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AN EXAMINATION OF ANIMAL SERVICE OFFICERS' VIEWS ON THEIR READINESS
TO RECOGNIZE AND REPORT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

by

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B.A. University of Central Florida, 2010

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master in Arts
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ABSTRACT

In the past few decades there has been research dedicated to understanding the roles that animals play within violent households. The American Humane Association (2010) has developed what they termed *The Link*. This concept examines how forms of violence, including domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, and animal abuse, are often intertwined. This qualitative study was facilitated using focus groups and interviews of animal service officers in Orange County, Florida to evaluate the relationship and training provided from a local domestic violence shelter. There were a total of 22 Orange County Animal Services employees who participated in four different focus group sessions, and two interviews with officers who had previously made referrals to Harbor House of Central Florida, the local domestic violence shelter. Results show that animal service officers view themselves as often being the first responders to a situation and, hence, an agent to help all victims, including both animals and humans. Participants indicated that their relationship with Harbor House of Central Florida has been weak and that many were unfamiliar with the referral program known as INVEST. They provided recommendations to strengthen their relationship with Harbor House of Central Florida that included trainings, support, and cross-reporting efforts that they felt were needed.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AHA American Humane Association

ASPCA The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

CPS Child Protective Services

OCAS Orange County Animal Services

FACA Florida Animal Control Association

FCADV Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence

HHCF Harbor House of Central Florida

INVEST Intimate Violence Enhanced Services Team

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence impacts many individuals in the United States, where it is estimated that each year 4.8 million women experience abuse by a current or former partner – indeed, making domestic violence a serious social problem (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Agencies that provide aid to victims of domestic violence in terms of shelter, mental health counseling, and services intended to combat this social problem receive a great amount of support to provide aid to victims and to educate the general population. As researchers and activists continue to learn more about the complicated nature of this type of violence, the services that shelters provide are vast and expanding. They provide immediate shelter for individuals who are escaping abuse in their homes, as well as counseling, career help, and assistance with housing once domestic violence victims are ready to leave the shelter.

Shelter staff also lead community coalitions and hold trainings for the general public to help recognize domestic violence and learn steps that individuals can take to aid possible victims (Chanley, Chanley, & Campbell, 2001; HHCF, 2012). In addition, domestic violence advocates work with outside agencies in order to train their personnel to recognize domestic violence and to utilize best practices when following up, either with victims directly or when reporting the witnessed or suspected abuse to appropriate agencies. Service providers that have been trained by advocates include physicians, nurses, welfare caseworkers, child protective agents, and, more recently, veterinarians and animal control officers (Magen et al., 2001). It is important to provide this training to veterinarians and animal control officers since there is research that links

domestic violence and animal abuse, often occurring at the same time. Providing training on domestic violence to professionals that work with injured humans and animals increases the chance that more victims will be identified and helped. The current study focuses on the relationship between a local domestic violence shelter, Harbor House of Central Florida, and animal service officers in Orange County, Florida. It also examines the training that officers have received and the referral process called INVEST established by Harbor House of Central Florida.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of studies in the past two decades have been dedicated to the relationship between violence in the home and animal abuse (e.g., Ascione, Weber & Wood, 1997; Ascione, 1998; Flynn, 2000; Faver & Strand, 2003; Flynn 2012). Animals living in the home are more often being considered a family member, and, just as violence in the family can touch anyone, animals too can be victimized by domestic violence (Ascione & Arkow, 1999).

Exploring the Link

The American Humane Association (2010) has developed what they call “The Link.” This concept examines how forms of family violence, including domestic violence, child maltreatment, elder abuse, and animal abuse are often intertwined. Other organizations that have joined with the American Humane Association (AHA) in recognizing the link between human and animal violence are The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and The National Link Coalition. They affirm that these forms of abuse often coexist in homes and urge communities and service providers to act when there is suspicion of abuse. In a national survey of large domestic violence shelters, researchers found that 85% of the shelters surveyed reported that victims of domestic violence discussed past incidents of pet abuse in their home (Ascione, Weber & Wood, 1997). In addition, this same survey found that 63% of the shelters indicated that children staying with them had discussed their pets being harmed. Surveys of shelter residents have found similar high rates of violence or threats of violence toward pets. For example, Ascione (1998) conducted a survey completed by women in a domestic violence

shelter in Utah and found that of the victims who had pets at home, 71% reported that their abusive partner had either threatened violence or had actually been violent to an animal. In a later study he found that 11% of the abused women had reported that their partner had abused or killed a pet (Ascione et al., 2007). These previous studies have been crucial in establishing the link and expanding our knowledge on domestic violence.

In addition, pets can be harmed or threatened harm to gain the compliance of other family members. This motivation has been found in many cases of sexual abuse toward children in which they are told to keep the abuse a secret or else their beloved pet will be harmed (Ascione & Arkow, 1999). At other times, pets are harmed by children in order for them to feel as though they have some type of control when experiencing violence in the home (Becker & French, 2004). This need for control also occurs in abused mothers who sometimes abuse their children for various reasons, including having a desire to have power over someone or something when they are left feeling powerless (Magen et al. 2001). In cases of domestic violence, aggressors typically victimize family members who are weaker physically and those who have less social capital (Ascione & Arkow, 1999).

Implications for Children

When children witness violence in the home they sometimes become desensitized toward the abuse. Viewing or experiencing violence might make the child act out the violence. When this happens, it is common for children to turn toward animals as a way to act out and rehearse the abuse that is going on inside the home (Ascione, 1993). One study found that children who had witnessed domestic violence were 20% more likely to witness an animal being harmed or

killed (Ascione, Thompson, and Black 1997). Currie (2006) compared children who had been abused and also abused animals to children who had not been exposed to abuse in the home but who also abused animals. She found a correlation between being exposed to domestic violence and being violent toward animals. The sample consisted of 94 children in the first group, those between the ages of five and seventeen who had both been exposed to domestic violence and had harmed animals, and 90 children within the same age range who had not been exposed to domestic violence but who had harmed animals. The study established that children who had experienced or been exposed to violence were nearly three times more likely to abuse animals than their counterpart. The children who had been exposed to domestic violence and had been violent toward animals were much older than the children who had abused animals, but were not victims of domestic violence. The fact that children were older could imply that they are less likely to grow out of the behavior of abusing animals, which some might believe to be a childish phase.

Along with the likelihood of children abusing animals and the age of the offending child, researchers are also interested in the extent of and the atmosphere around the abuse. Henry (2004) interviewed college students who reported themselves as being deviant to examine if there was a link between observation of animal abuse, tolerance of animal abuse, participation in animal abuse, and generalized deviant behavior. Henry found that the males in the study who observed animal abuse were more callous in the treatment of animals compared to females who had also observed such violent acts. Males who had observed these acts committed by their father or stepfather were more likely to become a participant. This could mean that males are more affected by cruel acts when they witness their parents as the perpetrators, making the child

more likely to follow in their parents' footsteps (Ascione & Arkow, 1999). Further, researchers discuss the possibility that adult aggressors might encourage their children to abuse animals by claiming that the abuse is meant to correct bad behavior, teaching children that cruel behavior is justified.

As mentioned earlier, a Utah shelter study also found that of the 58% of the women who had children, 32% reported that their children had been violent toward animals (Ascione, 1998). A further study conducted throughout different regions in Australia comparatively analyzed groups of women who had been abused with women who had not experienced abuse. The women who had been victims of abuse were more likely to report that their children had committed acts of abuse toward animals. However, in this study there was no significant difference found when examining whether the children had witnessed abuse. In this same sample, if partners had threatened or harmed the family pet, they were five times more likely to also have been abused by a person (or people) in the home (Volant, Johnson, Gullone, & Coleman, 2008).

Research identifying the link between human and animal violence is not the first time the parallels of animal abuse and violence against humans has been examined. In fact, in 1874 the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals brought a case of child abuse to a court in New York City under animal cruelty laws because there were no laws protecting children from physical abuse by the hands of their guardians. Mary Ellen McCormack, a ten-year-old girl, was being severely beaten by her adopted mother, and the nearby community became increasingly concerned for Mary Ellen's life. The investigator from the Department of

Public Charities and Correction, Etta Angell Wheeler, refused to give up on the case and approached Henry Bergh, the founder of the ASPCA, and pleaded that the organization take the case on the grounds that children ought to at the very least receive the same protection that animals receive. The organization took on the case, and with the help of the prominent lawyer, Elbridge Gerry, was successful in the prosecution of Ms. Connolly, Mary Ellen's adopted mother (The New York Times, 1874).

