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Lisa Jane Bruce
The University of Montana

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PET ADVOCATE PROGRAM FOR THE HOMELESS IN MISSOULA, MT

By

LISA JANE BRUCE

Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, The University of Montana, Missoula, MT 2008

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Approved by:

Sandy Ross, Dean of The Graduate School
Graduate School

Daniel P. Doyle, Chair
Sociology Department

June Ellestad
Sociology Department

Stacey Gordon
School of Law

ABSTRACT

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Pet Advocate Program for the Homeless in Missoula, MT

Chairperson: Daniel P. Doyle

Studies have shown the importance of the relationship that homeless individuals, including victims of domestic violence, have with their pets. This relationship can often create a barrier to accessing emergency shelters since not many shelters accept pets. This paper examines the need to create a community-wide program in Missoula, MT which provides a way to house pets while their owners access emergency shelters. The final section of this paper proposes a “Pet Advocate Program” that could be adopted by the Humane Society of Western Montana.

Companion animals, or pets, are prevalent in American households. They are quite often viewed as members of the family and are treated as such. For some owners, pets offer companionship, comfort, and love that the owner cannot gain elsewhere. Depending on the relationship between the owner and their pet, the owner may even put the pet's needs in front of his or her own. This relationship is complex and cannot be understood by everyone. Sociologists and other researchers have begun to explore this relationship to determine why owners feel so attached to their pets and why they would put their pet's needs first.

Albert and Bulcroft (1988) conducted a study examining the importance of pets in the American household. The researchers conducted telephone interviews in Rhode Island with 320 pet owners and 116 non pet owners. They examined pet ownership through a number of variables including age, marital status, income, and family life cycle stage. They found attachment to pets was highest among never married, divorced, and widowed people. The majority of those who owned a pet considered their pet a member of the family. People who were never married or who divorced even applied human characteristics to their pets (pet anthropomorphism). "Attachment to pets was greatest in families where there is a limited number of significant others to function as source of support and affection..." (Albert and Bulcroft 1988:547).

An interesting population studied in this area is homeless individuals. There seems to be a unique relationship between individuals who are homeless and their pets. Some homeless individuals refuse to give up their pets, even if it means they must live on the street rather than stay in a homeless shelter. Someone looking from the outside may think this individual is mentally ill or is being irresponsible and selfish. However, if you look more closely into this complex relationship, it may reveal that the homeless individual is doing the opposite.

A main cause of homelessness among women is domestic violence. Women fleeing an abusive relationship often do not have another home to flee to and consequently enter a domestic violence shelter. Many domestic violence shelters, like homeless shelters, do not accept pets. Many studies have shown that women delay leaving an abusive relationship if they cannot take their pets with them.

The purpose of this project is to assess the need for a community-wide pet advocate program in Missoula, MT for the homeless accessing emergency shelters. Creating a community-wide program that could be extended to every emergency shelter in Missoula, MT removes one barrier to homeless individuals and prevents pets from being given up for adoption or abandoned.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will discuss the major themes found in the literature regarding human relationships with pets. Specifically, it will focus on the relationship that homeless individuals, including victims of domestic violence, have with their pets. For this project and literature review, victims of domestic violence are categorized as homeless because the research discussed focuses on victims in domestic violence shelters. The major themes discussed in this literature review will be: (1) pets offer a source of comfort and unconditional love that their owner may not be able to find elsewhere; (2) pets give owners a sense of responsibility; and (3) pets are sometimes abused in domestic violence relationships and victims have delayed leaving the abusive relationship if they cannot take their pet with them.

Pets offer a source of comfort and unconditional love

Pets are prevalent in American households today and in most cases, those pets are viewed as members of the family (Albert and Bulcroft 1988; Fitzgerald 2007; Flynn 2000b; Flynn 2001).

Pets serve a number of functions in households including “a relaxing buffer from stressful life events, companionship, protection, unconditional love, and a sense of responsibility in a way that promotes physical and psychological health” (Cunningham 1995:90). Pets may even serve as emotional substitutes for other family members.

Pets offer a source of love and companionship that may be unavailable elsewhere. A homeless individual may feel isolated from the general population due to his or her current situation. A pet can provide the comfort needed to deal with the stressful situation of homelessness. Homeless individuals’ attachment to their pets is stronger than those of the general population (Cronley and Strand 2009). The owner develops a unique attachment to the pet while coping with the many factors associated with homelessness. In a study by Kidd and Kidd (1994), the researchers interviewed 105 homeless individuals, 52 of whom owned pets. Of the 52 pet owning homeless individuals, 32 of those individuals “declared that their pets were their only source of companionship and love” (Kidd and Kidd 1994:718).

For victims of domestic violence, their pets become their surrogate family (Flynn 2000a; Flynn 2001). Their abusive partner may have isolated them from family, friends, and the outside world, and their pet becomes the only constant in their life. Pets offer a source of comfort, affection, and unconditional love that the victim cannot seek elsewhere (Ascione 1998; Cronley and Strand 2009; Flynn 2000a). Flynn (2000a) conducted a study in South Carolina where he surveyed 107 women at a domestic violence shelter. Of the women who owned pets at some point during the abusive relationship, 73.2% reported their pets to be a source of emotional support. This source of comfort can help the victim cope with the abuse, regardless of whether or not the pet is being abused (Flynn 2000a).

A recent study found that having a pet affected a victim's desire to commit suicide. Fitzgerald (2007) examined the relationship between abused women who have pets and their decisions to not commit suicide. In her study, she interviewed 26 abused women who owned pets at some point during their abusive relationship. She found that pets were viewed as a source of protection and support as "fellow sufferers" and pets were viewed as a "lifeline" in considering decisions of suicide. Women didn't commit suicide for two main reasons: they felt a sense of responsibility to their pet and worried about who would take care of their pets; and because of the emotional comfort and social support their pets provided.

Pets "stand as silent witnesses to our behavior" (Irvine 2013:21). This is especially important for homeless individuals. In homelessness, people may be forced to make difficult decisions that they would be ashamed of. Pets will stand next to their owners and not criticize them for their behavior. Pets do not make their owners feel bad if they relapse on drugs or alcohol. Pets offer the love and comfort needed to cope with difficult situations, but don't judge the owner for being in that difficult situation. This source of non-judgment is important for homeless individuals to keep going day to day. They can look at their pet and know that at least one "person" is by their side, supporting them in their decisions.

Pets give owners a sense of responsibility

Caring for a pet offers a sense of responsibility to the pet owner. This concept can keep a homeless person "going" day to day because he or she feels the need to fulfill their responsibility to the animal. Their pet cannot care for itself if the owner is not around or taking on that responsibility. It gives the owner purpose to their life (Fitzgerald 2007).

Cronley and Strand (2009) used quantitative methods to analyze data from a homeless management information system (HMIS). The research compared the demographics of homeless

individuals who answered yes and no to the question “Do you have animals that you currently care for?” In their literature review, the researchers cited other studies that showed how important the human-animal relationship is to homeless individuals. For homeless individuals, animals offer love, companionship, a sense of responsibility, protection, and emotional comfort. Their analysis found that out of a sample of 4100 homeless individuals, 5.5% reported being the caretaker of an animal. A significant proportion of those who reported being an animal caretaker were female, homeless for the first time, and reported being homeless due to domestic violence (Cronley and Strand 2009).

Irvine (2013) found that some homeless individuals even stopped themselves from committing suicide because they worried who would care for their pet when they were gone. The owners felt they needed to stay alive to care for their pet who had been there for them through these difficult times of coping with homelessness. Pet owners have also reported that they avoided abusing substances or sought lifesaving medical treatments due to the sense of responsibility to the pet (Irvine 2013; Cronley and Strand 2009).

This sense of responsibility to care for the pet is one reason homeless individuals may not seek emergency shelter. If they cannot bring their pet into shelter with them, they may worry about who will care for their pet and feel that they need to stay on the street to be the one to care for their pet. Leaving a pet behind to enter shelter can create feelings of guilt, stress, and anxiety in the owner.

