

### **Duration and Cost of Housing Pets**

We encourage shelters to provide on-site housing of pets at no cost to residents. Each PAWS Program shelter should coordinate the pets' length of stay with the length of stay for the pets' family members. Assisting families in transitioning to pet-friendly housing will help them keep their pets with them after leaving the shelter.

Situations in which families leave your shelter but request that their pets remain behind should be handled on a case-by-case basis, since numerous factors may be involved. In such cases, you should have the outgoing residents sign an Extended Care Contract (see the Forms section) that outlines their obligations and specifies the extended length of stay for their pets. Generally, extended care should be provided only in situations where families have moved to temporary housing that does not allow pets, while the families receive assistance in finding pet-friendly housing.

### **Counseling Involving Pets**

Shelter staff may encounter residents who have witnessed animals being abused, tortured or killed by an abusive partner or other party. Witnessing such acts against helpless animals can cause significant trauma and psychological damage to both adults and children. Even residents who were able to rescue their pets from abusive homes may have residual issues from having witnessed past abuse. This is especially true for children. We recommend that a trained pet bereavement counselor be available to provide support for families as necessary. Any counseling services provided to residents should incorporate sensitivity to the human-animal bond.

### **Leaving the Shelter**

When a resident's permitted stay at your shelter has ended, or when the resident is ready to leave, the goal is to have the resident find long-term, safe housing. Since most shelters provide housing assistance, your shelter should also identify available pet-friendly housing so that outgoing residents can continue to be with and care for their pets. Developing a list of potential pet-friendly housing options in the community is an excellent partnering opportunity for shelters and animal welfare groups.

However, situations arise where a resident returns to an abusive partner. Given that children and pets may be returned to an environment known to be abusive, your shelter should follow existing protocols in this regard. Some protocols or state laws may call for notifying child protective services that a child may be returning to a dangerous home. If that is the case, then local animal welfare agencies should be notified if a pet is being returned to an abusive home. An option to consider is asking the resident if she will sign over ownership of her pet to your shelter's PAWS Program, which can then place the pet with its partner animal shelter or rescue group for placement in a new home.

In some situations, residents may simply leave your shelter without taking their pets. If a pet is abandoned with your shelter's PAWS Program, you should check with your partner animal shelter on pet abandonment laws to determine when the pet may be placed for adoption (or otherwise dispositioned) through the animal shelter or a rescue group. The Agreement Between Resident and Shelter (located in the Forms section), signed by the resident at the time of intake, addresses this issue.

### **Fundraising**

The costs associated with implementing, equipping and sustaining a PAWS Program will vary according to the type of housing provided, the number of pets housed on-site and the length of stay.

Doorways received a startup grant from American Humane to build an outdoor shelter in the facility's backyard. Doorways plans to finance the ongoing upkeep of the program through traditional fundraising efforts that promote the PAWS Program in the community, as well as seeking individual and corporate donors who are interested in animal welfare. Other sources of support include community foundations and donors who care about women's issues, child abuse and domestic violence prevention.

The director of the Naples shelter estimates that the total cost of housing pets on-site is no more than \$1,000 per year, and the program is entirely funded from donations of money and supplies. The shelter uses a "Giving Tree" fundraiser — the tree is adorned with paper ornaments listing small items that can be purchased with a donation. The tree is taken to various fundraising and outreach events, including schools, which gets students involved.

## Publicity

Your shelter should determine whether general publicity for your PAWS Program is warranted, due to the confidential location of your shelter. Advising the public of the PAWS Program, without revealing the location, will make more victims aware of your program and may result in empowering them to leave abusive homes due to the on-site pet policy.

Information regarding the existence of your PAWS Program should be provided to local law enforcement, social workers, domestic violence professionals, animal welfare investigators, prosecuting attorneys and veterinarians, who can assist in informing victims who need help leaving abusive homes. Many shelters have a brochure that law enforcement and other first responders can give to victims who are considering leaving abusive homes. If your shelter has such a brochure, placing information about the PAWS Program in it will ensure that information regarding pet-friendly shelter policies is provided to victims who have been hesitant to leave abusive homes for fear of leaving their pets behind.