Animal Professionals

With the recognition of the link between human and animal violence, it is important to provide professionals, such as veterinarians and animal control officers, with accessible information that they can use to aid both human and animal victims. These trainings are often similar to those provided to physicians, nurses, and hospital personnel. Currently, many veterinary schools are covering the signs of abuse and guidelines of what steps to follow when abuse is detected among animals and/or their human family members (Ascione & Arkow, 1999). In fact, veterinarians are mandatory reporters for child abuse in Colorado, and animal control officers or humane officers are mandated reporters in California, Colorado, Illinois, Maine, Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2011). However, since the majority of states do not mandate veterinarians to report abuse by law, many veterinarians are placed in the awkward position of accusing their clientele of harming their pet (Ascione & Arkow, 1999). When veterinarians are trained to recognize the link between human and animal violence, they can also assist domestic violence shelters in boarding animals for victims that need to seek refuge in shelters. Since the link theme has been

developed, some shelters have taken the initiative to work with local veterinarians and/or The Humane Society to provide animal boarding for free, or at a low cost, to ensure that pet(s) are safe from the abuser while human victims reside in a shelter (Ascione & Arkow, 1999; Randor & Davidson, 2008).

Frequently, veterinarians treat puppies and kittens who have been stepped on, cats who have fallen out of windows, dogs who have been hit by cars, and animals attacked by other animals (Ascione & Arkow, 1999). Veterinarians are understandably troubled by animals experiencing these types of trauma, but are even more so by the possibility that these injuries could have been intentional and that there could be human victims that are being exposed to similar forms of violent acts. Likewise, animal control and animal humane officers often investigate reported incidences of suspected animal abuse and neglect, as well as the more frequent cases of incessant barking, biting incidents, and dog fighting.

A study conducted at a veterinary school of medicine in Indiana found that the entire sample of 31 students stated that they had covered animal abuse in their courses and also agreed that in their careers they believed they would come across suspected incidents of animal abuse. The majority of students also agreed that they would come across suspected incidents of abuse against humans, although less than 25% had this form of violence covered in their courses (Ascione & Arkow, 1999).

Domestic violence training and the relationship to animal abuse is equally important among child welfare workers. Randor and Davidson (2008) suggest that workers in the court system, child protective service providers, and community leaders that work with children should

receive training about the commonalities, or link, between different forms of family violence. It is important that these child advocates learn about this link because abusers often threaten harm of a family pet to keep children silent about physical or sexual violence that they are suffering (Ascione, 2008). Researchers believe this is important because more data on the link between intimate partner violence and child abuse could be collected to better understand the implications of domestic violence (Ascione, Weber & Wood, 1997). In addition, sometimes child protective services' actions are counterproductive in helping battered women, but training by domestic violence shelter workers has proven helpful in mending these relationships (Magen et al., 2001).

Abuse toward humans and animals can be identified and addressed through trainings by experts in a specific field – for example, domestic violence advocates who provide trainings on possible signs of abuse to physicians' working within a local emergency room. Through these trainings, relationships between service agencies can be nurtured and cross-reporting protocols established. Becker and French (2004) point out the need for a system of cross reporting and training to be set up among government agencies. They argue it would be beneficial for animal control and local police agencies to work with domestic violence shelters to establish a task force to be involved in cross training. If animal control officers were able to report their suspicions to law enforcement, it would allow police to investigate cases where child abuse and/or domestic violence might be occurring.

Understanding the link between human and animal violence will positively impact new and reformed policies and social agencies that work with victims of domestic violence (Adams, 1994; Ascione, 1993; Ascione & Arkow, 1999). With the implementation of cross reporting, it

is important that researchers continue to better understand the relationship between social service agencies and the ways that service providers understand and cope with this new responsibility of recognizing and reporting suspected abuse that is outside their expertise. In the next section the two agencies, Orange County Animal Services and Harbor House of Central Florida, are highlighted, as well as the INVEST referral system that participants of the study were asked to evaluate.

Orange County Animal Services

Orange County Animal Services is a progressive animal welfare-focused organization that enforces the Orange County code to protect both citizens and animals. OCAS was established in 1969 to assist with controlling the spread of the rabies virus by minimizing the number of free roaming pets that could come into contact with wild animals. They are located in metro-west Orlando and welcome more than 23,000 animals into their shelters each year and receive nearly 65,000 calls annually regarding animal abuse, neglect, loose and nuisance animals, injured animals, animal bites and attacks, and abandoned pets. OCAS offers a wide variety of community-based services and programs to protect animals and humans, which include a low-cost spay and neuter program, pet adoption, foster care network, volunteer program, and community outreach and education. Community outreach and education includes classes on responsible pet ownership, teaching children how to care for their pet and safely approach and interact with animals, scheduled guest speakers on a variety of different topics, and so on (Orange County Animal Services, 2012).

All of the twenty-seven officers employed with Orange County Animal Services must complete training and certification through the Florida Animal Control Association (FACA).

FACA describes the duties and responsibilities of an Animal Control Officer, some of which are:

“apprehending and retaining stray and unlicensed dogs, cats and other animals; protects the public by enforcing applicable animal control laws and ordinances; issues citations and prepares reports on violations ... respond to calls and investigate complaints concerning stray, vicious, sick or injured animals ... issue citations to owners in violation of animal control regulations; prepare reports needed for legal action; keep all records; take into custody and impound stray and mistreated animals and animals held for evidence; file dog bite reports and contact owners; prepare animal traps for strays and nuisance wildlife; relocate wildlife; return animals to owners ... [maintain a] clean truck and report necessary maintenance work; respond to emergency calls after hours ... testify in court and before the Code Enforcement Board on animal control issues and cases; may be responsible for training other animal control officers; attend meetings as required; attend continuing education to sharpen job related skills; maintain on-going knowledge of policies, procedures, laws and ordinances; perform crossing guard duties when required; perform all other related duties as assigned” (FACA, 2012).

Officers are responsible for knowing animal control laws, regulations, and ordinances.

They are trained to recognize instances of animal cruelty and to handle and solve problems within the scope of their responsibilities. Each year, officers investigate nearly 3,500 reports of animal cruelty, neglect and abandonment. The legal standards for the definition and investigation of cruelty are outlined in Florida’s statutes §828.073, §828.03, and §828.12. On their website under the icon “Report a Pet Issue,” the agency recognizes the link of violence by stating, “animal violence has been linked to human violence. In fact, studies have shown that animal abusers are five times more likely to commit violent acts against people” (OCAS, 2012). They encourage individuals to report abuse toward animals by providing a number of ways, including filling out a complaint form, calling code enforcement at 311, or contacting Crimeline by phone, website or through texts. Crimeline is a hotline that allows individuals to make reports

anonymously with the possibility of receiving a cash reward for useful information resulting in a felony arrest. Their mission is to “increase the safety of the Central Florida community by assisting law enforcement agencies in removing undesirable individuals from the community” (Crimeline, 2012).

Harbor House of Central Florida

Harbor House of Central Florida, the domestic violence shelter in Orange County, Florida, offers a 24-hour crisis hotline, counseling, legal advocacy, and other services to thousands of individuals in Orange County. The shelter’s website explains that animals are often victims of domestic violence and in need of safety. Harbor House of Central Florida provides in-depth information on services and data collected on domestic violence.

The collaboration between Harbor House of Central Florida and Orange County Animal Services enabled researchers to map areas in the county with domestic violence calls and compare that data to calls about animal abuse or incidents to see if they could track a pattern. Harbor House of Central Florida is currently raising money to build a kennel on their site so that women will be able to bring dogs and cats with them to safety. On the website there are many places where one can donate and a special place to donate exclusively for the kennel program (HHCF, 2012).

INVEST

The Intimate Violence Enhanced Service Team is a community-coordinated response model created by the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence in 2006, intended to provide “intensive service management and assistance to individuals identified to be in potentially lethal situations” (Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2012). Orange County is one of eleven counties in Florida that participate in the INVEST program. In 2008 Harbor House of Central Florida developed their own INVEST form and teamed up with law enforcement at the Orange County Sheriff’s Office and Orlando Police Department to provide victims with education, safety planning, referral information on community resources, crisis intervention, advocacy within the judicial system, and emergency services. Harbor House of Central Florida has also been able to involve more than 200 employees of the Florida Department of Children and Families and other Community Based Care providers (HHCF, 2012). Since domestic violence perpetrators who also threatened and/or harmed animals in the home have been found to be more violent, it is vital for animal control officers to be included as cross reporters (Gupta, 2008).