In 2006, the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act was signed into law after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. The act requires states to have a plan in place to save pets during disasters. This act was developed because during Hurricane Katrina, people were putting

their lives at risk to save their pets (Leonard and Scammon 2007). The owners felt they were responsible for their pet's safety and needed to make sure they were taken care of.

Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse

Several studies have found that pets are abused in domestic violence relationships. It is theorized that abusers will threaten to harm pets or actually harm pets as a way to gain power and control over the victim. The literature discussed focuses only on domestic violence victims who are women. Although men can also be victims of domestic violence, the body of literature researching this is very small.

Studies have shown that anywhere from 46% to 71% of victims who were in domestic violence shelters reported that their partners had threatened to harm or actually harmed their pets (Carlisle-Frank, Frank, and Nielsen 2004; Ascione 1998; Faver and Strand 2003; Ascione, et al. 2007; Flynn 2000a). These statistics were shown to be higher in rural areas than urban areas. This could be because rural women are more likely to develop an emotional attachment to their pets because they are more geographically isolated and therefore they are more likely to stay for their pets (Faver and Strand 2003). Ascione, Weber, and Wood (1997) conducted a nation-wide study, surveying the largest shelter in each state (excluding Utah) and District of Columbia. They reported that 85.4% of the shelters surveyed reported that women who entered their shelter talked about incidents of pet abuse.

To avoid generalization of all abusers, it is important to recognize that not every abuser abuses pets. Carlisle-Frank, Frank, and Nielsen (2004) examined the attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs of abusers who abused pets and compared those to the abusers who did not abuse pets. Abusers who abuse pets were more likely to view pets as a scapegoat for other problems in their lives and were easily set off by life stressors. Pets were more often viewed as property rather

than family members and abusers believe they are superior to the pet (Carlisle-Frank, Frank, and Nielsen 2004). These characteristics of abusers who abuse pets can also be applied to abusers in general, explaining why they abuse their female partners.

While in the abusive relationship, victims often worry about the pet's safety, even if the pet has not been abused. Because the pet is often the only source of emotional support and unconditional love, worrying about the pet can create additional stress for the victim. Strand and Faver (2005) asked domestic violence victims about the worry they had about their pet both within the abusive relationship and after they had left. The researchers surveyed 51 women at a domestic violence shelter. They reported that 84% of the women owned a pet at some point during the abusive relationship. Of those women, 91% worried about the safety of their pet while in the abusive relationship. They also reported that 100% of those women whose pets had actually been abused worried about the pet's safety while in the abusive relationship (Strand and Faver 2005).

If the victim has a pet that has been abused or threatened by the abusive partner, she may delay leaving due to fear for the safety the pet. The victim is not always able to take the pet with her and she is faced with making the difficult decision of leaving the pet behind or delay leaving until she can find a place for the pet. Oftentimes domestic violence shelters will not accept pets or do not have a way to house pets (Ascione, Weber, and Wood 1997). It has been reported that 18% to 48% of women delayed leaving the abusive relationship due to fear for the safety of their pets (Carlisle-Frank, Frank, and Nielsen 2004; Ascione 1998; Faver and Strand 2003; Ascione, et al. 2007; Flynn 2000a; Flynn 2000b).

The victim often continues to worry about her pet's safety if she had to leave the pet behind when leaving the abusive relationship. This creates additional stress for the victim, who is likely

already experiencing a significant amount of stress and trauma due to leaving the abusive relationship. In the study conducted by Strand and Faver (2005) discussed earlier, 38% of the women who owned pets continued to worry about the pet's safety while in the domestic violence shelter. Flynn (2000a) found similar results. He surveyed 107 women at a domestic violence shelter and found that 40% of the women who owned pets worried about their pet's safety after coming to shelter.

METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

The purpose of this project is to assess the need for a pet advocate program in Missoula, MT that extends beyond what the YWCA of Missoula currently provides. The literature review has summarized the major findings regarding homeless people's relationship with their pets. Currently, the YWCA of Missoula provides the only Pet Advocate program that will foster pets while participants access their domestic violence shelter and emergency housing program for homeless families. There is a barrier to the homeless population who are not eligible for YWCA services to access other shelters if they own pets. For this project, I used a mixed method approach, conducting in-person interviews, gathering data from the domestic violence shelter intakes and current Pet Advocate program, and examining existing program models.

For the purposes of this project, I adopted Adams' definition of pets: "animals who are part of a household" (1994:64). This can include any number of animals from dogs, cats, fish, horses, and even swine. Of course, this definition can be interpreted differently by each interviewee, but will include any animal which the interviewee feels is a member of the household. For the purposes of this paper, "pet" and "companion animal" will be used interchangeably. The term "Pet Advocate" was adopted from the YWCA of Missoula. They

have deemed this the best term to call their pet foster program. I chose to adopt this term for this project to remain consistent in interviews with community members.

Quantitative Methods and Results

For the quantitative approach, I worked with the Pathways Program operated by the YWCA of Missoula. Pathways operates the only emergency domestic violence shelter in Missoula, MT. The shelter is in a confidential location and consists of seven bedrooms to house women and their children who have recently fled domestic violence. Women and their children can remain at the shelter for up to 60 days. Male victims of domestic violence are unable to stay at the domestic violence shelter. They are housed temporarily at local hotels.

Before a domestic violence victim enters the Pathways shelter a Personal Contact (PC) is conducted to assess whether or not she is eligible for shelter services. A PC involves an advocate meeting with the victim in person and administering an intake and lethality assessment. Not every victim who completes a PC enters the shelter if the advocate determines their safety risk is not high enough for confidential shelter. All of the PCs for a one year period are kept in a locked file cabinet at the YWCA Pathways Domestic Violence shelter. The following question regarding pets is asked on the lethality assessment: “Has he/she ever hurt or killed one of your pets?” Because at the time I was an employee of the YWCA and I had gained permission from the Pathways Program Manager, I was able to go to the Pathways shelter and look at all the PCs conducted in 2013 (including PCs for women who didn’t enter shelter that year). I looked only at the lethality assessment, specifically the question about pets, and tallied up the number of women who answered “yes” to the question.

During the calendar year (January – December) 2013, a total of 126 PCs were conducted with women victims of domestic violence seeking emergency, confidential shelter. Out of those

126 PCs, 113 resulted in the woman entering shelter. Of those 113 PCs, 18 women answered “yes” to the question “Has he/she ever hurt or killed one of your pets?” Of the 13 PCs that did not result in the women entering shelter, 1 answered “yes” to the question. It is important to note that the question does not ask about threats of harming the pet. The previous literature review discussed evidence that abusers will also threaten to harm the pet as a way to gain power and control over the victim. Some of those threats may never result in actual harm to the pet, but victims still worried about their pet’s safety while in the abusive relationship and after leaving the abusive relationship (Ascione 1998). The threats or harm to the pet may also come after the victim has left the abusive relationship, which the PC does not ask about. I recommend that Pathways add a question to their PC which states: “Has he/she ever threatened to hurt/kill one of your pets?” This question measures another way in which the abuser sought to gain power and control over the victim.

In June of 2011, the Pet Advocate program operated by the YWCA of Missoula began tracking all requests for a pet advocate. These data included the number of pet advocate requests, how many requests resulted in placement in a pet foster home, how long pets remained in foster homes, why pets were removed from foster homes, and why some pets were not placed in foster homes. I have been the coordinator of the YWCA’s Pet Advocate program since February of 2011 and have complete access to these data.

I examined the data during the same calendar year (January – December 2013). There were a total of 8 requests for Pet Advocates. Six of those requests came from women staying at the Pathways domestic violence shelter and 2 of those requests came from families staying in the YWCA Emergency Housing program for homeless families. Of the 8 requests, 4 of them resulted in a placement with a Pet Advocate. Of the 4 requests that did not result in placements,

2 of the families left the program before a Pet Advocate could be found and 2 of the families found their own placements. Those 4 requests resulted in a placement with a Pet Advocate for a total of 234 nights while their owners resided in the Pathways domestic violence shelter or Emergency Housing program.

