

AHA Conference, Austin, TX

Workshop: The Social Psychology of Partnering to Help Animals*
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The Social Psychology of Partnering to Help Animals
At-a-Glance Tip Sheet

Potential Obstacles to Look Out For:

- Lack of agency and/or community support
- Skewed priorities
- Ignorance and resistance from agencies and or the community
- Lack of adequate training by partner agencies
- Miscommunication between agencies
- Difficulty finding fosters or safe houses for animal victims
- Lack of commitment from partner agencies
- Political infighting within multidisciplinary partnerships

Symptoms: Individual/agency insists on taking control; requires all communications to first be filtered through them; dictates changes not supported by other participants; leaves other members out of the loop; becomes

competitive, manipulative, or engages in other behaviors that undermine the primary goal of helping animal victims

- Confusion about which agency has what responsibility
- Institutional Limitations

*Institutions inherently lack the capacity to completely address problems of violence to animals and can reach only a fraction of those animals who need help

*Institutions frequently only provide after-the-fact crisis intervention and do little to modify the social norms that could prevent violence toward animals in the first place

*Institutions will fail to help animals if they do not draw on the leadership in the community to develop long-term changes. This becomes especially important in communities with ethnic groups who hold cultural attitudes and traditions harmful to animals

Strategies/Techniques for Successful Partnering to Help Stop Animal Suffering

- Your partnership should strive to include the following professionals and agencies: Municipal leaders; officers of the court; veterinarians; animal control; animal shelters; animal welfare organizations; law enforcement; fire department officials; social service agencies; domestic violence caseworkers and shelter managers; family and elderly service professionals and therapists.
- If local organizations and agencies are reluctant to join your multidisciplinary partnership, locate and bring on-board *individuals* rather than entire agencies who are sympathetic to your goals
- Identify specifics about who in your partnership has received what types of training for recognizing and stopping animal abuse
- Utilize the numerous resources available to assure all active players have appropriate training (see upcoming book: *Silent Victims: Recognizing & Stopping Abuse of the Family Pet* for a comprehensive list of resources providing training to those working to stop animal abuse).
- Draw up a clear plan *and* a back-up plan to overcome problems arising from miscommunication
- Establish a phone-tree with a designated, competent, central contact person

- *Central contact person should conduct follow-up calls updating all participants who have missed partnership meetings of the current status of open cases, any changes in procedures, etc., and pass along all important messages.)

- Create a structured, detailed plan for how your partnership plans to get animal victims of abuse to safety. Include...
 - *Who will pay for animals' housing, food and veterinary care if the guardian is unable to?
 - *How long will the foster or safe haven be expected to house animal victims?
 - *What will happen to animals whose guardians cannot get back on their feet for prolonged periods or cannot secure animal-friendly housing?
 - *Should the guardian be informed of where the animal is being housed?
 - *Should guardians and their children be permitted to visit the family pet?

- Ideally, multidisciplinary partnerships should include: veterinarian, animal shelter, animal welfare organization that trains and organizes foster families

- Lay out clear details for all involved in partnership of each individual's and agency's responsibilities when a call of possible animal abuse comes in. All involved need a clear understanding of the importance of each person/agency as a link in a chain, and the problems that arise if someone drops the ball.

- Make clear statements of the need and expectations for all participants

- Create an environment where participants feel genuinely welcome and safe to openly discuss reservations or problems

- Appoint alternate persons to step in when primary people are unable to fulfill their commitment

- Lay ground rules up-front about participants' roles and the importance of maintaining a climate of mutual respect, open communication and cooperation. Clear guidelines should ideally be put in writing with all participants receiving a copy.

- Establish clear procedures for cross-reporting in cases of human and/or animal abuse

- Design a plan for conducting humane education within your community
 - *Reach out to community leaders to design educational materials, brochures and programs
 - *Invite the community to play an active role in distributing literature and information about stopping animal abuse
 - *Plan on periodic face-to-face programs presented to the community about animal abuse
 - * Target small segments of the community at a time. In step-fashion first reach out to religious institutions, community organizations, etc.

10 Features of Successful Multidisciplinary Partnerships

Successful Multidisciplinary Partnerships tend to...

- 1) Hold regular partnership meetings to touch base and reinforce solidarity
- 2) Create and maintain an atmosphere that fosters mutual respect and cooperation
- 3) Incorporate a diverse group of professionals with a variety of backgrounds and training and will offer a rich mixture of input and ideas from a variety of perspectives
- 4) Always make efficient use of members' time
- 5) Ensure that growth of the partnership is nurtured rather than feared (Newcomers are made to feel welcome and that their ideas and experiences are valued)
- 6) Develop a written plan and back-up plan of procedures and guidelines for both (a) crisis intervention and (b) proactive community outreach educational efforts
- 7) Make sure every participant fully understands and agrees to his/her role in the partnership plans
- 8) Develop a communication tree
- 9) Assign a central liaison to communicate changes, developments and vital information about animal abuse cases
- 10) Hold follow-up meetings following crisis intervention to update everyone involved, exchange key information for follow-through, and to determine what could be learned to prevent future similar situations, enhance educational outreach, and streamline current procedures

**Based on the book for animal welfare professionals; Silent Victims: Recognizing and Stopping Abuse of the Family Pet, by Pamela Carlisle-Frank, Ph.D. & Officer Tom Flanagan*