The purpose of the present study was to evaluate the attitudes and knowledge of animal service officers and to examine if training on domestic violence changes the way officers perform their job and interact with pet owners of abused or neglect animals. In addition, the training and INVEST reporting initiative between Orange County Animal Services and Harbor House of Central Florida were explored and discussed.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This qualitative analysis of the relationship and referral process between Orange County Animal Services and Harbor House of Central Florida was completed by conducting semi-structured focus groups with a total of twenty-two participants, and two one-on-one interviews with two of the four officers who have previously made referrals to Harbor House of Central Florida using INVEST. Ten questions were used in the semi-structured focus groups. Initial questions inquired about how long they have been employed at their current position. Participants were asked to explain or describe their employment responsibilities and the variety of cases on which they work. Then they provided details on how information is disseminated and software that is used in their office. In addition, participants were asked about their relationship with the general public and their working relationship with other social protection agencies like the Orlando Police Department, Child Protective Services, and Code Enforcement (which was a major theme in Arnold Arluke's work in 2006 when he interviewed Animal Police Officers).

Participants were asked about their knowledge on the link between human and animal violence and whether they see this connection in the cases they come across. To evaluate the trainings that Harbor House of Central Florida provided to Orange County Animal Services, I asked about any training that officers and personnel had received dealing with the link between human and animal violence, then specifically about trainings with Harbor House of Central Florida on recognizing domestic violence. Then we discussed their readiness to report cases and the reporting process. Finally, I asked for any recommendations to strengthen the relationship

between Harbor House of Central Florida and their agency and the INVEST referral process. The semi-structured interviews consisted of fifteen questions inquiring about the specific case that the officer had referred to Harbor House of Central Florida using the INVEST referral form.

Recruitment

To gain access to Orange County Animal Services, I initially made contact with the division manager, who seemed very pleased about this evaluation project. However, the division manager left the organization shortly after, and I was directed to work with the marketing and public relations coordinator for OCAS. Once I received approval from my committee and the University of Central Florida's Institutional Review Board, I contacted the marketing and public relations coordinator about setting up individual interviews with all of the officers. At this time, it became apparent that due to officers' demanding schedules, one-on-one interviews with each officer would not be possible. The method was then revised to include focus groups with consenting officers and more in-depth interviews with officers who had previously filed INVEST referrals with Harbor House of Central Florida. Once I received approval from the Division Manager at OCAS to speak with officers, I worked with the administrative specialist to arrange four focus groups and four interviews, of which two were completed. All focus groups and interviews took place at Orange County Animal Services.

Data Collection

Questions were open-ended in order to give participants an opportunity to share their ideas, views, and experiences regarding the link between human and animal violence. The four

focus groups and two interviews were audio recorded, then transcribed onto a Microsoft Word document. Participants were informed that their information and answers would remain confidential, but would not be anonymous. For the purpose of maintaining confidentiality, pseudonyms are used in the following chapter to refer to specific participants' comments.

Analysis

The six exchanges were transcribed onto a Microsoft Word document on a private computer using ExpressScribe, a program that allows the speed of a recording to be manipulated to make transcribing more manageable. The final analysis was performed on 76 single-spaced pages comprised of 25,619 words of focus group transcripts of 226 minutes. The supplementary interviews lasted for 131 minutes in total and were transcribed onto 39 single-spaced pages comprised of 15,578 words. I began my data analysis with a line-by-line open coding process of the transcripts of the four focus groups and two interviews. Strauss (1987) explained that when performing open coding, one needs to ask a specific question of the data, go through the data multiple times to ensure that the analysis is meticulous, and to make sure not to rush to conclusions, but rather let the evidence speak for itself – and only establish themes and findings once all the data is examined. While going through each line, I used different colors to highlight emerging themes; then I went through them several more times to find ways that the themes intersected and veered away from one another. After I noted the primary themes for each of the focus groups, I compared those themes between all the focus groups to discover commonalities and sub-themes. Major themes that are discussed in the following section are the role of officers,

understanding the link, collaborating with social service agencies, thoughts on the INVEST referral program, and suggestions for moving forward.

Sample

Participants were field officers and other personnel employed at Orange County Animal Services. Altogether, there were 22 participants: eight in the first focus group, six in the second, three in the third, and five in the fourth group. After the focus groups, two interviews were conducted with two of the four officers that had previously filed INVEST referrals with Harbor House of Central Florida. At the time the study was conducted, participants had been employed by OCAS from a range of six months to twelve years: four had been there less than a year, one for a year, two for four years, five for five years, two for six years, one for seven years, two for nine years, four for ten years, and one for twelve years. The participants were equally represented with regard to gender with 11 males and 11 females.

Setting the Scene

Focus groups one, two, and four were conducted in the break room in OCAS, which is a large room with five or so smaller offices that branch off of it. The break room had folding tables and chairs in the middle of the room with a refrigerator, microwave, a soda vending machine, and entrances to two bathrooms. Throughout the room there were also multiple filing cabinets, a large photocopying machine, a fax machine, and a wall of useful handouts and brochures. While waiting for the focus groups to begin, I saw this space being used for individuals having lunch, filling out paperwork, and as a training space. Between focus groups

three and four, there was a 30-minute training that I was able to observe; it was a PowerPoint presentation by one of the agency's veterinarians on parasites. Sitting through this training allowed me to gain a deeper appreciation for the vast health issues that officers have to be mindful of in regard to their safety and the animals. Throughout the focus groups, non-participants were going in and out of their office, listening to voicemails, making photocopies and chiming in at times, which made a less than ideal environment. For example, within the first five minutes of the second focus group, three participants were pulled out and were told that they were needed on the road. Instead, those three individuals participated in the fourth focus group. Other distractions during the facilitation of the focus groups included participants' handheld receivers going off, a maintenance worker changing light bulbs, and a delivery worker restocking drinks in the nearby vending machine. This setting proved to be challenging with many distractions during the focus groups. In addition, participants might have been less candid since nonparticipants were so near by and at times walking in and out of the room.

The third focus group and two interviews took place in OCAS's board meeting room. This was a small private room with an oval table that fit six rolling chairs with seating around the two walls. This room provided a more intimate setting with fewer distractions. I learned that this room is used for important meetings with local officials and where cruelty cases are sometimes heard.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Findings

This study examined only one animal control agency's training and its officers' understanding of the link between human and animal violence, which makes this research more exploratory. Thus, I was looking at the particular training and searching for what works best for this specific agency, as defined by these officers (and what does not make an impact), rather than making broad statements about all domestic violence trainings and their impact on animal control officers.

Officers' Responsibilities

Early into each of the focus groups, participants were asked to describe their work responsibilities and what a typical day looked like. Officers explained that they come in and check their call sheet; these sheets are comprised of calls coming into OCAS, 311-code enforcement and Crimeline. The list of calls that officers respond to expands throughout their shift and is uploaded to laptops in the trucks that they drive. Each officer has a particular truck and a zoned area of Orange County that they are responsible for serving, resulting in one officer per 10,000 residences. Some officers stay in the same zone for a matter of months, and some are rotated throughout the county on a daily basis. This seems to be due to the officer's preference and how many officers are on a particular shift. The participants from focus groups one and three worked the first shift, which was not the same for each person, but ranged from 7am-4pm.

Participants from focus groups two and four worked the second shift, which was from 3pm-11:30pm.

When they arrive, officers have on average eight calls in their box waiting for them. Depending on the severity of a case, it might be flagged for the officer, but otherwise they need to determine which calls to respond to first and which are low priority. One frustration that came up in every conversation was that since calls are continually being added to an officer's box, they almost never get to call a "1098" to their dispatch at the end of their shift, which means that they've completed all their calls. Frank explained, "When you look at it, it's kind of startling because you busted your tail all night long and you look at your call box, and it looks like it's not changed."

The calls that officers respond to range from complaints related to code violation, nuisance animals, aggressive animals, emergencies where animals are injured, dog bites, dog or cockfighting, or animal hoarding. When first responding to a call, officers might begin a lengthy investigation (depending on the specifics of the cases and whether or not there is sufficient evidence present), but what officers seem to spend more of their time on is educating people. Some calls can be resolved by explaining animal code ordinances, such as the requirement to provide dogs with water or proper shelter. In these instances, the owner of the animal is given a task and timeline within which to be in accordance with the law. All of the officers who spoke about how they like to handle cases indicated that they focus more on finding a resolution, rather than just writing citations. Jordan explained,

"If it's a cruelty type case where people are chaining their dog outside, they're not going to be able to build a kennel in one day. You gotta give them a little bit of time. The

dog's been on the chain for six years, but all of a sudden that dog's coming off the chain and you better build a kennel. You better get started, and you know we're going to give you two weeks or a week or something; but if you don't want to do it or show any effort to do it, then we're going to give you a citation – and we'll motivate you a little bit. That's about a \$265 motivator.”