It is important to note that the YWCA Pet Advocate program is not a well known program in the community. Participants in YWCA programs are informed of the Pet Advocate program if they tell staff that they have a pet that needs a place to stay. Victims of domestic violence are not aware of the Pet Advocate program when considering leaving the abusive relationship and homeless families are not aware of the program when seeking shelter services. There is no way of knowing how many victims of domestic violence and homeless families did not seek shelter services because they weren't aware that a Pet Advocate program existed.

Qualitative Methods and Results

For the qualitative approach, I conducted in-person interviews with professionals in the community who were either currently involved in the YWCA Pet Advocate program, had previously been involved with the program, or could benefit from being involved in a community-wide Pet Advocate program. Before I began conducting interviews, I had a list of 18 professionals who could have potentially been interviewed for this project. The final number of interviews conducted was 17.

I chose the original 18 interviewees based on their position within the community. I thought these professionals would have the most knowledge as to need for a community-wide pet advocate program. Professionals were contacted by me through email or telephone. I explained to them that I am a graduate student at the University of Montana in Sociology and would like to interview them for my project. I explained that my project was looking at whether or not there is

a need to create a community-wide pet advocate program and propose how it would be operated. Of the original list of 18 interviewees, 14 agreed to be interviewed for the project. One interviewee refused to be interviewed, two did not return my calls, and one directed me to someone else to interview. Two more interviewees were suggested to me during other interviews, bringing the total number of interviewees to 17.

Interviewees were given a choice of where the interview would take place and interviews were conducted either at the YWCA or at the interviewee's place of business. The interviews began by explaining the purpose of the project to the interviewee, reading the "Informed Consent Form" (Appendix A) to them, and having them sign it. At that point the audio-recorder was turned on. I had a set of interview questions that I used as a guide for the interview (Appendix B), but did not always follow the guide completely. Interviews lasted 30-45 minutes. At the end of the interview I asked each interviewee if they had suggestions of who else to interview for the project. Most of the suggestions were professionals I had already interviewed or planned to interview, but I added two more professionals to my list of interviewees by asking this question.

All interviews were transcribed and coded to find patterns in the data. Audio-recordings were destroyed after transcription. Transcriptions were saved in a password protected electronic folder. Names of interviewees in the transcriptions were changed to maintain confidentiality. Informed Consent Forms were kept in a locked file box completely separate from anything related to this project.

All 17 interviewees were professionals in the community. Two interviewees are currently volunteer Pet Advocates for the YWCA, two interviewees are employees of the YWCA that are involved in supervising the YWCA Pet Advocate program, two other interviewees were also employees of the YWCA, but not directly involved in the YWCA Pet Advocate program,

three interviewees had previously been involved in the program, five interviewees belonged to organizations that would benefit from a community-wide pet advocate program, two interviewees belonged to other organizations in Montana that housed pets on-site at their emergency shelters, and the last interviewee had extensive knowledge of the homeless population and the challenges they face.

Each of the interviewees acknowledged that people have a special bond with their pets. The Pathways Program Manager explained the bond as follows: “It’s like a family member...[the] only love, friendship, happiness, and care in their life”. This supports the research stated in the literature review. Interviewees discussed how pets are often viewed as members of the family and oftentimes are the only source of love and comfort for individuals. When I asked a staff member from the Poverello Center about this relationship, he stated: “[the pet is] the only real friend that they have or like I said a traveling companion. They go everywhere together, they spend all of their time together, it is a real source of comfort.”

This bond is especially important during times of crisis, such as facing homelessness or leaving an abusive relationship. A current YWCA Pet Advocate explained this bond as “the only emotional, non-judgmental, so I can look funny, act funny, and smell funny, and my animal will still love me”. The pet can offer consistency in the person’s life and provide comfort during stressful times. “The dog could be the one and only thing that is consistent in that family’s life...animals can be a really great comfort when you are stressed...they are part of the family.” This was stated by an interviewee from another organization in Montana that houses pets on-site at the emergency shelter.

Some of the interviewees referenced judgment that community members sometimes have against homeless individuals who have pets. Some community members look down on homeless

individuals who have pets and think they should find another home for their pets. The interviewees who referenced this type of judgment disagreed with it. An interviewee from another organization in Montana explained why that organization found a way to house pets on-site: “We never ask families to get rid of their pets because their pets are part of their family. Almost all of our families have been through some type of trauma in their lives and asking them to give up their pet is a very difficult thing.” The interviewees supported people keeping their pets, even during periods of homelessness, because of the bond they have with that pet.

Interviewees acknowledged the need for a pet advocate program that extended beyond the YWCA. They stated that having a pet can be a barrier to people accessing emergency shelters. None of the emergency shelters in Missoula take pets, unless they are service animals. An employee from the Humane Society of Western Montana acknowledged this barrier: “That is what was holding them back from entering [emergency shelters]. They are willing to sleep in their car in order to not get rid of their dog.” Interviewees would like to see pet owners be able to access emergency shelters with the option of still being able to keep their pet, even if the pet is with a foster family. By being able to provide pet foster families, people accessing emergency shelters can focus on the immediate crisis (homelessness or fleeing domestic violence) without the additional stress of worrying what to do with their pet. When discussing her support of a pet advocate program, another employee of the Humane Society of Western Montana explained that “...the person can go through what they are going through knowing that their animal is safe and sound, that makes it less trying for them and for whatever animal is being fostered.”

Both the Humane Society of Western Montana and Missoula City-County Animal Control support the goal of ultimately keeping pets with the original owner. An employee from the Humane Society of Western Montana explained why the organization is in support of a pet

advocate program: “[We] want to prevent pets from ever coming to shelter. We want to do whatever it takes to keep the pet with the original owner...it just makes sense to keep them in the original home.” An employee of Missoula City-County Animal Control stated she had seen instances where people had to give up their pets to access emergency shelters. She explained one situation that was especially hard for her to see: “The [emergency shelter] made a lady surrender her dog because she couldn’t get into the shelter with the dog and the anguish on her face is just something you don’t forget. I mean this is her friend and her companion and this is all she has.” The special bond that this woman had with her pet made it extremely difficult for her to give up her pet. Providing pet foster families is one way to achieve this goal of ultimately keeping the pet with the original owner.

All of the interviewees support a community-wide pet advocate program versus each emergency shelter agency having their own pet advocate program. “I think it would be amazing to have one community-wide program,” explained an employee of the Humane Society of Western Montana. Many of the interviewees stated that it makes sense to have one entry point for the program and for agencies to collaborate together because it would save time and resources. If each agency had its own program, each agency would have to recruit and train its own volunteers, come up with its own funding sources, and have its own staff member to coordinate the pet advocate program. “I think it would get complicated if each organization had their own [program]”. A community-wide program would eliminate duplication of services and would be more successful by pooling each agency’s resources together. An employee of the Poverello Center stated: “We are always trying to avoid duplicating services and I think having one central thing that we could all access would do just that.”

There were a number of challenges about a pet advocate program (even community-wide) that were discussed by interviewees. A main challenge is funding. How will such a program be funded? All of the interviewees supported reaching out to the community for donations, whether it is money or other resources. Interviewees acknowledged that we live in a community-oriented city and that our community generally loves and supports animals. When asked if she thought the program would receive community support, the YWCA Pathways Program Manager stated: “It is something that people are very much willing to do in a city like Missoula.”

It was also acknowledged that the funding needed to come from sources other than those that nonprofits were already utilizing. One interviewee was adamant that a pet advocate program should only be supported if the funding doesn't come from a source that was originally meant for humans. “My argument would be find a different funding mechanism and don't take money that we are trying to use to put people into homes and use on dogs...you ought not be spending money that is currently destined for humans.” The Humane Society of Western Montana does not have a specific grant that supports their Emergency Foster program or partnership with the YWCA Pet Advocate program. This is an area that will need further investigation.

