

Domestic Violence Shelters Adding On-Site Kennels for Pets

Many domestic violence victims are reluctant to leave home if they have to leave their pets behind, and pets that are left with abusers often suffer continued harm or even death.

Reviewed by [Dr. Becker](#)

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Up to 65% of domestic violence victims have said they were unable to escape because they were concerned about what would happen to their pets
- An increasing number of domestic violence shelters now have facilities to house victims' pets on-site
- Many animal shelters, rescue groups and foster organizations will take temporary custody of pets in domestic violence situations
- If a shelter near you does not provide on-site housing, you can inquire about off-site housing options. Many shelters will provide services to get your pets into temporary foster care or other boarding facilities
- There are also many community programs available that work independently of domestic violence shelters

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In cases of domestic violence, pets are often victims too. Further, up to 65% of domestic violence victims have said they were unable to escape because they were concerned about what would happen to their pets.¹

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 71% of pet-owning women who entered women's shelters said their batterer had injured, maimed, killed or threatened family pets for revenge or in order to exact psychological control over their victims.

Thirty-two percent of children living in such households had also hurt or killed animals, which is the tragic outcome of the children witnessing animal abuse and becoming more likely to abuse animals themselves.²

Unfortunately, most domestic violence shelters do not have on-site facilities to house animals, leaving victims with a hard choice of leaving their animals behind or not leaving at all.

Certain organizations are attempting to change this, however, including RedRover, which has a mission to ensure that every state has at least one domestic violence shelter with on-site kennels.

Domestic Violence Shelters Adding Pet Kennels

The Domestic Violence Intervention Program (DVIP) in Iowa is one U.S. shelter that has added dog kennels and cat havens to their shelter. For more than a decade, DVIP has provided arrangements for emergency pet kenneling and fostering for its clients, which was carried out with the help of area veterinarians and animal shelters.

Aside from dogs and cats, other pets, including a donkey, pot-bellied pig, snake and bearded dragon have also required emergency fostering. However, this means clients may be separated from their pets for an unknown period of time and visits have to be specially arranged.

Their on-site pet facilities, which allow clients and their children to stay in close proximity to their pets, were made possible through fundraising efforts and a \$6,000 construction grant from RedRover.

Three dog kennels, three cat havens and an outdoor dog run were added to the Iowa City location, which expects to house up to 20 dogs and cats a year. Kristie Fortmann-Doser, DVIP's executive director, told the Iowa City Press-Citizen:³

“We've known for a long time that a little over 70 percent of victims of domestic and dating violence have pets. We would constantly hear on the crisis line people saying they can't leave their home because they're worried about their pets.”

Sheltering Animals and Families Together (SAF-T)

If you or a loved one is in need, here is a **[list of SAF-T shelters](#)**, which are equipped to accept families of domestic violence along with their pets. Some of these shelters will also accept out-of-state residents.

There are, however, about 2,500 domestic violence shelters in the U.S. alone, so more work is needed to keep families and pets together and safe.⁴

Resources for Domestic Violence Victims and Their Pets

If a shelter near you does not provide on-site housing, you can inquire about off-site housing options. Many shelters will provide services to get your pets into temporary foster care or other boarding facilities.

There are also many community programs available that work independently of domestic violence shelters. For instance, some animal shelters will take in animals in need for varying lengths of time. As noted by RedRover:⁵

“Research clearly shows that offenders of domestic violence often have a pattern of abuse involving all members of the household — including children and pets.

When victims of domestic violence seek to escape their abusive homes they're not only faced with the challenge of finding shelter for themselves and their children, but also for their pets.

... Several organizations recognized the lifesaving urgency of this issue, and noticed that one way to address the problem was to make it easy for victims and shelter advocates to locate existing programs that can house victims' pets."

You can find searchable databases of such resources at a **[RedRover.org](#)**, including the National Domestic Violence Hotline's **[Safe Havens Mapping Project](#)**, which helps you find a shelter that allows you to bring pets.

If you cannot find a shelter near you that allows pets, call a local animal shelter and ask if they provide temporary shelter for pets in domestic violence situations.

Thirty-Two States Include Provisions for Pets in Domestic Violence Protection Orders

It's important to note also that 32 states, Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico have enacted legislation (as of 2016) that include provisions for pets in domestic violence protection orders. The protection orders vary by state, but most will grant the exclusive care and possession of pets to the victim.

In Illinois, for instance, the court can "[g]rant the petitioner the exclusive care, custody or control of any animal owned, possessed, leased, kept or held by either the petitioner or the respondent ... and order the respondent to stay away from the animal and forbid the respondent from taking, transferring, encumbering, concealing, harming or otherwise disposing of the animal."⁶ You can find the details of your state at **[Michigan State University's Animal Legal & Historical Center](#)**.

Sources and References

^{1, 2} [RedRover Domestic Violence and Pets](#)

³ [Iowa City Press-Citizen April 1, 2016](#)

⁴ [About Safe-T \(Archived\)](#).

⁵ [SafePlaceforPets.org \(Archived\)](#).

⁶ [Michigan State University, Legal & Historical Animal Center](#)