Not all calls are found to be legitimate; sometimes officers go out to a call and can't see anything wrong with the animal or their environment. This is sometimes due to reporters calling in and complaining that their neighbors caring of their animals is not up to the same standard as their own, even though the animal owner is not breaking any code violation. Or reporters call in and exaggerate a case to get officers out to the scene more quickly: “So they exaggerate it with us saying that the animal's about to die ... just to try to get us there quicker.” This is very challenging for officers, and they are frustrated when responding to cases that were prioritized because of the reporter's mistruths about the state of the animal when other animals and legitimate cases had to be pushed back. Officers also respond to calls that seem to be stemmed by a neighbor dispute rather than an actual infraction, as Virgil adds: “You go and there is nothing wrong with the animals whatsoever. There's no violations, there's no cruelty, nothing. I was like, ‘I guess you upset one of your neighbors somehow.’” This is especially true when they are the one OCAS officer in an area of the county. “[Sometimes] you have to explain to someone that you can't get to their dog that's just been attacked because you're the only officer in the entire east side of Orlando.” This is becoming an increasing problem. At the time of the focus groups, OCAS had 280 calls that were on hold because the agency didn't have the time or resources to attend to each issue that arose as soon as the call came in.

Even with the frequency of these cases that are unfounded or rectified by spending a little time to educate on proper pet ownership, officers still face challenging and potentially dangerous

situations. They usually have at least one legitimate cruelty case on a shift and must always be prepared when initially approaching a case. “We’re very aware of our surroundings when we walk into a situation, just because animals are very unpredictable. And so we don’t know if that dog that we’re coming to look after is sitting underneath the car when we pull up and, you know, could come charging at us, [so you have respond] to a call ... with heightened awareness.”

Officers typically try to find out who lives in the residence they are checking on and determine whether anyone in the household has a record. If the reporter didn’t remain anonymous and provided their information, the officer will make contact with that person and confirm the complaint – and also try to gather any useful information about the situation. If this isn’t possible, then the officer will try to make contact with a few neighbors to see if anyone has seen or heard anything suspicious. This allows the officer to gauge how to handle the case. In the fourth focus group, there was a lot of attention paid to the importance of getting the introduction right. Officers feel as though they are trying to work with communities and animal owners to improve the care for their animals rather than threatening or punishing them. Hearing them speak gave me the impression that they are really interested in cooperation and assistance to come to the best possible outcome for all parties involved.

Orange County Animal Services officers also work with other agencies, such as the Orlando Police Department. For example, if the police are raiding a house for drugs and there are dogs inside, they’ll call OCAS to assist. They may also be called in for a hoarding case to which code enforcement has responded. Some officers even had close connections with certain employees at the different agencies that they work with who will call them specifically if they have a question and vice versa. This is also due to the fact that some of the animal service

officers had previously worked these types of jobs before. Three participants mentioned this: one was previously a police officer, another was a correctional officer, and a third had a long career as a child abuse investigator. This fact might help account for the cooperation that animal service officers perceive they have with other agencies, including Harbor House of Central Florida. This finding was not supported by the literature. For example, in Arluke's (2006) work with animal and police officers, he found a great amount of strain with the local police department, partially caused by a lack of respect and understanding.

With OCAS enjoying this more or less collaborative relationship with other agencies, they are able to get a better sense of how other agencies work, the cases they handle, and the evidence that they look for. This insight into what other agencies do and how they investigate various kinds of cases will prove to be helpful for animal service officers when stepping outside the scope of their typical responsibilities of only being concerned with an animal's welfare and now beginning to identify a link and potential human victims.

Understanding the Link

After being asked if they were familiar with the link of violence between human and animal violence Janice shared, "The abuser will generally start out abusing the animal, [then] the children, then up to the other adult. Um, not always in that order; though sometimes they'll turn around and abuse the animals as ... bait to try to get the wife or child or whoever to [comply]." Participants spent a good amount of time discussing the framework of power and control within an abusive relationship and how the abuser will use any means necessary to control their victim(s) including threatening or harming animals. "They'll threaten to kill the animal if [the

victim] leaves or they will kill the animal and tell them that it will happen to them if they leave ... they use the animal basically for everything for control.” When asked about the seriousness of these threats, participants felt that these types of intimidation tactics (harming animals) need to be addressed right away and should not wait until the threats are acted upon, for the sake of all potential victims in the household. Janice added that threatening to harm or harming an animal could be a precursor to humans in the home being abused. “Basically, it’s a warning sign that if they’re violent toward animals that [the violence] will escalate.”

Of all the officers and personnel that participated in the study, everyone seemed to agree that the link between human and animal violence is visible in the work they do and is relevant to their jobs. Jackson expanded, “I think it’s normal for an officer to go, and they assess everything that has to deal with safety. If you assess everything, you’re going to see it; if there is something, you’re going to see it.” Many officers recounted past incidents when investigating a case of suspected animal neglect or abuse, women or children seemed to also be victims of verbal and/or physical abuse. “It’s like I went on this call one time, went to the house; kids were playing, having a good time, making all sorts of noise. And I go back to the house on a later date and dad’s home, and it’s absolutely silent. And I mean absolute silence, so you know that there’s something extraordinary with that situation.” Tom added, “In fact, I remember a case where this woman, she was like she was petrified that her husband would find out that we were there looking at the dog.” Janice explained that with these types of cases, there usually was a kind of tension in the air or a “nagging feeling that something’s not quite right.” In fact, after receiving trainings on the link between human and animal violence, some officers felt more confident to consider and identify abusive households instead of disregarding the suspected abuser as being a

“big jerk” and minimizing the incident. Breanne not only felt that training on the link between human and animal violence was relevant but also that it was beneficial to the state of mind of the officer investigating a case. She stated,

“I think it also gives the officers an outlet because a lot of them will pull up on a call and they recognize the signs, and before we had no way to refer [it] or who to go [to] to try to get the lady help. And they would come back upset, clearly upset, that they couldn’t do anything further for her. So this kind of gives them, you know, relieves that a little bit where they can refer it to, and it kind of takes the pressure off of them a little bit.”

After discussing participants’ understanding of the link and hearing past cases in which officers believed both humans and animals were being abused, we moved on to specific trainings that participants have received from Harbor House of Central Florida and other agencies regarding the link between human and animal violence. I inquired as to the trainings that Harbor House of Central Florida provides to OCAS and if they had set trainings. Breanne replied,

“No, what it is, it’s that Harbor House will notify us, when they are having a training and, um, what we try to do or what we were trying to do is that when they were notifying us we would try to send select individuals from the office. I can’t pull all these guys and put them in one training, so I can only take like two here and two here. And when I was keeping a list of who actually went through the trainings, I was trying to switch them as the trainings were coming along so that the same person [did not get] picked to go to the same training all the time and um, yea, the training was kind of ... I don’t know if they stopped doing the trainings or whatever, but I know there are some officers that never got to go to them.”

When asked about the trainings that they received, participants helped each other piece together the trainings that they had attended over the past three years. In total, seventeen of the twenty-two officers that I spoke to remember receiving some sort of training about domestic violence and the link between human and animal violence. They began discussing when Harbor House of Central Florida came to OCAS to provide a training and to introduce the INVEST

referral form. As they remembered, Harbor House of Central Florida had only been out to Orange County Animal Services once, so the training was probably similar to the training that I sat in on by the veterinarian. The veterinarian training was in the afternoon from 2:30-3pm because it overlapped between the first and second shift and was in the larger break room discussed earlier. This training was described as more of a discussion between Harbor House of Central Florida and OCAS officers and personnel, rather than a typical Domestic Violence 101 training, which Harbor House of Central Florida provides at no cost to the public on a monthly basis. The major parts that participants remembered were that domestic violence is not about love or wanting to hurt someone, but rather a means to control others and have power over them. Based on their earlier comments, officers seemed to really understand that domestic violence is about having power and control over an intimate partner rather than a twisted type of love. Another aspect of the training on the link between human and animal violence that participants recalled is that children who abuse animals might be doing so as a means of getting attention, and that behavior can be their own way of asking for help from the authorities.

The next training mentioned was one that Harbor House of Central Florida held on October 9, 2009, which was a fundraiser breakfast and training at a hotel in downtown Orlando, FL. During the breakfast representatives from Harbor House of Central Florida and community leaders spoke about the campaigns they were working on regarding the link between human and animal violence. They also heard from victims, who shared their personal stories of the violence that was inflicted upon them and how the animals in their homes were also threatened and, at times, harmed. After the breakfast there was an hour-and-a-half training held by Phil Arkow, an internationally acclaimed lecturer, author, and researcher on the link between human and animal

violence. He also was the founder of the National Link Coalition. One of the managers estimated that between twelve to fifteen OCAS officers attended this training.