When asked whether or not a fee should be charged to pet owners to use the pet advocate program, every interviewee was against that idea. They discussed the challenges associated with asking someone who is homeless and in crisis for money that they most likely do not have. “Both homeless population and people who are fleeing domestic violence, they probably don't have a lot of resources and probably need the ones that they do have just to provide for basic needs.” It was stated that any funding or resources that these homeless individuals do have should be put toward their basic needs, rather than a fee for their pet. Asking pet owners to

supply their own food and supplies was supported by interviewees, but also shouldn't be a barrier to being able to use the pet advocate program.

Another challenge discussed by interviewees was liability. What would happen if an animal injured a pet advocate or one of their pets? The YWCA currently does not carry additional liability insurance for the Pet Advocate program. Missoula City-County Animal Control specifically does not use foster families because of the additional liability issues and costs. The Humane Society of Western Montana does have liability insurance that covers all of their services, including pet foster families. However, their previous insurance company had dropped them (along with other animal shelters) because they used foster families, so they had to find a different insurance company. They do not pay additional costs to specifically use pet foster families. Because the Humane Society of Western Montana already has liability insurance that covers pet foster families, this is one of the reasons I recommend that they are the best agency to run a community-wide pet advocate program.

Although the YWCA currently runs the only pet advocate program in Missoula, most of the interviewees supported an animal-oriented agency running a community-wide program and most specifically named the Humane Society of Western Montana. When asked who could run the program, a current YWCA Pet Advocate stated: "Humane Society because they focus on the pets and make sure that the facility was adequate for the animals...have the knowledge...makes more sense that someone who knows what they are doing sets it up." There were three animal-oriented agencies in Missoula that I sought out to interview because I thought they would be a good fit to run a community-wide pet advocate program. I was unable to interview one of the agencies and cannot state whether or not they'd be willing to run such a program. Missoula City-County Animal Control stated they could not run such a program because they do not have

the capacity at their current shelter, are concerned about liability issues with pet foster families, and do not have the staffing capacity to take on another program. “We are not really a boarding facility because we have limited space and we are designed more for county strays...we don’t have the manpower to do anything extra.”

The Humane Society of Western Montana was very interested and willing to take on a community-wide pet advocate program if funding for the program and staffing was available. When asked if they were willing to take on a community-wide pet advocate program, the director of the Humane Society of Western Montana replied: “Yes, definitely. We really are focused on keeping pets in their original homes...depending on staffing...grants typically don’t fund staff.” They currently partner with the YWCA for their Pet Advocate program. The Humane Society provides vaccinations, food, and pet behavioral advice for pets that have been placed in the YWCA Pet Advocate program. After they partnered with the YWCA, the Humane Society created a similar program called the Emergency Foster Program. This program provides pet foster homes for people in emergency situations, such as moving or evacuating due to natural disasters. They charge pet owners a fee for using the foster program and limit it to 30 days except under extenuating circumstances. Because the Humane Society already partners with the YWCA and run a similar program, it makes the most sense for the Humane Society to take over a community-wide pet advocate program for people accessing emergency shelters. However, the Humane Society is not willing to take on additional programs unless additional funding for staff and resources were available.

Regarding the structure of a community-wide pet advocate program, there were three different models were proposed by interviewees: housing pets on-site at the emergency shelter,

housing pets at one animal shelter, and utilizing pet foster families. The pros and cons of each model are discussed in the next section.

Housing Pets On-Site at Emergency Shelters Model

In this model, each organization would house pets at their emergency shelters. This model would not represent a community-wide program, but would be easier for each organization to run on its own. A benefit of this type of model is it would serve a resistant population who no matter what would not separate from their pet. When asked why they allow pets on-site, another organization in Montana explained: “The main reason we allow the pets is because they don’t want to leave their pet...not sure how comfortable they would be with letting a stranger watch their pets.” They would be able to have their pet at the property that they are staying at, which means they would know how their pet is doing and be able to see their pet every day. “On-site would be important because of the separation...separation anxiety from the animal’s perspective.” Another advantage to this type of model is pet owners being able to care for their own pet. They would be responsible for walking, feeding, and cleaning up after their own pet. “We have some guidelines for pets...clean up after your pets...take that pet wherever [you] go.”

A disadvantage to this type of model is the infrastructure costs. Each emergency shelter would need to build a separate housing unit for the pets. They would need to make sure pets could be separated if needed and have access to go outside. Emergency shelters may not have adequate space to do this where they are currently located. This type of model would also require additional staffing costs to manage the pet shelter and operations.

I interviewed two organizations in Montana which house pets on-site at their emergency shelter. Both organizations decided to use this model because they didn’t have access to

volunteers to use as foster families. They also ran into challenges with people not coming into emergency shelter if they couldn't have their pet with them, even if the pet was able to be placed with a foster family. The main challenges these organizations have encountered with this model is property damage done by pets and the amount of noise created by pets (i.e. barking).

Currently, neither the YWCA nor the Poverello Center (the only homeless shelter in Missoula that houses single adults) is able or willing to house pets on-site at their emergency shelter. "There is so much to consider from a service providers perspective." While each agency recognized the benefits of having pets and owners together, neither of them has the space, funding, or willingness to create a way to house pets on-site.

Housing Pets at One Animal Shelter Model

A few interviewees suggested the possibility of having one animal shelter where the pets could be housed. This shelter could be built as its own facility or added on to another animal shelter, such as the Humane Society of Western Montana or Missoula City-County Animal Control. This model would support a community-wide program where one agency runs the program, but multiple agencies could access it. A benefit of this model is being able to have all pets at one location and owners being able to easily see their pets. Owners could still be required walk, feed, and clean up after their pet.

This model would have the same infrastructure and funding issues that the previous model had. There would be additional costs associated with building the shelter (or adding on to another animal shelter), providing additional staffing, and maintaining the shelter. Other challenges may also be similar to the previous model, in regards to property damage and noise level. A major challenge with this model is the confidentiality. This type of shelter would be most likely be in a public location, meaning abusers could show up at the animal shelter at any

time. This creates safety issues for victims of domestic violence, staff at the shelter, other pet owners at the shelter, and the pets themselves.

Currently, neither the Humane Society of Western Montana nor Missoula City-County Animal Control is willing or able to add additional units at their shelter to house pets in this situation. Neither organization supports this model due to the stress the animal endures while in a shelter environment. Both organizations support the use of pet foster families, discussed in the next section.

Pet Foster Families Model

This model would be the least expensive model to run. When asked why they would support a pet foster family model, one interviewee responded: “It is much more sustainable.” Foster families could be volunteers and only one full-time staff member would be needed to run the program and conduct fund raising. This model is what the YWCA currently uses for their Pet Advocate program. They use volunteers to foster pets and have them go through a two hour training. The training covers the link between domestic violence and animal abuse, the relationship people have with their pets while in crisis (homelessness and fleeing domestic violence), the procedures of the Pet Advocate program, and behavioral specifics for caring for a pet that may have been abused. Pets are then placed with the families in their homes. Pet Advocates and pet owners usually meet each other, but neither knows where the other one lives or has their personal contact information. All communication goes through one person at the YWCA, the Pet Advocate Coordinator.

One major benefit of using pet foster families is confidentiality. This is especially important when working with victims of domestic violence. “The animals and all of the people are safer because of the confidentiality of where the animals are.” Keeping the location of the

pet confidential protects the pet and victim from further harm. It creates a barrier for the abuser who may to find the pet while the victim resides in the domestic violence shelter.

Another benefit of a foster family program is for the pet. Interviewees who were associated with animal-oriented organizations referenced the stressful environment of a shelter. Pets in a shelter are subject to loud noises, weird smells, and have limited human contact. A shelter environment increases the likelihood of a pet becoming sick due to being stressed and being around so many other animals that are also stressed. Two employees of the Humane Society of Western Montana explained why they wouldn't use a shelter if foster homes were an option: "[shelter] is not very healthy, it is a stressful environment." "Shelter is very stressful for the pet." In a foster home, pets can receive attention, love, and care that they wouldn't receive in a shelter.

A challenge to this model is the inability of pet owners to see their pets every day. The YWCA requires pet owners to contact the Pet Advocate coordinator when they want to arrange a visit. The Pet Advocate coordinator then contacts the pet foster family to set up a day and location for a visit. The pet foster family and pet owner meet in a public location so the owner can see the pet for a few hours. This process can become confusing if each party isn't communicating clearly with each other when scheduling a visit. A pet foster family model will be the model I will propose for the Humane Society of Western Montana to use in a community-wide pet advocate program.