## Legal Issues

Before accepting pets on-site, your shelter should be aware of some common legal issues that may arise. We recommend that your PAWS Program Director consult with an attorney regarding your state and local laws; however, no legal issue is insurmountable, and it should not create apprehension in starting a PAWS Program. Following are some of the more common legal issues that a PAWS Program may encounter.

## *Confidentiality of Location and Identity*

A shelter's location is generally kept confidential to prevent abusive partners from locating the residents. Accepting a family pet on-site as part of the PAWS Program should not impact that confidentiality. The location of the entire family, including the pet, should never be disclosed to outside sources. If a pet must be transferred to an animal shelter or rescue organization for off-site housing, the family's identity and location should also be kept confidential. An agreement to protect that information can be formalized in an MOU or confidentiality agreement with the animal shelter or rescue organization, since there may be no legal duty to disclose the presence of a pet that is under the protection of a family violence shelter.

## *Court Orders and Pet Protection Orders*

If a court has included a pet in a domestic violence protection order<sup>3</sup> or in a divorce or separation agreement, your shelter should ask the resident to provide a copy of the order. This will help alleviate any issues concerning custody of the pet. This information should be made available to all professionals who come in contact with the pet.

For guidelines regarding pets in domestic violence protection orders, email [publicpolicy@americanhumane.org](mailto:publicpolicy@americanhumane.org) to request a copy of *Expanding Protective Orders to Include Companion Animals* by Phil Arkow and Tracy Coppola of American Humane.

## *Custody and Ownership Issues*

A frequent concern of shelter staff and residents involves the true ownership or custody of a family pet. When a

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<sup>3</sup> As of this writing, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Maine, Nevada, New York, Tennessee and Vermont have enacted pet protection order laws. However, a court may be requested to include a pet in a protection order even in the absence of laws that allow the protection.

pet has resided in the home of the victim and the abuser, how can you determine who should legally have possession of the pet? This issue should only arise when the abusive partner demands the return of the pet, and this would only occur if the location of the resident and pet has been disclosed to the abusive partner, or if the abusive partner makes a demand in court. Each state's laws are different, and it can be difficult to determine the ownership of a pet, since most animals are considered property. Here are a few guidelines to help determine ownership:

- Is there a pet protection order, divorce/separation order or other court order that designates ownership and custody of the pet? Some initial separation orders prohibit the parties from moving any family members or assets (which could include children and pets) until final settlement.
- Ask the shelter resident to bring any evidence of pet ownership and care when entering the shelter. For instance, an adoption or purchase bill of sale, veterinary records listing the resident as the primary caretaker and/or individual who paid veterinary bills, adoption paperwork listing the resident as the adopter, and licensing paperwork (such as dog or cat licenses, rabies vaccination certificates, microchip registration, etc.) in the name of the resident.
- Check with the family veterinarian to determine who brought the pet for checkups and treatment. This information helps demonstrate who the primary caretaker of the pet was.
- A novel legal argument that has been used is the "possessory interest" or "right of possession" argument. The resident who currently has the pet can argue the present right to control the



property (i.e., the pet) in spite of a claim of ownership by the abuser. In support of this, at least one court has held that one party of a divorcing couple cannot ask a court to enforce a contract regarding shared possession of a dog, since pets are property and property cannot be the subject of joint possession (DeSanctis v. Pritchard, 2002).

If a scenario occurs where the true ownership is in dispute, we recommend consulting with a local attorney before returning the pet to the abusive home. There have been instances where the shelter resident took the abuser's pet but had no legal claim to the pet, the pet was a valuable breeding pet and both parties had joint commercial interest in the pet, or some other claim was made by the abusive partner.

#### *Insurance/Liability for Bites and Other Injuries*

Consult with your shelter's liability insurance carrier to determine if the

existing policy will cover residents and staff who are injured (e.g., bites, severe allergic reactions, etc.) by pets housed on-site. In most instances, your shelter may need to add an insurance rider to the policy to address pets on the property. Another option is to have residents with pets sign a waiver of liability for any injuries received at your shelter, and a waiver absolving your shelter from claims should the pet escape or inadvertently be harmed.