There was also a training held downtown over lunch that around six officers attended. There they had lunch, then listened to a speaker talk for about an hour on the link between human and animal violence. From the individuals with whom I spoke, only four had attended this training and weren't able to describe the training to any length or recall the main speaker of this event.

Through these discussions, it was discovered that Harbor House of Central Florida hasn't been to Orange County Animal Services for over two years and that there seemed to be little to no communication between Harbor House of Central Florida and OCAS regarding the INVEST referral program.

The previous manager at OCAS was also on the advisory board of Harbor House of Central Florida. Because of her two roles, she was instrumental in bringing Harbor House of Central Florida out to OCAS, making sure that all the officers at that time were trained, and implementing INVEST as a resource for officers. She also kept officers and personnel updated when it came to events that Harbor House of Central Florida was hosting regarding the link between human and animal violence. These events included Paws for Peace, an annual walk and fundraiser where dog owners would hear from local community leaders and walk their dog to signify a movement against abuse toward both intimate partners and animals. She also seemed to be highly influential in the efforts of Harbor House of Central Florida building a kennel for cats and dogs on their property. The shelter named, PAWS (Pets And Women's Shelter), is

meant to assist women in escaping their abusive situations by removing the barrier that many victims face in refusing to leave without their animal. Since she left, I asked who the participants speak to if they come across a case where they suspect the link between humans and animal violence to be present, and most of the respondents named the marketing and public relations coordinator as their contact person; but a few named other managers that they tend to work with and keep updated with all their suspicious calls.

I asked each of the focus group participants if they had heard of the PAWS kennel and if they had any information on the progress of the project. With this question it became evident that there was a lack of communication and information among the officers with regard to Harbor House of Central Florida. A participant in the third focus group was under the impression that the PAWS kennel had been up and running for a few years now; others in the second focus group reported hearing that it would be up and running in the summer of 2012; some thought the idea of the kennel had died long ago; and then there were a few that did not know about the kennel.

Harbor House of Central Florida is not the only agency that has provided training regarding the link between human and animal violence. The link is also highlighted in the Florida Animal Control Association training that all animal control or animal service officers must complete in order to become an animal control officer in the state of Florida. Sandra, one of the managers who usually scheduled the trainings with Harbor House of Central Florida, also told me about a three-day national training that she had attended in Tampa, FL.

“Yea, it was uh, it was um, all the animal control agencies that were involved with Harbor House or have a woman abuse center in their area. It wasn’t just Florida, it was

nationally, so there were other states there. Um, there were law enforcement agencies there that worked with [animal service] agencies ... They went through a case and how the case played out and signs that the animal officer should have seen with the signs that the police should of seen and because their agencies weren't working together, the signs everybody missed that were going on in the house and the – consequences.”

In addition, Sandra mentioned that she had just completed her Three Levels of Cruelty Training offered as a professional development webinar by the ASPCA. “Level two touched on that ... domestic violence and animals.” The fact that participants had been exposed to the link in capacities other than Harbor House of Central Florida makes it difficult to determine how much information officers retained from the trainings by Harbor House of Central Florida. It's interesting to see that there are other agencies that recognize the link and have incorporated this relatively new dimension of violence into their curriculum. After determining the various trainings that officers and personnel have undergone regarding the link between human and animal violence, we began to speak specifically regarding the INVEST referral form and process.

INVEST Referrals

Many of the officers were not able to explain the INVEST referral process. In fact, one participant abruptly interrupted the conversation in the second focus group because he didn't know what we were talking about and was quite distressed that he was not informed about this responsibility and resource when he began working at OCAS. In all but the third focus group, there were participants who had not previously heard of the INVEST form or any formal relationship with Harbor House of Central Florida. Others were vaguely familiar with the form

but told me that after the division manager left nothing, in their view, had been done with the INVEST referral program.

One of the other managers that had been at OCAS with the former manager described it as an “application that we can fill out with the ... victim’s information on it and then um, they’re supposed to turn it in to our program manager, but like I said, she’s no longer here anymore. And then she would send it over to Harbor House, and they would contact the victim with the information we provided and see if she wanted help.” During the second focus group one of the participants excused herself for a few minutes to look for a copy of the INVEST form. When she returned with it, she made photocopies of the form for all the focus group participants and for myself. For many of the officers, this was the first time viewing the form.

The three-page community referral form inquired as to the name of the agency, name of the victim, address, phone number, sex, date of birth, race, employment status of the victim and their relationship with the perpetrator, if there are children in the home and if so how many, then the history of abuse. Then the same demographics were asked about the suspect. Respondents are asked to provide a description of the incident and why it was considered a potentially lethal case. The second page includes a domestic violence assessment checklist of 22 questions designed to identify risk factors, and the third page is a release of confidential information. Once completed, the form is to be faxed to Harbor House of Central Florida. After looking over the form, some officers in this focus group were concerned that the form was too long and inquired about information that they wouldn’t have access to without filling it out with the victim. Officers pointed out three things that would impede them in filling out the referrals completely.

The first was that officers were supposed to be filling out and filing these referrals once they returned to the office, which would mean that they would almost always forget to collect all the relevant information. Secondly, and more importantly, in order to fill out the INVEST referral, the officers would have to discuss the abuse with the suspected victim to get a history of the abuse and injuries, which could put them at risk and was out of the scope of their job responsibilities and capabilities. The third concern was the question on the INVEST form about why the officer considered a case to be potentially lethal. This question caused confusion as to whether OCAS officers were referring any incident in which they suspected domestic violence or just ones that they feared for the victim's life. At this point, participants didn't know that this same form is used by many different agencies that partner with Harbor House of Central Florida.

When inquiring about the INVEST referral process, some officers disclosed that they referred individuals to Harbor House Central Florida on their own, without an official process or protocol. Jackie said that when she came across a woman that she suspected was a victim of domestic violence, she would write Harbor House Central Florida's toll-free hotline number on the back of her OCAS business card and suggest that the woman might want to call the number. She felt that she was being safe because she wouldn't write Harbor House Central Florida or anything regarding domestic violence on the card, just the hotline number. A few of the officers thought that this was a good option that they could see themselves incorporating. They asked about the hotline and were pleased to hear that anyone could call in at anytime if they were concerned for their own safety or another's. Participants mentioned that since they worked the second shift, which was in the evening, it was difficult getting a hold of agencies and appreciated

that if they suspected something, they could possibly call the hotline themselves to speak to a trained advocate on how to proceed if they suspected domestic violence.

Providing Harbor House of Central Florida's hotline number on the back of the card, presented a few potential unforeseen consequences. First, suspected victims receiving the OCAS business card with HHCF's hotline number on it might not understand the officer's intent and might leave the card where the perpetrator could find it. Even if the victim understands and is aware that the number written down is Harbor House of Central Florida's and stores the card safely, the perpetrator might still find the card. In addition, having HHCF's hotline number written on the back of an OCAS officer's card could put them at risk, as well as other officers that might later respond to an animal welfare call but not be aware of the other forms of violence occurring in the house.

In the interviews I was able to ask participants who had previously filed INVEST referrals with Harbor House of Central Florida about the case, how they felt about the process, and the outcomes. The first participant I spoke to indicated that she responded to a call in which a rabbit was in a lake. It turned out that a young man had taken a rabbit in its cage and kicked it into a lake. Even though some people got it out right away, it died from the shock before the officer arrived. I asked what the legal classification of the action was, and she told me, "Yeah because they consider what he did to kick the cage, and the cage [fell] into the water and leaving it there as animal cruelty, but obviously it was more than just that. So we arrived there and asked. You start asking questions and you get the aspect of it's a boyfriend/girlfriend issue, and the more questions you ask you're like, 'Okay, this kid obviously has anger issues.'"

This case had come just one day after going to training on the link between human and animal violence and she thought, “Oh my god, this is by the book.” She began to ask about the relationship of the people involved and found out that “they were young, the girl was maybe 16. It was boyfriend/girlfriend and the kid was maybe 19, and then [the officer] learned a lot about the area where they lived in, especially the kid and his family's background. They were very well known. They weren't law abiding citizens, the family.” The officer received most of this information from the young lady's father. She found out that the young man had given his girlfriend a rabbit as a gift, but after they fought the day before, he sent her a text message after committing the act of kicking the rabbit into the lake. “He was dumb enough to text what he'd done to the rabbit: ‘Say bye-bye to the rabbit.’ And we learned from the class ... that a lot of abusers will take pride in what they do, and they'll text it, and if we ever have the opportunity take a picture of it, but lo and behold, we had a text where he admitted to all the stuff, so I started taking pictures, taking pictures of the father's cell phone.” With this information the officer spoke with her supervisor, and they felt that it was appropriate to fill out an INVEST form and refer the case to Harbor House of Central Florida. I asked if she felt that the training she received on the link between human and animal violence had helped her in navigating the case, and she was sure that it had. “If it wasn't for that training, I would have probably treated it as a regular animal that died. Yeah, it was kicked but I wouldn't have related it to a domestic violence kinda thing, which is not even animal abuse, because it wouldn't even qualify as animal abuse in my opinion.”