Sample Program Models

In order to assist my development of a community-wide pet advocate program for Missoula, MT, I examined four existing pet foster program models.

Frank Ascione created a program model called “Safe Haven for Pets: Guidelines for Programs Sheltering Pets for Women who are Battered” (Ascione 2000). Ascione began his project by interviewing 21 domestic violence agencies and 20 animal welfare agencies around the United States who had a program to take care of pets for victims of domestic violence while they fled the abusive relationship. Ascione provides several recommendations for running a Safe Haven for Pets and provides sample policies, forms, and brochures that agencies had sent him. His recommendations focus mostly on a pet foster family model. This program model did not provide much assistance to me in creating the proposed community-wide pet advocate program model.

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) created a program model that encourages domestic violence agencies to partner with animal agencies to create ways to house pets while victims access domestic violence shelters. The guide is called “Starting a Safe Havens for Animals Program” (HSUS 2008) and does not focus on a specific way to house the pets, but rather provides basic steps and ideas to consider when creating a program. This model provided starter sample forms for domestic violence agencies to use.

Another program model that I examined provided a guide to house pets on-site at the domestic violence shelter. The model was created by the American Humane Association and is called “Pets and Women’s Shelters (PAWS) Program” (American Humane Association 2008). This model provides a step-by-step process for how to start a PAWS program. The model also provided sample forms that agencies can use when creating their own PAWS program. Although this model is focused on housing pets on-site at domestic violence shelters, I was able to use some of the information provided in the sample forms to create the forms proposed for a community-wide pet advocate program.

The final program model that I examined evolved from the PAWS program. It was created and written by Allie Philips and called “Sheltering Animals and Families Together (SAF-T)” (Philips 2012). This program model supports housing pets on-site at domestic violence shelters and only provides examples of this type of housing. I found this program model to be the most comprehensive and provided the most easily adaptable forms. Most of program policies and forms were influenced by the SAF-T model.

The forms and program policies in this project were also adapted from forms used by the YWCA Pet Advocate Program and forms used by the Humane Society of Western Montana Emergency Foster program.

PET ADVOCATE PROGRAM MODEL

The program model that I propose is a community-wide pet foster family model that can be used by the Humane Society of Western Montana. I refer to this program model as the Pet Advocate Program because that is the term most known in the community for this type of program. This community-wide Pet Advocate Program will build off of the current YWCA Pet Advocate Program.

When determining whether or not to put time and resources into a new program, it’s important to conduct a needs analysis first. The importance of this needs analysis is to determine whether or not the resources needed to begin and run the program match the current need for the program. The current project conducted a partial needs analysis by examining simple statistics on the current YWCA Pet Advocate program and interviewing key professionals in the community. The data from the current project is limited and will not be sufficient when applying for grant funding. Therefore, an in-depth needs analysis would need to be conducted, where

more service professionals and actual clients are surveyed, gathering more data needed to apply for grant funding.

Every year, Missoula County conducts a “point-in-time homeless survey”. This survey gathers information about where homeless individuals are sleeping, what factors brought them to homelessness, what factors would have prevented their homelessness, and what factors would bring them out of homelessness. Surveys are sent to service providers who serve homeless individuals and volunteers go to the streets to have homeless individuals fill out the surveys. On the same day of the survey, Missoula also hosts Project Homeless Connect, where more surveys are administered. Because this survey is administered to a wide variety of homeless individuals, I propose that the survey add questions about pets to determine a need for a Pet Advocate Program. I propose the following questions be added to the “point-in-time homeless survey”:

Do you currently or have you ever owned a pet during your period of homelessness?
Did you have a place for your pet to stay while you were homeless?
Were you unable to stay at an emergency shelter because of your pet?
Did you find a place for your pet to stay while you accessed emergency shelter?
Would you have utilized a program that placed your pet with a foster family while you accessed emergency shelter?

Another part of a needs analysis is determining if the public would support such a program. People most likely to donate to such a program are probably people who already donate to animal programs or homeless programs. Most organizations have a newsletter they send out to their donors and volunteers. I propose that a short survey be attached to one of these newsletters for the YWCA, Poverello Center, Family Promise of Missoula, Humane Society of Western Montana, Missoula City-County Animal Control, and Animeals. There may be other agencies willing to include a survey in their newsletter. The short survey would consist of a brief description of the Pet Advocate Program and ask whether or not they would support funding a program.

A planning committee should be created to discuss program implantation and funding sources. This committee should at minimum consist of representatives from each of the agencies that will utilize the Pet Advocate Program: Humane Society of Western Montana, Missoula City-County Animal Control, Family Promise of Missoula, YWCA, and Poverello Center. I propose also including representatives Animeals, the Missoula City Mayor's Office, and local veterinary offices. The committee would need one point-person to be in charge of scheduling and leading meetings. I propose this person be someone from the Humane Society of Western Montana who will ultimately be the Pet Advocate Program Coordinator, a full-time staff position. I have created a "Guide to the Pet Advocate Program" (Appendix C) which can be used by the planning committee to begin forming the program. A Memorandum of Understanding should also be created for every agency, clearly defining the roles and responsibilities that each agency will follow.

One of the most important parts of this program is funding. Many of the interviewees discussed the need for funding in order for such a program to work. One of the tasks of the planning committee would be to identify sustainable funding sources. Like any nonprofit program, the majority of funding for the Pet Advocate Program would rely on grants and donations. I propose to first look at existing grants that animal agencies already utilize. Some of those organizations may have other grants that can be applied for that would fund such a program. Next, I propose to look at nationwide organizations that could provide grants, such as PetSmart or the ASPCA. Finally, the planning committee should reach out to other organizations who have a similar program and find out where they applied for grants at. The planning committee will also need to devise a plan for sustainability of funding when applying for grants.

The planning committee will also need to devise a plan for soliciting public donations. Most nonprofit agencies have their own donor database, but it is not reasonable to tap in those resources already used. The full-time staff position, Pet Advocate Coordinator, will also be responsible for developing and maintaining a fund-raising plan. The plan will need to ensure continued donations to maintain sustainability of the Pet Advocate program. These donations could be monetary, or non-monetary, such as dog food, leashes, or collars.

One important aspect of the Pet Advocate Program is being able to rely on volunteer pet foster families. These volunteers can be pulled from the existing pool of volunteers from agencies such as the Humane Society of Western Montana, YWCA, or Animeals. I propose that volunteers interested in becoming a Pet Advocate fill out an “Application to Become a Pet Advocate” (Appendix D). The application asks volunteers about what types of pets they are willing to foster, what types of pets they already own, and information about their home (schedule, space, fencing, etc.). These applications can be accepted at any time and should be reviewed in a timely matter. However, every volunteer should be required to attend a two-hour training before becoming a Pet Advocate. This training will cover behavioral considerations when fostering a new pet, the policies of the Pet Advocate program, and the importance of maintaining confidentiality. I recommend trainings are held at least quarterly throughout the year.

The Pet Advocate Program will require forms and protocols to help the program run smoothly. I have created a “Pet Advocate Program Protocol” (Appendix E) which a planning committee can use to begin implementing the program. This protocol explains the process that I recommend to follow when placing a pet with a Pet Advocate. I have provided instructions to case managers at emergency shelters as well as instructions to the Pet Advocate Coordinator at

the Humane Society of Western Montana. This protocol has step-by-step instructions for filling a Pet Advocate request as well as reference to forms that should be used during the process. The two forms, “Request for Pet Advocate” and “Agreement to Provide Pet Advocacy” which are referred to in the protocol can also be found in Appendix E.