#### *Kennel License and Special Permits*

Consult your local zoning and licensing department to determine if a special license is needed to house pets on-site and whether a special permit is needed to built outdoor kennels, if that option is preferred. The Doorways shelter was not required to obtain a kennel license, provided no more than three dogs are housed on-site at any time. (There was no limit on the number of cats.) If more than three dogs need to be housed, the shelter has an agreement with the AWLA animal shelter to see if it can accommodate the extra dogs.



## Evaluations

To ensure ongoing success, your staff should continually evaluate your shelter's PAWS Program, including its successes and struggles, as well as seek feedback from residents who participated in it. Factors to consider might include:

- How many pets participated in the PAWS Program (both on-site and off-site)?
- How many total days did the PAWS Program house pets?
- Were there sufficient supplies for the pets?
- What obstacles were encountered?
- Were the residents satisfied with the PAWS Program?
- Were there any problems with off-site placement of pets with a partner animal shelter?
- What, if any, legal issues arose?
- How does the shelter staff feel about the PAWS Program?
- What is the community reaction to the PAWS Program?
- Are there sufficient funds to maintain the PAWS Program?

## Conclusion

The PAWS Program acknowledges the tragic link between human violence and animal cruelty, as well as the therapeutic bond pets can provide to people who have endured trauma and violence. American Humane encourages all domestic and family violence shelters across the country to take serious steps toward implementing a PAWS Program.

**American Humane is available to provide technical assistance and guidance, at no cost, to help shelters implement a PAWS Program. Please contact American Humane at (703) 836-PETS (7387) or email [PAWSprogram@americanhumane.org](mailto:PAWSprogram@americanhumane.org).**

## Forms

The following forms have been prepared as guidance to help your shelter establish a PAWS Program. These forms should be tailored to comply with your state/local laws and to complement procedures in place at your shelter. You may wish to remove specific sections that are irrelevant to your shelter's practices, and add provisions to help your shelter implement an effective PAWS Program. Some forms and questions may be more suited for subsequent interactions outside the shelter intake process. Please follow your shelter's established documentation procedures in regard to these forms.

- Memorandum of Understanding Between Animal Shelter and PAWS Program
- Shelter Supply Checklist for PAWS Program
- PAWS Program Intake Form
- PAWS Program Agreement Between Resident and Shelter
- Procedures for Residents With Pets
- Consent and Release for Boarding at Animal Shelter
- PAWS Program Extended Care Contract
- PAWS Program Resident Evaluation

## Memorandum of Understanding Between Animal Shelter and [Domestic Violence Shelter] PAWS Program

[Animal Shelter] (“Shelter”) and [Domestic Violence Shelter] Pets and Women’s Shelters (PAWS) Program (“PAWS Program”) enter into this memorandum of understanding (MOU) concerning the boarding of companion animals of residents currently staying at [Domestic Violence Shelter]. This agreement is contingent on available space at Shelter.

Shelter agrees to care for pets that the PAWS Program is unable to house on-site. The PAWS Program may transfer animals to Shelter due to lack of space in the PAWS Program, and specialized needs of frightened/aggressive or larger animals.

During the pets’ stay at Shelter, the following care will be provided at no cost to the PAWS Program:

- Clean cage and fresh water daily or as needed.
- Feed major-brand pet food as provided to other shelter animals. Provide a special diet on request and at the expense of the owner (or food provided by the owner).
- Dog walking when staff is available.
- If the pet requires emergency medical care, such as casting broken bones, X-rays, treatment of burns or lacerations, etc., the services will be provided and billed by the attending veterinarian to the owner according to Shelter’s fee schedule.
- Preventive vaccinations if the pet is not up-to-date, including:
  - Dogs and cats 4 months of age and older must be current on a rabies inoculation and, if not current, the owner is responsible for Shelter’s actual cost of providing the inoculation.
  - Dogs must be current on their distemper, parvovirus and coronavirus vaccination and kennel cough vaccination and, if not current, the owner is responsible for Shelter’s actual cost of providing the vaccinations.
  - Cats 8 weeks of age and older must be current on their FVCRP vaccination and, if not current, the owner is responsible for Shelter’s actual cost of providing the vaccination.
  - For security reasons, residents may not visit their pets at Shelter, but they may call to check on their pets during office hours.