Once the link was established, or at least suspected, the officer contacted a manager and that person helped her fill out the INVEST form and contacted Harbor House of Central Florida

to submit the form to them. The officer indicated that the extra paperwork didn't take too much time, and she was pleased that Harbor House of Central Florida contacted the family. The young lady ended up staying with her parents and not utilizing Harbor House of Central Florida's resources. "It's a tough part of Orlando, it's trailer park area, and uh people that live there I'm sure they have quite a few weapons. And, they can take care of themselves; I think that's the father's mentality of the situation. You know, let him come to my property. But he got prosecuted, he was found guilty."

The officer disclosed that she was pleased with the outcome of the case and would feel comfortable filing another INVEST in the future. She added that even though the young lady decided not to go into shelter, at least Harbor House of Central Florida was notified and someone reached out and offered a safe place. She shared that many of the cases that she comes across are fairly heartbreaking and can take a toll on her emotional state but that it helps that she is close to a few other officers and has a supportive and close family that she can confide in and share her challenges.

The second participant described a case that was referred to Harbor House of Central Florida in which a dog actually bit a person twice within two month's time. She got a call that a male was the victim of a dog bite and went to talk with him, as she said officers usually do. "99% we go first to the reporter, and after that we make contact with the owner. So I went to speak with the reporter ... the person who opened the door, it was the roommate, the property owner. The [male who was bit] lived with this person so I told him I was there looking for him and I was there to respond to the bite from the incident that happened." The officer said that she

felt something was off from the beginning and found it highly irregular that the reporter would not come speak to her about being bit. After insisting that she needed to speak to the reporter in order to take his statement, the roommate told the officer that the reporter was drunk. The officer decided to speak with the roommate and take the roommate's statement since he had witnessed the incident. She told him, "Look, basically I just wanted to know what happened. And if I need to quarantine the animal at the house, I will do it, but it depends on exactly the circumstances."

The roommate finally told her,

"He went with him, the [male who was bit], he went to the lady's house, the dog owner ... well the dog owner put her dog, which is a chow mix, inside her bedroom and closed the door, unlocked. So [the male who was bit] opened the door and she many times told him to leave the dog alone, so the dog was getting nervous and running away from him. She grabbed the dog and put it inside the crate in her bedroom. And she, this time she locked the door, and she left the key somewhere in the kitchen. Meanwhile, she was talking with the friend I was talking to, and [the male who was bit] found the key and went and opened the bedroom, opened the gate the crate and let the dog out. So he was chasing the dog, the dog was running away from him, and [at] some point the victim was with the dog in the living room ... then suddenly they heard a growl, kinda like it was no growl; it was something that was different. Both of them they went to the living room, and the dog bit him, bit him right here on the ear. So what the dog did was basically bit just letting him know, 'leave me alone.' [The dog] immediately went to a corner. So he said 'No,' it's not the dog's fault."

The roommate told the officer that the man that was bit came back to the woman's house after drinking heavily. He began fighting with the woman, and the man's roommate said that he had to step in before the man physically hit the woman. At this point the officer went to the woman who owned the dog to hear her side of the story, which was almost verbatim to the roommate's story. At this time the woman said that she hardly knew the man that was bit by her

dog and that they weren't romantically involved. The officer decided that since the dog was defending itself that she wouldn't take the dog, but rather quarantine the dog in the house.

Then between 30 to 60 days later, the officer received another call about the same dog. It turns out that the same man who was now bit a second time by the same dog had moved and now lived only a few blocks from the woman who owned the dog. The officer went to speak with the woman who owned the dog and admitted that she was very frustrated with her. "I got upset because what I told her, and I said, 'I spent two hours, almost three hours, talking to you and exactly what I was telling you to avoid, so you didn't listen what I was telling you, so look now. The dog bit this guy again. And, I told you the one that's going to pay for it is the poor dog.'" At this point the woman finally disclosed that she was romantically involved with the man and that he was abusing her. The woman had visible bruises in varying coloring implying that she had been attacked on more than one occasion. The woman confided that she was fearful of her boyfriend and that he had also abused her dog. The officer, now understanding that the dog was trying to protect its owner and itself, felt a great deal of sympathy for the dog but believed that the woman was putting herself and her dog in danger. The officer told the woman,

"I told you to avoid the situation because the one who is going to pay for it is going to be your dog ... I don't feel comfortable with you, so I'm taking the dog with me. At least I know in ten days I know the dog is not going to engage in another bite or something worse than that. I said to her, 'You have ten days just to evaluate what is going on here, what happened to you, what's going to happen with your dog, and to make a determination or decision, you know, what is going to be your future after ten days.'"

At this point the officer took the dog and brought it to OCAS to be quarantined for ten days before its owner could retrieve the dog. After speaking to her supervisor about the case and the abuse that the officer had just learned about, the supervisor suggested that the officer go back

out to see the woman and take pictures of her bruises in case the boyfriend decided to press charges for the bites he had received from the dog and demand that the dog be destroyed or killed. So the officer went back to the woman's house and brought information about Harbor House of Central Florida and asked if she could take pictures of the bruises. The woman was hesitant at first and said she was uncomfortable about having pictures taken of her, but the officer kept reminding her that her dog couldn't talk, could not tell its side of the story. The officer said the pictures would collaborate the dog owner's testimony that the dog was only trying to protect her in case her boyfriend went through with filing a dangerous dog complaint. The officer described the bruises as "black bluish, both colors, ... and they were big. I mean he really hit her hard, and she's skinny ... and this guy, I mean, I can't imagine with the alcohol and hitting her what the alcohol would do." The officer also tried to give the woman information about Harbor House of Central Florida and their hotline number, but the woman declined the pamphlets and said that she didn't need them.

I asked the officer if she knew what happened with the case, and she replied that she did not know. The last thing that she was involved in was bringing the dog to OCAS and taking the pictures and then giving them to her supervisor. She explained that she did not know what happened to the dog after the ten days of being quarantined and if its owner picked up the dog. The officer preferred having some emotional distance from such cases as a coping mechanism. I then asked about the INVEST process and learned that the officer, in fact, had not filled out and filed the INVEST referral form but assumed that her supervisor was the one that worked with Harbor House of Central Florida. In addition, the officer was not aware if Harbor House of Central Florida ever contacted the woman and if she received help. When asked about the entire

experience and process, the officer said that she found it frustrating, “so frustrating, not with the process, I was frustrated with [the woman].”

Lastly, I asked if the officer would be willing to file INVEST referrals with Harbor House of Central Florida if she suspected instances of domestic violence, and she responded in the affirmative. The officer felt that trainings on the link between human and animal violence were beneficial and relevant to animal service officers, although she expressed concern that officers would not view this type of work (helping possible victims of domestic violence) as part of their job. During the interview the officer stated many times that her first priority must always be to the animal and the case dealing with the animal. This was evident in the fact that she would refer to the abusive boyfriend that was bit by the dog as the “victim” and the woman who owned the dog and was being abused as the “dog owner.”

Although I was not able to speak with the other two officers that were involved in filing INVEST referrals to Harbor House of Central Florida, I was able to get a little background information from the officer from the first interview. She said that there was one incident in which the police and OCAS responded to a call together. It turned out that the woman and her boyfriend were fighting. Then he grabbed their kitten and began punching it in the head. A neighbor saw this and called the police, who immediately contacted Orange County Animal Services. The OCAS officer was the first one to the residence and waited for the police to arrive to approach the house. When the police arrived, they found the woman “in the house naked with bruises all up her arms, her chest, her back and everything and the deputy asked her to put some clothes on and she looked and said ‘I’m not allowed to put clothes on.’” Her boyfriend was not

at the residence at the time, so the police officers stayed with her and Harbor House of Central Florida was called right away to request an advocate to come and assist the woman.

