

DEVELOPING A FIRST STRIKE CAMPAIGN IN YOUR COMMUNITY

The following information was prepared by The Humane Society of the United States Campaigns department in response to the many inquiries from the United States and abroad for guidelines on developing a First Strike© campaign.

STEP I: INFORMATION GATHERING

LAWS

1. Identify the laws in your country that prohibit violence against children, women, elders, and animals. Prepare a brief summary of each law. Also identify the possible penalties for breaking these laws.
2. Identify the laws governing the reporting of child abuse and other forms of family violence.
3. Are there any mandated reporters of these acts? For example, are teachers required to report suspected child abuse to authorities?
4. Identify the agency or agencies are responsible for enforcing these laws.
5. Do these agencies currently share information or work together? Do the existing laws enable the agencies to share information easily?

RESEARCH/DATA GATHERING

1. Gather or review data in your country on the incidence and prevalence of the following:
 - child abuse (physical or sexual abuse)
 - domestic violence (physical or sexual violence against a spouse/partner)
 - elder abuse (physical or sexual violence against an older person)
 - animal cruelty (intentional violence against an animal)

Data can be gathered from governmental and non-governmental agencies as well as organizations that deal with issues of violence against children, women, elders, or animals. If little data is available, strongly urge the agencies to begin to collect the necessary data.

2. Review and summarize any research in your country that explores the backgrounds of individuals convicted of serious violent crimes. Look for information on animal abuse in the background of the offenders.
3. Review and summarize any data or research in your country that addresses the connection between animal cruelty and human violence.

STEP II: INCREASING AWARENESS OF THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ANIMAL CRUELTY AND HUMAN VIOLENCE

DEVELOPMENT OF ANTI-VIOLENCE COALITIONS/PROFESSIONAL AWARENESS

1. If there is an anti-violence coalition or group in your country, provide the members with materials from The HSUS's First Strike campaign explaining the connection between animal cruelty and human violence as well as illustrations from local cases. Follow up by asking that an animal-welfare representative be included in the coalition or group.
2. If you are building a coalition from the ground up, identify all of the key players and decision-makers in your country who deal with violence issues. Use the information you gathered on community resources to draw up a primary list. Additional individuals and organizations may be identified as you begin contacting those on the primary list. Try to include representatives from the following disciplines: law enforcement, courts, animal protection, health organizations, children and family services, community programs (e.g., Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts), emergency services (e.g., Red Cross, Salvation Army), education, legislation, churches and media.
3. Contact all parties by letter and invite them to an informational meeting to plan the coalition. Stress the importance of identifying animal cruelty as a form of violence in families and the community. Include materials from The HSUS's First Strike campaign and information on local cases that illustrate the connection between animal cruelty and human violence. Follow up with a telephone call to emphasize the importance of the meeting.

THE FIRST MEETING

1. Provide an overview of the issue and the reasons for coordinating an anti-violence coalition.
2. Ask all participants to briefly introduce themselves and their organizations.
3. Hold a structured question-and-answer period designed to determine the group's priorities. Initial questions may include the following:

Community Resources Identify the agencies and organizations that provide assistance to victims of violence. What is their role?

Identify what resources are available to victims of violence (e.g., shelter, counseling, advocacy)

Identify any prevention, intervention, or treatment programs that use animal-assisted therapy (e.g., teenagers training dogs, children working with animals on a farm)

Community Attitudes Discuss with representative of the agencies involved in anti-violence efforts the attitudes of the community toward child abuse, domestic violence, elder abuse, and animal abuse. Are these taken seriously? Is it considered a crime? Also explore attitudes toward the perpetrators and the victims of these crimes.

Find out if acts of violence are commonly reported. If not, why?

Community Response to Violence Find out if there are any anti-violence coalitions or groups in your country. If any exist, determine the goals and activities of the groups and what governmental agencies are involved.

Legal/Court Response to Violence Are the laws prohibiting violent acts actively and consistently enforced?

What are the typical sentences for individuals convicted of breaking these laws?

*Note: These questions can be answered during the initial information gathering in Step I prior to the first meeting or included in the agenda for the first meeting.

SETTING GOALS

The goals you set will be based on the priorities established by the coalition at the first meeting. Following is a list of goals that may be appropriate for your country:

1. Identify other agencies or organizations that should be included in the coalition.
2. Identify possible sources of funding for the coalition.
3. Develop key questions that can be included on investigative reports made by all relevant agencies that would identify any possible connection between family violence and animal cruelty. For example, child abuse, domestic violence, and elder abuse agencies can include questions to determine if there are pets in the family and if they have been threatened, injured, or killed by a family member.
4. Establish cross-training among agencies. For example, a child abuse agency could provide training about recognizing and reporting child abuse to staff working with animal protection and domestic violence. This would help animal protection and

domestic violence workers identify possible cases of child abuse and provide them with information on how and where to report the abuse.

5. Establish a system for cross-reporting among agencies.
6. Propose legislation to develop or strengthen laws against acts of cruelty to animals.
7. Establish an emergency sheltering, or "safe pet" program, for the pets of any victims of family violence. This program will provide temporary housing for pets at an animal shelter, veterinary hospital or school, boarding facility, or foster home.
8. Create a centralized reporting system to track abuse and violence cases.
9. Encourage the development of humane education programs in the schools.
10. Develop a public-awareness campaign using The HSUS's First Strike campaign materials.

PUBLIC AWARENESS/MEDIA CAMPAIGN

1. Get to know the media. Who are they? How do you contact them? What are their interests?
2. Invite the reporters who cover crime issues to a coalition meeting. Also invite the editorial board of the newspapers.
3. Identify reporters and writers who have an interest in animals, family violence or children and invite them to a coalition meeting.
4. Write letters to the editor and call talk-radio shows to discuss local cases of violence. Explain how animal cruelty is connected to other forms of human violence and why it is important to take animal cruelty seriously.
5. Develop a press packet including First Strike campaign materials, local case examples, the coalition's mission and goals, research, and testimonials.
6. Hold a press conference to announce to formation of the coalition or the addition of animal protection agencies to an existing coalition.
7. Involve politicians and legislators. Ask them to support the coalition's mission and goals.
8. Solicit funding or in-kind services to launch a community awareness campaign.

9. Develop materials to supplement the First Strike campaign materials specific to your country and distribute them in schools, libraries, social service agencies, hospitals, doctors' and veterinarians' offices, pet stores, and other local businesses.
10. Develop an advertising campaign using billboards, bus advertisements, radio and television public-service announcements, and promotional give-aways (pens, magnets, etc.).
11. Organize a community event to raise awareness (e.g., End the Violence Day or Family Peace Day)
12. Establish a speakers' bureau to speak to civic organizations, church groups, etc.
13. Host a community forum, town meeting, or conference.

MEASURING YOUR SUCCESS

1. Use the coalition's goals to measure its success.
2. Develop other indicators of success such as increased public awareness of the issue, increased reporting of violence, development of interagency agreements.
3. Periodically review the goals of the coalition and revise them as necessary to reflect the needs of your country.
4. Prepare an annual report on the activities and progress of the coalition.

Visit www.hsus.org/firststrike for information about The HSUS First Strike© Campaign

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