The PAWS Program will have the pet owner execute a Consent and Release form before the pet is transferred to Shelter. The original will be kept on file at Shelter with a copy on file at [Domestic Violence Shelter].

This MOU will continue at the agreement of both parties and may be cancelled by either party in writing at any time.

[Animal Shelter]

[Domestic Violence Shelter]

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Animal Shelter staff signature and date

PAWS Program Director signature and date

## Shelter Supply Checklist for PAWS Program

- Cat litter
- Litter boxes
- Litter scoopers
- Litter disposal bags
- Dog food
- Puppy food
- Cat food
- Kitten food
- Dog leashes
- Crates and portable carriers
- Towels and/or blankets for crates
- Cleaning supplies (check with your local veterinarian or animal shelter on what types of cleaning solutions are safe to use)
- Emergency medical supply kit

## **[Domestic Violence Shelter] PAWS Program Intake Form**

The questions on this Intake Form are intended to help us better care for you, your children and your pets while you reside at the shelter. This information is not intended to be shared with outside individuals.

Name of Resident: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Pet	Species	Breed	Gender	Spayed/Neutered?	Age
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\_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact Name/Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Veterinarian Name/Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Admission: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you arriving at the shelter with any children? Yes No

Did your abusive partner threaten your pets? Yes No

If yes, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If yes, how has this impacted your pets' behavior? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Did your abusive partner harm your pets? Yes No

If yes, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If yes, how has this impacted your pets' behavior? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Are your pets' vaccinations current? Yes No

If no, list the vaccinations that need updating: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Have your cats been tested for feline leukemia and FIV? Yes No

Results and date: \_\_\_\_\_

Have your dogs been tested for heartworm? Yes No

Results and date: \_\_\_\_\_

List any behavior issues with your pets (i.e., excessive noise, aggression, fearful of strangers, separation anxiety, etc.):

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

Do your pets have any medical conditions? Yes No

If yes, please describe the ailments and current treatment: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How have your pets been housed at your home (i.e., crate-trained, indoor/outdoor pets, outdoor only pets, etc.)?

\_\_\_\_\_

Have your pets received flea/tick prevention treatment? Yes No

Are your pets house-trained/litter-box trained? Yes No

If no, describe what accommodations are needed: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Have your pets bitten anyone? Yes No

If yes, describe the circumstances: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Have you brought your pets' food, collars, litter box and/or medication with you? Yes No

If no, what supplies can we provide during your stay? \_\_\_\_\_

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

## PAWS Program Agreement Between Resident and Shelter

Name of Resident: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact Name/Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Veterinarian Name/Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Admission: \_\_\_\_\_

Anticipated Length of Housing of Pets: \_\_\_\_\_

The [**Domestic Violence Shelter**] PAWS Program ("Shelter") agrees to accept from the above-named shelter resident ("Resident") the following pets into the Shelter for safe housing:

Pet Name	Species/Breed	Age	Gender	Vaccinated?
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

The pets listed above are allowed to stay at no cost at the shelter for \_\_\_\_ days or until Resident has obtained pet-friendly housing. Vaccinations and a medical examination will be provided to Resident's pets free of charge during Resident's stay. If Resident's pets require immediate medical care upon entry to the Shelter, or during their stay, due to injury or illness, Resident will be responsible for the cost of services that the Shelter veterinarian will provide. ***Please be advised that, due to mandated reporting laws, any veterinary records provided or produced as a result of Resident's pet staying at the Shelter may be provided to law enforcement or to the prosecutor's office for use in court, if animal cruelty charges arise.***

In exchange for Shelter providing care to Resident's pet, Resident agrees to release and discharge Shelter and the PAWS Program, its successors and assigns from any and all actions, causes of action, claims and demands for, upon or by reason of any damages, loss or injury which may be sustained in consequence of the receipt of boarding and medical services under this program. This release extends and applies to all unknown, unforeseen, unanticipated and unsuspected injuries, damages, loss and liability and the consequences of them. This release, however, does not extend to violations of the law and any injuries or suffering Resident's pet receives as a direct consequence of a violation of law.