The officer went on to talk about a fourth case of domestic violence. It was not clear if the relationship between the perpetrator and victim was boyfriend and girlfriend or son and mother, but in any case she was quite confident that Harbor House of Central Florida was notified about the case. Orange County Animal Services was called out by the police department to investigate a possible case of animal abuse. The officer recorded,

“I don't know his reason behind it, but [the woman] had a golden retriever and [the man] was basically torturing this dog in front of her and somehow she managed to call 911, well it was a 911 hang up type thing. Well, they came and they opened the door. The guy had a little bit of blood on him. [The police officer] looked over the guy's shoulder and he saw the lady, the mother/girlfriend I don't know. She lipiped ‘Help me.’ So [the police officer] left, called for backup and came back and the guy took off. But he was threatening, if she was to leave him, to cut the dog's ears, and looked like he had injuries on him. So he was arrested and charged; he was sent to jail and then he was released on probation. And one of the things when we charge you for neglect we put a stipulation in there for the individual not to own animals or be around any animals, so the judge agreed to that. Sure enough, he decided to go back to his mother/girlfriend whoever. The dog is there. We ended up getting a call from the mailman (think it was the mailman) because the lady came out and said something to the mailman so he ended up calling the sheriff's department. Sure enough the dog's there, they find illegal drugs, he locked himself in the closet, and he ended up getting bitten by the K9 dog. ... They ended up re-arresting him again, and um they charged him with violation of his probation. And the other thing we impounded the animal. We told the lady we will release the dog to you, but you can't go back if he is at the house. You can't bring the dog back to the house and you can't allow this man back into the house. So he's in jail.”

These four cases demonstrate both the presence of the link between human and animal violence and the seriousness of cases that officers come across involving domestic violence.

Moving Forward

OCAS officers and personnel were asked if they felt that the training they received from Harbor House of Central Florida and the INVEST referral was worth continuing and strengthening, and overwhelmingly they responded in the affirmative. Officers said that this could be a very meaningful relationship and were willing to do their part to be trained, to discuss strategies when dealing with possible victims of domestic violence, and to refer cases using the INVEST program. They continuously stated that they view themselves as the first responders and hence, in a perfect position to help potential victims both animals and humans. Jackson highlighted the desire to reinstate the trainings from Harbor House of Central Florida. “It would be nice to establish a connection to get that training back up and going because even though [the division manager is] no longer here, obviously the officers are still interested in it because we usually are the first responders out there and they do see it on some level. To get the training back going again would be great.” There were a few suggestions regarding how future trainings should be organized, but the consensus was that officers were flexible with whatever worked best for the manager that had to do the scheduling and Harbor House of Central Florida, just as long as trainings would begin again. “I mean even if they did it quarterly, that's still enough of a refresher.” They were also open to going through the same training multiple times as refresher classes since there is so much content to cover and information might be more relevant based on new cases that officers have worked. “We might not pick up on one thing during a training; we might do it the next but that continual refresher always helps.”

Discussion

It is essential to build upon this relationship between Orange County Animal Services and Harbor House of Central Florida with trainings centered on how to recognize and identify possible human victims, how to interact with victims and perpetrators of domestic violence, and what steps to take after cases have been identified, such as filing an INVEST referral. This clearly indicates how important it is for the relationship between OCAS and Harbor House of Central Florida to be stronger. Ongoing trainings need to continue so that trained victim advocates can discuss possible solutions to situations and safety planning with officers to try to ensure that the situation does not escalate when they intervene.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Speaking with officers and personnel about their daily tasks and responsibilities gave me a great appreciation for the amount of work that they do and the many different “hats” they wear dealing with the variety of cases that they handle: making judgment calls, relating to others in varying ways, handling neighborly disputes, and summoning the strength that is needed to face heart-wrenching scenarios they come across on any given day. For example, they have had to respond to a call of a dog that has been locked in a car for hours while their owner is at Disney, and the dog did not make it. Other cases involve a call about animals on the side of the road that have been hit by a car. They experience the frustration of having to track the declining health of two cats that have been abandoned in a house for 30 days until the case is urgent enough to receive a warrant to enter the house because the cats are near death. With frustrating and taxing cases such as these, it’s important to be mindful of the stresses that Orange County Animal Services officers currently are experiencing when considering renewing and strengthen the trainings they receive regarding domestic violence.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the attitudes and knowledge of animal service officers and to examine if training on domestic violence changes the way officers performs their duties. Secondly, the study sought to evaluate the training on domestic violence and the INVEST referral program between Orange County Animal Services and Harbor House of Central Florida. Through the focus groups it became evident that officers haven’t had much training on the link between human and animal violence over the past two years. Hence, the focus groups became more about reinstating the training that Harbor House of Central Florida

had once provided and the INVEST referral program. Based on the participants' responses, it is evident that OCAS officers understand the link between human and animal violence and can see this link in their cases. Officers view training on domestic violence as relevant to their job and a way to ensure more victims will be helped if officers are equipped to recognize cases of domestic violence so they can refer them to the local domestic violence shelter. The following prioritized recommendations are meant to aid in the strengthening of the relationship between Orange County Animal Services and Harbor House of Central Florida.

The first recommendation is to officially establish a point of contact at Orange County Animal Services and Harbor House of Central Florida. It is important that officers at OCAS feel in the loop with the initiative. For example, the PAWS kennel or public trainings on the link between human and violence abuse. This way officers that have questions about services or other resources that are relevant to Harbor House of Central Florida will know where to receive accurate, up-to-date information or, at least, who would have the most updated information. This title should be placed under the responsibility of one of the managerial positions at OCAS, instead of simply allowing interest parties to take on the task since the relationship seems to suffer once that person leaves the agency. The second and third recommendations are for the two agencies to commit to holding quarterly trainings in which Harbor House of Central Florida travels to Orange County Animal Services and provides 60-90 minute trainings on how to recognize domestic violence, how to deal with the victim and perpetrator. Officers were adamant that future trainings should be at least 60 minutes to ensure that they are able to be better equipped to recognize domestic violence, fully understand how to fill out the INVEST referral forms, and that officers have some time to ask questions. It is also important for Harbor

House of Central Florida to hear feedback from officers on how the process is going and what additional support they might need. Officers need to feel comfortable with the INVEST form, understand what information on the form is essential for them to fill out, and be knowledgeable about what happens after a referral is made even if they are not always informed about the outcome of a case involving domestic violence. Currently, officers weren't sure of Harbor House of Central Florida's protocol after a referral was made and if they are equipped to help victims of varying backgrounds, ages, sexual orientations, and so on which might impede officers in contacting the domestic violence agency. The fourth recommendation is to revise the INVEST form to include only information that is relevant to OCAS. With a revised form officers will easily understand what information is needed in order for a referral to be filed and accepted by HHCF.

The fifth recommendation goes along with the second and third regarding the trainings that officers receive. Given the many distractions that officers can face in the hectic environment around the office, it is recommended that all trainings be held in the smaller board meeting room with fewer officers. The majority of the officers responded that they learned more at the longer trainings that Harbor House of Central Florida hosted in downtown, Orlando FL, but felt that it was more important to get all the officers trained and on the same page rather than waiting six months for a day-long training with a distinguished guest speaker that only a handful of officers could attend.

Three officers who were not employed with OCAS when Harbor House of Central Florida provided training were troubled to learn that they had a responsibility to aid victims of

domestic violence but had never been informed of this process. So the sixth recommendation is to create a protocol sheet that all new hires will receive who are in the field or work as an administrator, which will describe the link between human and animal violence, the relationship between Orange County Animal Services and Harbor House of Central Florida, and the INVEST referral process. The seventh recommendation is to explore the possibility of implementing a cross-reporting system that would entail Harbor House of Central Florida notifying Orange County Animal Services when a victim of domestic violence indicates that they have an animal at home that has been abused by the perpetrator. Of course, if this is a possibility the victim would have to consent to contacting OCAS to ensure that they are empowered by the process of being at HHCF.

The eighth and ninth recommendations are tasks that the key contact person at OCAS would head. Officers requested that there be someone in charge of updating them on new programs, initiatives, and services regarding the link between human and animal violence. One aspect that officers would like to be kept updated on is the progress of the PAWS kennel that Harbor House of Central Florida is in the process of building. The ninth recommendation is to create a calendar with trainings and events that Harbor House of Central Florida will be hosting in the future, as well as information on the link between human and animal violence, and for INVEST referrals forms to be readily available in a set location. And lastly, the tenth recommendation is to conduct a more thorough evaluation of the training that Harbor House of Central Florida provides a year after rotating trainings have been implemented and all the officers have been reintroduced to the INVEST referral process.