After funding, protocols, guides, and forms have been developed and agreed upon by the planning committee, the program can be implemented. Part of implementing a new program is making sure those who could benefit from the program are aware that the program exists. I have created a “Pet Advocate Program Informational Sheet” (Appendix F) that can be given to service providers, clients, and displayed at many local agencies. This form explains the program, who is eligible, and how to apply. The planning committee could also work with a marketing advisor to develop a public service announcement, press release, and posts on social media networks such as Facebook. All of these tasks will alert a wide audience that the Pet Advocate Program exists and what it is for. These tasks may also attract new donors or volunteers.

Finally, this program will need an ongoing evaluation process. The first part of the evaluation process is to have pet owners fill out a “Pet Advocate Program Evaluation” (Appendix G) after they have participated in the Pet Advocate Program. These evaluations should be examined at least quarterly by an outside, nonbiased source. This source should also provide recommendations for changing the Pet Advocate Program. It is also important that service providers have an opportunity to evaluate the program. A yearly evaluation should be sent to any agency utilizing the Pet Advocate Program. All of the forms and handouts created should also be reviewed by an attorney before implementation.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this project was to assess the need for a community-wide pet advocate program in Missoula, MT for the homeless accessing emergency shelters. By creating a community-wide program that could be extended to every emergency shelter in Missoula, MT, it removes one barrier to homeless individuals and prevents pets from being given up for adoption or abandoned. Through interviews with professionals in the community, it became clear that there is a need for such a program and it is supported by community members. My recommendation of using a pet foster family program model was the most supported model by interviewees and was the most cost-effective for the current agencies in Missoula, MT.

The Pet Advocate Program model previously proposed is intended for use by the Humane Society of Western Montana. The information and suggestions in the model were adapted from existing models and suggestions by professionals in the community. This model can be adapted or updated at any time to meet current needs and address challenges of the program.

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APPENDIX A

SUBJECT INFORMATION AND INFORMED CONSENT

Study Title: Pet Advocate Program for the Homeless in Missoula, MT

Investigator(s): Lisa J. Bruce; Department of Sociology; The University of Montana, Missoula, MT; Phone: (406) 241-9691; Email: lisa.bruce@umontana.edu
Faculty Supervisor: Dan Doyle; Department of Sociology; The University of Montana, Missoula, MT; Phone: (406) 243-5912; Email: dan.doyle@umontana.edu

Special Instructions: This consent form may contain words that are new to you. If you read any words that are not clear to you, please ask the person who gave you this form to explain them to you.

Purpose: You are being asked to participate in a professional project that assesses the need for an expanded pet advocate program for the homeless in Missoula, MT. The purpose of this project is to create a program model and grant application guide that can be used to expand the current Pet Advocate program in Missoula, MT.

Procedures: If you agree to take part in this research study, you will be asked a series of questions related to your experiences and knowledge regarding the current Pet Advocate Program. You will also be asked about any suggestions or ideas you may have to expand the current program. If you refer to a specific client that you have worked with in the past, please do not disclose their name to maintain confidentiality. The interview will be conducted at a location of your choice, will be audio tape recorded, and will last about one hour.

Risks/Discomforts: There is no anticipated discomfort for those contributing to this study, so risk to participants is minimal.

Benefits: Your participation in this study may result in a program model for that can be used by the current Pet Advocate program in Missoula, MT.

Confidentiality: Your records will be kept confidential and will not be released without your consent except as required by law. The audio-recording of your interview and the notes taken by the interviewer will be kept confidential and only accessible to the researcher and her faculty supervisor. This information will be stored in a locked file cabinet and your signed consent form will be stored in a cabinet separate from this information. The audio-recording will be transcribed without any information that could identify you. The audio-recorded will then be destroyed. Your name may be stated in the final paper, if you give consent to do so. You may request a copy of the final paper.

Your initials _____ indicate your permission to be identified by name in any publications or presentations.

If you do not want to be acknowledged by name in any publications or presentations, please initial here _____.

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal: Please understand that your participation is entirely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You have the right to refuse to answer questions without consequence.

Questions: If you have any questions regarding this study, now or in the future, please contact the Principal Investigator, Lisa J. Bruce, at lisa.bruce@umontana.edu or the Faculty Advisor, Dan Doyle at dan.doyle@mso.umt.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact the UM Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (406) 243-6672.

Statement of Your Consent: I have read the above description of this research study. I have been informed of the risks and benefits involved, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. Furthermore, I have been assured that any future questions I may have will also be answered by a member of the research team. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study. I understand I will receive a copy of this consent form.

STATEMENT OF CONSENT TO BE AUDIO RECORDED: I understand that audio recordings will be taken during the study. I consent to being audio recorded. The audio-recording will be destroyed at the end of this project.

Printed Name of Subject

Date

Subject's Signature

Investigator Signature (Lisa J. Bruce)

APPENDIX B

Pet Advocate Program for the Homeless in Missoula, MT Interview Questions

- 1) Have you seen that having a pet is a barrier to accessing emergency shelter?
- 2) Do you believe there is a need in Missoula to offer a way to house pets while their owners access emergency shelters?
- 3) Why do you think providing a place for pets is important?
- 4) How would you structure such a program?
 - a. Would you use volunteers?
 - b. Would you charge a fee to owners to use the program?
 - c. Would you provide foster homes or shelter on-site?
 - d. Would you require pet owners to provide their own food, supplies, and vet care?
 - e. How would you maintain confidentiality, if using foster homes?
 - f. How would you recruit and train volunteers?
- 5) What programs/shelters in Missoula do you think would benefit from a Pet Advocate program?
- 6) Should each program/shelter have their own program, or should there be one community-wide program?
- 7) Are you familiar with the Pet Advocate program operated by the YWCA of Missoula?
 - a. What is your current involvement with the YWCA Pet Advocate Program?
 - b. How long have you been involved with the YWCA Pet Advocate Program?
 - c. Why did you choose to become involved in the program?
 - d. If applicable, how was the program run when it first began?
 - e. What changes have you seen be made to the program since it first began?
 - i. Do you think these changes have helped the program run better?
 - f. What are some strengths you've seen in how the program has been run?
 - g. What are some challenges you've seen in how the program has been run?
 - i. How would you suggest each of these challenges be improved?
 - h. Did you attend the Pet Advocate training?
 - i. If yes, did you find the training helpful?
 - ii. What parts of the training were most helpful?
 - iii. What would you add to the training?
 - iv. What would you delete from the training?
- 8) If applicable, why did you ask the YWCA for information on their Pet Advocate program?
 - a. Do you have your own pet advocate program?
 - b. Have you implemented any of the YWCA Pet Advocate program policies into your own program?
 - c. What are the policies and procedures you use for your program?
 - d. Could I have access to these policies and procedures to use for my project?

APPENDIX C

Guide to the Pet Advocate Program

The following is a guide which can be used to begin organizing community-wide Pet Advocate program that provides pet foster families for people accessing emergency shelters.

Funding

Grants and other funding resources will need to be researched. Some of the costs associated with the program may be able to be pulled from existing funding sources. Community outreach should also be done to receive donations. I see the following list as things to consider when creating a budget for this program:

- One full-time staff person (Pet Advocate Coordinator)
- Cell phone for the Pet Advocate Coordinator
- Steady supply of dog/cat food
- Supply of bowls, beds, leashes, collars, toys, etc.
- Vaccinations
- Basic Vet Care
- Liability insurance (this may not be an additional costs depending on what your current liability insurance already covers)

Eligibility

You must determine who will be eligible for the Pet Advocate program. I recommend that people accessing the following four emergency shelters be eligible for the Pet Advocate program: Poverello Center, YWCA Pathways Domestic Violence Shelter, YWCA Emergency Housing Program, and Family Promise of Missoula. To date, Family Promise has been unreachable to determine if they are interested in participating in the program.

Pet Advocates

Pet Advocates should be volunteers in the community who are willing to donate their time and resources to foster a pet. Volunteers should understand the risks associated with fostering an animal, which includes property damage and harm to them or their pets. Anyone interested in becoming a Pet Advocate should fill out an "Application to Become a Pet Advocate". Applications should be reviewed as they come in and volunteers contacted soon after receiving the application. I recommend that volunteers be required to attend a two hour training before fostering any pets.

