



IAHAIO's position statement regarding domestic violence and related animal abuse

IAHAIO acknowledges the link between domestic violence and animal abuse.

IAHAIO supports the provision of public education, training for professionals, academic research and the promotion of effective and compassionate interdisciplinary partnerships that collaborate with a view to minimising the incidence of domestic violence and animal abuse in all its forms.

Caring for the human-animal connection

IAHAIO maintains that there is an inseparable connection between people and animals. IAHAIO upholds the humane treatment and responsible care of animals throughout society, and recognises that responsible care of animals is a source of well-being and enrichment for people and animals alike.

Since the 1980's, researchers and professionals in a variety of human services and animal welfare disciplines have identified that there are significant correlations between abuse of animals and abuse of children, the elderly, and an intimate partner in situations of domestic violence. Studies have also shown that in addition to the deaths, injuries and emotional traumas experienced by animals that are targeted by abusers exercising coercive control over their human victims, the actual or threat of harm to the animals are significant barriers preventing these victims from leaving the abusive environment.

In instances where animals are subjected to neglect, ill-treatment and cruelty, then IAHAIO maintains that the needs of the individual (animals and people), the community, and wider society benefit from the assistance of professionals, organisations and support systems that are able to respond knowledgeably, compassionately and effectively.

IAHAIO maintains that abuse against human and non-human animals is unacceptable. IAHAIO acknowledges that the causes of abuse and violence are many and varied. IAHAIO maintains that it is critical to understand and recognise individual and societal factors that create risks associated with violence and abuse, in order to prevent, mitigate and resolve the detrimental costs of abuse to people and animals. Seeking to understand factors that shape and create risk for the development of violence and abuse is not intended to excuse or mitigate personal responsibility for anti-social or criminal behaviours.

Many professionals and organisations recognize their important roles and responsibilities to detect, report and assist in cases of domestic violence and animal abuse. However, those same professionals

and organisations also face considerable barriers which complicate their ability to fulfil their professional role in responding to such cases.

In recognition of the legal, ethical, safety, training and economic barriers to effective detection, reporting, and reduction of human and animal abuse, IAHAIO supports in principle, the continued development of practical initiatives to reduce those barriers.

Solving issues of domestic violence and animal abuse

IAHAIO recognises that complex societal challenges, like the prevention of abuse involving people and animals, require integrated solutions to be developed amongst multiple stakeholders functioning at local, national and international levels.

IAHAIO supports the following objectives as warranting continued attention with a view to further developing integrative solutions and collaborative initiatives:

1. Increased understanding, identification and capacity building developed through the provision of education, cross training and provision of practical resources; and
2. Implementation of informed, practical and compassionate intervention systems in terms of (a) human services and animal welfare standards, (b) support systems that contain, educate and rehabilitate the abuser, and (c) provide practical protections for victims including, for example, shelters for people and animals who are either at-risk or victims of abuse; and
3. Development of public policy and law that implement initiatives which include (a) development of professional ethical obligations mandating reporting of suspected abuse, with (b) legislative protections providing immunity from civil and criminal liability for those who report suspected abuse to the appropriate authorities, and (c) the inclusion of pets on legal instruments providing protections to victims of abuse; and
4. Further research with the objective of identifying factors that prevent, mitigate, and compassionately assist all those involved in the circle of violence. Areas for research include, for example, child welfare, human-animal studies, sociology, criminology, psychology, social work, and human and veterinary medicine.

For further information on IAHAIO visit <http://iahaio.org/new/>

For a list of organisations, links and resources on the subject of domestic violence and animal abuse visit <http://nationallinkcoalition.org/resources/articles-research>