Recommendations

- 1) Establish a single contact person at Harbor House of Central Florida and Orange County Animal Services
- 2) Set up quarterly trainings provided by Harbor House of Central Florida in which animal service officers are rotated through to ensure that all officers receive training on the link between human and animal violence
- 3) Trainings that Harbor House of Central Florida provide should include identifying domestic violence, dealing with victims and perpetrators
- 4) Update the INVEST for with only information relevant to OCAS
- 5) Hold smaller, more intimate training with between six to ten officers in the board meeting room
- 6) Create a protocol document for new animal service officers
- 7) Examine any possibility of creating a cross-reporting system in which Harbor House of Central Florida would contact Orange County Animal Services if a person at their shelter indicated that they had an animal at home that was being abused by the perpetrator
- 8) Have a procedure to update officers on Harbor House of Central Florida's initiatives regarding the link

9) Create a calendar of public Harbor House of Central Florida trainings, as well as events regarding the link, such as *Paws For Peace*

10) Plan to evaluate the training on domestic violence and INVEST referral program one year after regular trainings have been implemented

**APPENDIX A: INTIMATE VIOLENCE ENHANCED SERVICES TEAM
(INVESTeam) COMMUNITY REFERRAL FORM**

HarborHouse

of Central Florida

INVESTeam

INtimate Violence Enhanced Services Team

Community Referral form

AGENCY NAME: _____
VICTIM NAME: _____
Street Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____
Zip Code: _____ Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____
Female ☐ Male ☐ Date of Birth: _____ Race: _____
Unemployed ☐ Employed ☐ Job Title: _____
Place of Work: _____ Work Phone: _____

Relationship to Abuser:

- ☐ Married and Living w/ Abuser
- ☐ Married and Separated
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Dating and Living w/ Abuser
- ☐ Dating
- ☐ Previous Relationship
- ☐ Co-Parents
- ☐ Other

Children in Household: Y / N

Number of Children: _____
Age of Youngest: _____
Age of Oldest: _____

History of Abuse:

- ☐ Recent Police Reports
- ☐ Previous Injunctions
- ☐ Arrest(s)
- ☐ Abuser on Probation
- ☐ Abuser on Parole

SUSPECT NAME: _____
Street Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____
Zip Code: _____ Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____
Female ☐ Male ☐ Date of Birth: _____ Race: _____
Unemployed ☐ Employed ☐ Job Title: _____
Place of Work: _____ Work Phone: _____
Proximity to abuser: Same house ___ Same block ___ W/i 1 mile ___ 1-5 miles ___ 5+ miles ___

What makes this case lethal? Please describe the recent incident(s):

Domestic Violence Threat Level Assessment Checklist for Agencies		
Victim (Last, First, Middle Initial)		Date
Suspect (Last, First, Middle Initial)		Report #
Referring Agency	Contact Person	Phone

Following are the risk factors associated with domestic homicides. Several "yes" answers will indicate that the level of violence may be escalating and particular notice and care should be taken when dealing with the batterer and the victim.

	Is this a current or previous intimate relationship? For example; married, divorced, lived Together, child in common, current or former boyfriend/girlfriend) IF NO, completion of the checklist and referral to INVESTeam is inappropriate.	Yes	No	N/A	UK
1	Has your partner ever physically harmed you? If yes, how often? <input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 times <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 times <input type="checkbox"/> 11 or more times				
2	Has the physical harm become more serious over the past year?				
3	Has the physical violence been happening more often over the past year?				
4	Have you recently separated from or talked about leaving your partner?				
5	Has your partner ever threatened or attempted suicide?				
6	Is there a firearm in the house or accessible to your partner?				
7	Do you believe your partner will kill you?				
8	Has your partner ever told you how they plan to kill you?				
9	Has your partner ever tried to strangle you?				
10	Has your partner ever been diagnosed with a mental illness?				
11	Has your partner ever been Baker Acted or committed to a mental health facility?				
12	Has your partner ever threatened you with a weapon? If yes, please circle which type: Knife Gun Other:				
13	Has your partner ever used a weapon to harm you?				
14	Has your partner been stalking, following, or watching you?				
15	Has your partner been violent toward or threaten to harm your children?				
16	Does your partner control all or most of your daily activities?				
17	Does your partner have a history of domestic violence against other partners?				
18	Has your partner been violent towards or threaten to harm your pets?				
19	Does your partner act out violently in front of others?				
20	Does your partner get drunk or high on a regular basis?				
21	Has your partner been significantly stressed lately (job loss, loss of loved one, recent arrest, etc...)?				
22	Is your partner violently and constantly jealous of you (i.e. Does your partner say "If I can't have you no one will")?				

Please check all actions taken against you by the suspect:

	In the Past	Last 6 Months		In the Past	Last 6 Months
a. Attempted to hit with car	_____	_____	f. Hit in the stomach while pregnant	_____	_____
b. Burned	_____	_____	g. Thrown down steps	_____	_____
c. Received broken bones	_____	_____	h. Held against your will	_____	_____
d. Put in the hospital	_____	_____	i. Stabbed or cut	_____	_____
e. Shot	_____	_____	j. forced to have sex	_____	_____

Please complete all forms and fax to INVESTeam at 407-423-2266.

HarborHouse

of Central Florida

Release of Confidential Information

I hereby authorize release of this threat assessment form between the referring agency, _____, and the INVESTeam (Harbor House, Orange County Sherriff's Office, Orlando Police Department, and INVESTeam management staff) including, but not limited to, communication and correspondence among employees associated with said institutions. This release is only for the purpose of coordinating services and sharing related information between these entities. This release also authorizes exchange of information between the referring agency and the INVESTeam by telephone or facsimile communication. I understand that this release may lead to further law enforcement intervention on my behalf, to include background checks on both myself and the perpetrator. In consideration of such disclosure on your part, I hereby release you from any liability arising from said disclosure.

Client Signature: _____

Date: _____

Witness Signature: _____

Date: _____

This Release of information expires on _____ Date: _____

(This release shall expire ninety days from the date of authorization.)

APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. How long have you worked for Orange County Animal Services?
2. What are your daily tasks/responsibilities?
3. What is your understanding of the link between human and animal abuse?
4. What trainings from Harbor House have you received? Others?
5. What do you think about these trainings being mandatory?
6. Does each officer attend every training? How is information disseminated?
7. Do you feel prepared when investigating cases and confident in identifying domestic violence?
8. Have you changed the way you approach cases since receiving training on domestic violence?
How?
9. What is the procedure for filing a referral to House or Department of Children & Families?
10. Do you feel that more trainings and/or support are needed?

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What case did you refer to Harbor House?
2. How did you get involved in the case?
3. Can you describe the case?
4. What made you decide to file the referral?
5. What are your thoughts on the referral process?
6. How comfortable were you in filing the referral with Harbor House?
7. Do you know how the case resolved?
8. Do you think you would make another referral to Harbor House if you suspected abuse within the home?

**APPENDIX D: ORANGE COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES APPROVAL
LETTER**



ANIMAL SERVICES

2769 Conroy Rd. • Orlando, Florida 32839-2162
407-254-9150 • Fax 407-355-5749
email: animalservices@ocfl.net
www.ocnetpets.com

To Whom It May Concern,

I, Dil Luther, Division Manager of Orange County Animal Services, grant UCF M.A. Applied Sociology Student Abigail M. Malick permission to conduct interviews of Animal Control Officers at 2769 Conroy Road Orlando, FL 32839-2162 in January and February 2012. The interview results will be used solely for the purpose of obtaining information regarding domestic violence and animal abuse for her master's program thesis.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dil Luther", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Dil Luther
Division Manager
407-254-9145
Dil.Luther@ocfl.net

APPENDIX E: IRB APPROVAL LETTER



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: **Abigail M. Malick**

Date: **January 23, 2012**

Dear Researcher:

On 1/23/2012, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	Exempt Determination
Project Title:	Evaluation of Domestic Violence Training to Animal Control Officers
Investigator:	Abigail M. Malick
IRB Number:	SBE-12-08158
Funding Agency:	
Grant Title:	
Research ID:	N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 01/23/2012 12:39:28 PM EST

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne Muratori".

IRB Coordinator

APPENDIX F: IRB APPROVAL LETTER FOR MODIFICATIONS



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: **Abigail M. Malick**

Date: **March 09, 2012**

Dear Researcher:

On 3/9/2012, the IRB approved the following minor modifications to human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	Exempt Determination
Modification Type:	Instead of separate interviews of animal control officers, four focus groups (5-8) participants will be conducted. In addition, four officers who have made referrals to Harbor House will be interviewed. Interview questions remain the same. Revised consent documents have been approved for use.
Project Title:	Evaluation of Domestic Violence Training to Animal Control Officers
Investigator:	Abigail M. Malick
IRB Number:	SBE-12-08158
Funding Agency:	
Grant Title:	
Research ID:	N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 03/09/2012 02:15:35 PM EST

IRB Coordinator

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