Resident has received, read and agreed to comply with Shelter's "Procedures for Residents with Pets."

\_\_\_\_\_  
Shelter Resident signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
PAWS Program Director signature Date

## Procedures for Residents With Pets

Please remember that the safe housing of your pet through the PAWS Program is a privilege, and not a right, so please adhere to these procedures during your stay:

- Be respectful of other residents, who may not welcome the presence of a family pet or may have allergies to your pet. Therefore, please keep your pet in your designated room or designated kennel area in the shelter.
- Attend to the care of your pet each day. This includes providing appropriate food, water, exercise, scooping/changing of litter, and playtime.
- If your pet frequently barks, meows, chirps, etc., at a noise level that can be heard outside your room, please advise staff upon your entry to the shelter so that appropriate accommodations can be made to avoid disturbing other residents.
- Clean up any messes or accidents that your pet has while inside the shelter.
- If your pet requires immediate medical care upon entry to the shelter or during your pet's stay at the shelter, notify a staff member immediately. You will be responsible for the cost of any extraordinary medical care that the shelter veterinarian provides. We have secured low-cost and reasonable rates from our veterinarian to help reduce your financial burden during transition.
- Supervise your children around all pets housed at the shelter.
- Provide a copy of each pet's current vaccination records when checking in to the shelter or within 48 hours of arrival. If your pet is not current on vaccinations, the shelter veterinarian will provide vaccinations at no cost or for a reduced fee.
- Upon ending your stay at the shelter, you must take your pet with you or sign a PAWS Program Extended Care Contract for the continued boarding of your pet at the shelter while you find pet-friendly housing. If you leave your pet behind and fail to make arrangements with the PAWS Program for extended care, you agree that the pet has been relinquished and the PAWS Program may place the pet for adoption or other disposition with a local animal shelter or animal rescue organization and that you forfeit all legal rights to the pet.

If you violate any of these procedures during your stay, the shelter has the right to require you to find alternative placement for your pet.

## Consent and Release for Boarding at [Animal Shelter]

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number Where We Can Contact You: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact Name/Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Pet Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Species/Breed: \_\_\_\_\_ Color: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Weight: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Needs: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Last Vaccinations: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Veterinarian Name/Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Date That Pet Will Be Retrieved by the Owner: \_\_\_\_\_

I am the owner, or agent for the owner, of the animal listed above and have the authority to give this consent. I understand that my pet will be cared for at [Animal Shelter] so long as I am a resident at [Domestic Violence Shelter]. When I leave [Domestic Violence Shelter], I must make arrangements within 24 hours to retrieve my pet. If I fail to retrieve my pet by the date established in this contract and have failed to make arrangements for an extended stay, then I agree that the pet has been relinquished to [Animal Shelter] and that [Animal Shelter] may place my pet for adoption or euthanize my pet according to its policies.

I agree that [Animal Shelter] will update any vaccinations for my pet, at my cost, and that if unforeseen emergency medical care is required, my pet will receive that treatment and I will be responsible for the costs. If my pet is on medication for an existing condition, I agree to provide the medication to [Animal Shelter].

In exchange for [Animal Shelter] providing care to my pet, I agree to release and discharge the [Animal Shelter] and [Domestic Violence Shelter] PAWS Program, its successors and assigns from any and all actions, causes of action, claims and demands for, upon or by reason of any damages, loss or injury which may be sustained in consequence of the receipt of boarding and medical services under this program. This release extends and applies to all unknown, unforeseen, unanticipated and unsuspected injuries, damages, loss and liability and the consequences of them. This release, however, does not extend to violations of the law and any injuries or suffering my pet receives as a direct consequence of a violation of law.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## PAWS Program Extended Care Contract

Name of Shelter Resident: \_\_\_\_\_

New Address/Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact Name/Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Veterinarian Name/Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Leaving the Shelter: \_\_\_\_\_

Anticipated Length of Extended Care Housing of Pets: \_\_\_\_\_

The [**Domestic Violence Shelter**] PAWS Program (“Shelter”) agrees to continue housing the following pets at the shelter as part of the Extended Care program:

_____	_____	_____	_____
Pet Name	Species/Breed	Age	Gender
_____	_____	_____	_____
Pet Name	Species/Breed	Age	Gender
_____	_____	_____	_____
Pet Name	Species/Breed	Age	Gender

