

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Draft 4/4/2005

PARTICIPATING PARTIES:

Addison County Humane Society (ACHS). The ACHS works to foster the humane treatment of animals in our community. We do this by operating a shelter that takes in strays and unwanted animals and places them with new families, educating the community about issues important to the welfare of animals and facilitating the process of investigating animal cruelty in our county.

The ACHS manages the *Addison County Anti-Cruelty Coalition* and serves as the central clearing house for reporting cruelty and neglect in Addison County. The Coalition has brought together law enforcement agencies, animal control officers, humane society officers, veterinarians, rescue organizations and government officials to develop a coordinated action plan. The objective of the plan is to strengthen the effectiveness of humane enforcement and to facilitate aggressive prosecution of offenders throughout the county.

Middlebury District Office of Family Services. Family Services is committed to protect children and strengthen families, in partnership with families and communities.

GUIDING PRINCIPALS:

- Child abuse, animal abuse, and domestic violence are directly related as different manifestations of the common denominator of *family violence*.
- By working collaboratively, animal welfare, child protection, and domestic violence organizations are in a better position to break the cycle of violence negatively impacting the vulnerable family members we serve.

DESCRIPTION OF COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIP:

The Addison County Humane Society and Family Services have developed this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to improve on collaboration between our agencies and to enhance services for the individuals and companion animals victimized by family violence. This collaboration identifies the following strategies to achieve these goals:

1. Conduct annual joint staff meetings/trainings as a forum to address intervention strategies to meet the needs of the populations we serve. The purpose being to strengthen this relationship through joint training and cross training as well as discussion on policy and practice issues that may arise between agencies.
2. Continue and maintain an ongoing dialogue between the two agencies that facilitates the ongoing development of this agreement.

3. Resolve potential conflicts in a respectful manner.
4. Define and clarify confidentiality issues that will arise as a result of collaboration.
5. Clarify and implement the referral and cross-reporting policies of each agency.
6. Work as team members to advocate for the development of resources needed for a coordinated community response to family violence.
7. Provide training and orientation on the collaboration for all new staff at each agency.

ANIMAL ABUSE REPORTING BY A FAMILY SERVICES STAFF MEMBER:

Any Middlebury District Office of Family Services Social Worker in her or his professional capacity or within the scope of her or his employment, who has knowledge of or observes an animal whom he or she knows or reasonably suspects has been the victim of animal cruelty or neglect, shall report the known or suspected instance of animal cruelty or neglect to the Addison County Humane Society.

If the animal is not in immediate danger call the ACHS at 388-1100 within 48 hours. Depending on the issue, the Humane Society staff will notify the appropriate individual to investigate. Non-emergent issues will be referred to a Humane Investigator, usually the animal control officer in a town, or another individual as designated by the town. Management of a situation can include education, support to correct the problem, issuance of a citation, or notification of a law enforcement officer. Reported cases are entered into the ACHS Humane Investigation online database that can be accessed by law enforcement officers and humane investigators to identify past infractions and to document current findings and activity. In addition the ACHS will report back to the caller with the outcome of the investigation.

If an animal is in immediate danger, call the State Police at 388-4919 as soon as possible.

This duty is to report – not to investigate such situations. The ACHS, through the Addison County Anti-Cruelty Coalition, shall be responsible for the investigation of known or suspected animal cruelty or neglect.

A report of a known or suspected instance of animal cruelty or neglect shall include the name and title of the person making the report, his or her business address and telephone number, the name of the animal owner/custodian (if known), the location of the animal and animal premises, the number, type, and applicable description of the animal(s) involved, an indication of the suspected condition of the animal and/or animal premises, and any other information, including information that led that person to suspect animal cruelty or neglect.

When two or more persons who are required to report are present and jointly have knowledge of a known or suspected instance of animal cruelty or neglect, and where there is agreement among them, the report may be made by a member of the team

selected by mutual agreement and a single report may be made. Any member who has knowledge that the member designated to report has failed to do so shall thereafter make the report.

CHILD ABUSE REPORTING BY A HUMANE INVESTIGATOR: It is suggested that ACHS adopt a child abuse reporting protocol which will guide their investigators in making reports of child abuse and neglect. Such a protocol would include the expectation that an investigator who has reasonable cause to believe that any child who has been abused or neglected would make a report the Family Services Office within 24 hours. A report of suspected child abuse or neglect should contain any known information about risk to children, names of parents and children in family, location of home and any other information that will help Family Services respond appropriately. If Co-occurring domestic violence is known or suspected including that information in a report to Family Services will us to respond in a way that honors the safety needs of children and adult victims of domestic violence.

ACCEPTANCE:

The Addison County Humane Society and the Middlebury District Office of Family Services agree to work together to implement the objectives of this collaboration, to maintain communication, and ensure accountability to the community through this agreement.

Signed:

Jill Tucker, Executive Director, ACHS

Brenda Gooley, District Director,
Middlebury District Office
Family Services