Confidentiality/Safety

Because you will be working with homeless individuals and victims of domestic violence, it is important to maintain confidentiality of everyone involved in the Pet Advocate program. One staff member at the Humane Society of Western Montana should be designated as the Pet Advocate Coordinator. All communication between participant (pet owner) and Pet Advocate must go through this Coordinator. The participant and Pet Advocate should not exchange contact information directly.

Due to safety concerns, pet exchanges should only happen at the Humane Society of Western Montana when at least two staff members can be present. At this point in time, I recommend that pet visits not be arranged while the pet is with a Pet Advocate. By not doing visits, it can help maintain the confidentiality of everyone involved and reduce any safety concerns.

Training of Pet Advocates

A two hour training for volunteers interested in becoming a Pet Advocate should be held at least twice a year. The training should follow the following outline:

- Explanation of the Pet Advocate Program, why it exists, and who is eligible.
- Explanation of the Poverello and YWCA shelters and who is eligible for those services.
- Explanation of the Pet Advocate Program Protocol.
- Examples, tips, and resources for introducing foster pets into their home.
- Training on how to deal with pets who may have been traumatized.

Length of Stay

A time limit should be placed on how long participants can use the Pet Advocate program. Placing a time limit will allow resources to be used most effectively and deter abuse of the program. Each emergency shelter program has their own time limits for the amount of time a participant can stay at their shelter. Family Promise has the longest time limit, which is 90 days. I recommend that regardless of which emergency shelter the participant is in, the maximum amount of time they can use a Pet Advocate is 90 days.

Supplies/Food

The pets will most likely need supplies and/or food while placed with a Pet Advocate. It is important to remember that these participants are homeless and may have limited resources. I recommend that you keep a supply of bowls, beds, toys, leashes, etc. to be used if needed. These items should be returned to the program once the pet has been returned to the owner.

Participants should be held responsible for providing food for their pet. By asking them to provide their own food, it can significantly reduce the costs of the program and allow the program to remain a free service to participants. I recommend that participants can receive up to two weeks worth of food to get them started, but they must provide their own food after that.

Evaluation

When the participant gets their pet from the Pet Advocate, they should be asked to fill out an evaluation of the program. These evaluations should be analyzed by an outside source who will prepare quarterly reports and suggestions for the program.

APPENDIX D

Date: _____

Application to Become a Pet Advocate

Name: _____

Physical Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email Address: _____

May we contact you in the middle of the night if we have a pet advocate request?

- Yes No

Please check the types of animals you are willing to foster:

- Cat – adult
- Cat – kitten
- Dog – adult
- Dog – puppy
- Dog – large breed
- Dog – small breed
- Other small animals (hamster, rabbit, bird, fish, snake, etc.)

Please specify: _____

Can you take more than one pet at a time?

- Yes No

How long are you able to foster pets?

- Two weeks
- One month
- Three months
- Six months
- Other (Please specify: _____)

Are you willing to be available to meet with the family in a public location so they can see their pet at least once a week?

- Yes No

Do you have a fence?

- Yes No
If yes, how tall? _____

Please list other animals in your home:

Type (Dog, Cat, etc.)	Breed (if dog)	Weight/Size	Gender	Age

Please describe any experience you have in fostering animals:

Please describe your family's schedule/time away from home:

I acknowledge the following (please initial):

I fully understand that with any volunteer work involving contact with animals there is a risk that I may be bitten, scratched, or may come in contact with a diseased animal.

I agree to keep the foster animal for the agreed upon length of time.

I agree to return any foster animal on the agreed upon date.

I understand that information about the owner of the pet MUST be kept confidential.

I understand that I will be responsible for any costs or expenses associated to damage and wear and tear to my property in exchange for my agreeing to be a volunteer pet advocate and keep pets at my home.

I understand that the Humane Society of Western Montana is not liable for damage or injury that may occur to my property, pet, myself, or my family.

Signature

Date

**** Every Pet Advocate is required to go through a two hour training before fostering a pet. The training will cover behavioral considerations when fostering a new pet, the policies of the Pet Advocate program, and the importance of maintaining confidentiality. You will be contacted with information on when the next training will be held.*

APPENDIX E

Pet Advocate Program Protocol

The Pet Advocate program provides pet foster homes for people accessing emergency shelters in Missoula, MT. Currently, participants accessing the Poverello Center and the YWCA Pathways Domestic Violence shelter or Emergency Housing program are eligible for a Pet Advocate. We hope to soon add Family Promise of Missoula to this list.

Instructions to Case Managers at the Poverello Center or YWCA

- Have the participant fill out a “Request for Pet Advocate” application for each pet.
- Give the participant the “Pet Advocate Informational Sheet”.
- Explain the following to the participant:
 - Finding a Pet Advocate is not a guarantee and that they will need to consider other options as a back-up plan.
 - They are responsible for housing the pet until a Pet Advocate can be found.
 - They will not know the Pet Advocate’s personal contact information, where the Pet Advocate lives, and cannot visit their pet while it is with a Pet Advocate.
 - If the participant would like an update on their pet, they will need to contact the Pet Advocate Coordinator at the Humane Society of Western Montana.
 - They will need to provide food for their pet. HSWM can supply up to two weeks worth of food, but nothing beyond that.
 - The participant is only eligible for a Pet Advocate while they reside in the emergency shelter. They must contact the Pet Advocate Coordinator at the HSWM within 24 hours of exiting the shelter and must pick up the pet within 72 hours or it will be surrendered to the HSWM.
- Fax the “Request for Pet Advocate” form to the Pet Advocate Coordinator at the Humane Society of Western Montana.
- Call the Pet Advocate Coordinator to let them know you have sent over a request.
- Inform the Pet Advocate Coordinator if there are any changes to the participant’s shelter exit date or if they exit the shelter unexpectedly.

Instructions to the Pet Advocate Coordinator at the Humane Society of Western Montana:

- Use the information on the “Request for Pet Advocate” form to find potential Pet Advocate matches.
- Call the participant (pet owner) within 24 hours of receiving the “Request for Pet Advocate” to answer any questions they may have and explain the process.
- Call matching Pet Advocates until you find one that can take the pet.
 - Explain basic information about the pet and approximately how long the pet will need to be in their home.

- Schedule a meeting of the Pet Advocate, pet owner, and pet within 48 hours of receiving the request.
- If needed, provide the pet with needed vaccinations and two weeks worth of food.
- During the meeting, the pet owner may meet the Pet Advocate and explain anything regarding their pet. Please reiterate to everyone that all communication must go through the Pet Advocate Coordinator.
- Have the Pet Advocate sign the “Agreement to Provide Pet Advocacy” form and provide them with a copy. Also provide the Pet Advocate with a copy of the “Request for Pet Advocate” form with the pet owner’s name and phone number blacked out to maintain confidentiality.
- Be aware of the participant’s shelter exit date so you can plan for an exchange.
- Have the pet owner fill out an Evaluation when they receive their pet back.

Date: _____

Request for Pet Advocate

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____ (you must provide a way to contact you)

Name of Emergency Shelter where you are residing: _____

Entry date into emergency shelter: _____

Name of Case Manager: _____

Name of Pet: _____

Species: Dog Cat Small Animal, specify type: _____

Dog Breed Type: _____

Age: _____

Gender:

Male

Female

Weight: _____

Is your pet spayed/neutered?

Yes

No

How long have you owned this pet? _____

Please describe your pet's appearance:

Medical Information:

Primary Veterinarian: _____

Are vaccinations current? Yes No

Vaccination Record attached? Yes No

Date of rabies vaccination: _____

Date of annual combination distemper vaccination: _____

Date of Bordatella (kennel cough) vaccination for dog: _____

What flea/tic preventative do you use? _____

Current medications and/or allergies: _____

Is your pet currently pregnant? Yes No

Feeding Information:

Are you able to provide food for your pet? Yes No

The Humane Society of Western Montana can provide up to two weeks worth of food. It is my responsibility to provide food for my pet after the two weeks.