The pets listed above are allowed to stay at the above-named Shelter at no cost for an extended period of \_\_\_\_ days while the above-named Shelter Resident (“Resident”) locates permanent or transitional pet-friendly housing. If the pets require immediate medical care during their stay, Resident will be responsible for the financial costs that the Shelter veterinarian will provide. If Resident’s pets are on medication or special food, she will leave those provisions behind when she leaves the Shelter and/or will provide a sufficient quantity of those items before leaving. If Resident fails to retrieve her pets by the expiration of this Contract, she agrees that the pets have been relinquished and Shelter may place the pets for adoption or other disposition with a local animal shelter or animal rescue organization and that Resident forfeits all legal rights to the pets.

In exchange for Shelter’s providing care to Resident’s pets, Resident agrees to release and discharge Shelter and Shelter’s PAWS Program, its successors and assigns from any and all actions, causes of action, claims and demands for, upon or by reason of any damages, loss or injury which may be sustained in consequence of the receipt of boarding and medical services under this program. This release extends and applies to all unknown, unforeseen, unanticipated and unsuspected injuries, damages, loss and liability and the consequences of them. This release, however, does not extend to violations of the law and any injuries or suffering Resident’s pets receive as a direct consequence of a violation of law.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Shelter Resident signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
PAWS Program Director signature Date

## PAWS Program Resident Evaluation

As a resident of the shelter, whether you arrived with a pet or not, we would appreciate your input on our PAWS Program, which allows pets to reside with their families at our shelter. Your honest opinions and helpful feedback will assist us in making this program a success for everyone.

- 1. Being allowed to bring my pet(s) to the shelter through the PAWS Program has been influential in my decision to leave my abusive home: (circle one)**

Strongly Agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly Disagree   Not Applicable

- 2. I am satisfied with the services provided by the PAWS Program: (circle one)**

Strongly Agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly Disagree   Not Applicable

- 3. What was the most helpful thing about the PAWS Program?**

- 4. What can we do to make the PAWS Program better?**

- 5. If you were a resident without a pet, please provide any feedback or suggestions about pets being at the shelter.**

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## Resources

To obtain a copy of *Safe Haven for Pets: Guidelines for Programs Sheltering Pets for Women Who Are Battered*, please email your request to American Humane at [publicpolicy@americanhumane.org](mailto:publicpolicy@americanhumane.org).

For assistance with *building a kennel*, please contact American Humane at [info@americanhumane.org](mailto:info@americanhumane.org) or (800) 227-4645 for a copy of our *Operational Guide for Animal Care and Control Agencies: Planning and Building an Animal Shelter* (2000).

Organizations offering *pet bereavement counseling* programs include the Association of Pet Loss and Bereavement ([www.aplb.org](http://www.aplb.org)) and Delta Society (<http://www.deltasociety.org/AnimalsHealthPetlossResource1.htm>). An additional list of state-by-state pet loss support groups can be found at <http://www.petloss.com/groups.htm>.

## Appendix

### Animal Handling and Safety Tips

*Note: These tips address some basic animal handling and safety issues, to assist shelter staff in interacting with residents' pets and to assist shelter residents in staying safe around animals. They are not comprehensive instructions for animal handling and safety. For detailed information and instruction on animal handling and safety, consult your partner animal shelter or contact American Humane.*

#### Animal Safety Tips for Shelter Staff

- Place copies of the Animal Safety Tips for Parents and Children around your shelter to educate residents.
- Ask pet-owning residents to supervise their pets' interaction with other people at all times.
- Ask residents to not interact with another resident's pet unless the pet's owner is present.
- Carefully assess a pet's demeanor before handling it. (See Animal Handling Tips for Shelter Staff, below.)
- Don't allow children to play rough games with the animals.
- If a situation appears unsafe, don't wait for a child's mother to intervene; she may not understand how dangerous the situation is or that her child is doing something inappropriate.
- If you are unsure of what to do, or if a pet appears overly agitated or stressed, immediately contact your partner animal shelter or American Humane for assistance.
- Keep litter boxes out of reach of children and away from pregnant women.

