



2021-08

## THE NATIONAL SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION SUPPORTS THE CHILD AND ANIMAL ABUSE DETECTION AND REPORTING ACT

**WHEREAS**, the nation's sheriffs, as the highest constitutional law enforcement officers in many counties, cities, and parishes throughout the country, are often called out to cases of intimate partner violence (IPV)<sup>1</sup>, defined as a "pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain control over another intimate partner<sup>2</sup>;"

**WHEREAS**, between 3.3 million and 10 million American children were exposed to IPV<sup>3</sup>, and one-third of children who witness IPV are victims themselves<sup>4</sup>;

**WHEREAS**, multiple studies have shown that IPV and animal abuse are often co-occurring, with between 49% to 71% of domestic violence victims reporting pets were threatened, harmed, or killed by the perpetrator<sup>5</sup>, while one 2017 study noted 89% of victims reported some form of animal abuse by a domestic violence perpetrator<sup>6</sup>;

**WHEREAS**, animal abuse is linked to numerous Adverse Childhood Experiences/Events (ACEs), the exposure to which causes biomedical, emotional, and social problems in children, including mental health issues, substance abuse disorders, and diseases like pulmonary lung disease and hepatitis<sup>7</sup>;

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<sup>1</sup> A 2009 report by Andrew Klein estimates that between 15% and 50% of calls to law enforcement are domestic violence-related. Practical Implications of Current Domestic Violence Research: For Law Enforcement, Prosecutors and Judges," National Institute of Justice, June 2009, pg. 1, <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/225722.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> What is the Definition of Domestic Violence?, FindLaw.com, Oct. 3, 2018, available at <https://www.findlaw.com/family/domestic-violence/what-is-domestic-violence.html>

<sup>3</sup> Resource Center on Domestic Violence: Child Protection and Custody, *Rates of Child Abuse and Child Exposure to Domestic Violence*. Retrieved from <https://www.rcdvcpc.org>.

<sup>4</sup> National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (2015), *Domestic violence and children*. Retrieved from [ncadv.org](https://www.ncadv.org).

<sup>5</sup> Facts and Myths about Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse, Animal Welfare Institute, <https://awionline.org/content/facts-and-myths-about-domestic-violence-and-animal-abuse>

<sup>6</sup> The Link Between Cruelty to Animals and Violence Toward Humans, Animal Legal Defense Fund, <https://aldf.org/article/the-link-between-cruelty-to-animals-and-violence-toward-humans-2/>

<sup>7</sup> Barbara W. Boat, *Connections among adverse childhood experiences, exposure to animal cruelty and toxic stress: what do professionals need to consider?* Retrieved from <https://www.ashlandmhrb.org/>.

Additionally, exposure to animal cruelty at a young age has been shown to increase the likelihood of acts of animal cruelty from adolescence into adulthood, which is a “sentinel indicator and predictor” linked to a higher likelihood of violence towards humans<sup>8</sup>;

**WHEREAS**, information from child protection agencies may assist law enforcement in detecting cases of child abuse and other forms of interpersonal violence, allowing for a more effective, coordinated response to these threats to public safety; and

**WHEREAS**, information on exposure to animal abuse by children and adolescents could lead to early intervention and prevention of later acts of animal cruelty and human violence;

**WHEREAS**, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) does not currently include statistics on animal cruelty cases in the national clearinghouse of information on child abuse and neglect; and

**WHEREAS**, H.R. 763, the “Child and Animal Abuse Detection and Reporting Act”<sup>9</sup> would amend CAPTA to include animal abuse incidences in the information collected by the national clearinghouse.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the National Sheriffs’ Association recognizes the association between child and animal abuse and supports the passage of H.R. 763, the “Child and Animal Abuse Detection and Reporting Act” to improve public safety measures by curtailing domestic violence.

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<sup>8</sup> National Link Coalition, *What is the link?* Retrieved from <https://nationallinkcoalition.org>.

<sup>9</sup> GovTrack.us. (2021). H.R. 763 — 117th Congress: Child and Animal Abuse Detection and Reporting Act. Retrieved from <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/117/hr763>