Feeding schedule (including amount and type of food):

Housing Information:

Can your pet be left alone during the day? Yes No

If yes, for how long? _____

Does your dog bark when left home alone? Yes No

If you animal primarily an indoor or outdoor animal? Indoor Outdoor Both

Does your dog jump fences? Yes No If yes, what height/type? _____

Does your dog dig outside? Yes No

Where does the animal sleep? _____

Is the animal crate trained? Yes No

Is the animal house trained? Yes No Litter trained? Yes No

Does your animal chew/scratch furniture, clothing, doors, etc.? Yes No

What supplies can you provide for your pet?

- Bed Crate Cage
- Leash Food bowl Cedar/bedding
- Collar Water bowl

Behavior Information:

Good with dogs: Yes No Not been around/Don't know

Good with cats: Yes No Not been around/Don't know

Good with children: Yes No Not been around/Don't know

Good with men: Yes No Not been around/Don't know

Good with women: Yes No Not been around/Don't know

Activity Level: Very Active Moderately Active Not Active

Please check which commands the animal knows:

Sit Lay down Stay Come Others (please list): _____

Has the pet ever stayed at a location other than with you, such as at a boarding facility, animal shelter, or with family/friends?

Yes No

If yes, please describe the situation and how the animal reacted:

To your knowledge, has the animal ever bitten or scratched anyone? Yes No
If yes, what were the circumstances?

Under what circumstances with the animal bite, scratch, threaten or show excessive fear?

Has the animal ever been deemed vicious or dangerous in the State of Montana or other state? Yes No

Please read each statement carefully and initial that you understand:

___ I agree that the above is true a history of my pet, to the best of my knowledge.

___ I hereby release the Humane Society of Western Montana and the Pet Advocate from any and all liability regarding the care and housing of my pet.

___ I understand that the Pet Advocate may decide at any point that she/he can no longer provide pet advocacy. If the Pet Advocate gives notice that she/he can no longer provide shelter for my pet or if the Humane Society of Western Montana is unable to find a Pet Advocate, it is my responsibility to find shelter for my pet.

___ I understand that my pet may be surrendered to the Humane Society of Western Montana if I do not contact the Pet Advocate Coordinator to arrange an exchange within 24 hours of leaving the emergency shelter and retrieve my pet within 72 hours of leaving the emergency shelter.

___ I give the Humane Society of Western Montana and the Pet Advocate permission to seek veterinarian or emergency medical care when deemed necessary by the Humane Society of Western Montana.

Signature

Date

Agreement to Provide Pet Advocacy

Name of Pet Advocate: _____

Phone Number of Pet Advocate: _____

I agree to provide shelter for: _____
(Name of pet AND first name of participant)

Dates of pet advocacy: From _____ To _____

**** The pet advocacy end date can be subject to change. The maximum amount of time you will have the pet is 90 days.*

Please read each statement carefully and initial that you understand:

___ I agree to contact the Pet Advocate Coordinator immediately if there are any issues/concerns with the pet.

___ I agree to keep all information about the family and their pet confidential. I agree not to disclose to anyone any information about the family, the pet or their situation.

___ I will not disclose my personal or contact information to the owner of the pet.

___ I fully understand that with any volunteer work involving contact with animals there is a risk that I may be bitten, scratched, or may come in contact with a diseased animal.

___ I agree to keep the foster animal for the agreed upon length of time and return the animal on the agreed upon date.

___ I understand that I will be responsible for any costs or expenses associated with damage and wear and tear to my property as a result of fostering this animal.

___ I understand that the Humane Society of Western Montana is not liable for damage or injury that may occur to my property, pet, myself, or my family.

Signature _____ Date _____

Pet Advocate Coordinator _____ Date _____

APPENDIX F

Pet Advocate Program Informational Sheet

What is the Pet Advocate Program?

The Pet Advocate program provides pet foster homes for people accessing emergency shelters in Missoula, MT. The Pet Advocate program is funded through and managed by the Humane Society of Western Montana (HSWM). HSWM screens participants and pets, finds an appropriate placement for the pet, and arranges the pet exchanges. HSWM also provides vaccinations if needed and up to two weeks worth of food for the pet. If needed, the HSWM's behaviorist is available to answer questions regarding animal behavior and offer resources.

Who is eligible for the Pet Advocate Program?

Currently, participants accessing the Poverello Center and the YWCA Pathways Domestic Violence shelter or Emergency Housing program are eligible for a Pet Advocate. To apply for a Pet Advocate, participants must get an application from their case manager at the emergency shelter where they are staying. Case Managers will help you fill out the application and forward it on to HSWM for review. The HSWM will contact you within 24 hours to arrange a time for you to bring your pet for evaluation. Currently the HSWM is only able to provide Pet Advocates for dogs, cats, and other small animals.

Who are Pet Advocates?

Pet Advocates are volunteers who have agreed to foster pets in their home for a short period of time. Pet Advocates are required to fill out an application where they provide detailed information about their home and experience with animals. Pet Advocates are required to attend a two hour training before fostering pets. The training provides information about the Poverello and YWCA, information about the human-animal bond (especially as it applies to homeless individuals or victims of domestic violence), and information on how to incorporate a foster animal into their home.

What do I need to apply for a Pet Advocate?

To apply for a Pet Advocate, participants will fill out an application with their case manager at the emergency shelter they are residing at. The application asks extensive information about the animal. Although not required, proof of current vaccinations is very helpful. If the animal is not current on vaccinations or if the participant cannot provide documentation, it can slow the process for the pet to be placed with a Pet Advocate.

Participants are responsible for housing their pet while a Pet Advocate is found. Participants are responsible for supplying food for their pet. The HSWM can provide up to two weeks worth of food if needed, but cannot extend beyond that. Participants should also supply bowls, beds, leashes, collars, etc. The HSWM has a limited supply of these items that can be used while the pet is with a Pet Advocate.

How long can I have a Pet Advocate?

Participants are eligible for Pet Advocates as long as they reside at the emergency shelter and for a maximum of 90 days (extensions are granted on a case by case basis). When participants leave the emergency shelter, they are no longer eligible for a Pet Advocate. Participants must pick up their pet within 72 hours of exiting the emergency shelter or the pet will be surrendered to the HSWM.

Can I see my pet while it's with a Pet Advocate?

Due to safety and confidentiality concerns, participants will not be able to see their pets while it is placed with a Pet Advocate. If the participant would like to know how their pet is doing, they can contact the Pet Advocate Coordinator at the HSWM. The Coordinator will contact the Pet Advocate to get updated information on the pet. All communication between participant and Pet Advocate will go through the Coordinator. The participant will be contacted if there are any issues or concerns regarding their pet or if the pet needs medical attention.

STEPS IN PROCESS

1. Contact my case manager to obtain a "Request for Pet Advocate" application.
2. Fill out the application completely and attach any vet records I have on my pet.
3. My case manager will fax my application to the Humane Society of Western Montana and contact the Pet Advocate Coordinator.
4. The Pet Advocate Coordinator at the HSWM will review the application and contact me within 24 hours to arrange a time for me to bring my pet to the HSWM.
5. When I bring my pet to the HSWM, it will receive any vaccinations needed and meet the Pet Advocate and their pets.
6. At this point, I will have the opportunity to talk to the Pet Advocate about my pet and its behavior.
7. I will not receive the Pet Advocate's phone number or address and they will also not receive any information on me, other than which shelter I am staying at. If I want information on how my pet is doing, I will contact the Pet Advocate Coordinator at the HSWM.
8. I must contact the Pet Advocate Coordinator one week before my exit date from the shelter to arrange a meeting time to exchange my pet. If I leave the shelter unexpectedly, I must contact the Coordinator within 24 hours and meet within 72 hours to get my pet.

APPENDIX G

Pet Advocate Program Evaluation

We would appreciate your input on the Pet Advocate program, which provides foster homes for pets while their owners access emergency shelters. Your honest opinions and helpful feedback will assist us in making this program a success for everyone.

1) I am satisfied with the services provided by the Pet Advocate Program: (circle one)

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

Please explain your answer:

2) What were the benefits of using the Pet Advocate Program?

3) What were the disadvantages of using the Pet Advocate Program?

4) What can we do to make the Pet Advocate Program better?