#### Animal Handling Tips for Shelter Staff

Animal behavior can be unpredictable, especially in the stressful process of leaving a home (particularly for cats). So be sure to move slowly and in a gentle manner around any potentially stressed animals.

You should remain constantly alert when interacting with or handling any animal. Always ask permission from the animal's owner before interacting with the animal, and be sure to understand each animal's personality and history.

Safe, effective animal handling demands total concentration on the animal you are working with and your ability to read the body language the animal is displaying. Watch animals for warning signs of stress and fear, which can quickly lead to aggression. If you are unsure of an animal's state, you should avoid handling the animal until it is noticeably calmer, or only handle it when its owner is present and you have her permission. But don't rely on the owner to recognize the signs of potential aggression in her own animal.

### Signs that a DOG may be uncomfortable or afraid:

- stiffening, freezing or trembling
- standing or lying tensely at the rear of its cage
- staring, avoiding eye contact; wide eyes with white rims
- flattening or pinning back its ears
- growling, excessive deep barking or excessive whining
- panting, drooling or lip licking
- raising hair on its back
- tucked or rigid tail
- lack of appetite
- sweating foot pads
- showing teeth or snapping in the air

*Note: A wagging tail is not always a sign that the dog is being friendly; it may merely mean the dog is assessing the situation.*

### Signs that a CAT may be uncomfortable or afraid:

- ears flattened
- curled up in a ball or body turned sideways to face you
- facing the back of the carrier or cage
- fast-swishing tail
- growling, hissing, spitting or excessive meowing
- raising hair on its back

### If you must handle a potentially stressed animal, remember the following:

- Never lean directly over an animal; instead stand sideways in front of the cage with your chin down and gaze averted.
- Speak in a soft, soothing, upbeat tone while you reach your hand out, and allow the animal to sniff it thoroughly.
- If the animal backs away, it needs more time to adjust.
- If the animal approaches and sniffs your hand, gently scratch it under the chin. The animal may be receptive to handling.
- Allow the animal to come to you, rather than entering the cage or reaching in to grab it.
- To remove a cat from a carrier into a cage, open the carrier and tilt it into the new cage. Or, if possible, simply leave the cat in its carrier and place it into the new cage with the carrier door open.
- To handle a very fearful cat, cover its head with a large, thick towel or blanket and wrap it around the cat as you pick up the cat.

## Animal Safety Tips for Parents and Children

### Supervision and Safety

- Never leave a child alone with any animal.
- Teach children how to pay attention to warning signs — an animal that is growling or hissing wants to be left alone!
- Teach children to never approach or pet any dog unless the owner gives permission, even if they have met the dog before.
- Children should never approach an animal they do not know, especially strays or animals in vehicles, tied up or behind a fence.
- Teach children to never try to stop a fight between two animals — the children could get seriously injured.
- Be careful of an animal's claws — especially a cat's — when playing with an animal. Trim cat nails regularly.
- Keep litter boxes out of reach of children and away from pregnant women.

### Petting Animals

Show your children how to safely pet an animal:

- Avoid the face and head area.
- Stroke the animal on the chin or along the neck and back. Many animals do not like being rubbed on the belly.
- Stroke animals softly from head to tail, but never pull on an animal's tail.
- Don't hug an animal around the neck.
- Never try to hold any animal if it wants to go away from you.
- Don't approach an animal from behind to pet it or play with it.

### Playing With Animals

Teach your children:

- To leave animals alone when they are sleeping, caring for their babies, or if they appear injured or sick.
- To leave dogs alone if they are eating or chewing on toys.
- To never lunge at, tease, yell at or startle any animal.
- That animals may be startled by loud, high-pitched noise or sudden movements.
- To never run when approached by a dog.
- That, if approached by a dog, to “act like a tree” by standing still and staring straight ahead until the dog leaves.
- That if they are sitting when a dog approaches or are knocked to the ground by a dog, they should “act like a rock” by curling up in a ball, keeping their hands over their ears.



AMERICAN HUMANE

Pets and Women's Shelters (PAWS)<sup>™</sup> Program

[www.americanhumane.org](http://www.americanhumane.org)