

## New Program To House Dogs at Women's Shelters

**The American's Humane Association's initiative will help domestic violence shelters establish dog-friendly quarters.**

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The American Humane Association (AHA) has created a program to promote on-site pet housing at women's shelters in hopes of helping battered women who are reluctant to leave their partners because they are afraid for the safety of their pets.

AHA's Director of Public Policy, Allie Phillips, created the Pets and Women's Shelters (PAWS) program, and has witnessed the dilemma faced by victims who stay with abusers because they are fearful of what will happen to their pets if they leave.

"In the mid-1990s as an assistant prosecutor, my misdemeanor criminal trial docket included many domestic violence cases," Phillips explained. "Most of those cases never proceeded to trial or resulted in guilty please because the victims often failed to appear in court due to fear of retaliation by their batterers. One frequent concern I heard was 'If I testify or I do not go back with him, he will kill my pet.'"

Studies indicate that 18 to 48 percent of women reported that they were concerned about their pets' safety and stayed in abusive homes or delayed leaving because they did not want to leave their pets behind, according to the AHA.

The PAWS program provides a step-by-step manual for shelters to assess their needs and provides instructions for shelters on how to implement a pet-friendly policy, as the majority of shelters currently don't allow pets.